'Fact' or fiction: Exploring the perspectives of local stakeholders on media discourses and their performative effects on a destination and its touristic image: The case of Giethoorn

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Preface

This thesis has been carried out to successfully complete the final year of the Master programme Tourism, Society and Environment at Wageningen University and Research. After finishing my internship in January 2021, I enthusiastically started brainstorming on the topic for my master's thesis. I was eager to use the knowledge and skills that I had acquired during the first year of my master's degree for my own research. I became significantly interested in discussions on matters such as 'overtourism', 'visitor management' and 'destination development'.

After seven months of hard work and effort, I am now finally able to proudly present my master's thesis about the perspectives of local stakeholders on the media discourses on Giethoorn. It has truly been a valuable experience on a professional, as well as personal level. Whilst conducting this thesis research, I have met many interesting and enthusiastic stakeholders from Giethoorn, and I am very thankful for their input and genuine interest in my research topic. I feel very grateful that, despite the current circumstances, stakeholders from Giethoorn were still eager to contribute to my research. This thesis has allowed me to learn new things about the specific research topic and has helped me to grow and develop myself both academically and personally.

First, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Martijn Duineveld for his continuous support throughout the past few months, especially given the fact that we are now living in an extraordinary time. During our virtual meetings, he helped me to think critically and creatively to strengthen and improve my thesis. Carrying out this thesis would therefore not have been possible without his support and constructive feedback. Second, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the local stakeholders of Giethoorn who I have met through Teams, ZOOM, e-mail and phone calls. Without your input and effort, my thesis would not have been possible. I am very grateful for the inspiring and interesting conversations we have had during the past few months. Last but not least, I would like to thank my family, friends and classmates for their endless support and uplifting energy these last few months. I appreciate all of you very much.

Finally, I proudly present to you my master's thesis. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Zeist / Wageningen, 15th of July 2021

Simone Benneker

Executive summary

An increasing amount of tourist destinations within Europe have been the focus of media attention. Most of this media coverage, however, is related to negative associations with the tourism industry such as situations related to overtourism and its impact on the quality of life of local populations. The media therefore plays a crucial role in the development of a destination image. More importantly, negative reporting of a destination in the media can result in a problematic destination image. While there is a rich body of literature available on the influence of destination image on the decision-making process of tourists and therefore the perspectives of tourists, research on how local stakeholders respond to and deal with negative portrayal of their destination seems to be lacking. More importantly, there is a lack of research on how media discourses exert power and can therefore change and/or influence destinations, hence the performative reality effects of media discourses.

The objective of this explorative case study was to explore the perspectives of local stakeholders on the media discourses about their destination and the performative reality effects of the media discourses on the destination and touristic image. The Dutch village of Giethoorn was the chosen destination analysed in this case study, as Giethoorn has received a significant amount of (rather negative) media coverage over the last few years, mostly related to the negative consequences of the tourism sector. Starting from a post-structuralist approach focusing on discourses and performativity, several in-depth interviews were conducted with local stakeholders from Giethoorn, including residents, entrepreneurs and local authorities.

The findings show that there are mixed perspectives among the stakeholders interviewed on the current media portrayal of Giethoorn. On the one hand, several stakeholders hold the opinion that media discourses portray a simplification of reality and that the media presentation of Giethoorn is one-sided and negative. Media discourses magnify excessive situations in the village, and those images define the image of Giethoorn as a destination. On the other hand, other stakeholders view the positive side of the media portrayal as the high level of publicity ensures that Giethoorn remains a popular tourist destination.

Moreover, different potential performative effects of the media discourses have been found throughout this study. First, as a result of the frequent media attention, Giethoorn is becoming increasingly popular among tourists. Second, the increasing amount of media publicity on Giethoorn has led to the strategic use of the media by local stakeholders to serve their own interests and achieve their own ambitions. Third, due to the dominant media focus on sensational stories, stakeholders struggle to shine a different light on Giethoorn to attract other target groups, such as the preferred 'quality visitors' who are interested in the history, culture and nature of the area. Fourth and last, media discourses on negative aspects of tourism in Giethoorn has led to forced changes related to regulations on tourism within Giethoorn in order to maintain and improve the village's status.

Finally, this study has concluded that there are different discourses of coping with the current media images that are very much linked to certain interests of stakeholders. The reason why stakeholders either accept, decline, strategically engage with or positively reverse media discourses on Giethoorn is linked to specific interests of stakeholders. This thesis showed that certain discourses and images are magnified and circulated in the media because interests are linked to power. Certain stakeholders want particular selective discourses and images to be magnified by the media, and thus want Giethoorn to be selectively highlighted, in order for these discourses to contribute to their own interests. As a result, there is little collective effort to create a better image for Giethoorn in the future. Local stakeholders should work more together in order to formulate a strong joint long-term plan for Giethoorn, including how to deal with tourism and their preferred image in the future.

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1. Introduction

''Overtourism is fast becoming one of the most hotly debated issues in the modern age of travel. In the past few years, the number of destinations raising alarm over this has steadily increased. Countless headlines have followed as cities that have become reliant on tourism dollars undergo an identity crisis, wondering if they can start turning away such important sources of income'' (Minihane, 2019).

Several destinations in Europe, including the cities Venice and Barcelona for example, have dealt with negative media coverage. As such, the negative aspects related to tourism have often been the focus of attention among media reports. Hence, destinations that used to depend on their created (positive) image, now have to deal with a negative image. Amsterdam is another prime example of a destination that has coped with a rather negative destination image, as the city has often been linked to phenomena such as 'overtourism' and 'mass tourism' within media (McClanahan, 2021). Consequently, the famous I amsterdam-letters in the city centre had to be removed since this slogan had become a symbol for mass tourism (Couzy & Koops, 2018).

These examples illustrate the significant impact that media portrayal can have on destinations. As can be seen within several tourist destinations and in scholarly literature, destinations that used to have an 'ideal' image, for example the scenic canals of Amsterdam, are now dealing with a 'cold' and negative image due to negative media coverage and portrayal. Hence, the media plays a crucial role in the development of a destination image, and negative reporting of a destination in the media can result in a problematic destination image (Muhoho-Minni & Lubbe, 2017). Given the significant role and impact of (media) image, certain destinations do not want to be associated to excessive terms such as overcrowding and overtourism. Therefore, several representatives of the tourism sector criticise the media for shining a negative light on the sector and portraying one-sided images of tourism within destinations (NRIT Media, 2020).

The importance of the media in constructing a destination's image has not gone unnoticed in scientific literature and has resulted in a large range of studies on the subject in recent decades (see e.g., Agapito et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2017). These studies often focus on the importance of destination image in the decision-making, selection and evaluation process of tourists (Llodra-Riera et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2017). Additionally, various scholarly literature focuses on the influence of the media on the creation of destination image and the influence on the perceptions of tourists through either positive or negative presentations (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Mercille, 2005; Buhalis & Law, 2008; Laing & Crouch, 2009).

While most scholarly literature focuses on the perceptions that tourists have of certain destinations, local stakeholders are the ones who are facing the consequences of negative images about their destination as portrayed by the media. In fact, Stylidis, Sit and Biran (2016) argue that studies on place image have given limited attention to other (local) stakeholders' perspectives. How do they respond to the (negative) portrayal of their destination within the media? And what are their perceptions on the reality effects of the media portrayal on their destination and its touristic image? These questions are central to this thesis.

This thesis aims to go further than the mainstream studies on destination image and media that have predominantly focused on the perspectives of tourists in regard to destination image. Instead, this research will focus on the perspectives of local stakeholders within a destination. More importantly, this thesis aims to look more critically at how different discourses within media can lead to different realities, also known as 'performative', effects. According to van Dijk (2015), discourse can be seen as the dominant and conventional manner of thinking about a certain issue, in this case a particular destination. Discourse often presents itself as articulating the truth and accurate reality. Because the

media (often) deliberately promotes a dominant discourse, the discourse gains greater authority and is perceived to be more accurate. As such, this thesis will explore the role of power of media discourses; how do these discourses exert power? How do they act and how do they influence and/or change destinations and its local stakeholders? Hence, this research aims to go beyond mainstream impacts studies that assume both generality and causality and instead will focus on the performative (reality) effects of media discourses. Therefore, this topic fits with the ideas of Baudrillard, who stated that ''we must no longer assume any principle of truth, of causality, or any discursive norm. Instead, we must grant both the poetic singularity of events and the radical uncertainty of events'' (2000, p. 48). Additionally, Næss (2016) argues that, when referring to social phenomena, causality between influential variables and effects appears to be a somewhat discredited idea, especially among post-structuralist theorists. In this thesis, the local interpretations on media discourses about their destination as well as its performative effects will be explored through a case study carried out in Giethoorn, the Netherlands.

1.1 Case study of Giethoorn

This research has been designed as a case study and focuses on the Dutch village Giethoorn, situated in the municipality of Steenwijkerland and within the province of Overijssel. The village is built on islands, linked by wooden bridges and is renowned for its many centuries-old straw-roofed farms. Giethoorn is called the 'Venice of the North', because visitors are able to sail the ditches with various types of boats as a touristic activity (NOS, 2017). Consequently, Giethoorn has attracted tourists from all over the world, including countries such as Dubai, United States and China (Tuenter, 2020).

