

## **Post-pandemic tourism: old wine in new bottles?**

A study of the European tourism industry post Covid-19: a qualitative content analysis of news media narratives

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## POST-PANDEMIC TOURISM: OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES?

### ABSTRACT

Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, the European tourism sector used to account for 50% of the world's tourism arrivals on a yearly basis, making the continent the biggest producer of tourism in the world. Consequently, revenues produced by tourism and associated businesses, such as the food and drinks sector, contributed approximately 10% to Europe's GDP. However, the tourism industry has been widely disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, causing a standstill in global travel as mobility restrictions were implemented in an attempt to contain the virus. As a result, the European tourism industry is suffering huge losses, leaving many jobs at risk. However, the future remains unclear. Since the abrupt halt to tourism, a substantial body of work has been published about the future directions of the tourism sector. This study will add to this existing debate by providing a news media analysis, aiming to examine what narratives are employed to construct the future of the European tourism industry in particular. This is an interesting study setting because the context of Europe – and the European Union in particular – serves as an example of globalization in the sense that it is an ecosystem with multiple shared interests (trade, security, economics). Because of this, lessons learned from the European context can be applied to the wider context of worldwide interconnectedness that characterizes 21<sup>st</sup> century globalization. Within the context of tourism, it has also been demonstrated that news media play a paramount role in influencing and directing public perception and in turn, policy and governance decisions. Therefore, news analysis can serve to better understand public opinion as well as the agenda of policymakers – the agents that ultimately define what future tourism practices will look like. Ultimately, the goal of this study is to find an answer to the following research question: “How do European online news outlets construct the future of the European tourism industry after the impact of Covid-19?”. In order to reach an answer, 44 news articles published by a variety of European sources were analysed by means of a qualitative content analysis. In the end, multiple narratives were found in the dataset, ranging from the construction of a more sustainable industry, to a return to the previous status-quo. In the construction of a more sustainable tourism industry, many tourism trends were identified. Additionally, changes in consumer behaviour as a result of the health emergency were illuminated. Additionally, another key finding centred around the realisation for tourism practices to diversify in order to be more resilient. However, the main finding of this study is that news media were underpinned by a sense of uncertainty throughout, as all narratives were constructed with a sense of caution. This was not completely unexpected since health emergencies like the Covid-19 pandemic are known to be characterized by heightened levels of uncertainty and fear.

**KEYWORDS:** *Tourism, Covid-19, European tourism, Tourism trends, News narratives, Pandemic*

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Theoretical framework.....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 The tourism industry .....	4
2.2 The ideology of the global tourism industry .....	6
2.3 Disruptions of the global tourism industry by Covid-19 pandemic .....	11
2.4 Imaginations of the future tourism industry: “boosterism” vs. “degrowth” .....	15
2.5 News media analysis.....	18
2.6 Summary .....	21
<b>3 Methodology .....</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 Qualitative content analysis .....	23
3.2 Data collection .....	24
3.3 Data analysis .....	28
<b>4 Results.....</b>	<b>31</b>
4.1. Opportunity for change: rethinking tourism .....	32
4.1.1 <i>Alternative forms of tourism</i> .....	34
4.1.2 <i>Change in consumer behaviour: psychological effects of pandemic</i> .....	37
4.2. Business-as-usual approach: a return to the “glorious past” .....	40
4.3. Diversifying the tourism industry for resilience .....	42
4.3.1 <i>Diversification economy</i> .....	43
4.3.2. <i>Diversification tourism sector</i> .....	44
<b>5 Discussion .....</b>	<b>47</b>
Limitations .....	50
<b>References .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Appendix B.....</b>	<b>68</b>

## 1. Introduction

Upon its first discovery in the Wuhan province of China, the Covid-19 virus has quickly spread across the world and has left no aspect of human life unaffected in its havoc. In financial terms, the impact of the Corona virus is estimated to have caused a decline of roughly 0.42% in the global gross domestic product (GDP) in the first quarter of 2020 alone, according to Bloomberg economic analysts (Ayttey et al., 2020). The industry that accounts for 10% of global GDP is the tourism industry and all business sectors that are associated with it, such as the events and food and drinks sector (Folinas & Metaxas, 2020). The mobility restrictions that were implemented around the world to prevent (further) spread of the Covid-19 virus have had a grave effect on the global tourism industry: impairing all parts of its value chain – both on macro and micro (SMEs) levels. Hence, many authors have stated that tourism is one of the sectors most heavily impacted by the global pandemic (Becker, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020b). In fact, some of the latest data provided by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) attests that global tourism “suffered its worst year on record in 2020, with international arrivals dropping by 74%” in comparison to the previous year in which a whopping 1 billion more international arrivals were recorded (UNWTO, 2021). Although tourism is known to be a rather resilient industry, capable of adequately recovering from crises (Grechi et al., 2017), it should be mentioned that the impacts of the current health crisis are unprecedented. To illustrate: the most recent previous global disaster (the 2009 economic crisis) caused a mere 4% decline in global tourism arrivals, compared to the enormous decline of 74% caused by Covid-19 in 2020 (UNWTO, 2021).

This research will focus specifically on the European tourism sector, which accounted for half of the world’s tourist arrivals on a yearly basis prior to 2020 (United Nations, 2020), thus rendering the continent one of the main producers of tourism in the world. Consequently, the economic value of tourism and its associated business sectors is quite substantial in Europe, accounting for approximately 10% of the continent’s GDP (Andrei & Drăgoi, 2020). This distribution is similar to the value of tourism on a global scale which also weighs in at 10% (Folinas & Metaxas, 2020). As a result, the impact of Covid-19 on the tourism industry in Europe is understandably substantial given its sheer size and value. Research conducted by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reports that in Europe, 13 million jobs will be lost in the travel and tourism sector, resulting in a GDP loss of €633 billion (Data Europa, 2020). The reason why this research opted to focus

specifically on the European continent is motivated by a multiplicity of reasons. First of all, there is the sheer size and value of the sector in Europe as well as its role as main tourism producer in the global tourism system. The significance of the tourism sector on both a European and global level, makes it an interesting phenomenon and setting to study. Moreover, it is interesting to examine the tourism industry and the impact Covid-19 has had on it within the European context because the area is “a great contemporary example of an international organization with both economic and political integration” (Sankowski, 2020, p. 2). Hence, lessons and challenges from the experience of the European ecosystem could be taken as an example to theorize about what globalization might look in the post-pandemic world (Sankowski, 2020). Lessons learnt from the European context could thus influence policy makers around the world to make sense of post-pandemic international relations and cooperation as well as the mechanisms of globalisation during, and after, the Covid-19 pandemic (Sankowski, 2020). However, the outlook of aforementioned post-pandemic world, and in particular the outlook of the tourism industry, are yet unknown. Hence, this research aims to uncover what direction it might be headed and fill this gap in existing literature by providing an answer to the following underlying research question: “*How do European online news outlets construct the future of the European tourism industry after the impact of Covid-19?*”. In order to answer this broad research question, a literature review was first conducted in which relevant existing research was critically engaged with. Based on the literature review, the following sub-question was formed: “*Which narratives from academia (degrowth vs. boosterism) resonate in European online news coverage?*”. This sub-question thus aims to examine if narratives produced by scholars are mirrored by news media, and if so, how.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, much research has been published calling for a more resilient and sustainable tourism industry, in which Covid-19 is sometimes positioned as a unique opportunity to realise these goals (e.g. Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Romagosa, 2020). Nonetheless, no research has yet been conducted on the public consensus on this topic. Hence, this research aims to fill this gap in literature by examining news media narratives about the subject by means of a qualitative content analysis. News media participate in the framing and shaping of understandings of phenomena as well as the construction of realities – they thus define “salience, influence public opinion and shape community consensus” (Pasquinelli & Trunfio, 2020, p. 1810). As for the context of tourism management, it has been demonstrated that news media play a paramount role in influencing

and directing public perception and thus in turn, policy and governance decisions as well (Hall, 2002; Schweinsberg et al., 2017). This research will examine news narratives surrounding Covid-19 through the unique angle of tourism. Therefore, in a general sense, this study will add to body of existing literature about news coverage during pandemics (e.g. Beaudoin, 2007; Mutua & Ong'Ong'a, 2020; Shih et al., 2008). Specifically, this exploratory research will provide a novel dimension to the debate by examining the impact of a pandemic through the lens of tourism. Lastly, this study will help guide tourism planners and policy makers in their debates surrounding the future of the industry by providing an overview of the agenda's set by news media. From a business perspective, the overview of news media narratives might be able to serve as a guideline to inform future practices since this research provides insights into the changing customer demand as a result of the pandemic.

This research will first discuss relevant existing literature in the upcoming theoretical framework chapter. The existing theories and concepts discussed in this chapter will serve as a foundation for this research. Consecutively, the methodology chapter will explain the research method employed in this research as well as the data collection and data analysis process. This chapter will be followed by the results section which will provide a thick description of the dataset and the most significant themes that emerged from the qualitative content analysis. Finally, the discussion will provide a conclusion in which the main research question is answered. Additionally, some of the research's main limitations will be acknowledged and suggestions for future research will be made.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

In this chapter, existing theory and relevant concepts will be discussed and summarized with the aim to serve as a foundation for the research at hand. The first section will pertain to the discussion of tourism as a capitalist industry, including a brief historical overview trailing how the sector became what it is today. Secondly, a section will be presented that explains the underlying mechanics of said industry by discussing the current market system within which it functions and the defining ethos that underpin it, thereby touching upon concepts such as globalisation and consumerism amongst others. After having established the mechanisms of the global tourism industry prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus, the third section will touch upon the disruption that the pandemic has brought upon the tourism industry on a global level first. Consecutively, the focus will be shifted towards the European tourism industry in particular since that is the subject of this research. The penultimate section concerns existing research that discusses the direction and future of the tourism industry after the Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, the last section of this chapter will briefly discuss the value of studying news media in this context and summarize some existing news narratives that were found in studies conducted during previous health crises.

### **2.1 The tourism industry**

Tourism is often labelled the largest industry in the world (Aramberri, 2009; Fletcher, 2011), although there are authors who dispute this claim. Higgins-Desbiolles (2006) for instance, argues that positioning the global tourism phenomenon as an *industry* overshadows other conceptualizations, such as that of tourism as a social force, in favour of the effects of marketisation and other neo-liberal principles that ultimately serve the private wealth accumulation agendas of leaders in the business sectors involved in tourism. Higgins-Desbiolles (2006) asserts that while the global tourism phenomenon does consist of all aspects to qualify as an industry, it is greater than that. On top of the economic benefits that are usually emphasized within the neo-liberal paradigm, Higgins-Desbiolles (2006) discusses the social and cultural benefits that tourism offers such as tourism's contribution to the personal well-being of tourists; its contribution to preserving certain cultures in a time of cultural homogenisation spurred by globalisation; and lastly, its powers to promote a greater sense of understanding, peace and acceptance amongst people. An example of the latter socio-cultural function of tourism can be found in efforts made by the European Union (EU)

to unite and connect tourism supply throughout the continent in order to develop a sense of European coherence, shared roots, culture and history (Hjalager, 2007). Nevertheless, this paper will in fact make use of the “tourism industry” terminology to discuss all features of the multifaceted phenomenon at hand. However, taking into account the points raised by Higgins-Desbiolles (2006), it must be clear that while this paper does refer to an industry, it does not disregard the social and cultural aspects that constitute and contribute to tourism practices. This paper thus recognizes both assets that are tangible, e.g. transport, accommodation etc. (Camilleri, 2018), as well as those that are intangible and often overlooked such as the emotional labour performed by tourism workers (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017).

Despite the fact that the tourism industry is one of the largest industries in the world, it is also a rather recent industry. Specifically, the phenomenon of travelling for leisurely purposes gained increasing popularity in the post-war era, which saw an increase of the middle class as a result of the proliferation of Fordist capitalism (Fletcher, 2011). Given the increased spending capacity per median household, combined with “paid vacation time, shorter hours of work, less physically taxing jobs, and better education” (Fletcher, 2011, p. 444-445), the new middle class started consuming pre-packaged holidays at large – which heralded the rise of mass tourism. However, the 1970s saw structural changes in the nature of tourism offerings which increasingly shifted towards a variety of individually tailored and flexible trips, often focussing on niche markets that had not previously been tapped into such as ecotourism, or more disturbing examples such as sex and slum tourism (Fletcher, 2011). Although this brief historical overview based on Fletcher (2011) stems from a US/Western-centric point of view, it remains true across cultures that the proliferation of the middle class equals an increase in tourism. To illustrate, Folinas and Metaxas (2020) explain how the burst in tourism numbers in the last 30 years can “be attributed to the emergence of the middle classes in the newly affluent and highly populated countries of the world such as China, Brazil and India” (p. 2). These findings are echoed by Cohen (2012) and Pasquinelli and Trunfio (2020). Thus, middle classes have developed at different rates around the world but are similar in the fact that once a certain level of disposable income is acquired, the consumption of travel and tourism increases. According to Folinas and Metaxas (2020), other factors that have contributed to the explosive growth of the tourism industry in recent years are the growth of novel technologies; the advent of budget airlines; and the emergence of novel lifestyle movements that are associated with increasing prosperity worldwide. As a



result of all aforementioned modern developments, the UNWTO reports that the number of international tourist arrivals had reached 1.4 billion by 2018, accounting for a market value of \$1.4 trillion – a milestone which was originally estimated to be reached only by 2020 (UNWTO, 2019).

## **2.2 The ideology of the global tourism industry**

According to Higgins-Desbiolles (2018), it is important to understand and manage tourism in relation to the larger system within which it functions – this section thus aims to explain exactly this. Currently, this larger system or ideology that is considered to be leading in the majority of the world, thus informing both governmental and corporate decisions, is a neoliberal paradigm (Cohen, 2012; Fletcher, 2011; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018). This neoliberal ideology is underpinned by a philosophy of endless growth, which is seen as the most vital dynamic of the current capitalist market system according to Hamilton (2004), who goes as far as to call these inbuilt growth dynamics a “growth fetish”. In fact, continual growth is vital to the market system: “capitalism requires continual expansion in order to survive” (Fletcher, 2011, p. 449) – a mechanism that prompted Sandler (1994) to aptly pronounce the “grow or die” or GOD principle. This idea of continual growth has also seeped into the minds of some actors in the tourism industry and the related academic field, proclaiming the tourism industry to be a “growth industry” (Cohen, 2012). This train of thought is described as a *boosterist* approach, which subscribes to pro-growth and expansionary beliefs and “represents a simplistic view that tourism is inherently good with automatic benefits” (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020b, p. 557).