Giethoorn has often been the focus of attention within the media due to the popularity of the village among mainly foreign tourists. Due to the increasing number of tourists, the level of experienced nuisance by residents has also increased accordingly. The overcrowding of visitors in the centre of the village is said to add greater pressure on the village's services and infrastructure (Valkeman, 2017; Boonstra, 2018). Accordingly, the media has used these incidents to stimulate the discussion about the negative consequences of tourism for destinations and its local residents. Many of these news items criticized the consequences of tourism for the surrounding environment and quality of life for its residents. Various news articles compare Giethoorn to amusement parks, and state that the quality of life in 'Giethoorn Amusement Park' is under threat (Smit, 2017). Moreover, terms such as ''overcrowded'', ''nuisance'', ''overtourism'' and ''liveability'' therefore often appear in media reports about tourism in destinations such as Giethoorn (NOS, 2017; Van Dalen, 2017; Hermanides, 2018). In addition, in his famous book *Grand Hotel Europa* author Ilya Leonard Pfeijffer dedicates an entire chapter to Giethoorn in order to emphasise the negative impacts of (mass) tourism for local populations (Schouten, 2019).

Giethoorn can therefore be seen as an example of a destination that deals with a rather negative media portrayal that is mostly related to the negative impacts of tourism. It would be valuable to explore the perspectives of local stakeholders on the media portrayal of their destination. For example, is there a certain level of one-sidedness within media representations regarding tourism destinations? Additionally, it would also be valuable to explore the perspectives of local stakeholders on the performative (reality) effects of media discourses on their destination and its touristic image. How is a destination changed or influenced by media discourses? Hence, local stakeholders' perceptions on media discourses about their destination as well as its (potential) performative effects on the destination needs further insight. It is not only necessary to generate more information on this topic for academic purposes, but also for destinations managers and marketeers. An increased awareness of the performative effects of media portrayal on a destination and its touristic image can help

destination managers and marketeers to make informed choices and improve their destinations in a sustainable way.

1.2 Research objectives and research questions

Based on the problem statement, this thesis aims to explore the perspectives of local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn. In addition, this thesis aims to analyse the views of local stakeholders on the (potential) performative reality effects of the media discourses on the destination and touristic image of Giethoorn; how does the media portrayal influence and/or change the village and its local stakeholders? Hence, the overall aim of this research is to go beyond the (dominant) portrayal which is created by the media, and focus on the perspectives of local stakeholders instead. By exploring different experiences of the portrayal of Giethoorn within Dutch media, different perspectives and views can be brought together to illustrate the complexity of the portrayal of destinations within media, and how this can potentially lead to performative reality effects for destinations and their touristic images.

Based on the above-mentioned scientific objectives, the following central research question will guide this thesis:

What are the perspectives of local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn and its (potential) performative effects on the destination and its touristic image?

In order to answer this central research question, the following sub-research questions were designed:

SQ1: What are the perspectives of local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn?

SQ2: What are the perspectives of local stakeholders on the (potential) performative effects of the media discourses on the destination and touristic image of Giethoorn?

1.3 Outline of the report

Following this introduction, this thesis is divided into eight chapters. The next chapter will include a detailed literature review on the concept of destination image. This chapter will link the destination image to tourism, media and placemaking. Following the literature review, the third chapter will describe the main theoretical underpinning of this thesis: post-structuralism; which assumes that different realities coexist instead of one image or reality. Additionally, this chapter will address the relation between the concepts of 'discourses' and 'performativity'. The chapter will include a conceptual model to give a visual summary of the theoretical framework. The fourth chapter discusses and supports the methodological choices made in relation to the research and ends with a critical reflection on this study's validity, reliability and limitations. After the methodological overview, the fifth chapter presents an analysis of how Giethoorn is portrayed in the media in order to give context to the further analysis of perspectives of local stakeholders within the following chapter.

Accordingly, the next and sixth chapter includes the results of this study. The results consist of the perspectives and judgements of local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn, including their views on the accuracy of the media portrayal. Additionally, this chapter includes the views of local stakeholders on the (potential) performative effects of the media on the destination and touristic image of Giethoorn. Furthermore, in chapter seven, the main research results will be analysed and compared to the theoretical framework as well as the conceptual framework. The eighth chapter will combine a conclusion, discussion and future research suggestions based on the findings of this thesis. Finally, the nineth chapter of this thesis will end with a small blog post to explore the practical application of the results of this study by elaborating on the consequences for management.

2. Literature review

The main goal of this chapter is to position this thesis within the existing literature on destination images within the context of tourism, media and urban planning and marketing. This chapter will start with a literature review of the concept of 'destination images'. To better understand how unfavourable media portrayal and negative destination image can affect urban planning and marketing of destinations, this chapter will briefly discuss the link between image and the concept of 'placemaking'.

2.1 Destination image

Destination image is a complex definition that can be controversial. The idea is derived from ''image theory'', which implies that the universe is a distorted representation of the objective reality and resides in the individual's mind (Wang et al., 2015). Despite the different conceptualizations, Wang et al. (2015) argue that the image of a destination is usually characterized as the mental representation of information, feelings and general perception of a specific destination by a person. More specifically, Assael (1984, as cited in Wang et al., 2015) argues that image is shaped by processing information from several sources over time. As such, an image is typically created by two key factors: external factors (information sources) and personal factors (socio-cultural characteristics of a person). Additionally, as explained by Iwashita (2006), individuals' perceptions of destinations are formed by a variety of sources of information, as well as their own personal traits. Additionally, various destination image scholars perceive destination image to consist of multiple dimensions (Wang et al., 2015; Muhoho-Minni & Lubbe, 2017):

- *Organic image* derives from the interaction of a person with sources of non-tourism and non-commercial content, such as television, radio and newspaper reports.
- *Induced image* is shaped as a consequence of marketing, advertisement and promotional campaigns by destination management organizations and other organizations.
- *Complex image* emerges from a visit to the actual destination. The image is argued to be complicated because visitor is offered a greater understanding and differentiated perspective of the destination.

Furthermore, Lim and O'Cass (2001) explain that destinations can also be seen as brands, where the destination can be distinguished from its competitors by a powerful brand. As such, Tasci et al. (2007) explain that marketers often use destination image to make the right decision while planning, developing, positioning and promoting their destination. The authors state that this is primarily because the image of a particular destination can have direct impacts on destination choice processes and potential visitor behaviour. Therefore, destination image plays an important role in the success of tourist destinations (Agapito et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2017). As such, the authors describe destination image as the general impression of a destination by the tourist that includes the representation in the mind of a tourist of what a person knows and feels about the destination. As such, Muhoho-Minni and Lubbe (2017) argue that a problematic image of the destination can be a significant obstacle to attracting visitors. While most destination image studies concentrate on positive characteristics, Becken et al. (2017) argue that negative factors are also likely to influence and shape the image.

Beerli and Martín (2004) argue that there is currently a consensus among tourism researchers on the value of destination image and the important role it plays in the decision-making, selection and evaluation process of tourists. As explained by Buhalis and Law (2008), the media is a potential source of such information to bring a destination to life for visitors. However, there are authors, such as Muhoho-Minni and Lubbe (2017), who have argued that information can play a crucial role in the development of a destination image and that negative reporting and portrayal of a destination in the media can result in a problematic destination image. In fact, various other scholars have argued that

the role of the media in the creation of destination is recognised as a current issue. They argue that the media, particularly the news, has the power to influence the perceptions of tourists through either positive or negative explanations, interpretations and visual presentation. As a result, the media has the ability to influence the image of destinations either positively or negatively through (in)direct provision of information (Mercille, 2005; Laing & Crouch, 2009; Frías et al., 2012). As such, popular culture and other types of images have been recognized as having a significant influence on destination image (Hall, 1980; Mercille, 2005). For example, Urry (1990) argued that the tourist gaze, which he describes as the viewpoints and expectations of tourists, is created and maintained through a variety of non-tourist activities, such as news articles, documents, film and videos.

2.2 Destination images and the media

It has been argued by Muhoho-Minni and Lubbe (2017) that there is a common agreement among destination scholars that potential tourists rely heavily on information-related content and visuals due to the intangibility of tourism products. As such, information sources within media enables tourists to bring a destination to life in their minds. Accordingly, Wang et al. (2015) argue that people's ideas and attitudes are shaped by mass media, such as the internet, which is one of the most important sources in the everyday media environment to which they are exposed. In addition, as explained by Muhoho-Minni and Lubbe (2017), the internet is another exposing source of non-tourist information, such as news stories, which has the potential to influence the perception of a destination by tourists. Hence, according to these authors, media plays a role in shaping the image of destinations. The authors argue that the media can form new myths or gather established assumptions about the destination, and it also enables these images to be circulated more widely. As such, Shields (1992) has differentiated between different types of images: rich image and one-dimensional image. He argues that destinations with a rich image are those that are covered for a wide range of themes and events by the media, including social events, politics and economics. Destinations with a one-dimensional image receive coverage only when specific events occur within them. When media labels a destination as solely hosting a specific sort of activity or event, it becomes a symbol for such activities and events. As a result, additional events and activities are not included.

Hence, all the different forms of the media have the potential to play a leading role in various portrayals of destinations. Besides the personal image of the individual, Iwashita (2006) argues that it should be remembered that there are stereotyped images that are exchanged by groups of people. People engage with media representations and content, such as news stories and visual images, from which they can obtain knowledge or emotional experiences that generate myths about the places portrayed. Consequently, as stated by Muhoho-Minni and Lubbe (2017), information sources from organic media are important aspects in the development of organic images as they help to contextualise destinations. In turn, this leads to the engagement of the audience and therefore enables representation to build meaning.

Furthermore, Mercille (2005) stresses the importance of independent media information sources for the creation of destination images. He includes the effect of information sources through selective representation and the selective perception of encoded messages by the audience. Moreover, Hunter (2016) acknowledges that the portrayed destination image is not a random collection of iconic representations of the destination. Instead, it can be conceptualized as 'brand image' which implies the importance of the reputation of a destination. According to Huijbens (2011), image and reputation have become essential attributes of destinations and are increasingly becoming the focus of brand management practices. Accordingly, destination managers and marketers recognize the impact of image construction because it can reflect the destination brand in the minds of visitors (Marine-Roig, 2015; Hamelin et al., 2016). Nevertheless, Cotirlea (2015) states that the formation of destination

images cannot be completely controlled as individuals generate ideas about the destination organically through other sources of information, such as the media. As a result, as Lopes (2011) and Marine-Roig (2015) suggest, a mix of external information sources and personal factors forms the overall image of destinations among tourists, determining whether the destination is seen positively or negatively.

2.3 Placemaking and negative image formation

Tourism destination planning and marketing are inherently placemaking activities aimed at influencing a destination's image according to Lew (2017). He argues that by means of placemaking, a public space is turned into a place where people can live, work and relax. In addition, Dupre (2019) explains that placemaking creates a link between people and public areas, where the user is seen as the central figure. When a public area develops significant meaning for users, it has a positive impact on the value of a place. Avraham and Ketter (2013) argue that negative image formation can be unfavourable for placemaking within destinations. The authors state that policymakers in these destinations struggle to overcome long-held unfavourable stereotypes and biases about their destinations. The associated negative perceptions were formed over several years and maintained in the public mind by sensational media coverage. Consequently, a negative image is a major barrier to attracting tourists, as well as residents and investors.

More specifically, Avraham and Ketter (2013) differentiate between different types of images: 'open' images and 'closed' images. The authors argue that additional features can be added to 'open' images. 'Closed' images, on the other hand, do not allow additional characteristics to be added, or at least those that differ from the main image. Such images are therefore also known as 'stereotypes. When a destination is recognised as a place where certain events take place, it becomes a symbol for such events. As a result, additional events within the destination are less likely to be covered by the media (Avraham & Ketter, 2013). As a result, according to Avraham (2004), destination leaders view their destination's unfavourable reputation as a barrier to it becoming more appealing and prevents a brighter future for the destination. The author states that destinations attract greater attention during times of crisis due to the tendency of media to focus on negative news items. As a result, tourists, visitors as well as investors are less likely to return, which creates a more significant problem for the destination. More importantly, Avraham (2004) argues that it is extremely difficult to change a stereotype about a certain destination once it has been developed, as considerable work is necessary to persuade the target demographic to be open to a new and different image of a destination.

2.4 Positioning this research within a niche in the literature

To conclude, this literature review has shown that there has been a significant amount of scholarly literature written on the role of various types of information, mostly related to the media, on the images of destinations. However, there seems to be a scarcity of literature focusing on how local stakeholders within destinations perceive and deal with negative image formation in the media. Instead, a large amount of destination image-related studies focuses on the perspectives of tourists. This thesis therefore aims to gain a better understanding on the perspectives of local stakeholders on the discourses about Giethoorn as portrayed by media and the different performative reality effects of the media portrayal on the actual destination according to the views of local stakeholders. Therefore, this thesis takes on a broader perspective by critically focusing on the performative reality effects of different media discourses on destinations, in this case Giethoorn. Hence, this topic fits within a post-structuralist paradigm as this thesis will focus more on the role of power of media and thought discourses; how do these discourses exert power within destinations, including its touristic image? How are destinations and its stakeholders influenced and/or changed by media discourses?

3. Theoretical framework

The aim of this thesis is to explore the perspectives of local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn and their views on the performative reality effects of the media discourses on the destination and touristic image of Giethoorn. Since this thesis focuses on the role and power of media discourses and their performative effects on destinations, a post-structuralist framework has been explicitly chosen. Therefore, the concepts of 'discourses' and 'performativity' are also centralized within this study. All of these concepts are brought in from a poststructuralist research approach, hence this chapter will start with explaining this approach.

3.1 Post-structuralism

The theoretical foundation of this research starts from a post-structuralist thinking approach. Within post-structuralism, the idea of an objective reality is opposed as each person constructs reality in a different manner, and no construction is truer than another (Miller, Whalley & Stronach, 2005). As such, individuality is a pure concept that arises from the cultural context that shapes a person and identity, including language. One of the aims of post-structuralist research is to deconstruct theories that claim access to universal reality and deconstruct an oppressive version of reality for oppressed groups, since truth is non-existent within post-structuralism (Cheong & Miller, 2000). Additionally, as explained by Næss (2016), post-structuralist theorists often reject the possibility of distinguishing things from one another. According to him, when referring to social phenomena, causality between influential variables and effects appears to be a somewhat discredited idea. More specifically, poststructuralists view the world as being shaped by discourse. In doing so, they understand that the way the world is seen and perceived, is highly affected by the prevailing way of thinking about the world or interacting with it. As such, post-structuralism can be seen as equivalent to postmodernist theories, which believe that there is no fixed, universal human nature, as this is socially constructed (Gorton, 2010). Instead of a single reality, post-structuralism believes that many different socially created realities exist. Post-structuralism therefore focuses on the uniqueness of sites, taking into account the historical, cultural and political context of their study subject (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005).

3.2 Discourses

This next paragraph will explore the concept of 'discourses' as this is a leading concept within this research. This section will link the concept of 'discourses' to the concept of 'representation'. While these are different concepts, they all fit within the ontological assumption within poststructuralism that reality is multiple, hence that there are different narratives within reality.

As mentioned in the previous section, post-structuralist approaches believe that the way in which to explain how things happen, is by thinking through discourses of texts (Sharp & Richardson, 2001). Hence, discourses can help to clarify and minimize rules of truth shaped by the observation and analysis of hidden structures of ideas. Tenorio (2011) argues that it is possible to make certain distinctions between definitions of discourse. Discourses can be seen as linguistic description, words, phrases and texts. In addition, discourse can also be viewed as a sample of language usage, such as a speech. Besides that, discourse may also refer to the expected communication in the context of a situation or human interaction, through (non-)verbal means. Van Leeuwen (2006, p.144) adds that discourses contain social reasonings ''that serve the interests of particular historical and/or social contexts''.

A person who has played a central role in the development of discourse analysis, is Michael Foucault. He claims that knowledge is not just a reflection of reality. As such, reality is a broad construction and what is true and false is decided by various regimes of knowledge. Foucault established a theory of power/knowledge in his work (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). He argues that power is so inseparably

bound to knowledge, that one cannot be considered without the other. Hence, the beliefs of researchers are often related to the tension between their knowledge/power discourses, as they are grounded in it (Cheong & Miller, 2000). Power is distributed through various social practices, instead of belonging to particular agents such as individuals. With regard to knowledge, Foucault's combination of power and knowledge means that power is directly related to discourse. Discourses relate mainly to the understanding of subjects and objects. Moreover, the concept of power/knowledge by Foucault also has implications for his conception of reality. He argues that access to universal reality cannot be obtained because it is difficult to speak from a position outside of discourse; it is hard to escape from representation. Within discourses, 'truth effects' are produced. Since truth is unachievable, questioning if anything is true or false is unproductive. Instead, Foucault argues that the emphasis should be on *how* discourses create effects of truth, and *the ways* by which the construction of discourses give the impression that they represent true or false images of reality (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Accordingly, discourses can be related to the concept of 'representation'. Stuart Hall has been largely concerned with researching the role of the media in society in relation to representation as well as how the media can lead to different versions of reality. Rather than debating whether a representation is a true or false reflection, Hall (1997) advocates for a more modern viewpoint that takes a more active and creative approach to the concept of representation in connection to how individuals think about the world and their role within it. This new perspective on representation connects to thinking about communication and discourses in more complex ways, as images can have various different meanings. According to Hall (1989), power shapes and influences every form of representation. Communication is always connected to power and the influence of those groups that exercise power in a society on what is represented through the media. Therefore, representation is the way in which meaning is given to the aspects which are portrayed through images or words. According to Hall (1989), numerous research on media representation focus on the gap between what one would consider to be a true event and how it is portrayed in the media.

Thus, as is argued by Hall (1997), representations are not about whether the media represents or distorts truth, as this means that one 'actual' interpretation can exist. Instead, it is about the many meanings that can be created by representation. As such, meaning can be challenged (Hunter, 2016). Hence, as argued by Wassler and Talarico (2021), dominant social representations are shared by the majority of people, which control public opinion and the media. When connecting the concept of discourses and representation to tourism, it shows that particular destinations are well-known for their media fame according to Urry (2002, as cited in Iwashita, 2006). In the current postmodern societies, people can be media-dominated, as they increasingly rely on the media to represent reality. As a result, reality itself has become a representation. Therefore, media has an impact on the way people think about different destinations, and can thus shape people's imaginations (Iwashita, 2006). This is why several authors, such as Mol (2002) and Law and Urry (2004), argue that one should not consider multiple perspectives on a single reality, but instead consider multiple realities.

Finally, the concept of discourse will be used to gain a better context and understanding of the portrayal of Giethoorn in the media and the different perspectives of local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn. Discourses can add value to understanding concepts, as it has the potential to expose the role of language in the media (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). For example, which words are used to describe Giethoorn and what do these words mean? In addition, this thesis aims to go beyond the singular perspectives on reality that take place within media discourses about Giethoorn and consider multiple realities by focuses on the perspectives of local stakeholders instead.