In the same vein of the tourism industry being called a “growth industry”, many authors have attested that tourism supports and sustains capitalist growth agendas and has been a vehicle to drive the expansion of global capitalism and the Western consumerist ethos (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017; Cohen, 2012; Fletcher, 2011; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020b). In this sense, tourism has been a major force in driving globalisation (Cohen, 2012; Hjalager, 2007) – a phenomenon which can be defined as: “a restructuring process that works across units and affects all aspects of human life: from capital flows, through political collaboration, to the flow of ideas” (Hjalager, 2007, p. 437). Globalization has thus eliminated economic, political and cultural barriers and therefore enabled the free flow of people, goods and intangible assets such as communication, information and life-styles across the world (Cohen, 2012). The process of globalization is reinforced by the growth of and

developments in communication and information technologies as well as infrastructure (Hjalager, 2007), since these developments further lower aforementioned barriers. In fact, tourism has actually in turn been one of the drivers behind the developments of the global infrastructure network (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017; Cohen, 2012). As Cohen (2012) explains, tourism assisted in the creation of the modern global transportation system, which made formerly remote destinations easily accessible. Additionally, the tourism industry also contributed to the development of the “moorings”, which are institutions that support travel mobility such as airports and travel accommodations (Cohen, 2012). Therefore, given that tourism helped create the current worldwide infrastructure system, and thus acted as a facilitator that enabled the free flows of people and goods, it can not only be described as a result of globalization but also as a *cause* (Hjalager, 2007).

One of the most significant intangible effects of the globalization of tourism is the fact that it “contributed to the spread of the modern Western consumerist ethos into ever more remote parts of the non-Western world” (Cohen, 2012, p. 104). Under this ethos, consumption is seen as an expression of one’s individuality and freedom (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010). However, according to Sklair (2002), consumerism has little to nothing to do with satisfying biological needs, but rather about satisfying so-called “induced wants” – this dynamic is called the culture-ideology of consumerism. Since tourism is mainly a hedonistic leisure activity of voluntary nature (Cohen, 2012) it is clearly an example of an induced want, created by advertising professionals and tourism organizations. Therefore, tourism can be seen as an outstanding example of consumerism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010). Wang (2002) even went as far as to call tourism “the peak form of consumerism” while Cohen (2012) calls tourism a leading symbol of consumer culture in general. Yet, since the latter half of the twentieth century, tourism seems to have become more than simply an induced want: it is now viewed not as a luxury, but as a right and a necessity by those privileged enough to easily afford travel (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010). On the other hand, Büscher and Fletcher (2017) explain that tourism has also come to serve a different, more functional role in the sense that tourism has become a capitalist relief mechanism. In capitalist societies where high levels of experienced stress and anxiety are common, travel and tourism have become a means for people to alleviate these pressures (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017). Nonetheless, Hall (2010) argues that it is this very voluntary nature of tourism that makes the sector extraordinarily prone to crises of all kinds – economic, ecological and political – as it will only be enacted once people’s “vital” needs have been

met. Nonetheless, when a global pandemic like the current Covid-19 health crisis causes governments to close their borders and restrict non-essential travel (Nicola et al., 2020), individuals are not even able to practice their discretionary “right to travel” (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010).

However, it would be a faulty assumption to think that the globalization of the tourism industry amounts to equality, or equal distribution in any shape or form for that matter. Instead, the globalization and marketisation of tourism has led to a fragmentation of the production system (Cohen, 2012), multiple forms of structural violence (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017) and socio-economic inequalities in general (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020b). The production of these inequalities is mainly due to the fact that the expansion and development of tourism practices around the world was largely powered by affluent Western countries, as a means to grow their ownership and boost their profits (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017; Fletcher, 2011). Additionally, Fletcher (2011) explains that tourism development was considered a great investment opportunity, which perfectly lend itself as a method to redirect excess capital. In Harvey’s (1989, as cited in Fletcher, 2011) analysis of how capitalism sustains itself, he observes that there are a number of ways in which aforementioned excess capital can be reabsorbed into the system – which he calls spatial and temporal “fixes”. Tourism development is one of the manifestations that these spatial and/or temporal displacements can take on. For instance, international tourism development can provide an ideal means of a spatial fix, as it allows excess capital to be exported “to a new geographical location where it can be reinvested in novel development” (Fletcher, 2011, p. 449). On the other hand, a temporal fix involves “displacing excess capital into future return, either by investing in ventures that will realize profit down the road or by reducing turnover time” (Fletcher, 2011, p. 449). Tourism provides this sort of fix by means of selling transient events that are instantaneously consumed rather than selling durable products (Fletcher, 2011). However, tourism can also provide a combination of aforementioned displacements in the form of a composite “time-space fix”. This is mainly accomplished through the provision of loans for tourism development (e.g. as provided by the United Nations Development Program and the World Bank), as this not only displaces excess capital into new spaces, but into the future as well (Fletcher, 2011). These dynamics have caused Fletcher (2011) to conclude that “tourism expansion can be viewed as an instance of ‘accumulation through dispossession’” (p. 455) – a dynamic that some scholars deem to be rather characteristic of neo-liberal capitalism in general.

In this process of accumulation through dispossession, tourism expansion has been deemed a practice of neo-colonialism (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017; Mowforth & Munt, 2015; Munt, 1994) and/or similarly, of neo-imperialism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010). According to Hall and Tucker (2004) this is to some extent due to the fact that the choice of which markets to expand into, often reflect colonial relationships. However, regardless of whether tourism was introduced in a developing country by a Western/developed nation or on the country's own behalf, in many cases "a developing country's engagement with tourism serves simply to confirm its dependent, subordinate position in relation to the advanced capitalist societies – itself a form of neo-colonialism" (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006, p. 1195). In other words, the poor and marginalized living in the developing world eke out a living by serving and hosting the privileged on their holidays in order to hopefully enjoy their moment as consumers in the future themselves (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010). This not only serves to sustain the capitalist world-system (Fletcher, 2011), but also confirms the aforementioned dependent and subordinate position the developing countries hold towards those that travel and the capitalist societies they originate from. However, due to the proclamation of the tourism industry as a pathway to fast (economic) development (Fletcher, 2011; Marsiglio, 2018), many countries have wholeheartedly invested in their tourism industry along all sectors (infrastructure, hospitality, branding and PR). This has resulted in an economic dependency on tourism, or simply a tourism dependency, for many countries (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020b).

Thus, as a global industry, tourism – and its neo-imperial tendencies – depends upon structural patterns of uneven geographical capitalist development. These elements feed off one another since tourism profits from *and* exacerbates structural inequality (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017) in the sense that corporatized tourism hinges upon the exploitation and commodification of local people, cultures and environments (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010). Therefore, the aforementioned culture-ideology of consumerism and the right to travel as discussed by Higgins-Desbiolles (2010) and Sklair (2002), often leads to the exacerbation of structural inequalities in which local people, cultures and environments of developing countries are exploited to serve the enjoyment of the capitalist class from developed societies. Additionally, expansion of the tourism industry to those developing countries results in economic inequalities as the capital accumulated is often repatriated elsewhere (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017). As a result, up to 90% of tourism revenues are said to "leak" out of the less affluent host countries (Fletcher, 2011).

Due to the aforementioned uneven developments on which most of the international tourism industry thrives – both as a commodified distinction used as a form of branding, as well as a form of socio-economic inequality – tourism can be seen as a product of structural violence (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017). In fact, Büscher and Fletcher (2017) attest that the rise and spread of capitalism as a whole has been based on multiple forms of violence – both structural and physical/direct. With regards to structural forms of violence, Büscher and Fletcher (2017) identify three main manifestations: “production of inequality, waste and spaces of exception” (p. 656). While these forms of structural violence are not unique to tourism, they do take on certain typical characteristics when embodied in tourism. The production of inequality has already been discussed previously and mainly refers to the way the international tourism industry relies on and exacerbates uneven geographical development in socio-economic terms (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010). As for the second form of structural violence, production of waste, minor examples are mentioned such as the production of promotional materials (e.g. flyers) by tourism organizations (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017). However, we currently live in the age of the internet and social media and research shows that as of 2010, online information has become foundational in the orientation stage of travel consumers to the point where 84% of tourists used the Internet as their key travel planning resource (Leung et al., 2013). Additionally, research has shown that tourism producers are increasingly focussing their promotional activities on spaces where their consumers are: online (Leung et al., 2013), and understandably so. Therefore, we can assume that the waste produced by the tourism industry in the form of physical promotional materials has become minimal in recent years.

Yet, the real and most obvious production of waste is that which entails (in)direct environmental degradation (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017). Not only does tourism development exploit natural resources and environments, it also heavily relies on – and therefore significantly stimulates the development of – travel infrastructure (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017). As Duffy and Stroebel (2015) explain, much of this transportation system, such as the aviation industry, has negative structural impacts on the environment and has been shown to advance climate change. Additionally, research has shown that tourism “meaningfully contributes to: changes in land cover and land use; energy use; greenhouse gas emissions; (...) and extinction of wild species” (Hall et al., 2015, p. 5) amongst other things. This form of structural violence could thus have large implications in the long-term. The final form of structural violence, spaces of exception, as discussed by Büscher and Fletcher (2017), refers

to the creation of so-called “tourism bubbles” which shield tourists from the two previously mentioned forms of structural violence by creating places of enjoyment, disconnected from local realities. Because these spaces of exception cause tourists to turn a blind eye to the other two forms of structural violence, Büscher and Fletcher (2017) argue that it thus exacerbates the production of inequalities and waste, which makes it a form of structural violence in its own right.

In sum, we can assert that the tourism industry is of worldwide scale and as a form of capitalism, it has been both a cause and a result of globalization (Hjalager, 2007). In this sense, tourism has been heralded as a tool for fast (economic) development as well as a vehicle for capitalist expansion (Fletcher, 2011). However, these dynamics have resulted in the creation of inequalities and the exacerbation of hierarchies that are reminiscent of colonialism and imperialism (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017). Additionally, tourism has actively contributed to the spread of the Western consumerist ethos – which in turn exacerbates the proliferation of the tourism industry in its own right since hedonistic travel has become a leading symbol of consumer culture (Cohen, 2012) and therefore has become a necessity instead of a mere “induced want” (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010).

### **2.3 Disruptions of the global tourism industry by Covid-19 pandemic**

In the words of Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2020, as cited in Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020b): “The coronavirus epidemic confronts us with something previously thought to be the impossible: the world as we knew it has stopped turning, whole countries are in a lockdown, many of us are confined to our homes facing an uncertain future in which, even if most of us survive, economic mega-crisis is likely” (p. 551). Indeed, the advent of the Covid-19 virus has caused the world as we knew it to have stopped turning, which has had enormous negative impacts on billions of people, affecting their livelihoods and mental health (Cullen et al., 2020; Fegert et al., 2020; Pfefferbaum & North, 2020), and most business sectors – a prime exception being online retail services such as Amazon, whose CEO has only gotten richer during the pandemic (Kelly, 2020). As mentioned before, the tourism industry is argued to be one of the hardest hit industries along with its affiliated sectors such as hospitality, events and the arts (Becker, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020b; Nicola et al., 2020). In fact, estimations provided by the UNWTO (2020) foresaw a decline in international tourism of up to 80% in 2020; a total of 120 million jobs to be at risk; and a possible loss in tourism export revenues of up to 1.2 trillion US dollars. In a similar vein, the

World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) also produced some estimates regarding the impact of the pandemic and warned for a loss of 50 million jobs in travel and tourism worldwide (Faus, 2020). Additionally, the WTTC further proclaimed the significant threat Covid-19 poses towards the tourism sector in terms of its potential to cause a shrinkage of the sector of up to 25% in 2020 alone (Faus, 2020).

Notwithstanding that the consequences of Covid-19 can be felt by tourism producers all around the world, it can be assumed that countries whose GDP substantially consist of revenue produced by the tourism industry and affiliated sectors – in other words: countries that have a tourism dependency – will be the worst affected. As a result, the WTTC expects Asia's tourism industry to be the most heavily affected by the pandemic (Faus, 2020). To illustrate, it is estimated that Vietnam's tourist sector will experience a loss of 5 billion US dollars in 2020 while the Philippines are expected to suffer a slowdown of up to 0.7% of the country's 2020 GDP (Nicola et al., 2020). Besides Vietnam and the Philippines, the tourism industries of Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Japan, and many more are expected to be impacted severely by the crisis (Ayittey et al., 2020). Naturally, China cannot be left out of this discussion. Given the fact that the Covid-19 virus sprung from the Chinese city of Wuhan in the centrally located Hubei province, China was the first nation to experience economic downturns as a result from the health crisis (Ayittey et al., 2020). The tourism sector constitutes roughly 11% of China's GDP (Folinas & Metaxas, 2020) and Chinese outgoing tourists are the single largest consumer segment in the world in terms of spending – accounting for 150 million outbound trips in 2018 and spending a whopping total of 227 billion US dollars while abroad (Folinas & Metaxas, 2020). Thus, the consequences of Covid-19 related to tourism are estimated to significantly impact the Chinese tourism industry as well as the industries of the countries which are now missing out on Chinese tourists.

Besides aforementioned nations, the Covid-19 pandemic also poses a threat to other established tourism producers, as Folinas and Metaxas (2020) explain that “traditional tourist destinations with constant traffic are at risk of losing up to 90% of their flows” (p. 7). An example the authors give of aforementioned “traditional destinations” are popular spots in Europe such as Ireland, Greece and Cyprus – countries whose GDP also happens to significantly consist of tourism revenues (Folinas & Metaxas, 2020). Aside from these three countries, it is to be expected that the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic will significantly impact the tourism industries of countries all throughout Europe. This is

because the continent is known to receive the highest annual traffic of tourists – consisting of both international as well as inter-regional visitors (Ana, 2017; Aramberri, 2009). In fact, the continent accounted for 51% of all international tourist arrivals in 2015 (World Tourism Organization, 2016). Consequently, it is no surprise that the sector is one of the key contributors to the continent's GDP, accounting for 10.3% of the total market value (Andrei & Drăgoi, 2020). Moreover, the sector is said to account for 10% of the workforce in Europe and on a macro level it is said that 10% of all corporations in Europe operate exclusively in this field (Andrei & Drăgoi, 2020). Therefore, the European Commission considered tourism industry was considered to be the third most significant socio-economic activity in the EU as of 2014 (Andrei & Drăgoi, 2020) – referring to the sector's importance as a contributor to both GDP and employment rates. Yet, whereas it was originally predicted by the UNWTO (2014) that the European tourism industry would continue to grow until 2030 at a rate of 2.3% annually, the Covid-19 pandemic has quickly changed the outlook of the industry and halted its growth curve. Instead of growth, it is estimated that the industry will suffer a loss of approximately 633 billion Euros, thus affecting the livelihood of approximately 13 million workers (Data Europa, 2020).