3.3 Performativity

In this next section, the concept of 'performativity' will be explained. An understanding of this term is crucial to be able to grasp how discourses can influence and/or change realities. This section will discuss the reality effects of discourses and the relationship between the abovementioned concepts in order to look at how media discourses shape the images of destination at a local level and can therefore influence and/or change destinations; including its stakeholders. The concept of performativity is therefore used in this context as it is about the reality effects of discourse.

The ability of words to impact change in the world is known as performativity (Cavanaugh, 2015). As such, language may function as a kind of social activity rather than merely defining the world. One of the first philosophers to explain the notion of performative language was John L. Austin. He proposed a difference between *constative* language, which defines the universe and can be judged as true or incorrect, and *performative* language, which performs actions in the world. According to Austin, performative language includes verbal acts such as expressing a commitment (Cavanaugh, 2015). As a result, performativity entails both ''saying'' and ''acting/doing'' at the same time. Hence, when something is spoken, individuals begin to act on it. A wedding ceremony is a good example to illustrate this notion. When spoken with the correct intentions and under the right conditions, the phrase ''I do'' transforms the person in question from single to wedded. As a result, these two small words are not merely words in this sense, because they carry universal significance (Diedrich et al., 2013). Austin therefore claims that performative language has the potential to build (new) reality in addition to describing and reporting. Performance, according to Saward (2017), can be used to create social realities. While performances are usually regarded as imaginary, they may also 'make belief', or construct the social reality they portray.

Van Assche, Beunen and Duineveld (2012) describe performativity as ''the self-fulfilling prophecy of discourse: things become accepted as true and real as result of prior discourse'' (p. 3). This suggests that the more often a certain speech is repeated, the more truth and reality it creates. Performativity can therefore be described as the constructive quality of discourse that makes it look as genuine or valid, while other (additional) discourses are ignored (Van Assche et al., 2012). On a related note, scholarly literature on performative language and performativity have been marked by a variety of challenges and problems according to Cavanaugh (2015). These challenges include the importance of actors' intentions and difficulties linked to agency, the meaning of context, and the consequences of social roles and power distributions. Moreover, Larsen (2005) argues that Butler adds a different perspective to performativity in her work on the construction of gender. Butler claims that performativity is similar to Foucault's rethinking of power in that it is generated by the social script of power rather than individual performance skills. In addition, Saward (2017) argues that performances may also create alternative realities as they contribute to visions of change that motivate or inspire people to act. These social realities can have such significant impacts that they shape important parts of the lives of people and institutions.

The concept of performativity can be connected to studies related to media. Because of the rapid advancements of technology, people now interact with visual representations of reality through devices (Piredda et al., 2015). In addition, Liegl & Wagner (2013) explain that the media plays a role in delivering messages and can effectively turn something into a message (p. 242). The authors argue that, from this viewpoint, the effect of the media on texts and narratives should not only be considered, but it should be the main focus point. The media are constructive, which indicates that media shapes and decides the meaning of their material (Liegl & Wagner, 2013). This can also be applied to the case of Giethoorn, since the discourses about the destination as portrayed by media are socially constructed and therefore play an important role in sending out particular messages which

shape and decide the meanings and images of the destination. In turn, social realities created through performativity can be consequential for the lives of stakeholders of destinations. The media portrayal can therefore have performative reality effects for the destination and its touristic image. More specifically, the media representation of a destination can have consequences for the way in which destinations and local stakeholders cope with, and are affected by, the media image of their destination.

3.4 Conceptual framework

This last section of the theoretical framework has been established to visualise the mentioned theories and translate the theoretical framework into practical implementation for the data collection process. Figure 1 illustrates a visual representation of the framework.
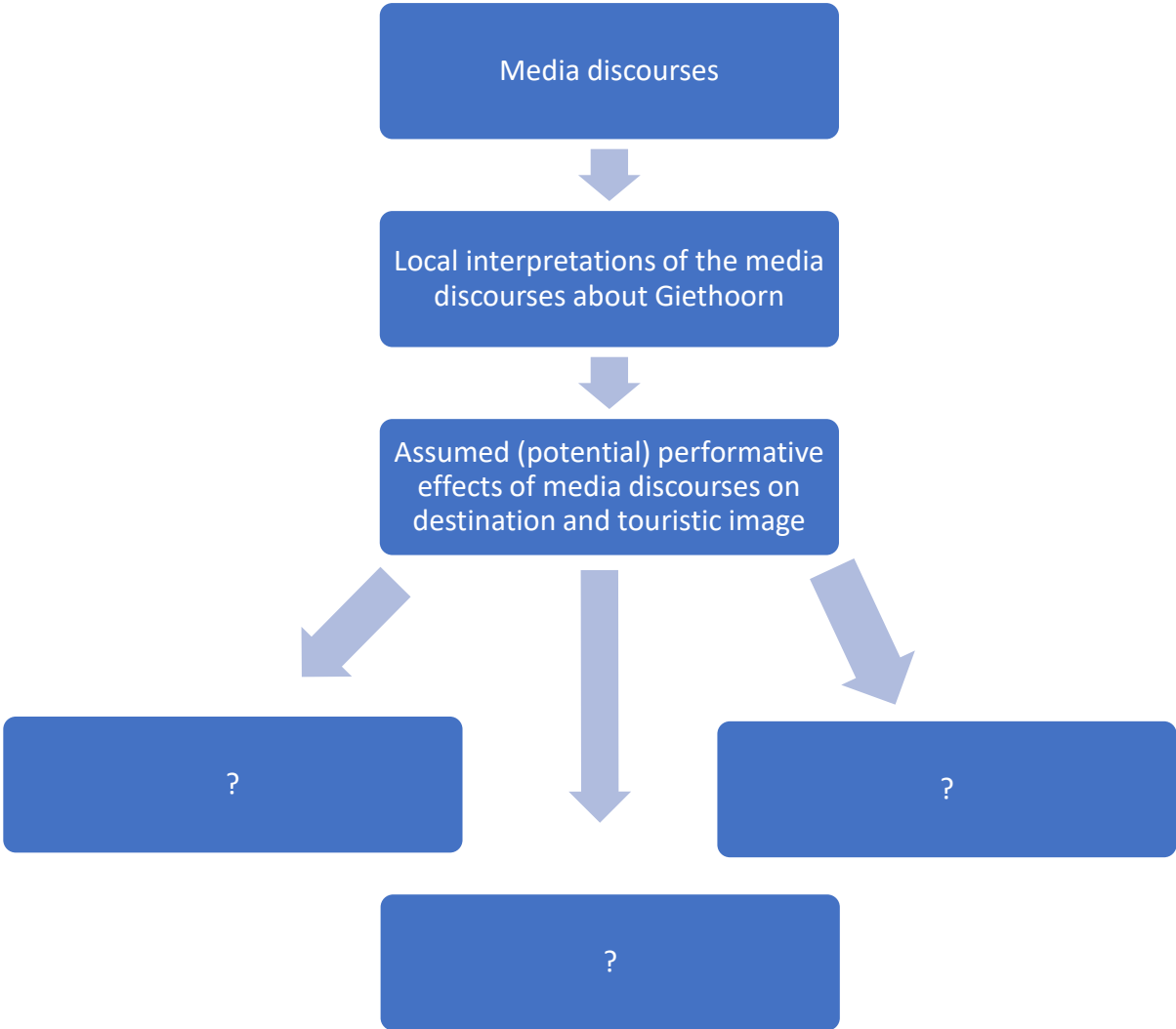
Figure 1: Conceptual framework

This thesis starts with an analysis of the media portrayal of Giethoorn, which gives context to the different media discourses about Giethoorn. This context analysis of the media portrayal of Giethoorn serves as background to better position the following chapter on the interpretations and judgements of local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn. In addition, this research will focus on local stakeholders' perspectives on the potential performative effects of the media discourses on the destination and its touristic image; how do local stakeholders respond to and deal with the current media portrayal of Giethoorn and how are they influenced and/or changed by the media discourses about their destination? In other words, the findings of this study will contribute to filling in the blank boxes and therefore explore both the interpretations of local stakeholders of the media discourses about Giethoorn as well as the assumed (potential) performative effects of the media discourses about the destination and touristic image of Giethoorn according to local stakeholders.

4. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological choices taken in relation to this thesis research. By using a qualitative research design, this study seeks to gain further insight into the perspectives of different local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn, and their views on the (potential) performative effects of the media discourses on the destination and touristic image of Giethoorn. This chapter will begin with a description of the design of the study, followed by an explanation of the methods used. In addition, the manner in which data has been collected and afterwards analysed will be addressed in this chapter. The final sections of this chapter will explain the research's validity, reliability and limitations.

4.1 Research design: an exploratory case study

As previously mentioned, this research is based on a post-structuralist approach, which assumes a world where people get their information from different viewpoints and therefore perceive things differently. As such, this research focuses on the different perspectives of local stakeholders concerning the media portrayal of Giethoorn, and the potential performative (reality) effects of media discourses on the destination and touristic image of Giethoorn. The methodological approach of this research can be identified as an exploratory case study, as this specific topic does not yet appear to be extensively explored in research literature (Boeije, 2010). Several qualitative research methods have been used in order to be able to explore the subject more in depth, since these methods have a flexible approach. Qualitative research allows for the investigation of different perspectives, as explained by Boeije (2010). As tourism and destination image are quite complex phenomena, qualitative research can contribute to gaining a better understanding of these phenomena by ''letting the data do the talking'', as stated by Tribe (2006).

One of the most significant advantages of an exploratory research approach is the ability to continuously adjust both data collection and data analysis to emerging fields (Boeije, 2010). A key feature of qualitative research methods is that they contribute to explore and find meaning (Boeije, 2010). This is particularly useful in this research as it focuses on how different media representations influence the destination image of Giethoorn. The research design of this case study has been chosen because this thesis focuses only on the case of Giethoorn. In this study, the research design of a case study is useful as different types of qualitative research methods can be joint within the design. In turn, the combination of various qualitative approaches, such as interviews and media analysis, will improve the internal validity of this study due to the triangulation of research methods (Verhoeven, 2014).

4.2 Research methods

Since an exploratory case study is the research design of this study, several forms of data collection can be implemented. In this thesis, two qualitative research methods have been used: media analysis and in-depth interviews. These two methods have been chosen due to their suitability to the context of this study and the research questions. Before the beginning of the actual data collection, the decision about what kind of methods to use was already decided, as it was very clear to the researcher would be most applicable to this study.

Media analysis

The first focus of this research has been to examine the discourses about Giethoorn as portrayed by media. The aim of analysing media is to provide a better context and background information for the chapter that addresses the results of this study; the perspectives of local stakeholders on media discourses about Giethoorn. Hence, chapter four, the context analysis of the media portrayal of Giethoorn is not a stand-alone chapter, but instead serves as a context for the following analysis in the results chapter. As argued by Verhoeven (2014), media analysis examines media texts directly and

considers what is collectively said about a certain subject or issue. The author explains that media analysis is known as the study and criticism of media. This form of research looks at texts found in books, letters, blogs, newspapers and movies. In addition, Berger (2005, p. 25) states that media analysis is ''a research technique that is based on measuring the amount of something (for example negative portrayals of population groups) in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated popular form of art''. Hence, it is a method that is used for collecting and analysing textual material (Neuman, 1997, p. 272). In this research, media analysis will therefore be used to gain more insight into the media discourses about Giethoorn in order to contextualise the perspectives of local stakeholders on this matter.

In-depth interviews

This thesis also includes another qualitative research method: in-depth interviews. This research method has been selected for this case study because it provides information about the perspectives and experiences of the involved local stakeholders (Boeije, 2010). Within this study, semi-structured interviews were carried out with various local stakeholders in Giethoorn, ranging from local entrepreneurs and associations to policymakers at the municipality and the provincial house. The purpose of the interviews was to gain more insight into the perspectives of local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn, and to explore the potential performative effects of media discourses on Giethoorn and its touristic image. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because the researcher can operate through a topic list this way, yet it also allows people the ability to talk openly about their opinions and experiences on the research topic (Boyce & Neale, 2006). As such, the interview guide was viewed as an adaptive research instrument by the researcher. During some interviews, the researcher noticed that certain questions could be interpreted as biased. As a result, certain interview questions from the interview guide were slightly rephrased in a more open and unbiased way, so that the interview respondents could respond in an even more free and open way.

An extensive list of the themes and topics discussed during the interviews, hence the interview guide, can be found in Appendix A.

4.3 Sample methods

Overall, fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted with local stakeholders from Giethoorn, as this increases the ability to answer the research questions with the necessary scope. In addition, it also provides an adequate sample to discover the perspectives of local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn and its potential performative effects on the destination and touristic image of Giethoorn. The sampling method of the interviewees that has been selected for this research can be referred to as purposive sampling, since interviewees have been selected based on several features (Verhoeven, 2014), such as their connection to tourism in Giethoorn or their involvement in the village's destination image. This sample included stakeholders from local authorities such as tourism policy advisors and councillors at municipalities and provincial houses, a regional marketing organisation, local residents and local entrepreneurs. Hence, at a certain point, a list of potential interviewees was created by the researcher in order to approach the potential respondents for an interview via email. Moreover, besides the purposive sampling method, another potential sample method for this study is the snowball method, as Verhoeven (2014) calls it. During the contact moments via email and during the actual virtual interviews with the involved stakeholders in Giethoorn, the researcher could be referred to other persons who might also provide relevant insights for this study due to their background and/or expertise.

Category	Mentioned in thesis as	Type of business	Location of interview
Municipality	Tourism councillor	-	ZOOM
Municipality	Policy advisor A (tourism)	-	Teams
Municipality	Policy advisor B (spatial planning)	-	Phone call
Province	Policy advisor C (tourism)	-	Teams
Regional and city marketing	Area manager	-	Teams
Resident	Resident A	-	Teams
Resident	Resident B	-	Teams
Entrepreneur	Entrepreneur A	Hospitality: hotel, B&B and boat rental	Teams
Entrepreneur	Entrepreneur B	Hospitality: boat rental and camping site	Teams
Entrepreneur	Entrepreneur C	Hospitality: restaurant owner	Phone call
Entrepreneur	Entrepreneur D	Hospitality: restaurant and hotel	Phone call
Entrepreneur	Entrepreneur E	Hospitality: tourist information centre	E-mail
Entrepreneur	Entrepreneur F	Retail: advertising company	Teams
Entrepreneur	Entrepreneur G	Hospitality: museum	Teams

Table 1: Overview of interviewees

4.4 Data collection

The data collection for this research took place between 8 March and 30 April 2021, using a media analysis and in-depth interviews as the chosen research methods for the data collection.

Media analysis

The online platforms LexisNexis and Google were used in order to get a better insight and understanding of the discourses as portrayed in the media on Giethoorn. Via these online platforms, newspaper articles taken from several Dutch newspapers were consulted and used to search for media representation of tourism in Giethoorn. The authors used news articles that were published between 2013 and now, since critical discussions on the tourism sector started around that time. This analysis was carried out in March and April 2021, before, during and also after the in-depth interviews. The analysis was carried out before the interviews to provide contextual information and insights as a foundation for the design of the interviews. In addition, this analysis was also conducted during and after the interviews to compare the found results from the conversations with stakeholders to the media portrayal of Giethoorn.

An overview of the analysis of the media portrayal of Giethoorn can be found in Appendix B.

In-depth interviews

In the end, fourteen in-depth interviews with local stakeholders of Giethoorn were conducted in March and April 2021, via virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams and telephone calls due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner as it provides

respondents to share their perspectives and views in an open way. The content of the interviews was related to 1) stakeholders' own images of Giethoorn, 2) image of Giethoorn as portrayed by the media, 3) impacts of media portrayal for the image of Giethoorn as a destination and 4) desired image of Giethoorn in the future. Probing was used during the interviews to generate further explanations from the research participants, which can contribute to establishing a relation between the researcher and the interviewees (Boeije, 2010).

Accordingly, the transcripts of the several in-depth interviews with local stakeholders from Giethoorn can be found in Appendix C.

4.5 Data analysis

A large amount of information was gathered by the researcher based on the two qualitative research methods that were used to collect the relevant data. The researcher asked for permission before each interview to record the conversation in order to be able to transcribe and analyse the data afterwards. The full interview transcripts allowed the researcher to identify the reactions and perspectives of local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn and its performative effects of the media on the destination and its image more easily. In addition, transcribing the full interviews also allowed the researcher to gain full context of certain phrases and opinions. This would be more difficult to identify if the researcher were to summarize only the main aspects, as a lot of relevant information would be left out.

After collecting the necessary data through media analysis and in-depth interviews, it was thematically analysed using coding methods. The author made use of inductive coding, which is a data analysis method in which a researcher examines and analyses raw textual data in order to construct concepts and themes based on data interpretations (Thomas, 2006). To conduct the analysis, the qualitative data analysis and research software MAXQDA were used. According to Bryman (2016), coding consists of knowledge being divided into various components and defining matching themes. The coding process consisted of three stages: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The first stage, open coding, was used to define emerging patterns and recurring topics related to the research questions. The second stage, axial coding, established connections between the categories, in order to organize the data more efficiently. Once the connections were made between the different categories, it became easier for the researcher to identify the perspectives of local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn and its potential performative effects on the destination and its touristic image. The third and final stage, selective coding, was used to integrate the different categories of code defined in the previous phases. Finally, this last stage integrated other potentially useful information (Boeije, 2010). MAXQDA was used to visualize and display the coding of the data, which helps to recognize patterns and draw conclusions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

As such, the coding scheme of the in-depth interviews with local stakeholders of Giethoorn can be found in Appendix D and the coding scheme of the media analysis of Giethoorn can be found in Appendix E.

4.6 Validity and reliability

Verhoeven (2014) describes validity as the degree to which systematic errors have been made. In addition, she also describes validity as the researcher's ability to be precise about whether he or she needs to evaluate. It is therefore important to use the right measuring instruments in this situation. According to Verhoeven (2014), there are three types of validity: content validity, internal validity and external validity. The interviewer's ability to judge what he or she plans to research is called content validity, and it may be enhanced by asking more detailed questions throughout the interview. As a result, this has been extensively used during the interviews for this thesis. Furthermore, internal

validity refers to whether the conclusions drawn are accurate (Verhoeven, 2014). Since the findings of this study are based on research method triangulation, the internal validity of this study has improved. Nevertheless, the internal validity has decreased since some interviewees requested and received the interview guide beforehand in order to prepare for the conversation. As a result, the interviewees' responses to the questions could have differed from what they would have done if they had not seen the questions. Finally, external validity refers to how representative the sample is of the rest of the population and thus how generalizable it is (Verhoeven, 2014). Since this analysis relies on qualitative research techniques, and therefore ignores quantitative statistics and percentages, the potential to generalize to other comparable circumstances is emphasized. The external validity of this thesis was reduced since it only included one single case study. However, since fourteen stakeholders from Giethoorn, ranging from different backgrounds and fields, have been interviewed for this study, the external validity has increased accordingly.