The European tourism industry – which is not only of special interest due to it being the biggest host market for tourism in the world (Ayitney et al., 2020), but also because the context of Europe is a great example of international cooperation. This is because the countries in the region, the 27 EU member states in particular, share interests in both political and economic terms (Sankowski, 2020). Since Europe acts as a unified trading body that operates globally, it can be seen as an exemplary ecosystem that could be generalised to the market dynamics of the worldwide system. As Sankowski (2020) explains in relation to Covid-19 and the related aftermath: “lessons and challenges from the EU's experience might shed light on how globalization might look after the virus and what changes and/or future directions it might take” (p. 2). Yet, although countries in Europe share many common interests, ranging from political, socio-economic, security and trade interests amongst other things, the initial response to the pandemic was quite individualistic as nations dealt with the virus with their own means and capabilities (Sankowski, 2020). Notwithstanding that resources were rather limited across the continent in the initial stage, as the crisis deepened so did the divisions between “the North” (e.g. Germany, Sweden, The Netherlands) and “the South” (e.g. Portugal, Italy, Greece). This is because the economically weaker southern countries were affected more harshly and on top of that, their recovery process was slower in



comparison to the more affluent northern countries (Sankowski, 2020). This led to the eventual intervention of the European Union, which called into existence several financial packages/programmes in order to cope with the crisis and its impacts (Nicola et al., 2020; Sankowski, 2020). This amounted to a 1.7 trillion euro rescue package provided by EU member states, the UK, and nations in the region which are not formally a part of the Union such as Switzerland (Nicola et al., 2020). Additionally, the European commission has gathered a 25 billion euro investment fund to support nations' recovery from the crisis and has agreed on a "more relaxed policy on budget rules to encourage public spending and the support of affected businesses by their corresponding government" (Nicola et al., 2020, p. 187).

As for the tourism industry, the sector has also been subject to the mechanisms of the EU as it has been used as a vehicle to support the political and economic agendas of the union. Hjalager (2007) explains that the EU has made efforts "to unite and interconnect tourism supply across borders in special interest trails (...) this is supposed to have positive economic benefits for the enterprises, but it is also meant to develop European coherence and a feeling of common roots, culture, and history" (p. 443). Perhaps as a result, we can see unified efforts made by European tourism producers to deal with the repercussions of the Covid-19 crisis. For instance, the European Tourism Manifesto Alliance – which is an association that encompasses over 60 public and private organisations from the European tourism and travel sector – has made a joint call for the implementation of urgent measures, including temporary state aid and short- to medium-term loans to overcome shortages; the launch of the European Unemployment Reinsurance Scheme; and funds provided by the EU through the Corona Response Investment Initiative (Nicola et al., 2020). This aid would certainly not be misplaced since Folinas and Metaxas (2020) explain that "an epidemic can become the ultimate driver of national tourism industry to the collapse, as it affects all human activities, like social, religious, athletic, artistic and cultural" (p. 9). In the case of Europe, this would thus correspond to the collapse of roughly 10% of the continent's GDP (Andrei & Drăgoi, 2020). According to Faus (2010), the recovery process from this crisis could take up to ten months, although this could potentially take longer depending on the duration and eventual impact of the pandemic. Nonetheless, the European tourism sector has demonstrated its ability to recover from crises quickly before, which it did after the 2008 economic crisis (Grechi et al., 2017). However, in the case of this particular crisis it is yet unclear what the recovery process will look like. In the next section, existing literature will

be discussed that proposes guidelines and suggestions for this recovery process and the European/global tourism sector moving forward.

#### **2.4 Imaginations of the future tourism industry: “boosterism” vs. “degrowth”**

According to Higgins-Desbiolles (2020b), major crises, such as the current Covid-19 pandemic, have the ability to illuminate dynamics that have mostly been overlooked prior to that particular crisis. In a similar vein, Indian novelist and well-known intellectual Arundhati Roy (2020) stated: “Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next”. Thus, pandemics have transformational powers and effects on environments and societies (Hall et al., 2020). Accordingly, the Covid-19 crisis and its impact on the tourism industry has caused many people – from regular citizens, to industry professionals and academics – to reflect on the state of the tourism industry and where it should be headed once travel restrictions are lifted. Although it should be mentioned that these debates are certainly not new, as prior to the Covid-19 outbreak different movements were already opposed to certain issues related to modern mass tourism. An example would be the protests and movements against the exponential growth of tourism in urban areas (Novy & Colomb, 2016; 2019) – a phenomenon called “overtourism” (Pasquinelli & Trunfio, 2020). In a broader sense however, a vast body of work was pre-existent to the Covid-19 crisis in which critiques were offered on the ways in which tourism supports and sustains capitalist growth and its negative consequences (increased inequality and ecological damage) (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020b). Instead, calls were made to make tourism more sustainable, both in ecological terms and in the sense of resilience (e.g. Hall, 2009; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010). This way, sustainable tourism can be defined as: “a tourism system that encourages qualitative development, with a focus on quality of life and well-being measures, but not aggregate quantitative growth to the detriment of natural capital” (Hall et al., 2015, p. 1). However, the current neo-liberal market paradigm inherently contradicts notions of sustainability due to its dependence on continuous growth (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010). Similarly, the tourism industry is a significant contributor to the “unsustainability of the current growth model and the culture-ideology of consumerism that underpins it” (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018, p. 159). Since sustainable tourism clearly engages with notions of limits which are indisputably incongruent with the culture-ideology of consumerism and pro-growth ideology that dominates all aspects of the current world order, governments and

industry alike will be reluctant to make tourism more sustainable as this undermines the core principles they rely on (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010; 2018). Yet, Higgins-Desbiolles (2010) explains that paths to a more sustainable transformation are multiple, including slow tourism, volunteering tourism, a change in consumer behaviour and a transformation in values and ideologies which could e.g. result in realistic pricing in which environmental costs of tourism and travel are incorporated.

Nonetheless, with regards to the current issues caused by Covid-19, we can distinguish two main schools of thought when discussing the recovery process of the tourism industry: one that is pro-industry and prescribes to a boosterist approach (e.g. Butcher, 2003; 2020; OECD, 2020). While the other, significantly more commonly advocated movement, supports a quite contrary vision of sustainability and resilience, underpinned by phenomena such as de-growth and proximity tourism (e.g. Hall, 2009; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Romagosa, 2020). As discussed in the previous paragraph, the latter movement has been around prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, in which scholars had called for a more resilient and ecologically friendly version of tourism in response to neo-liberal market dynamics of exploitation and overproduction. However, these calls were previously mostly disregarded as governments “often claimed that the problem was out of their hands since they could not stop people from travelling” (Fletcher et al., 2020). Yet, the mobility restrictions implemented worldwide due to Covid-19 show that it is in fact possible to regulate tourist flows when there is a political and/or societal consensus to do so (Romagosa, 2020). Many academics are convinced that the unsustainable and ecologically damaging practices on which the tourism industry relied in the pre-pandemic world, should be a valid driver to affect change as well (Fletcher et al., 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Thus, some authors argue that this pandemic can be seen as a unique opportunity to introduce structural changes that were previously deemed impossible in order to reform the tourism industry (Fletcher et al., 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Romagosa, 2020).

There are also socio-economic benefits to be found in implementing a more sustainable form of tourism as research has shown that health crises similar to the Covid-19 pandemic are inevitably going to reoccur in the future (Lew, 2020; Pieri, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial for companies that survive *this* health crisis to adapt their products and services to be more resilient to future pandemics as well (Lew, 2020). Additionally, it will be crucial for tourism businesses to change in accordance with evolving customer interests, which are shown to be increasingly shifting towards sustainable services and products (Andrei &

Drăgoi, 2020). Hence, suggestions for a more resilient and sustainable tourism industry are often formulated by means of de-growth strategies (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Romagosa, 2020), which in the context of the tourism industry can be understood as: “tourism development without growth in throughput of matter and energy beyond regenerative and absorptive capacities” (Hall, 2009, p. 53). Alternatively, proximity tourism – which is the act of travelling near home (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2016) – is predicted to experience a rise in popularity as a result of the increase of sustainable customer interests; reduced economic power due to the crisis; and/or an increased sense of insecurity and uncertainty with regards to health and travelling, which renders destinations in near proximity “less risky” and thus more appealing (Romagosa, 2020).

However, some scholars (Hall et al., 2020; Sankowski, 2020) caution that although the re-imaginings of a more sustainable tourism industry post-Covid-19 are commendable and just, the more realistic response will be a “business-as-usual” approach. This strategy ascribes to the pro-industry boosterist school of thought as mentioned before. Along these lines, academics believe that it will be vital to develop recovery strategies for the tourism industry that will reignite nations’ stalled economies by means of tourism and thus it will be necessary to re-establish tourism businesses to return to their pre-pandemic state as soon as possible (Hall et al., 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020b). Unsurprisingly, calls for reform and sustainability are considered as threatening by those who ascribe to this line of thought, as it contradicts the goal of growth in tourism that they tend to emphasize (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020b). As Hall, Scott and Gössling (2020) predict, a business-as-usual approach to tourism will be the focus of most destinations and governments – thus reinvigorating “the juggernaut that is international tourism” (p. 591) due to economic motivations. Similarly, Sankowski (2020) notes that the complex and multidimensional mechanisms of globalization, including but not limited to tourism, will continue on, albeit slightly reformed and adapted to the new realities of a post-pandemic world.

This discussion has provided a brief overview of the different perspectives within the tourism academy on the future and direction of the tourism industry post-Covid. This is important according to Higgins-Desbiolles (2020a), who argued that it is vital to have a critical approach to tourism at moments like this – global crises that can unfold moments of truth and reflection. Tribe (2008) argues this is “essential for setting an agenda for ethical management, governance and coexistence with the wider world” (p. 245). Equally known for their agenda setting powers are news media (Pasquinelli & Trunfio, 2020; Rim et al.,

2014), which is the object of analysis in this research. Hence, the next section will provide a theoretical background to validate the relevance of studying news media in the context of this study.

## **2.5 News media analysis**

As previously mentioned, research has shown that pandemics are impending and inescapable and recent influenza outbreaks – such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2002-2003 and the current Covid-19 outbreak – have alerted the world to the complexities and downside of increased connectivity around the world (Lew, 2020; Pieri, 2019). As a result, global pandemics are increasingly viewed as one of the most serious threats to modern Western societies (McInnes et al., 2014; Elbe, 2010; Pieri, 2019). During such pandemics, it is especially vital for the sake of public health that news reporting is performed in accurate and timely manner (De Coninck et al., 2020; Mutua & Ong'Ong'a, 2020; Pieri, 2019). This is first and foremost due to the necessity for accurate and swift dissemination of health measures (such as social distancing and putting on face masks) imposed by governments (De Coninck et al., 2020). The main channels of dissemination of this information are legacy news media (e.g. television, online and offline newspapers, radio) as well as social media (De Coninck et al., 2020). However, research has shown that media coverage provided by newspapers, both in print and online, remains central in influencing public and policy debates on topics such as national security and health crises (De Coninck et al., 2020; Dry & Leach, 2010; Mutua & Ong'Ong'a, 2020) – especially coverage produced by national sources from the West, according to Pieri (2019).

Quick and accurate information thus reduces the risk of misinformation (Iyengar, 1990), which in turn can contribute to the contagion of the virus since the general public is aware of what safety measures to abide by (Mutua & Ong'Ong'a, 2020). Additionally, correct reporting by news media can contribute to the reduction of sentiments of uncertainty and anxiety amongst members of the general public (De Coninck et al., 2020; Mutua & Ong'Ong'a, 2020). On the other hand, failure to do so can cause panic to news consumers (Brahmbhatt & Dutta, 2008; Mutua & Ong'Ong'a, 2020), which can manifest itself in behaviour such as misinformed panic buying. Similarly, overly sensationalised reporting (e.g. usage of graphic imagery) can increase levels of stress to news consumers (De Coninck et al., 2020) at times when people generally already experience high levels of anxiety due to social distancing and quarantine measures (Cullen et al., 2020; Pfefferbaum &

North, 2020). On another note, news media also play a pivotal role during health crises in setting the stage for political and public debate to transpire surrounding the management of the crisis at hand (De Coninck et al., 2020; Mutua & Ong'Ong'a, 2020; Ophir, 2018). News media thus play an important role in the framing of public and policy debates (Dry & Leach, 2010; Pieri, 2019). Therefore, Pieri (2019) concludes that as such, performing news media analysis “remains of great relevance to analysts interested in the debates and the policy-making connected to pandemic threats” ( p. 76). Because this research will examine news narratives surrounding Covid-19 through the unique angle of tourism, the results will add to existing research about news coverage during pandemics in general and will aid guide tourism planners and policy makers in their debates surrounding the future of the industry by providing an overview of the agenda's set by news media. This is due to the fact that within the tourism management context, it has been demonstrated that news media play a paramount role in influencing and directing public perception and thus in turn, policy and governance decisions as well (Hall, 2002; Schweinsberg et al., 2017).

This previously mentioned “agenda setting” refers to a theory originally developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972) in their foundational research on the dynamics during the presidential election of 1968 in Chapel Hill, North Carolina (US). In brief, the main premise of agenda setting theory is to understand how “the popular agenda of the media affects society and attempts to explain why mass media has gained so much power over the thoughts of people everywhere” (Schweinsberg et al., 2017, p. 242). However, news media influence the perceived importance of topics by covering some more than others – a phenomenon which is called the appointment of salience (McCombs, 2005; Rim et al., 2014). In this sense, Schweinsberg et al. (2017) explain that news media have the ability to influence public opinion and entice action by means of the salience they appoint to certain topics – also called *objects* (McCombs, 2005) – and the language they use to construct their narratives surrounding these topics. This latter semantic tool is also known as *attributes*, which are “a variety of characteristics and traits that describe them” (“them” being the topics) (McCombs, 2005, p. 546). Besides objects and attributes, news media also need to moderate their framing in order to function as agenda setters (McCombs, 2005). However, news framing constitutes as another theory in itself too (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Goffman, 1974). In essence, news frames can be described as “interpretative packages” (Livingstone & Nassetta, 2018) and by selecting such an interpretative package or frame, news media give a certain meaning to stories and make a particular perspective dominant

(Rim et al., 2014). With regards to the perspective put forward, an important part of framing theory is recognizing the possible organisational pressures, ideologies and other external factors that influence the frame employed (Schweinsberg et al., 2017). Research has shown that levels of salience achieved through agenda-setting and framing are positively associated with the public's recognition and understanding of the issue at hand (Rim et al., 2014). In fact, research has shown that especially the framing of health information influences the public's perception of the issue and can determine how individuals assess their risk of infection, the severity of the disease, and how to respond appropriately (Rim et al., 2014).

There is quite a substantial existing body of work that has applied the agenda setting theory and associated framing theory when analysing news coverage of previous pan- or epidemics. However, these were approached from a general health-related angle as opposed to this study's focus on the tourism industry. In this sense, this research will be an interesting addition to the existing literature surrounding news coverage during health crises. For instance, some scholars have found that in the case for SARS (Abraham, 2007) and Avian flu (Scoones & Forster, 2010), pandemics were discussed through a war framing in which metaphors were employed that described medical professionals as "an army" and drugs as "weapons". In other research surrounding SARS news coverage, Beaudoin (2007) found the following four frames: attribution of responsibility, human interest, severity, and economic consequences. In a similar vein, Shih et al. (2008) conducted a longitudinal study of the news coverage surrounding three different epidemics (mad cow disease, West Nile virus and avian flu) and identified frames that are similar to and expand on those identified by Beaudoin (2007). In their research, Shih et al. (2008) identified the following six frames: uncertainty, reassurance, conflict, new evidence, action and consequences – out of which the latter two frames were most consistently applied throughout coverage of all health crises examined. Additionally, McCauley et al. (2013) found that the stressors caused by periods of uncertainty like global health emergencies, can trigger covert fears that some people hold against individuals from different ethnic or racial backgrounds. Subsequently, this can lead to stigmatization or discrimination directed at people who (assumedly) originate from the region that is associated with the disease (McCauley et al., 2013). The results from Mutua and Ong'Ong'a's (2020) study surrounding the initial phases of news coverage surrounding Covid-19 by six major international publications (e.g. BBC, Al-Jazeera) were found to correspond with findings of McCauley et al. (2013). Namely, articles from January 2020 especially were found to include expressions of stigmatization and Sinophobia against the

Chinese out of fear of potential infection with the Covid virus (Mutua & Ong'Ong'a, 2020).