In general, reliability refers to the degree to which a study has avoided making any unintentional mistakes (Verhoeven, 2014). In addition, Baarda et al. (2013) describe reliability as the degree to which the outcomes are not influenced by chance. In qualitative studies, however, repeating the study is problematic since interviews cannot often be conducted under the same conditions. This reliability of this thesis has decreased since it only looked at one scenario, Giethoorn. Nonetheless, the research's reliability has improved as a result of the interview guide's standardization, as the same interview guide was used for all of the performed interviews. As a result, the interview guide can be considered a trustworthy tool. Finally, the study's reliability has improved as a result of the triangulation of data processing and the fact that all of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. However, this can also have drawbacks because the data could have been viewed differently by the researcher during the data analysis. Overall, this exploratory study's reliability is deemed to be minimal.

4.7 Limitations

It is important to remember that this study has certain shortcomings, which will be addressed in this section. Since the researcher does not live in Giethoorn, one of the possible shortcomings of this thesis could be the outsider view. This may have influenced the interview respondents' attitudes as they may have felt reluctant to share certain experiences and opinions. Nevertheless, the researched attempted to overcome this constraint by showing an open and interested attitude. Hence, the outsider view can also be seen as an advantage, as the open attitude of the author can lead to no bias. Furthermore, due to the ongoing pandemic, all of the in-depth interviews were conducted remotely through virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams and ZOOM. Unfortunately, technical difficulties occurred every now and then, which made the data collection as well as analysis process slightly more complicated because the level of understanding could have been better during physical interviews than via virtual interviews. In addition, the scarcity of time is also a significant potential limitation of this research. This disadvantage arose as a result of the fact that this was a master's thesis that had to be completed within a certain amount of time. As a result, the subject could only be studied in a more exploratory way rather than a comprehensive and informative manner. More local stakeholders might have been consulted if there had been more time, ensuring that the subject could have been discussed more thoroughly. This also connects to the next possible limitation of this study: the sample size. Since in-depth interviews are time-consuming, the sample size for this study was kept small. This demonstrates that the study's findings are more indicative than representative. Finally, the results could be partially biased due to the author's own subjectivity in coding and visualising themes within the qualitative research. Hence, the author's own bias and subjectivity can be a disadvantage to this study.

5. Media analysis of Giethoorn

This chapter presents the context analysis of the portrayal of Giethoorn in the media. This analysis explores the different discourses on Giethoorn as portrayed by the media. As such, this chapter serves as background information for the readers before diving into the different perspectives of local stakeholders on the media portrayal of Giethoorn and the performative effects of this portrayal. This chapter first outlines the positive discourses on Giethoorn within the media and then addresses the negative portrayal on Giethoorn by the media.

5.1 Giethoorn: the bucket list tourist destination

Various news articles regarding Giethoorn emphasize the fact that the village has become a tourist attraction for people from all over the world (NOS, 2019; Heppenhuis, 2020; Vinckx, 2020). Tourism in Giethoorn has increased considerably in recent years. Besides being included in several travel guides, the village of Giethoorn became even more popular after the announcement that the village will be included in the world edition of Monopoly (Westerink, 2017). According to media reports, the majority of the incoming tourists in Giethoorn are Chinese. It is said the Giethoorn has become a hotspot and bucket list destination for Chinese tourists. Giethoorn seems to be an embodiment of the Asian country, as groups of Chinese tourists are everywhere in the village (Baneke, 2015). Besides Asian tourists, the media acknowledges that Giethoorn is a popular destination for many other international visitors, as stated by Kropman (2019) and Tuenter (2020):

''Since the successful promotion of Giethoorn in China, over ten years ago, there are many Chinese tourists, but they are not the only ones who have discovered Giethoorn. Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew; you can hear it all when you walk along the Binnenpad'' (Kropman, 2019).

''The whole world has come to know the 'Venice of the North'. In Giethoorn (2,800 inhabitants), tourists come from far and wide: from Australia, Dubai, Canada. But the best known are the Chinese'' (Tuenter, 2020).

In addition, various news reports argue that the significant differences between tourists' home countries and Giethoorn is what attracts most international tourists to the small village. Especially Asian countries are very densely populated. Hence, the village and the surrounding environment can offer tranquillity, space and clean air to tourists (Baneke, 2015; Westerink, 2017; Heppenhuis, 2020). Moreover, Van Keken (2020) explains that international tourists enjoy and appreciate the Dutch countryside and its open and wide spaces.

5.2 Giethoorn: the village that suffers from overtourism

Besides the fact that Giethoorn is often labelled as a highly touristic destination by the media, the village is frequently associated with terms such as 'overtourism' and 'mass tourism' by media reports. Professors and researchers also add Giethoorn to the list of destinations that suffer from excessive tourism, which also includes Amsterdam and Venice (Willems, 2018; Hermanides, 2019). Giethoorn is described as a typical example of a destination that experiences overtourism, as the excesses often occur at specific places and specific times (Willems, 2018). As stated by Hermanides (2018): *''The 'overtourism' in these places means that residents sometimes even experience tourists from outside peeking into their kitchens''* and BNNVARA (2019): *''Diapers in your mailbox: Giethoorn experiences inconvenience due to mass tourism''*. Willems (2018) and Hermanides (2019) argue that while the increase of tourism might be beneficial for the local economy of the village, it is perceived as damaging for local residents of busy places such as Giethoorn, as the quality of live is decreasing:

''Hordes of tourists passing by your house. For the locals in Giethoorn it is a daily occurrence. Can you still live normally in your own village? Just like in European cities like Venice and Dubrovnik,

quality of life and tourism are at odds. Giethoorn is now fighting the battle with 'overtourism''' (Willems, 2018).

''That overtourism can be a serious problem can be seen on the cycle paths in Giethoorn. Those cycle paths can no longer be used because of the large number of tourists walking around. And the canals can hardly handle all those boats. A physical threshold is being crossed here due to tourism: the infrastructure is no longer adequate'' (Hermanides, 2019).

Many news articles and images about Giethoorn address the fact that it has become more crowded, and sometimes even too crowded, in Giethoorn, especially on the canals and small paths. Van Dalen (2017) addresses this aspect in his news report where he explains that *''Giethoorn is struggling with tourism. The Gieterse population complains more and more, especially in the southern part with overcrowded canals on summer days''*. Since the last decade, the village has become more crowded with visitors (Tuenter, 2020). More importantly, news articles describe Giethoorn as a destination where tourism has gotten out of control, alongside destinations such as Zaanse Schans, Amsterdam and Kinderdijk (Hermanides, 2019). Especially during the sunny days and high season, the village is flooded by tourists. This, however, has said to have dangerous and negative consequences for the accessibility of the village by, for example, emergency services:

''According to the chairman of 't Gieters Belang, Evert van Dijk, the main complaints from the village are that it is too busy and too dangerous. ''Especially on such a sunny Whit weekend, there is a car on every blade of grass'', Van Dijk explains. If a fire breaks out, the emergency services can hardly get past'' (Westerink, 2017).

Furthermore, according to various news reports, the crowded scenes caused by tourism have impacts on the local residents since they are often unable to make use of the infrastructure of the village due to the large crowds. Kropman (2019) interviews local residents for her news report, where one resident shares that *''It is too busy here, some say. And indeed, I do not have to try to cycle through the centre of Giethoorn during the day at this time of year, I cannot do that anymore''*. Besides that, news reports discuss that the village has become less enjoyable and authentic for local residents due to the large crowds. It is estimated that more than a million visitors take a boat trip through the few canals of the village every year (Van Keken, 2020). The media also acknowledges fears for an excessive burden on the fragile natural environment if tourism increases significantly (Van Dalen, 2020). Hence, the media presents Giethoorn as a destination that is constantly overrun by tourists. More specifically, the village is overrun by Chinese tourists on a daily basis. According to the media, Chinese tourists are there every day, and are increasingly visiting Giethoorn (Boonstra, 2018). Media reports state that, as a result, Giethoorn is succumbing to Chinese tourists. Some residents even state in news reports that if Giethoorn had not been promoted in China, the village would not have experienced any nuisance, and the village would have remained liveable due to the lack of Asian tourists (Valkeman, 2017). A few examples of news reports that have discussed this topic are Goegebeur (2017): *''Hordes of Chinese tourists have been flooding Giethoorn for years''*, De Telegraaf (2018): *''Chinese are now often in Giethoorn and Amsterdam, where it is overcrowded''*, and Trouw (2019): *''Giethoorn is overrun by hundreds of Chinese tourists day in and day out''*.

There are, however, several news articles that aim to show other perspectives on tourists in Giethoorn. Local residents and entrepreneurs also show a different perspective, as they express that Giethoorn is really visited by tourists from all over the world. The flow of Chinese tourists is rather exaggerated in the media according to a few local entrepreneurs (Obbink, 2020). In addition, several entrepreneurs state that the Chinese visitors are still a minority, but people only talk about them because they are

recognizable (Tuenter, 2020). As such, visitors from Asia travel all year round, not just in the high season. However, because they stand out, there seem to be many of them (De Stentor, 2021).