Because most studies discussed in this paragraph examined news coverage by means of framing theory and with a focus on the issue from a health and safety perspective, it will not be expected that the aforementioned results will be found in this study too – given that this research focuses on tourism and news narratives in a broader sense than framing theory in particular.

## **2.6 Summary**

To conclude, this chapter has detailed the construction of tourism as a global industry. It explained how the industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, both due to the rise of the middle class in newly affluent countries as well as the development of tourism practices as a pathway to fast economic development. As a result, the industry has come to constitute approximately 10% of both the global and European GDP, thus contributing significantly to economies and the livelihoods of people in countries around the world. Additionally, this chapter explained the ideology that underpins the global tourism system: being neo-liberal capitalism – a paradigm that is hinged upon continuous growth and consumption. Within this context, tourism has become a leading symbol of consumer culture. Tourism has also been explained to be both a result and a cause of globalization – although the mechanisms that qualify tourism as a cause of globalization are somewhat contentious, since many scholars have attested to the neo-imperial/colonial nature of tourism expansion and development. In this sense, the chapter explained how tourism creates and exacerbates, but also depends on, different forms of inequality – a dynamic which is not uniquely characteristic to tourism, but also to capitalism at large. However, the Covid-19 virus has significantly impacted and disrupted tourism practices around the globe as shown in the third section of this chapter. Although the European tourism industry has proven itself to be resilient by bouncing back swiftly and strongly during previous crises – it is yet unknown if, and how, the sector will survive this pandemic. Therefore, existing literature was reviewed to illuminate how scholars envision the future of tourism after Covid-19. This resulted in the emergence of two main lines of thought: a business-as-usual approach and a more ideologically driven call for sustainable reform. Although the latter movement seemed to have more ground within the academic field, some scholars have cautioned to “be careful what you wish for” (Hall et al., 2020) since a resumption of the pre-pandemic status quo is most likely to be the response of governments and policy makers.



Nonetheless, the last section of this chapter detailed how news media have the ability to influence discourse both in the public and policy spheres through their agenda-setting powers. Hence, this research has chosen news media as the unit of analysis with regards to this topic: the narratives presented in news media can offer insights into future decisions made by the general public and governance.

### **3 Methodology**

In this chapter, a detailed description will be offered of all the methodological choices made by the researcher with the aim to provide full transparency of the research process. Thus, a brief explanation of the chosen research method will first be provided to clarify its key principles and its suitability for this particular research by making use of existing literature. Subsequently, a comprehensive discussion of the data collection process will be presented, including all steps taken in order to reach the ultimate dataset. Lastly, the actual process employed during the data analysis stage will be explained and justified by means of existing literature.

#### **3.1 Qualitative content analysis**

In order to reach an answer to this study's underlying research question, the research method of qualitative content analysis (QCA) was chosen to examine the data. This method is characterized by three main features: it is structured, flexible and useful to reduce large amounts of data (Schreier, 2013). The method enables a subjective interpretation of the texts by employing a systematic classification process of coding and disseminating themes, which thus allows researchers to systematically describe the meaning of qualitative data (Schreier, 2013). Since the aim of this study is to uncover the narratives present in online news media about the (imagined) future of the European tourism industry, qualitative content analysis will allow the researcher to reduce the information in the texts in a structured way, in order to illuminate the narratives presented within the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the aforementioned characteristics of the research method, combined with its potential theoretical freedom (when opting for a grounded approach), provides a "flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (p. 78). Although the flexibility provided in qualitative content analysis is considered to be a major advantage of the research method, it is also the method's main point of critique as it could cause a lack of clarity with regards to the analysis, if the process is insufficiently documented (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, when performing qualitative content analysis, the researcher plays a very active role in discerning codes and themes and ascribing meaning, since codes do not magically "emerge" from the text – the researcher actively has to make sense of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is therefore important to be aware of this role the researcher plays in the research as his or her predispositions could potentially influence what meanings are given to which texts depending on their interpretation and

understanding of the world at large and the influences that shape it (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Given the recursive nature of the method, alongside the active role of the researcher, the research method of qualitative content analysis is not necessarily a method that allows for exact replication (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Nonetheless, this research will aim to describe its data collection and analysis process as detailed as possible to provide full transparency and sufficient documentation.

### **3.2 Data collection**

This section will describe the data collection process that took place over the course of three days (25 through 27 May, 2021) by means of the news archive and data collection tool LexisNexis – which is the most commonly used news archive in the social sciences (Weaver & Bimber, 2008). The tool allows researchers to search data in a so-called “guided search”, in which a distinction can be made between different publication types such as “News” and “Law reviews” amongst others. Since this research is interested in examining news media articles, a guided search for News was conducted. As a result, findings from queries entered into the guided search for news will result in articles from newspapers, newswires and press releases. No further distinction was made based on the publication type amongst the results of the queries, since both hard news (that which is considered more factual and “objective”) and soft news (e.g. opinion pieces) (Reinemann et al., 2011) are deemed interesting to this research. Additionally, due to the exploratory nature of this research, all narratives and imaginations about the future of travel and tourism in Europe are deemed relevant. Thus, search queries were entered into the guided search bar for news publications. To find relevant articles, several queries were conducted consisting of varying combinations of similar concepts. Ultimately, a total of 7 different queries as displayed in Table 1 (see below) were employed in order to gather an adequate amount of articles to form the dataset.

Subsequently to conducting a certain query, several steps were undertaken in LexisNexis prior to the actual examination of the gathered entries. To start, a language filter was set to include articles written in English exclusively. This choice was motivated by convenience as well as necessity since the researcher is fluent in only two languages spoken on the European continent: Dutch and English. On top of that, the researcher’s skill set nor resources allowed for the collection and translation of articles written in languages other than Dutch or English. Since it was deemed more methodologically sound to select just one

**Table 1**

*Concepts that constituted the seven search queries conducted on LexisNexis*

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Tourism	Europe*	Future
Tourism	Europe*	Post Covid
Travel	Europe*	Post Covid
Tourism industry	Europe*	Corona
Tourism industry	Europe*	Covid
Tourism	Europe*	Corona
Tourism sector	Europe*	Future

*Note.* Terms followed by asterisk encompass different permutations of the term (Weaver & Bimber, 2008), which enlarges the range of the query.

language filter, the choice was made to select articles written in English since this language can be considered the global lingua franca and would therefore result in significantly more articles compared to if the language filter was set to Dutch. Nonetheless, employing this language filter does have certain implications for this research given that the aim during the data collection process was to include articles written by European sources. In the European continent, only the United Kingdom and Ireland have English as their national (first) language. Hence, it was to be expected that the majority of articles in the dataset would originate from the aforementioned regions as news articles about the topic originating from other European nations will most likely be published in their own respective native languages. After the dataset had been collected, the researcher manually looked up the publishers of all articles to determine its geographical origin. For a complete overview of the origin of the sources included in the dataset, see Table 2 below. This way, distinctions were made e.g. between articles published by countries that are part of the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) and articles published in the Republic of Ireland. Ultimately, this led to the final dataset being comprised mainly of articles originating from

UK sources as expected (45.5%), followed by articles from Irish and German sources, both representing 13.6% of the dataset respectively. Due to the assumptions formed prior to the data collection process, it was slightly surprising to see German sources in the top three contributors of the dataset.

**Table 2**

*Source origin of articles in dataset*

Country of origin	Number of articles included	Percentage of dataset
UK	20	45.5%
Ireland	6	13.6%
Germany	6	13.6%
Malta	4	9.1%
France	2	4.5%
Azerbaijan	1	2.3%
Croatia	1	2.3%
Switzerland	1	2.3%
Bosnia Herzegovina	1	2.3%
Russia	1	2.3%
Pan-European*	1	2.3%
Total	44	100%

*Note.* Origin of sources was looked up on Google if unclear on LexisNexis.

\*EurActiv.com is an independent pan-European media network.

This research aimed to strictly examine articles written by European sources to get the local perspective on the issue. Although LexisNexis offers a “Location” function that allows users to filter results by the location of the source, its options are limited to the 50 states of America. Therefore, this function was futile for this particular research. As a result, the researcher has had to manually select articles written by European sources by looking at the geographical distinction offered on LexisNexis. This information is provided underneath each article’s title along with other metadata (data about the data), such as the article’s word count, publication date, and the name of its publisher. A final filter was set by means of the “Timeline” function, in which the range of retrieved articles was set to span from January

30<sup>th</sup> 2020, up until the day of data collection (thus being either the 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> of May). The date of January 30<sup>th</sup> 2020 was chosen due to the fact that the World Health Organization pronounced the Covid-19 crisis as a global emergency on that day (Nicola et al., 2020). Hence, this research considers this date the official “start” of the global health crisis induced by Covid-19 and therefore, it was chosen as the outer left parameter of the date range.

With aforementioned language and timeline filters in place, the search results from each query were sorted by relevance. Additionally, the feature provided by LexisNexis called “Group duplicates” was turned on, which ensures that several versions of the same article are grouped together and thus appear only once in the same results list. After all the aforementioned steps had been undertaken, the researcher manually went through the first four pages of results for each of the seven queries conducted. Each page consists of 50 results, which thus equals to 200 articles being taken into consideration per query. The most relevant articles from each query were stored in separate LexisNexis folders. After reviewing the 200 results from the 7 queries, a total of 206 articles were initially collected. However, this is not a hard number as some duplicates were inevitably included given the fact that some articles came up as a result for multiple queries. After this initial data collection stage, an eighth folder was created to store a primary selection made from the aforementioned 206 articles. This primary selection from was based mainly on the following criteria: the article must have a word count of at least around 300 words – however, articles that were deemed to be extremely fitting and/or relevant to the research were still included even if the word count was slightly below 300. Secondly, articles were selected based on their seeming fit topic based on the article title as well as the LexisNexis’ “Subject Classification” function which showcases the salience of discussed subjects within articles by means of percentages. This way, articles that seemed rather relevant based on their title but scored a low percentage on the “tourism” subject classification, were excluded. By making use of these criteria, the 206 articles were narrowed down to the most relevant 90 articles. From these 90 articles, a final selection of the most relevant articles was made based on the previously mentioned criteria, which resulted in a dataset of 44 articles. The researcher stopped including articles at the point of 44 articles as thematic saturation – a tipping point at which “no additional new concepts can be found” in additional texts (Schreier, 2013, p. 176) – had been reached. For a complete numerical overview of the dataset, see Appendix A for a tabular representation of all 44 articles including their title, length, publication year, publisher and the source’s national origin. The numeric

classification assigned to the articles in Appendix A will be used to reference findings from the articles throughout the upcoming sections of the paper.

In sum, the data collection process that took place over the course of three days (25 – 27 May, 2021) by means of the data archive and collection tool LexisNexis, resulted in a dataset consisting of  $N = 44$  articles. Although the articles cover a range from June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 through May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the majority of the articles ( $N = 35$ , 79.5%) were published in 2021. The average length of the articles in the dataset was 889 words, while the shortest article consisted of 261 words (article #19) and the lengthiest of 1.892 words (article #11). The articles stem from a variation of sources, of which the vast majority originates from the UK (45.5%), followed by sources from the Republic of Ireland (13.6%) and Germany (13.6%). In total, 11 countries belonging to the European region are represented in the dataset of which the tone/types of publication range from hard to soft news – the latter including some thought/opinion pieces. Additionally, one article published by a pan-European media network called EurActiv (euractiv.com) was included, which thus does not originate from or represent one particular country, but rather the continent as a whole.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

After completion of the data collection stage on LexisNexis, the dataset was exported and entered into analytics software Atlas.ti, which is a software designed to facilitate qualitative content analysis of any format (e.g. text, photographs, audiovisual). According to Hwang (2007), employing such software has both practical and empirical benefits as it will save time and make the task at hand easier. Additionally, it will “enhance credibility building by making the research processes more transparent and replicable” (Hwang, 2007, p. 525). In the software, articles were sorted numerically as the researcher assigned numbers from 1 through 44 to the articles (identically to those assigned in Appendix A). This facilitated smooth retrieval as well as easy cross-referencing when writing memos during the coding process.

The actual coding process took on a semi-structured approach, meaning it included aspects from both grounded theory as well as theoretical/framework approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In grounded theory, the aim is to build a new theory “from the ground up”, meaning that the data is leading in the development of this new theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As for the framework approach, existing literature foregrounds the analysis process and the researcher aims to discover how the data under scrutiny relates to existing literature

(Boeije, 2010). Consequently, grounded theory requires researchers to produce data-driven – also called inductive – codes, whereas the framework approach requires the application of concept-driven – also called deductive – codes (Schreier, 2013). In this particular research, a literature review of existing relevant literature was conducted prior to the data analysis stage, which resulted in the possession of theoretical background knowledge on behalf of the researcher. From the existing theory, some concepts were used as sensitising concepts (Blumer, 1954), which Bowen (2006) explains to be concepts that provide a theoretical foundation for the development of novel theories. In this research, the sensitising concepts taken from existing literature included: globalization, boosterism, sustainability, proximity tourism, overtourism, and tourism dependency. Since these aforementioned concepts were actually present in the data, the concepts were used as code names and thus, some deductive, concept-driven codes were assigned. Nonetheless, the majority of the assigned codes were inductive and data-driven codes. Since coding is an ongoing reflexive and recursive process (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the researcher continuously went back and forth between articles in multiple rounds of coding to ensure that codes were assigned equally across all articles. Meaning that after new codes had emerged from new articles, the researcher revisited articles that had already been coded to see if the new codes applied to those texts as well. Additionally, the researcher kept track of interesting or surprising findings by writing memos throughout the coding process.

After all 44 articles had been coded in the initial coding process, a point of thematic saturation was reached at which “evidence started repeating itself and that it could be expected that no new themes or relevant data would emerge from further analysis” (Van Sterkenburg et al., 2010, p. 427). This initial round of coding resulted in a total of 172 codes, varying in nature from descriptive, thematic and in-vivo codes (Boeije, 2010). Since this is a very vast amount of codes, further refinement and fine-tuning was needed, which can be described as the process of axial coding (Boeije, 2010). Hence, some codes were merged while others were deleted. In the latter case, the corresponding text segment was re-coded under an equally fitting, but more frequently occurring code. For example, 14 codes were merged to constitute one new code called “tourism alternatives” – the 14 individual codes all pertained to descriptions of different forms of tourism that are alternatives to the practices of mass tourism which were the standard in the pre-Covid world (e.g. train travel instead of air travel). Finally, a total of 75 codes remained. Next, similarly to Van Sterkenburg et al., (2010), codes that pertained to similar phenomena were then grouped together into more



encompassing conceptual themes, or “code groups”, of which a total of 10 were constructed. These ten code groups were later used as sub-themes to serve as foundations for the narratives of the main themes. For an overview of the final coding scheme, see Appendix B. By going back and forth between the data and the memos written during the coding process, the researcher identified three most important themes called “Opportunity for change”, “Business-as-usual”, and “Diversifying tourism”. These 3 main themes and their subsequent code groups and codes will be used to construct and explain the main narratives that were present in the news articles about this study’s topic of interest. Consequently, these most important codes were evaluated and thoroughly analyzed in reference with the theoretical framework to write up the main findings in the upcoming chapter.

## 4 Results

In this chapter, the main findings from the conducted analysis will be discussed by way of three main themes. These findings will be supported with excerpts from the data to illustrate the claims made – the articles that produced each excerpt will be referenced by means of its numeral classification as depicted in Appendix A. Additionally, the findings will be positioned alongside existing literature when applicable. The aim of this chapter is thus to offer a thick description of the dataset and to discuss the findings most relevant to this study’s underlying research question about the future of the tourism industry as constructed by European news media. Prior to delving into the main findings however, some overall findings will be briefly outlined here.

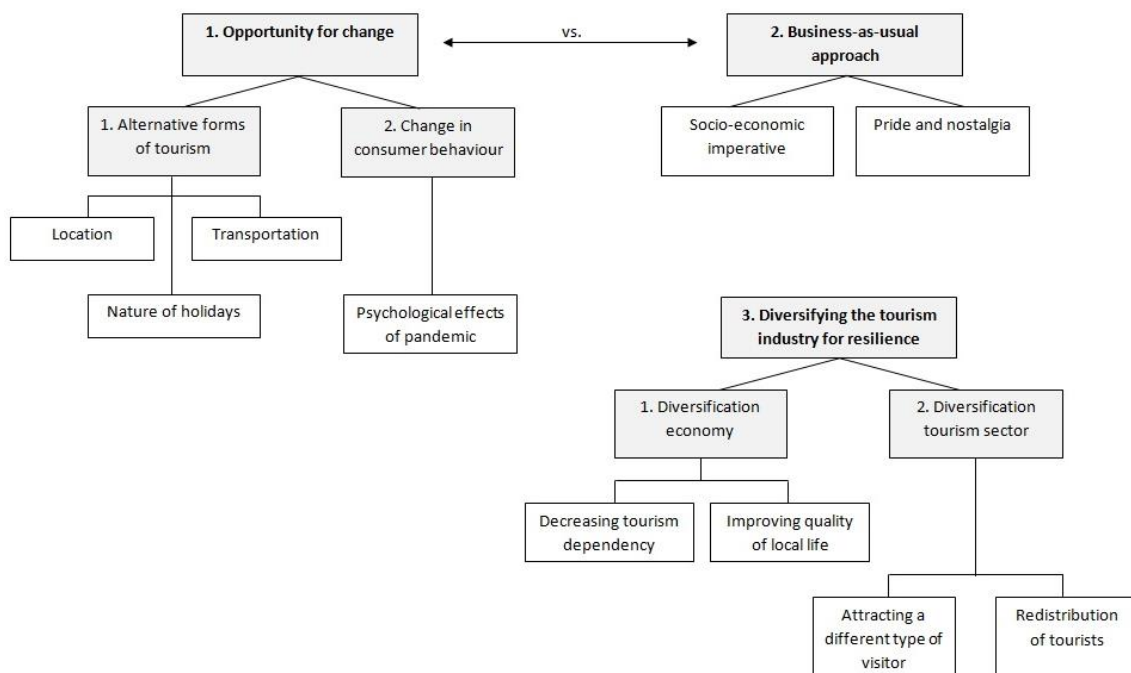
First of all, a general characteristic of the articles within the dataset was a certain sense of uncertainty. Although texts constructed different versions of where the tourism industry and its recovery should or will be headed in the years to come, what unanimously resonated throughout the corpus was a constant reminder that if anything, the future is uncertain. In some cases, it even sounded as a precaution, whereas others seemingly emphasized the mutable nature of the future of tourism as a way to cage sparks of optimism: “We’ve had a whole series of ministers coming out over the weekend saying ‘don’t book your holiday yet, we don’t know is going to happen’” (article #34). This general finding was thus reminiscent of Romagosa (2020) when the author stated that “the only certainty right now is uncertainty” (p. 690). Nonetheless, some authors put forward some cautious optimism, which was mainly centred around the steady roll out of vaccinations throughout Europe and more importantly, the promise of potential vaccination certificates/passports that would allow vaccinated Europeans to travel seamlessly throughout the continent in the near future. Although the development of said certificate is still rather uncertain in and of itself, a vast portion of the articles seemed to hold onto this development in the sense of there being light at the end of the tunnel. Therefore, it was rather unsurprising that the topic of vaccinations, and particularly that of vaccination certificates, were given significant salience in the articles published in 2021. Especially in articles collected onwards from February/March, as the discussions around implementing such certificates started gaining traction around that time. Consequently, the articles that appointed high amounts of salience to this topic were focussed on a vision of a rather short-term future of European tourism. However, most articles seemed to agree that recovery of the tourism industry would be a long-term “battle.” The connotation of a battle against the Covid virus was evoked in multiple article and seems

to align with findings from Scoones and Forster’s (2010) study on Avian flu news coverage in which pandemics were discussed through a war framing.

In general, most articles seemed to have similar estimations about the length of the recovery process, as many stated that it would take approximately 5 years for the European – and global – tourism sector to recover and to possibly return to the levels at which it functioned pre-pandemic (e.g. articles #3, 10, 19). However, is a return to the “old normal” desired or has the “new normal” as induced by Covid-19 sparked a paradigm shift away from the mass tourism and mass air travel that characterised the juggernaut of global tourism pre-pandemic? To answer this question, section 4.1 will discuss the first main theme which pertains to the news narratives that see the health crises as an opportunity for change and sustainable reform. The subsequent section will discuss a quite contrary narrative surrounding a business-as-usual approach to the future of tourism. The third section will discuss the final main theme, which pertains to the narrative which acknowledges a need to diversify the tourism industry in order to improve businesses’ resilience. A visual representation of the three aforementioned main themes (along with their sub-themes) can be found below in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Thematic map*



*Note.* Thematic boxes that are tinted gray and numbered represent (sub)sections; the thematic boxes tinted white are simply themes that occur within the (sub)themes.

#### **4.1. Opportunity for change: rethinking tourism**

The first key narrative that emerged from the data was the perspective that the advent of Covid-19 and the stop it put on the global tourism system, is an opportunity for change. This perspective is therefore perfectly aligns with the majority of tourism academics who also believe that the current health crisis is a unique opportunity to implement changes that had previously been deemed impossible and to create a more sustainable tourism industry post-pandemic (e.g. Fletcher et al., 2020; Lew, 2020; Romagosa, 2020). In this dataset, similar sentiments were expressed, in which the pandemic was called an opportunity for change and to rethink the status-quo by multiple authors and the authorities they cited alike. One article even went as far as calling the Covid crisis “an act of divine intervention” (article #23) – which was particularly written in relation to the halt to mass aviation and the high levels of carbon emission associated with it. The articles that shared this vision, all imagined a more sustainable tourism industry post-Covid – or at least hoped for it. In this sense, a lot of alternative forms that could facilitate a more sustainable tourism sector were suggested in the dataset alongside some other trends related to less damaging ways of performing tourism. This section will therefore first describe some general trends that emerged from the narratives of rethinking tourism, which centre around sustainability and slow-travel. Next, the first sub-section will delve into the alternative tourism forms that emerged from the dataset. These alternatives have either been proven popular throughout the pandemic and the past holiday seasons (e.g. summer vacation of 2020), and/or are predicted to emerge as tourism trends post-pandemic. The second will discuss a related trend: the change in customer behaviour as a result of Covid-19. This change in demand can result in (sustainable) changes made by tourism businesses in order to meet new customer needs.

With regards to the general narrative that emerged from the dataset, it mainly could be described as a questioning of the status quo. Not necessarily all articles came up with alternative ways in which to perform tourism in a less environmentally and socially damaging manner, but they did all recognize the need for this and in turn, questioned the way in which the tourism industry operated before the pandemic. This line of thought is perfectly encapsulated by the author of article #6, who theorizes:

What does anyone want from a post-pandemic holiday? To eat different food and not do the washing up? To drink cold beer or read a good book under a warm sun, then get in the sea without suffering thermal shock? To see the children play outdoors rather than on screens? In many ways a holiday is a simple thing. Slow travel was an emerging trend before the pandemic: holidays from the hurly-burly with time to laze in a meadow, bake bread, read books and so on. A reaction to everything that is

packaged, Instagrammed and shallow, there has been a rapid rise in holidays that offer, among other things, off-grid living, mindfulness, and walking. The idea is to ease back, paying attention to local food, culture and language.

Thus, one can conclude that a paradigm shift away from the shallow and packaged has occurred in favour of something more meaningful and attentive. In this regard, some articles described holidays with a sustainable focus (e.g. by means of transportation), as a “guilt-free getaway” and “holidays that come with a real feel-good factor” (article #38). This points towards an increased awareness of the negative impact tourism and travel can have on the environment and local communities. This is illustrated by a quote from article #22:

The coronavirus is a kind of dress rehearsal for the disaster that climate change could cause if humanity does not slow it down: the era of mass air travel must come to an end for the sake of the health of the planet. And logically, that means fewer visitors.

The narratives in this section thus seem to align with the previously explained theory of de-growth (Hall, 2009) as exemplified by article #6: “after the great pause, the slow down”. Instead of going on multiple trips a year and jetsetting around the world in order to visit all renowned hotspots for a snap on Instagram – a vast part of the articles seemed to imagine a slower version of tourism: with less trips, that are embarked on with a more mindful approach. These narratives are thus reminiscent of the concept of slow tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009). The following sub-section will discuss some concrete examples of what more sustainable and slower tourism may look like post-pandemic.

#### ***4.1.1 Alternative forms of tourism***

With regards to different forms of tourism that could serve as substitutes to the customs around mass tourism of the pre-pandemic world, the dataset revealed several alternatives. These trends that make up more sustainable and environmentally friendly avenues of tourism can be divided into three categories, the first of which refers to the location; the second to transportation; and the final to accommodation and the nature of the holidays (e.g. city trip, resort vacation).

As for the first category, referring to the location or destination of travel, there seemed to be a general consensus that domestic tourism (tourism performed within the borders of one’s home country) and proximity tourism (the act of travelling near home (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2016)) are not only the main avenues of performing tourism during the pandemic, but they are also likely to remain substantially popular after the pandemic has passed. These findings are in line with predictions made by Romagosa (2020), who

recognized a rise in proximity tourism – either domestically or to neighbouring countries within close vicinity – would follow as a result of customer’s increased sustainable interests; reduced economic power due to the crisis; and/or an increased sense of insecurity and uncertainty with regards to health and travelling. These reasons behind the rise of proximity/domestic tourism as put forward by Romagosa (2020) were mirrored in the dataset. However, some articles also attributed the rise in proximity tourism to more practical and/or governmental reasons: deeming proximity tourism to be more of a default option due to travel restrictions, rather than a conscious decision. Additionally, many articles approached the issue from a business perspective and explained that in order for most domestic tourism businesses (and associated markets) to survive, it will be key for local residents to consume local tourism products and services. Therefore, proximity travel is expected to receive plenty of marketing attention from national organizations in order to boost the domestic market and to save the businesses that are still afloat. To illustrate, James Withers (chief executive of Scotland Food and Drink) shares:

We have a recovery plan in place that will be about trying to sell more locally within Scotland and celebrate what we have on our doorstep. There is a big bit consumers and shoppers can do out there by buying and shopping local and supporting the businesses that are there in their communities. (article #4)

This also applies to tourism. Additionally, the author of article #6 writes about the rise of proximity tourism: “There has been a realisation - which has been coming for some time - that the type of adventure associated with far-flung destinations can be had closer to home, and at a fraction of the cost, in both money and carbon.” This links us to the second category regarding modes of transportation.

There seems to be a push for multiple alternatives that are less ecologically damaging than aviation – which had been a mode of travel sworn off by a certain group of people prior to the pandemic already under the idea of *Flygksam*. This term originates from Scandinavia and translates to “flight shame”. Supporters of this idea have been trying limit their number of flights or foregoing flying altogether. The movement thus “condemns travelling by plane to the same social cachet as wearing socks and sandals in St Tropez” (article #6). Coming out of the pandemic however, a vast amount of articles in the dataset seemed to believe that the paradigm shift towards more sustainable and meaningful travel will result in greener travel, too. As proposed by many, the main substitute to aviation will be train travel. Not only is this a more environmentally friendly mode of transportation, train travel is also lauded for its “slow travel” qualities and the social interactions that characterise train journeys. Therefore,

it is expected that train travel will become popular again in post-Covid Europe: “Rail travel, whether forcibly prioritised - as the French government has just done by banning domestic flights where a suitable alternative rail connection exists - or embraced purely from personal choice, is likely to be resurgent” (article #23). In a similar vein to France banning domestic flights where a suitable rail connection exists, train travel is expected to thrive especially for short haul journeys – which in turn refers back to the phenomenon of proximity tourism. In order to facilitate a shift from air to rail, 36 environmental NGOs called for the need of fair market conditions compared to air and road travel; attractive connections; convenient travel times; and fair prices in an open letter directed at EU transport ministers (article #36). Which is quite interesting in terms of globalization as the improvement of rail structures around Europe would thus further strengthen the interconnectivity of European nations, during a time where the increased global connectedness spurred by globalisation has been the very reason behind the rapid spread of Covid-19 (Pieri, 2019).

Besides railway travel, other alternative modes of transportation that emerged from the dataset were electric vehicles and ferries. Some articles also mentioned several travel companies that aim to balance the “people/planet/profit equation”, while focussing on “enriching the experience for both the traveller and the community they're visiting, reducing the carbon footprint of their businesses and itineraries, and giving back to the environment” (article #36). An example of this is the start-up *Byway*, which was conceived during the pandemic and has since received £100.000 in funding from Innovate UK's Sustainable Innovation Fund (article #38). Like many others, *Byway* believes the future is rail – and thus all its itineraries are flight-free, transporting its travellers by train, boat and bike (articles #38, 6). Yet, one might not even have to physically move in order to travel, as one article also mentioned the advent of virtual travel (article #6). Thanks to new technologies and propelled by a need for entertainment/ travel during Covid-19 and its lockdowns – more and more companies have invested in their virtual offerings, such as the company *Art Safari* which offers virtual art courses set in the virtual Galápagos islands, Cambodia and New Zealand.