Besides the associations with overtourism, the village of Giethoorn is frequently described as an amusement park and open-air museum by the media. According to Smit (2017) and Kroon (2019) , Giethoorn has turned into an amusement park where one does not have to pay an entrance fee, and where the liveability is at stake. In addition, Willems (2018) and Hermanides (2019) argue that a social threshold has been breached in Giethoorn because residents complain that, especially Chinese, tourists walk around as if it were an open-air museum. As said by Kropman (2019): *''the canal resembles a fairground attraction filled with traffic jams of boats bumping into each other''.* Furthermore, various news articles share moments where international tourists have gotten the impression that the whole village is an amusement park since tourists regularly ask at what time the park closes (Westerink, 2017; Vinckx, 2020). Because of this impression, tourists often invade private areas of local residents due to the expectation of Giethoorn as a tourist attraction and museum. As explained by AD/Amersfoortse Courant (2020): *''The Chinese who did not step into a boat, walked along the narrow paths. They walked into gardens, tapped on the windows, took pictures of everything and everyone; as if every inhabitant of Giethoorn was a tourist attraction''.* In addition, Boonstra (2016) argues the same thing as he states that *''it is not always fun. ''The problem is that the Chinese visitors think that Giethoorn is a museum, so beautiful that it cannot be real. And they see the residents as extras,'' says the resident opposite the Baptist church who still has to endure the biggest tourist crowds: on their fence is a sign: no admittance, in English and Chinese''.*

As a result of the many stories and articles within the media about the village's associations with overtourism, crowding and liveability, many destinations in the region do not want to end up like Giethoorn (Van Twisk, 2021). There are several news articles about destinations in the Netherlands, and especially in the region around Giethoorn, who are expressing their fear of excessive situations if more visitors come to their destination. Although more visitors would be beneficial for the local economy and employment, destinations want to avoid extreme situations as can be seen in Giethoorn (De Telegraaf, 2018; Pennewaard, 2018; Van Twisk, 2021). A few news reports who have covered this topic are Pennewaard (2018) and Van der Naald (2019), as can be seen in the quotes below:

''The number is not the starting point, but the quality is. I prefer tourists who come for an exhibition than for a fair. We should not want to be Giethoorn'', says Martin Cnossen, director of Merk Fryslân'' (Pennewaard, 2018).

''Fortunately, Gelderland is not yet like Giethoorn or Amsterdam, where the flow of tourists is excessive'' (Van der Naald, 2019).

5.3 Giethoorn: the village that depends on tourism
Another recurring theme in several news articles about Giethoorn is the village's dependence on the tourism sector and therefore also the incoming tourists. As such, tourism has a fixed place in the councillor's agenda (Tuenter, 2020). Many entrepreneurs are happy when Chinese tourists come to Giethoorn during the low season, as local businesses and the region need those tourists to survive (Vinckx, 2020), which shows that Giethoorn can be seen as a seasonal destination. Therefore, the absence of the international tourists during the current corona crisis created uncertainty for the entrepreneurs towards the winter months, as almost 90% of their hotel guests come from outside of Europe (Heppenhuis, 2020). Nevertheless, not every entrepreneur has this same view, as they state that the international visitors were very well replaced by domestic tourists and from neighbouring countries. De Stentor (2021) have interviewed entrepreneurs on this topic: *''Giethoorn is also less*

dependent on the intercontinental tourist than people think, says the entrepreneur. He estimates their share of his turnover at 15 per cent''.

Several media images highlight that tourism in Giethoorn has been viewed from an economic perspective for too long since the tourism sector significantly contributes to the local economy and level of employment (Van Dalen, 2017). Obbink (2020) states that 36 percent of all jobs in the village depend on the tourism industry. Hence, as stated by van Dalen (2020) and Tuenter (2020), this makes Giethoorn the driving force behind tourism in the municipality. In her news report, Hermanides (2019) interviews a professor who states that *"Policies to combat overtourism are still in their infancy, says Peeters. "Most destinations are still very stuck in the growth paradigm, the firm belief that tourism must necessarily grow. Even in Giethoorn, the aim is still to grow tourist revenues""".* As such, the tourism councillor in the municipality of Steenwijkerland acknowledges that the quality of life was put under pressure by the crowds of tourists, as the village has been viewed from economic perspectives for too long (Tuenter, 2020);

Despite the dominant negative images related to tourism in Giethoorn within the media, some images show a different perspective on the impacts of tourism. Valkeman (2017) explains that a new flow of tourists was needed to sustain the regional economy and maintain facilities such as local supermarkets and public transport. In addition, Dijkstra (2020) addresses the fact that some local residents of Giethoorn do not understand the constant criticism regarding the tourism, as it provides new facilities and modernization within the village. Giethoorn is unthinkable without tourists for some people as it has become a part of the village. Or as they say in the village: 'if there is nothing strange, no strangers will come' (Dijkstra, 2020). Tuenter (2020) also acknowledges this aspect as she interviews local entrepreneurs in Giethoorn: *"I do not understand it at all. You know that you choose a village where there is something to do. That is precisely the charm, he says. Without tourism, the baker, the bus stop, the restaurants will also disappear''.* Mollen (2020) also includes this aspect in her news report: *"Tourism is very important for all the facilities in the village''.* Moreover, Kropman (2019) and Van Keken (2020) highlight the fact that tourism contributes to the level of facilities within the village, as can be seen in the quotes below:

"Yet I also find this hustle and bustle special in a region that is ageing and where the young people are moving away. And I also think that the village benefits from it. Just look at the growth in the number of restaurants. You can get everything here now. I first had to get used to the renovation; it has become a lot more modern. People can now hear about the history of Giethoorn on cassettes in all sorts of languages in our local museum. And yes, that makes me quite proud'' (Kropman, 2019).

"It is quiet in Giethoorn. Awfully quiet. Van Dijk: 'The whole village suffers when local businesses go under. And yes, the tourists are missed. They are the ones who bring colour and activity to the village and who belong there''' (Van Keken, 2020).

5.4 Giethoorn: the village that is damaged by tourism

The majority of images about Giethoorn in the media highlight the negative impacts of tourism on the village. One of the most significant impacts, as presented by the media, is the decreasing quality of life for local residents. The downside of the (increasing) tourism flows in Giethoorn is the pressure it puts on the village, especially along the village canal. Additionally, problems such as trespassing on private property and damage to property are also portrayed as significant impacts of tourism. In return, this puts pressure on the quality of life, especially during the high season (Willems, 2018; Van Dalen, 2020). Due to some of the excessive situations in Giethoorn, some local residents are trying to ignore the visitors and the associated incidents, such as the bumping of boats. In his report, Boonstra (2018) interviews one local resident who states: *"I am in a state of ignoring it, I have closed the curtains. I do*

not want to see it'' (Boonstra, 2018). Some news articles hold the municipality accountable for not intervening soon enough and allowing some of the drastic consequences of tourism to happen, especially related to the decreasing quality of life for local residents:

''But at the same time, you have to ensure that the village remains liveable. That almost went wrong here. The municipality of Steenwijkerland, to which Giethoorn belongs, initially allowed things to go badly. When international tourism began to grow, anyone who wanted to could have even larger boats sail through the canals, so that even more people could travel and it became even busier'' (Kropman, 2019).

As portrayed by media reports, many local residents are bothered by the crowds of visitors since the increasing tourism flows in Giethoorn. BNNVARA (2019) states that it is clear that nuisance is being experienced by local residents and that the level of annoyance among local residents has increased since the increasing arrival of tourists. Schreuder (2019) and Tuenter (2020) share examples of local residents who encounter Asian tourists trespassing their private property and gardens, for example Asian tourists who are picnicking in their gardens or trying to enter their houses. AD/Amersfoortse Courant (2020) share stories of certain residents of Giethoorn who experience such high level of inconvenience due to tourism that they do not want to leave their homes during peak days because it is no longer enjoyable to walk around through the centre:

''Together with his wife, 73-year-old Otten lives in a large house on the Binnenpad, the central, most picturesque and by far busiest path in Giethoorn. Now, just before eleven o'clock in the morning, it is still quiet on the path. But on the water, it is already busy. ''Especially in the weekends, it is not doable. Then we really do not leave the yard'''' (AD/Amersfoortse Courant, 2020).

Besides the fact that residents are annoyed by the large numbers of tourists in the village, Fix (2017) discusses that the behaviour of tourists also worries some residents. Because some tourists have the impression that Giethoorn is an attraction park or open-air museum, they have the expectation that they can enter anywhere. In turn, this kind of attitude annoys some of the local residents according to Fix (2017). That is why van Weezel (2019) argues that informational education and enforcement are important for the village of Giethoorn, as the pressure from tourists can be reduced if tourists behave in a better way. As explained by Westerink (2017), many visitors do not realise that they are surrounded by private property of local residents, hence several information kiosks in different languages are beneficial for the village. That is why, as covered by Boonstra (2018) and BNNVARA (2019), several local stakeholders have developed a new tourist guide that informs tourists about the house rules of the village, in response to the increasing level tourists and experienced nuisance:

''It is not so much the numbers; we are used to that in Giethoorn. It is more the attitude; the Chinese think they are in a museum, with the inhabitants as staff. They take pictures through the window when the people are eating, they enjoy the sun on their benches in the backyards of local residents'' (Boonstra, 2018).

''In response to this increase and nuisance, advertising specialist Ronald de Boer has developed a new tourist guide together with the local business association. It is available in Dutch, English and Chinese. The facts are the most striking new points in the guide: 'Did you know that suitcases are not silent? That boats are not bumper cars? And mailboxes are not bins?''' (BNNVARA, 2019).