The final category pertaining to accommodation types and the nature of holidays (e.g. city trip, resort vacation). With regards to accommodations, trends that arose from the data are an increase of popularity in holiday homes, camping and its luxury version: *glamping* (a portmanteau of glamorous and camping). According to article #35: “In the holiday home or in the holiday apartment one stays among oneself, this self-sufficient form

of accommodation appeals to many holidaymakers in Corona times”. This appeal is probably due to Covid-19 measurements such as social distancing, which may have resulted in varying levels of agoraphobia (fear of crowds/crowded places) and/or anthrophobia (fear of other people). Camping/glamping has a similar benefit: it is self-sufficient and flexible (article #35) and most camping spots offer enough distance and detachment to harbour feelings of safety and privacy (article #15). Closely related to the camping trend is an overall focus on the outdoors. This development is similarly powered by visitors’ desire for personal safety, according to John McGrillen (chief executive of Tourism Northern Ireland) who explains:

As people look towards holidays, they are going to be much more activity-based – connecting with nature, exploring authentic experiences, and a lot of that based on the landscape (...) And the areas in which we’ve already seen a surge, including outdoors, activities and luxury camping, will continue to be growth areas. (article #3)

This connects to the final trend for adventure tourism and holidays centred around activities. It is believed people will have a larger interest in adventurous trips in the future, with the sentiment being that “there is no time like the present” (article #15). Similarly, it is expected that more people will try their hand at new activities while they can, such as scuba diving. However, this time around, people will have realised that such adventures and activities can be experienced closer to home too instead of in far-flung destinations (article #6).

Whereas the last paragraph of this sub-section briefly touched upon the changed consumer behaviour as a result of living through the pandemic, the next section will delve into the psychological effects of pandemic in more detail to explain the motivations behind changed customer demand.

#### ***4.1.2 Change in consumer behaviour: psychological effects of pandemic***

The advent of Covid-19 has subjected people around the world to multiple stressors such as anxiety, stress and depressive symptoms (Cullen et al., 2020) as well as insecurity, confusion and emotional isolation (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). Additionally, it is predicted that many will experience post traumatic stress disorder in the aftermath of the pandemic (Cullen et al., 2020; Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). These general psychological effects, combined with people’s recalibration to the “new normal” of wearing face masks and social distancing, are predicted to influence patterns in future tourism consumption. This section will describe how a vast amount of articles in the database estimated a change in consumer behaviour as a result of the effects of Covid-19 on holidaymakers.



In article #24, Xavier Marcé (the Barcelona councillor responsible for tourism) explains that there will be a natural change in tourism as a result of the pandemic: “‘Tourism will be completely different,’ she said. ‘Not everyone will travel like they used to. And those who do travel may want to do so in a calmer way, maybe they will see less but enjoy the experience more.’” She thus alludes to an estimated paradigm shift as a result of the pandemic, which resembles the predictions made by Lew (2020) that post-Covid tourism consumers will have greater social and environmental awareness, which will influence their travel behaviour. Evidence of this can be found in a recent survey conducted by Original Travel (a luxury travel company based in the UK), in which 67% of its clients were planning on travelling "better" post-Covid and another 16% wanting to be more mindful about it (article #38). According to Barcelona’s tourism councillor Marcé, this paradigm shift can be accounted to “changed attitudes to mobility” (article #24), which was a theme found in other articles too. This observation refers back to the rise in proximity tourism (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2016) and the concept of flight shame and the increased environmental awareness of consumers (Lew, 2020).

A significant number of articles also discussed rather direct effects that Covid measurement of social distancing have had on tourism consumers – which starkly contrasts pre-Covid travel that was characterized by mass tourism and in its most popular destinations: overtourism. For instance, overtourism formed a big issue for some European cities such as Amsterdam, Barcelona and Venice prior to the Covid outbreak, as local communities were heavily disrupted by the strain of mass numbers of visitors and the deformation of the housing market caused by Airbnb (Pasquinelli & Trunfio, 2020). However, it is believed that people will not be comfortable with big cities post-Covid (article #38) – thus implying a certain sense of agoraphobia and perhaps newly ingrained need for physical distance from strangers. To illustrate, the author of article #6 discusses the recovery of previously overtouristified cities and theorizes that: “It may be that visitors will avoid such places anyway, the fear of over-crowding and close proximity to strangers causing a flight to less discovered destinations.” The author goes on to explain that for some people, the joy of travel in a post-pandemic world will be defined by “peaceful empty spaces, fresh air and a noticeable lack of other people” (article #6). This estimation that consumers will have a need for space is echoed throughout the dataset and is said to be reflected in the types of holidays that are in demand too: “Our guests are looking for places offering wide open spaces that lend themselves to physical distancing”, explains Geoffrey Kent, founder of luxury operator

Abercrombie & Kent (article #15). This relates back to the rise in demand for (luxury) camping holidays. In a similar vein, industry insiders believe that on top of a need for space, post-Covid consumers will want more privacy too. Hence, an increase in demand is expected for larger suites, private villas and holiday homes – which is believed to appeal to holidaymakers in Corona times due to its self-sufficiency and its facilitation of social distancing in the way that one can stay in a Corona-free-bubble (article #35). This also alludes to persisting fears about possibly getting infected with the virus.

With regards to the fear and anxiety caused by the pandemic, there are three other proposed trends of consumer behaviour. The first is the idea that travelling in small groups will become popular post-Covid, as this would also facilitate a “small bubble” that would harbour a feeling of safety amongst travellers (article #15). Yet, it would still offer some social interaction – the lack of which was one of the main reasons for mental health problems amongst some people (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). Therefore, travelling in small groups would alleviate the qualms of isolated holidaymakers. Secondly, as previously mentioned, many articles theorized that there will be a higher demand for accommodations and activities that are outdoors or situated closely to natural environments. This is unsurprising given authorities’ advice that activities are safer outdoors – as spread of the virus is less likely in open air and once again: more social distance can be kept. As a result, a recent survey conducted by YouGov (an international research data and analytics group) found that:

“Most Europeans want mayors to allocate more green space in their cities post-COVID. According to the survey, 82% would like to see more greenery, while over 60% want more space for walking and public transport. Those who have suffered from COVID-19 tend to be even more in favour than their counterparts.” (article #36)

Lastly, what resonated throughout the dataset is the increased need to create environments of enhanced cleanliness that will harbour feelings of trust and most importantly: safety. Not only is this important for the consumer-side of the tourism market, but equally so for the production-side as the protection of their reputation, employees and recovery process have been positioned as key motivators to improve their safety and cleaning policies. As a result, hospitality businesses are described to have undergone several changes, including but not exclusive to: enhanced cleaning, contactless check-in services and more digital services in general (article #41).

The psychological effects of Covid-19 – such as fear and anxiety and the need to maintain a distance from strangers – are thus estimated to influence the behaviour of travel

and tourism consumers in the ways described in this sub-section. The changes in consumer behaviour also go hand-in-hand with many of the tourism trends identified in the previous sub-section. Yet, although the dataset agrees that Covid-19 will influence the consumption patterns of travellers, it is unclear whether these predictions will apply to all segments of the consumer market (e.g. across age groups); nor is it clear whether the psychological consequences of the pandemic and its related stressors will eventually wear off, or if they will be of long-lasting impact – examining this would be an interesting topic for future research. In the next section, a rather contrasting perspective about the future of tourism will be described.

#### **4.2. Business-as-usual approach: a return to the “glorious past”**

Aligned with what was found in existing literature about industry supporters who prescribe to a pro-growth and boosterist point of view (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020b), a significant portion of the articles in the dataset seemed to prescribe to this train of thought as well. The articles pertaining to these narratives used connotations of survival and recovery in order to get the tourism industry back to the way things were. This desire to return to business-as-usual as soon as possible was previously predicted by scholars such as Hall et al., (2020) and Sankowski (2020). Often, this desire was expressed alongside a statement of the industry’s socio-economic importance, which is illustrated by the Spanish Deputy minister for tourism, who said:

Spain intends to move quickly, as the government seeks to revive a sector that in pre-pandemic times accounted for 12 per cent of annual gross domestic product, but plummeted to just under six per cent amid lockdowns and travel bans last year. (article #31)

This way, stating the socio-economic value the tourism sector holds for certain destinations seemed to serve as a validation to adhere to the boosterist approach. On the other hand, the mentioning of socio-economic importance of tourism also points to another theme within tourism debates: that of tourism dependencies (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017). As previously explained, some destinations have grown economically dependent on their tourism sector and these destinations have especially suffered substantial losses thanks to the Covid-19 crisis. Therefore, perhaps unsurprisingly, the desire to return to the “old normal” was mainly expressed by authors and officials from destinations that are known to have an economy that is dependent on tourism. In a similar vein, these articles also glorified the post-pandemic tourism industry although they were seemingly aware of the negative

consequences that accompanied it (e.g. overtourism). For example, two articles originating from Maltese publications described their tourism sector with pride and nostalgia:

According to the Tourism Authority, in 2019, 2,753,239 people visited the island, injecting 2.2 billion euros into the local economy and notably contributing to Malta's GDP and employment; therefore, it is understandable why there is an effort and push despite numerous perils to bring inbound tourism back to its glorious past. (article #29)

An important point in the previous quote is the emphasis on *inbound* tourism.

Whereas articles described in the previous section regarded the (near) future of tourism to be centred around domestic tourism; articles that adhere to the narrative described in this section regarded domestic markets to be insufficient in order for tourism businesses to survive the pandemic: “many industry purveyors know that drumming up domestic tourism is not enough” (article #1). Instead, they held the belief that the real market for tourism is foreign visitors. To that regard, many articles expressed and emphasized the importance of the resumption of international (air) travel as soon as possible since “the stay-at-home boost is not enough to compensate for the fall in revenues for the favourite holiday destinations” (article #20). The resumption of international (air) travel is once again pinned on socio-economic benefits: “We emphasize that the resumption of travel and tourism is crucial for global economic recovery because of the direct and indirect economic impact this sector has on others” (article #13). Thus, narratives here mainly presumed the power of tourism as a pathway to economic development – a view shared by some academics (Fletcher, 2011; Marsiglio, 2018). This is especially reflected in article #26 which focuses on a declaration signed by 6 countries of the Western Balkan which “foresees positioning tourism as a key strategic sector for regional economic recovery” and a way to contribute to “the recovery of the tourism sector, of the economy and make it really a prime example of the region's path to EU integration.”

Since the articles that adhered to this perspective were adamant about the resumption of international travel as soon as possible, a lot of the narratives included the discussion of the possible vaccination passports since this would open up borders around Europe. From this perspective, the vaccination passports were thus received very positively and some authors even called for the creation of other alliances with highly vaccinated nations to further boost the tourism industry. An example of this is the accord between Greece, Cyprus and Israel allowing citizens with Covid-19 vaccination certificates to travel unimpeded between the three countries. Mitsotakis, the prime minister of Greece, was the first to press the case for vaccine passports with other EU members in back in January 2021 and he

believes “what we will be doing with Israel to be a trial run of what we can do with other countries” (article #17). In a similar vein, aviation industry officials are disappointed in the “overly cautious” governmental plans that are persistent throughout Europe. For instance, Henry Smith (conservative chairman of the all-party future of aviation group) believes that the UK should take advantage of their successful vaccination policy by pursuing routes with other countries that have similar vaccination rates, otherwise “the economy competitively will be at a disadvantage. It's not just holiday travel, it's the economic imperative” (article #44).

Since the narratives described in this section view the immediate revival of the tourism industry as it was before as crucial, many articles emphasized that governmental support and financial aid will be vital to facilitate this reinvigoration. Thus, many authors called for governments to provide (additional) funds and to take other measures in order to help tourism businesses survive and “bounce back” successfully in the near future. The author of article #37, which originates from Ireland, even cautioned that the government must not turn a blind eye to the tourism industry as it did after the 2008 financial crisis:

The government has a job to do. It cannot afford to take its eye off the industry as it did during the boom. It must continue financial support it can for as long as it can, or we will be years away from achieving anything like the 2019 visitor numbers that provided so many jobs and income to so many families.

Besides survival, some articles even expressed a desire for growth of the tourism industry post-pandemic. This is in stark contrast with the narratives surrounding sustainability and de-growth as described in the first section. Nevertheless, although the narratives described in this section aimed for a speedy recovery and a resumption of the status-quo of tourism and travel post-Covid – some articles did acknowledge that perhaps some changes needed to be made in order for the tourism businesses that do survive this crisis, to become more resilient for the future. This latter topic is the final theme which will be discussed in the upcoming section.

### **4.3. Diversifying the tourism industry for resilience**

In this section, the third prevailing narrative that was present in the dataset will be shared which in essence concerns the premise that a diversification of the tourism sector is needed in order for tourism businesses to survive the current Covid-19 pandemic and to become more resilient. In fact, improving the resilience of tourism businesses is vital since research has shown that health crises similar to the Covid-19 pandemic are inevitably going

to reoccur in the future (Lew, 2020; Pieri, 2019). Tourism practices thus need to diversify in order to survive this storm and to weather those that are to come. From the data, it emerged that it is especially imperative for countries and/or municipalities that have grown economically dependent on tourism to diversify not only their tourism practices, but also their economy at large, which is illustrated by the following two excerpts:

It is equally true that a model of economic growth cannot be based on the monoculture of tourism, and not only because the pandemic has demonstrated the vulnerability of this industry. The coronavirus is a kind of dress rehearsal for the disaster that climate change could cause if humanity does not slow it down. (article #22)

Covid-19 has got the mayors of some of Europe's most heavily visited cities, academics and urban scholars all singing the same tune: the collapse of the travel industry caused by the virus offers a unique opportunity for cities plagued by mass tourism to rethink their business model. (article #24)

Thus, to further explain the final narrative centred around diversification, the first sub-section will describe how articles constructed the possibilities to diversify economies at large (especially of tourism dependent countries). The second sub-section will entail descriptions from the dataset surrounding methods by which diversifications of the tourism sector in itself can be executed.

#### ***4.3.1 Diversification economy***

The first measurement that emerged from the data mainly applies to those countries and/or municipalities that have developed a tourism dependency over time – some examples of this as mentioned in the dataset are Barcelona, Malta and the Canary islands. In line with literature discussed in Chapter 2, tourism had been originally implemented and developed in these countries as a fast/easy pathway to socio-economic development (Fletcher, 2011; Marsiglio, 2018). For example in the case of Spain, tourism is accredited to having played “a decisive role in modernisation after the end of the Franco regime” (article #22). Whereas in 1960s ex-colony Malta, tourism development was encouraged by the government in order to tackle the perception of the island as a British military base (article #29), and more importantly to generate jobs and economic benefits for the island and its habitants (article #16). Unarguably, the development of tourism and affiliated markets has had significant socio-economic benefits for aforementioned nations. However, having a “deformed economy” (article #12) that is dependent on one industry, leaves such countries in quite a vulnerable situation. Therefore, it emerged from the data that destinations with a tourism

dependency are looking to diversify their economy at large by tapping into different revenue streams that were previously left disregarded. For example, article #11 explains how the president of Gran Canaria sees more of an opportunity for Gran Canaria in new business areas that could reduce its tourism dependence:

We need to diversify our economy. And there are alternatives: Agriculture, for example - we're working on concepts to push self-sufficiency in food, a sector we've lost to tourism. Then, of course, renewable energy, wind power. And at the moment, there's also research going on in the islands into seaweed farming for medicinal and cosmetic purposes.

Although the types of different sectors that will be the focal point of the diversification strategies vary depending on each country and the opportunities present in that region, the theme of diversifying the economy by focussing on other markets besides tourism was universal.

#### ***4.3.2. Diversification tourism sector***

Another strategy that was widely mentioned is the diversification of the tourism sector in itself. This again was mentioned mainly from the point of view of destinations with a monolithic economy focused on tourism; but not exclusively so. In fact, this topic was present in articles that concerned previously overtouristified destinations, such as Amsterdam and Barcelona (Pasquinelli & Trunfio, 2020). The data showed that the pandemic has led to a realisation amongst tourism planners in these destinations that the need to diversify and reimagine their tourism practices is of dual importance: not only to make the sector more resilient post-pandemic, but also because of the importance of protecting the wellbeing of local communities and environments. This latter realisation was a driver to renew “the bond between residents and their city, environment and each other”, according to the chief executive of amsterdam&partners when talking about the diversification campaign for the Amsterdam tourism sector (article #24).

As many articles prompted municipalities and governments to rethink their tourism practices and to reflect on what kind of tourism they want in the future, two main strategies for diversification emerged from the data. First of all, the desire to attract “a different type of visitor” was expressed in multiple articles, quoting officials from tourism agencies in Prague, Venice, Amsterdam, and Barcelona amongst others. Different from the mass tourism-visitor who rents out Airbnbs and who congests cities by visiting all the typical sights and attractions, the different type of visitor was described as someone more mindful. This is illustrated by a statement from Dr. Julian Zarb, who is an academic in the field and

president at the Malta Tourism Society: “look at quality not quantity [...] at who it is we are trying to attract, but rather at the tourist who wants to be there, and not just happens to be there” (article #29). Similarly, the Barcelona councillor responsible for tourism expressed: “I don’t want more tourists, I want more visitors” (article #24). In this sense, the narrative here thus seems to surround more positive associations with the concept of a guest who is more mindful and respectful towards their host – or in this case, their host *country*. Therefore, this type of holidaymaker was expressed to be the type of visitor destinations are aiming to attract post-Covid since it is thus believed that these types of tourists will contribute to a healthier destination and visitor economy.

As an alternative to the plan of attracting a different type of tourist post-Covid, other municipalities voiced strategies that will aim to redirect the tourists they receive – no matter how considerable the numbers. This will reduce the congestion of certain “hot spots” and/or neighbourhoods and improve the habitability of the destination for local residents. Additionally, by redirecting streams of visitors to different, yet undiscovered, places in the destination, an opportunity will be provided for local businesses and entrepreneurs to capitalise on these new customers. Thus, more members of the local community will get to reap economic benefits that tourism brings to those locations and not only tourism flows, but also cash flows will be redirected. This is illustrated by Marcé, the local official responsible for tourism in Barcelona:

It is less a question of numbers than of distribution. He wants to encourage tourists to visit other parts of the city and not just the traditional sites. (...) ‘Thirty million visitors managed the way they were up until the beginning of this year is not sustainable,’ Marcé said. ‘The same number with different interests dispersed to different areas may not be such a big problem.’ Octavi Bono, the director general of tourism for the Catalan government, agrees. ‘We don’t want more or less tourism, we want better tourism with a better distribution of tourists by season and by location.’ (article #24)

To conclude, what becomes clear is that both by diversifying the economy at large, as well as by diversifying the tourism sector in particular, the intervention of Covid-19 has made tourism stakeholders realise that long-term structural changes need to be implemented in order to create resilient and “better” tourism. The importance of doing so is explained to be related to environmental impact; to meet changing customer demands which are increasingly shifting towards sustainability (which is in line with predictions by Andrei & Drăgoi, 2020); and to protect and benefit local communities and environments. A trend for post-Covid tourism as proposed by some policy makers thus seems to be shifting towards a more mindful and considerate approach that will aim to take into account the quality of life



of those involved in the sector. Hence, the goal for many seems to be to create a diverse economy as well as a sustainable visitor economy that doesn't harm the liveability nor the natural ecosystem of the destination.

## 5 Discussion

To conclude, this exploratory research has made an effort at dissecting European news narratives about the (imagined) future of the tourism sector in the European continent. Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus and following global pandemic, a considerable body of academic work has been published within the tourism field. This research thus adds to that existing body of work and provides a novel perspective by examining news articles and the narratives they use to construct the future of an industry that has been heavily impacted by the global health crisis and the travel restrictions imposed worldwide to counter the spread of the virus. This chapter aims to sensitize the most important findings and position them within larger societal context. Additionally, an answer will be provided to this study's underlying research question of: "*How do European online news outlets construct the future of the European tourism industry after the impact of Covid-19?*" and its according sub-question, which related to whether narratives from academia also resonated within the European news articles. Pertaining to this sub-question, we can conclude that many narratives and concepts from academia were reflected in the dataset – although not always explicitly mentioned in the same terms. While some articles constructed the future of the European tourism industry from a lens of sustainability, they discussed degrowth strategies – halting mass aviation; taking less trips a year; and visiting destinations closer to home – without using the term of degrowth. Nonetheless, a vast amount of articles adhered to one narrative proposed by academics: that of sustainability and degrowth. The articles that subscribed to this narrative, proposed ways in which such a re-imagined industry could be realised in post-pandemic Europe. The realisation that change was needed shone through especially in articles that focussed on, or were written by authors from, destinations that previously suffered from mass tourism and overtouristification.

Contrarily, the second narrative that was found in academia and the dataset alike, was a pro-industry "boosterist" approach that aimed to resume travel and tourism in the same way it did before the disruption of Covid-19. Articles that adhered to this narrative still believe in growth and thus foresee growth in the tourism sector once businesses reach their pre-pandemic levels again. It was also in these articles/narratives that the neo-liberal and consumerist paradigm resonated most clearly, seeing how these narratives were seemingly underpinned by the capitalist idea of continuous growth in order to survive – which is reminiscent of the growth or die (GOD) principle (Sandler, 1994). In the case of

this research, these narratives thus constructed that a future of the European tourism industry would be insurmountable if consumption of tourism products and services would not resume on the short-term, since most tourism businesses would not survive otherwise.

What both narratives commonly shared however, was a certain imperative to entice action amongst its readers. To explain, articles that employed the sustainability narrative to construct their vision of the post-pandemic European tourism industry, seemingly tried to convince their readers to book certain holidays (e.g. destinations in close proximity) or to use certain modes of transportation (train travel rather than air travel). In some cases, this message was packaged in connotations of guilt, by explaining the concept of *Flygskam* (flight shame) and by labelling sustainable holidays as “guilt-free.” The most obvious example was the listing of sustainable travel companies in a select few articles which almost came across as blatant promotion. On the other hand, the articles that employed the business-as-usual narrative to construct their vision of the post-pandemic European tourism industry, seemingly aimed to entice their readers to start consuming – both domestically and hopefully soon, internationally too. These articles emphasized the large economic impact Covid-19 has had on tourism businesses, seemingly to create feelings of guilt and/or responsibility amongst its readers in order to motivate them. This way, the two vastly contrasting narratives share one commonality after all – although it must be acknowledged that the call to action in the sustainability-oriented articles has a rather ideological motivation whereas the business-as-usual articles mainly has an economic motivation.

Overall, the most prominent finding was that the vast majority of the articles in the dataset were found to frame their narratives from an angle of uncertainty – which aligns with findings from Shih et al. (2008). This was not entirely unexpected since this research focuses on a topic that discusses something which has not happened yet: what the European tourism industry will look like post-pandemic. Additionally, life during the pandemic was characterized by uncertainties: on top of the fears surrounding possible infection, restrictions and information were constantly changed and updated. This sense of uncertainty seems to thus have seeped into the minds of most authors of the articles analysed for this research, which was illustrated by the caution with which they wrote their predictions and estimations. This dually seems to serve a purpose to create cover for themselves in case things go differently *and* to possibly confine dangerous amounts of optimism in the case of some (temporal) good news.

Overall, this uncertainty portrayed in the dataset offers the most compelling answer to this study's research question of how European news outlets construct the future of the European tourism industry post-pandemic. Although narratives of re-imaginings of the status-quo were vastly put forward in which hopes for a more sustainable and "better" tourism industry were expressed, it is yet unclear where the future will be headed. However, it seems as though the European tourism sector will be headed towards the business-as-usual direction at least in the short-term due to the development of vaccination certificates that will allow free travel throughout the continent for individuals that have successfully completed their vaccinations.

Finally, the last main theme or narrative that emerged surrounded the notion of making the tourism industry in itself and economies that depend on tourism for their viability more resilient for the future was a theme vastly present in the dataset. Yet here too, it is yet unknown whether actual measures of diversification will be implemented to achieve a more resilient industry and visitor economy. Eventually, it seems as though the long-term future of the European tourism industry will only become clear as time passes and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic continue to wear off. Only research conducted post-pandemic will be able to actually provide an answer to the research question. Nevertheless, in the meantime this exploratory paper can provide an answer for the short-term future of European tourism: which seems to be old wine, in new bottles by means of vaccination passports and limited interconnectedness in travel, meaning that the mechanisms of globalisation will be reinstated, but not on an actual global level as Europe will focus on Europe in the near future.

However, only time will tell what the long-term future of European tourism will look like as governments are still grappling with trying to cope with present issues – there isn't yet time to focus on long-term solutions (Hall et al., 2020). Yet, as more research is published about public opinion, news media and the agenda setting performed by them, policy makers could still be influenced to either implement sustainability or boosterist measures. In this sense, this study has added to the existing body of work that examines news media coverage during health emergencies and has introduced the novel perspective of tourism studies to the debate. Additionally, by outlining the news media narratives surrounding the future of the tourism industry – encompassing both tourism trends as well as trends in consumer behaviour – this study could have managerial implications for tourism professionals to guide their business practices moving forward. Alternatively, this

study could guide policy discourse in their debates surrounding which policies to implement as this study uncovers which stakeholders have interests in which outcomes (the general public, municipalities, tourism professionals).

### **Limitations**

The main limitations of this study lie within its methodological choices. First of all, the choice to examine articles written in English exclusively introduced a language bias as previously mentioned. This choice was motivated by convenience as well as necessity since the researcher only possesses fluency in two languages spoken on the European continent: Dutch and English. Additionally, the time and scope of the master thesis research project, combined with the researcher's set of capabilities and resources did not allow for the collection and translation of articles written in languages other than Dutch or English. Given these circumstances, combined with the aim set by the researcher to make the research widely accessible, the choice was made to examine articles written in English exclusively. However, this inevitably resulted in a skewed dataset of which the majority of texts originated from UK sources, accounting for 45.5% of the dataset (59.1% when including sources from the Republic of Ireland). However, the dataset can be considered slightly skewed in another way as many articles collected from February/March 2021 onwards, focussed their contents on the possible implementation of national and/or unified (digital) vaccination certificates that would allow vaccinated Europeans to travel across the continent unimpeded. Albeit incidental, a sizeable amount of articles centred their discussions about the future of European tourism around these possible vaccination certificates and therefore this occurrence can be considered another limitation of this research.

Another methodological limitation lies within the fact that this research did not account for the ideological orientations of the publishers included in the dataset due to time constraints. However, these orientations can influence which frames are employed (Schweinsberg et al., 2017), and therefore additional layers of insight could have been added to the news media analysis had the ideological/ political orientation of the sources been acknowledged. However, future research could expand upon the research presented in this paper by accounting for aforementioned flaw. Additionally, avenues for future research would be replicating this study in a different context; or specifically examining the topic from a framing theory perspective. As mentioned before, it would also be highly interesting to examine changes in consumer behaviour regarding travel and tourism products to find out

the significance and/or duration of the psychological effects of Covid-19.

A final minor comment should be made here to alert readers to the contention around the usage of UNWTO statistics as multiple researchers have questioned the reliability of the widely used UNWTO database (Aramberri, 2009; Fletcher, 2011; Mowforth & Munt, 2015) because of several weaknesses: for one, it depends on data provided by its member governments – which are often unreliable – and secondly, domestic travel is ignored as only international, cross-border travel is counted. After encountering these statements as well as Fletcher's (2011) warning to read the UNWTO statistics with caution, the choice was made to avoid using UNWTO statistics as much as possible. Nevertheless, since the statistics are widely used in the field, the use of UNWTO statistics in this research was almost inevitable. However, this final note is thus meant to acknowledge the disputed nature of the UNWTO statistics and to ask readers to do the same.

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## Appendix A

### *Overview articles included in dataset*

	Article	Length	Origin
1.	Daragahi, B. (2020). Hard road ahead as tourism industry struggles to bounce back from coronavirus crisis. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/coronavirus-tourism-industry-flights-restaurants-holiday-quarantine-a9600191.html">https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/coronavirus-tourism-industry-flights-restaurants-holiday-quarantine-a9600191.html</a>	1210	The Independent (UK)
2.	Bridge, A. (2020). 'There's a huge pent-up demand for rail adventures' – Alan Heywood on train travel in the time of social distancing. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/celebrity-interviews/alan-haywood-life-in-travel/">https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/celebrity-interviews/alan-haywood-life-in-travel/</a>	740	The Telegraph (UK)
3.	Mulgrew, J. (2021). 'We will lose tourism businesses in short-term': Tourism NI chief John McGrillen says hopes are pinned on a good summer. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/northern-ireland/we-will-lose-tourism-businesses-in-short-term-tourism-ni-chief-john-mcgrillen-says-hopes-are-pinned-on-a-good-summer-40174546.html">https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/northern-ireland/we-will-lose-tourism-businesses-in-short-term-tourism-ni-chief-john-mcgrillen-says-hopes-are-pinned-on-a-good-summer-40174546.html</a>	1166	Belfast Telegraph Online (UK)
4.	Stormont, B. (2021). A year of COvid-19: Food and drink industry chief 'optimistic' there are better times ahead for resilient businesses. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.eveningexpress.co.uk/fp/lifestyle/food-and-drink/a-year-of-covid-19-food-and-drink-industry-chief-optimistic-there-are-better-times-ahead-for-resilient-businesses/">https://www.eveningexpress.co.uk/fp/lifestyle/food-and-drink/a-year-of-covid-19-food-and-drink-industry-chief-optimistic-there-are-better-times-ahead-for-resilient-businesses/</a>	1595	Evening express (UK)
5.	AFP. (2021). 50,000 tourism experts gather to chart post-Covid recovery. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62PS-W6S1-DY93-M2BH-00000-">https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62PS-W6S1-DY93-M2BH-00000-</a>	372	Agence France Presse – English (France)

6.	Rushby, K. (2021). A year on from the first lockdown, what has become of travel?. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2021/mar/23/a-year-on-from-the-first-lockdown-what-has-become-of-travel">https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2021/mar/23/a-year-on-from-the-first-lockdown-what-has-become-of-travel</a>	1614	The Guardian (UK)
7.	Ewropej (2021). COVID-safe tourism in Europe should include ‘EU hygiene seal’ for businesses. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/ewropej/108771/covidsafe_tourism_in_europe_should_include_eu_hygiene_seal_for_businesses#.YMy4M2gzbiU">https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/ewropej/108771/covidsafe_tourism_in_europe_should_include_eu_hygiene_seal_for_businesses#.YMy4M2gzbiU</a>	450	Malta Today (Malta)
8.	McQuinn, C. (2021). Irish holidaymakers set to be main tourism revenue source this year. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.irishtimes.com/business/transport-and-tourism/irish-holidaymakers-set-to-be-main-tourism-revenue-source-this-year-1.4472969">https://www.irishtimes.com/business/transport-and-tourism/irish-holidaymakers-set-to-be-main-tourism-revenue-source-this-year-1.4472969</a>	497	The Irish Times (Ireland)
9.	McKenzie, J. (2021) Edinburgh Airport chief warns Scotland’s global influence and competitiveness could be undermined unless new government creates urgent Covid recovery plan for travel and tourism industry. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/transport/edinburgh-airport-chief-warns-scotlands-global-influence-and-competitiveness-could-be-undermined-unless-new-government-creates-urgent-covid-recovery-plan-for-travel-and-tourism-industry-3200262">https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/transport/edinburgh-airport-chief-warns-scotlands-global-influence-and-competitiveness-could-be-undermined-unless-new-government-creates-urgent-covid-recovery-plan-for-travel-and-tourism-industry-3200262</a>	568	Edinburgh Evening News (UK)
10.	Sputnik (2021). EU’s pandemic-hit tourism industry to recover in full after 2023. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62N9-NSV1-DY43-6088-00000-00&amp;context=1516831">https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62N9-NSV1-DY43-6088-00000-00&amp;context=1516831</a> .	286	Sputnik News Service (Russia)
11.	Marek, M. (2021). Guests wanted; On Gran Canaria the number of	1892	Die Welt am



	tourists has decreased by 70 percent, everywhere hotels are empty. Many who live from tourism long for the old times before Corona. But there are also islanders who see the crisis as an opportunity for change. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:620P-3K71-JBK9-23D0-00000-00&amp;context=1516831">https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:620P-3K71-JBK9-23D0-00000-00&amp;context=1516831</a> .		Sonntag – English) (Germany)
12.	Ferguson, B. (2021). Heritage campaigner Loyd Grossman urges Edinburgh to rethink revival of ‘honeypot’ tourism industry. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.scotsman.com/whats-on/arts-and-entertainment/heritage-campaigner-loyd-grossman-urges-edinburgh-to-rethink-revival-of-honeypot-tourism-industry-3204250">https://www.scotsman.com/whats-on/arts-and-entertainment/heritage-campaigner-loyd-grossman-urges-edinburgh-to-rethink-revival-of-honeypot-tourism-industry-3204250</a>	576	Scotsman (UK)
13.	AFP (2021). Italy, G20 look to return of tourism. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62KK-G5K1-JBV1-X0KC-00000-00&amp;context=1516831">https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62KK-G5K1-JBV1-X0KC-00000-00&amp;context=1516831</a>	382	Agence France Presse – English (France)
14.	Trend Business Review (2021). Low-cost airline model will help revitalize demand in post-COVID times. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:6237-3RC1-DY3K-T316-00000-00&amp;context=1516831">https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:6237-3RC1-DY3K-T316-00000-00&amp;context=1516831</a> .	433	Trend Business Review – Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan)
15.	Marshall, S. (2021). Travel in 2021: Open season? Trends for post-Covid planet. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/open-season-trends-for-a-post-covid-planet2021-in-focus/">https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/open-season-trends-for-a-post-covid-planet2021-in-focus/</a>	661	The Sunday Post (UK)
16.	Mangion, G. M. (2020). Post-COVID – tourism new wine in old bottles. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from	1117	The Malta Independent

	<a href="https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2020-07-07/business-news/Post-COVID-tourism-new-wine-in-old-bottles-6736224927">https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2020-07-07/business-news/Post-COVID-tourism-new-wine-in-old-bottles-6736224927</a>		(Malta)
17.	Smith, H. (2021). Post-Covid tourism hopes buoyed by deal between Greece, Cyprus and Israel. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/15/post-covid-tourism-hopes-buoyed-by-deal-between-greece-cyprus-and-israel">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/15/post-covid-tourism-hopes-buoyed-by-deal-between-greece-cyprus-and-israel</a>	702	The Guardian (UK)
18.	Agius, P. (2021). Saving Maltese tourism, vaccine passport now. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2021-03-03/blogs-opinions/Saving-Maltese-tourism-vaccine-passport-now-6736231477">https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2021-03-03/blogs-opinions/Saving-Maltese-tourism-vaccine-passport-now-6736231477</a>	733	The Malta Independent (Malta)
19.	McCurry, C. (2020) Tourism sector could take over five years to recover. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40129994.html">https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40129994.html</a>	261	Irish Examiner (Ireland)
20.	BNE IntelliNews (2021). Tourism's long road to recovery. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.intellinews.com/tourism-s-long-road-to-recovery-210636/">https://www.intellinews.com/tourism-s-long-road-to-recovery-210636/</a>	1617	Croatia Today (Croatia)
21.	O'Halloran, B. & Burke-Kennedy, E. (2021). Travel leaders angry at government's lack of post-Covid recovery plans. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.irishtimes.com/business/transport-and-tourism/travel-leaders-angry-at-government-s-lack-of-post-covid-recovery-plans-1.4483521">https://www.irishtimes.com/business/transport-and-tourism/travel-leaders-angry-at-government-s-lack-of-post-covid-recovery-plans-1.4483521</a>	454	The Irish Times (Ireland)
22.	Altars, G. (2020). We need a new tourism. Retrieved June 18 2021, from <a href="https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:605G-XRB1-DY2B-S2C5-00000-00&amp;context=1516831">https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:605G-XRB1-DY2B-S2C5-00000-00&amp;context=1516831</a> .	824	Die Welt – English (Germany)
23.	Harris, A. (2021). Will travel ever be the same again?. Retrieved	987	Irish Daily Mail

	18 June 2021, from <a href="https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62NW-N6F1-JCBW-N1P1-00000-00&amp;context=1516831">https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62NW-N6F1-JCBW-N1P1-00000-00&amp;context=1516831</a>		(Ireland)
24.	Burgen, S. & Giuffrida, A. (2020). How coronavirus is reshaping Europe's tourism hotspots. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/20/how-coronavirus-is-reshaping-europes-tourism-hotspots">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/20/how-coronavirus-is-reshaping-europes-tourism-hotspots</a>	1148	The Guardian (UK)
25.	The Western Mail (2020). Call for 'mature debate' on tourist industry future. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:60H3-M781-DYTY-C28V-00000-00&amp;context=1516831">https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:60H3-M781-DYTY-C28V-00000-00&amp;context=1516831</a> .	777	The Western Mail (UK)
26.	FNA (2021). Western Balkans endorses Tirana Declaration to support tourism in the region. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62D8-98B1-JCH9-G383-00000-00&amp;context=1516831">https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62D8-98B1-JCH9-G383-00000-00&amp;context=1516831</a>	852	Federalna Novinska Agencija (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
27.	Kirst, V. (2021). Vaccination card for summer holidays in Italy?. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:61YM-7HD1-JBK9-20MX-00000-00&amp;context=1516831">https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:61YM-7HD1-JBK9-20MX-00000-00&amp;context=1516831</a> .	963	Die Welt – English (Germany)
28.	Tschudy, D. (2020). Tourism region on the move. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:6175-1VH1-DY2B-S1DC-00000-00&amp;context=1516831">https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:6175-1VH1-DY2B-S1DC-00000-00&amp;context=1516831</a>	1007	Handelszeitung – English (Switzerland)
29.	Stockus, M. (2021). Releasing the Golden Goose. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2021-">https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2021-</a>	1002	The Malta Independent

	04-19/newspaper-opinions/Releasing-the-Golden-Goose-6736232733		(Malta)
30.	Mullen, S. (2021). City events hub bids to tackle climate change. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62GS-BC51-JD7N-K3MR-00000-00&amp;context=1516831">https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62GS-BC51-JD7N-K3MR-00000-00&amp;context=1516831</a>	385	Evening times (UK)
31.	Madeley, P. (2021). Countries look to open up again as others continue a battle for survival. Retrieved 18 June 2021, from <a href="https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62RT-CPG1-DYTY-C120-00000-00&amp;context=1516831">https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&amp;id=urn:contentItem:62RT-CPG1-DYTY-C120-00000-00&amp;context=1516831</a>	1447	Shropshire Star (UK)
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## Appendix B

### *Coding scheme*

Main theme	Code groups/ sub-themes	Codes
<p><b>Covid-19 as an opportunity for change</b></p> <p>This theme concerns narratives that see Covid-19 as an opportunity to implement changes to better the tourism industry in terms of sustainability and de-growth</p>	<p><b>Rethinking tourism</b></p> <p>This code group / sub-theme includes all codes that envision a greener and better version of tourism in the future. Codes included thus concern the environment and climate change as negative effects of mass tourism and mass aviation are discussed, as well as alternatives forms of tourism that could diminish those negative effects. Examples of the latter phenomenon were coded under e.g. “tourism alternatives” and “trend” as well as “localisation”</p>	<p>Call for transformation</p> <p>Climate change</p> <p>Sustainability</p> <p>Downsides tourism</p> <p>Environment</p> <p>Impossibility of returning back to normal</p> <p>Innovation</p> <p>Localisation</p> <p>‘Opportunity for change’</p> <p>Paradigm shift</p> <p>Reflection on Covid/lockdown</p> <p>Rethinking tourism</p> <p>Tourism alternatives</p> <p>Trend</p> <p>Aviation</p>
	<p><b>Tourism consumers</b></p> <p>This code group / sub-theme includes all codes that pertain to the stance of tourism consumers with regards to tourism during and after the pandemic. E.g. some consumers were described as anxious and scared as a result of Covid,</p>	<p>Anxious consumer</p> <p>Change in consumer behaviour</p> <p>Eager consumers</p> <p>‘Huge pent-up demand’</p> <p>Estimation customer behaviour/demand</p>

	<p>whereas others experienced a “huge pent-up demand” for travel and were thus considered eager. Estimations of consumers behaviour or demand were coded under a code of identical name.</p>	
<p><b>Business-as-usual approach</b></p> <p>This theme concerns narratives that see Covid-19 as a threat to the tourism industry and the continuous growth that used to underpin the global system. As a result, the code groups/sub-themes pertaining to this theme aim to get tourism back to the way things were (business-as-possible) and adequate governmental aid is needed to achieve this. Additionally, narratives in this theme emphasize the socio-economic importance of the tourism sector to justify their beliefs.</p>	<p><b>Boosterism</b></p> <p>This code group / sub-theme includes all codes that are associated with the boosterist ideology which considers tourism as an inherently good and beneficial sector that should be developed and sustained. Accordingly, codes belonging to this boosterist sub-theme/code group view tourism positively and construct their narratives about the impact of Covid-19 through sentiments of battle and loss. A return to the old normal and business-as-usual is desired, including the inherently globalised nature of tourism pre-Corona.</p>	‘A distant memory’
		Boosterism
		Business-as-usual
		Globalisation
		Overtourism
		Hopeful/optimism
		Positive look on tourism
		Resistance to change
		Return to old normal
		Tourism as developmental tool
		Tourism growth post-Covid
		‘Domestic market is not enough’
		Sentiments of battle and loss
		Nostalgia and pride
<b>Importance tourism</b>	Dependency	
<p>This code group / sub-theme includes all codes that were used to discuss the socio-economic importance of tourism, especially for tourism dependent economies for which the income generated by tourism</p>	‘Lifeline/vital’	
	Socio-economic importance travel/tourism sector	
	Vulnerability tourism	



	is considered vital. However, this also points to the vulnerability of tourism which pertains to the volatile nature of the sector and the risk this poses to tourism practitioners and the economy at large in case of crisis.	
<p><b>Diversifying the tourism industry for resilience</b></p> <p>This theme concerns narratives that call for a need to diversify the tourism industry to improve its resilience. Additionally, a diversification of the economy at large is also needed for nations/ municipalities that are dependent on tourism revenues.</p>	<p><b>Future of tourism</b></p> <p>This code group / sub-theme includes all codes that consider the future of tourism from a broader perspective. Codes included pertain to the uncertain and unclear future that the tourism sector currently faces as well as the need for tourism businesses to transform and diversify in order to become more resilient. This is also important to improve the quality of life for local residents and environments (coded under “localisation”). Hence, it is needed to “upgrade the sector” and to attract a different type of visitor.</p>	Domestic market
		Diversification tourism sector
		Estimation customer behaviour/demand
		Lengthy recovery process
		Localisation
		Tourism alternatives
		Apprehension
		Transformation business because of Covid
		Unclear future
		‘Upgrade the sector’
		Vaccinations
		‘Want a different type of visitor’
		Uncertainty
Resilience		
<p><b>Miscellaneous</b></p> <p>Codes in this category do not pertain directly to one of the three main themes that were previously discussed, hence</p>	<p><b>Article metadata</b></p> <p>This code group includes the codes that were used to describe the dataset by means of their publishing</p>	Date
		Length
		Source origin

<p>their division in “Miscellaneous”.</p> <p>Nonetheless, these code groups helped to make sense of the data in a general sense and aided to the overall understanding of the narratives that were presented in the analysis.</p>	<p>date, word count, and origin.</p>	
	<p><b>Covid-measures in tourism</b></p> <p>These codes pertain to restrictions (in terms of mobility or e.g. wearing face masks) that were implemented due to Covid-19 that affected tourism practices and the sector at large.</p>	<p>Covid measures/regulations</p>
		<p>Mobility restrictions</p>
		<p>Tourism measures</p>
		<p>Safety</p>
	<p><b>Europe/governmental</b></p> <p>Since this paper focuses on the European continent, the codes in this group pertain to discussions of unique European issues such as Brexit, and the vaccination passports as well as other governance related topics.</p>	<p>Brexit as challenge</p>
		<p>Cooperation government and industry</p>
		<p>Downside to/critique European cooperation</p>
		<p>European coherence</p>
		<p>Global competition</p>
		<p>Governmental aid/support</p>
		<p>International cooperation</p>
		<p>Vaccination passport/certificate</p>
	<p><b>Impact Covid on tourism industry</b></p> <p>This code group includes codes that pertain to discussions of direct effects Covid has had on the tourism industry and its businesses.</p>	<p>Transformation business because of Covid</p>
		<p>Economic impact</p>
		<p>Impact Covid-19</p>
<p><b>Tourism producers</b></p> <p>The codes included in this group pertain to the stance of tourism producers and the difficulties and challenges</p>	<p>Challenge</p>	
	<p>Marketing</p>	
	<p>Business difficulties due to Covid</p>	

	they faced throughout the pandemic. Additionally, the codes in this group discussed future endeavours of business owners and the ways they will have to market themselves in order to draw tourists to survive this crisis.	Mentality of business owners
		Survival of businesses
		Trying to 'draw tourists'
		Desperation

*Note.* Codes that are written or include terms in quotation marks are in-vivo codes, meaning that the terms between quotation marks were taken directly from the data.