Additionally, Dommerholt (2017) and NOS (2019) present that due to the large crowds on the village canals, the bridges of the village are damaged by the bumping boats. On busy days, Giethoorn consists of many traffic jams and not all the captains of rental boats have the capacity to steer the boat across the water without colliding. As a result, NOS (2019) covers that the village had to protect the bridges

against tourists who collide into the bridges and therefore damage them. As such, the media presents that the tolerance of residents in regard to tourists is declining, as the sense of place and belonging within the village has decreased over the past few years due to tourism (NOS, 2018). It is said that some residents feel that tourists violate their privacy and the village character (Valkeman, 2017). As presented by De Telegraaf (2018), *''the fact that Giethoorn is described in the Lonely Planet as 'Holland's Venice' is no longer that makes the inhabitants glow with pride. Because partly thanks to that description, on beautiful summer days you stumble over the boats in the waters of the village, a car is parked on every blade of grass and tourists walk into residents' gardens as if it were an open-air museum''*. In addition, NOS (2018) explains that the increasing amount of accommodation services within the village centre also contribute to the declining sense of belonging and social cohesion within the village, as local residents have a new neighbour almost every week: *''If you have lived next door to your neighbour for years, with whom you even share your bridge, and that becomes a bed and breakfast, then suddenly you have a different neighbour every day. Then you get less of a feeling that the village still belongs to you''* (NOS, 2018).

Yet, not all news reports present that local stakeholders from the village are negative towards the level of tourism in Giethoorn. Willems (2018) argues that there seems to be mixed feelings among residents about tourism. Some of the local residents have their local business in Giethoorn, and are therefore in favour of tourists coming to their village. In addition, AD/Amersfoortse Courant (2020) explains that while many entrepreneurs realise that there are residents who complain about tourism, they believe that, in the end, almost everyone in the village benefits from tourism as it contributes to the local economy and level of facilities within the village. Nevertheless, as stated by NOS (2019), there is a love-hate relationship with the visitors. The tourist industry and local entrepreneurs benefit from it, but there remains inconvenience for residents. Valkeman (2017) argues that while entrepreneurs are liking the incoming tourist flows, residents are increasingly annoyed by the flows of foreign visitors and their behaviours: *''Entrepreneurs are happy about it, but the residents are increasingly annoyed by the stream of Chinese and their antics. Their village is becoming a China Town, they fear''*.

Due to the differing opinions about tourism as well as the ranging interests within the village, Giethoorn is displayed as a destination where stakeholders cannot get along with each other. The tension and conflicts between the local residents and entrepreneurs are frequently mentioned by the media, as the people in Giethoorn are closed off and on their own, and there is a lack of solidarity and unity as argued by Westerink (2017) and Kroon (2019):

''But I wonder if that will work. There is no solidarity at all. Here in Giethoorn nobody can get along with each other'' (Westerink, 2017)

''Slowing tourism down? It is far too late for that. For the hotel and restaurant entrepreneurs, there are golden times, because a lot of money is being made. But the residents that live near the touristic hotspots are not being considered. Their lives have turned into a nightmare'' (Kroon, 2019).

5.5 Giethoorn: new future direction for tourism

During the current corona crisis, the media has also shed light on the opportunity for Giethoorn to consider a new direction for tourism and for their image as a destination (Tuenter, 2020). Due to the excessive situations related to tourism, Giethoorn has tried to maintain a proper balance between tourism and the liveability, and therefore also restore the image of their destination (NOS, 2018). In 2020, the municipality of Steenwijkerland, in collaboration with residents' association 'Gieters Belang' and business association 'Giethoorn Onderneemt', has drawn up a future vision for Giethoorn. This future vision describes what Giethoorn wants to achieve as a destination. These three stakeholders aim to find a good balance between liveability and the tourism development of Giethoorn. The

stakeholders find it important that a good balance is found between pleasant living and the impacts of tourism (Steenwijkerland, 2020). This future vision focused on a few basic principles, most importantly that the local community comes first and that a balance is found between economy, ecology and liveability (AD/Amersfoortse Courant, 2020). As presented by Van Keken (2020): *''The main aim, says Van Dijk on behalf of the residents' association, is to 'regulate' the flow of tourists. That is different from 'reducing', he emphasises. 'We do need to organise things better'''*.

Therefore, the new motto of Giethoorn is 'spread and seduce'. Tuenter (2020) reported that Giethoorn aims to attract quality tourists and spread them over time and space. In addition, Van Dalen (2020) explains that the intention is to seduce tourists to also travel to the lesser known places in the region. Local stakeholders want to make sure that tourism does not get out of control in Giethoorn, and therefore regulate the crowds, as the village must remain liveable (Fix, 2017; Boonstra, 2018). In order to prevent extreme congestion and preserve the authentic character of the village, certain conditions are set for an increase in tourism (Van Dalen, 2020). Therefore, the municipality of Steenwijkerland has introduced new sailing regulations for Giethoorn. As explained by Tuenter (2020) and Verheij (2020), boat renters must now pay to be allowed to sail in the village canal. Finally, Tuenter (2020) presents that the municipality wants to focus on a different target audience and stimulate multi-day stays in the area. The new target audience of Giethoorn includes visitors who value the cultural and natural aspects of the region, who also contribute to the local economy of the region, instead of putting pressure on the quality of life for local residents: *''Attract the good people, and not all at the same time in one place. An important element is the hunt for the 'quality tourist'. ''What you do not want'', says Harmsma, ''is the Asian tourist who comes to your area for two or three hours, spends basically nothing and leaves again. That does not do you any good as a municipality, as an entrepreneur or as a resident'''''* (Tuenter, 2020).

5.6 Summary of media analysis

This chapter served as a context analysis of the media portrayal of Giethoorn. Throughout this chapter, it became apparent that there are different discourses on Giethoorn as portrayed by media reports. First, the media portrays Giethoorn as a bucket list tourist destination, and that, as a result, tourists from all over the world are attracted to the small village. Giethoorn is portrayed as a destination that suffers from overtourism and overcrowding. The media presents Giethoorn as an open-air museum that receives Asian tourists every single day and that the village is turning into an amusement park. Besides that, the media presents Giethoorn as a destination that is solely dependent on the tourism sector, highlighting the economic importance of the tourism sector. Furthermore, as presented by the media, Giethoorn is damaged by tourism. The media frequently highlights the negative impacts for local residents such as decreasing sense of belonging and physical damage to the village (e.g., the bridges). Finally, the media also highlights the new future direction for tourism in Giethoorn which includes a better balance between tourism and liveability, spreading and regulation, and targeting a different audience. However, since one cannot assume that people read the same sources let alone have the same kind of interpretation, the next chapter will address the perspectives of local stakeholders on the media portrayal of Giethoorn.

6. Perspectives of local stakeholders on media discourses and their performative effects

Following on from the previous chapter, which outlined the media portrayal of Giethoorn, this chapter will elaborate on the findings of this study. The findings are based on the coding schemes and data analysis of the several in-depth interviews with local stakeholders from Giethoorn. This chapter is divided into three parts. The first section will explore the perspectives of local stakeholders on the accuracy of the discourses about Giethoorn as portrayed by media. The second segment will elaborate on the judgements by local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn. The third and last section of this chapter will describe the (assumed) performative effects of the media discourses on the destination and touristic image of Giethoorn according to local stakeholders.

6.1 Accuracy of the media portrayal of Giethoorn

This section will present the opinions and perspectives of local stakeholders on the accuracy of the media portrayal of Giethoorn. As such, this section will discuss the truths and falsehoods of the media presentation according to different local stakeholders. Here, the simplification of reality by the media as well as the one-sided and selective presentation of Giethoorn will be addressed, which are frequently mentioned by local authorities, entrepreneurs and residents.

Media portrays a simplification of reality

During the interviews, it became clear that the portrayal of Giethoorn within media reports is often a simplification of reality. More specifically, various local entrepreneurs and municipal stakeholders notice that the media often selectively focuses on incidents. Interviewees express that, sometimes, the media presentation can also be seen as fundamentally wrong. The media does not come up with a nuanced story, but magnifies certain images of Giethoorn, for example a crowded canal filled with boats. Both municipal stakeholders and local entrepreneurs believe that the media presentation of Giethoorn is not always accurate, especially the images concerning the crowded scenarios in the village. As such, Giethoorn is dismissed in the media as a destination that is structurally overcrowded by tourists, while in reality, the village has certain peak moments (Policy advisor A & B, entrepreneur B & D). Entrepreneurs and municipal stakeholders agree on the fact that Giethoorn is busy on warm summer days, and that during those moments, incidents may occur that are caused by an event such as a wedding or music boat. However, most entrepreneurs find that these are often incidents that are blown up to great proportions (Entrepreneur A). As a result, the destination is determined by the image that is created in the media.

> *''I think that everyone still has that image of there being so many Chinese in Giethoorn, but I think that was 1.5 years ago, because that's how long it's been since there are so many Chinese in Giethoorn, especially through Corona. So that' So that's a bit of a problem''* (Entrepreneur F).

> *''It is precisely the incidents that are magnified, and that becomes the standard of how Giethoorn is portrayed''* (Tourism councillor).

> *''You can see that on social media, too; every now and then you see a photo of a full canal because there is a music boat. It is a narrow canal so you cannot pass each other. The first ten boats listen and wait for the music boat, the rest wait behind in a queue. That is the image from 3-4 years, but you see this every time. People act as if it is always busy there and as if you cannot sail there because there is always a traffic jam. On the one hand, it is highly irritating, because it is untrue''* (Entrepreneur B).

Especially entrepreneurs consider this to be a problem, as people can get certain expectations of the village. The image and brand of Giethoorn is considered as somewhat tarnished by various entrepreneurs, but only for those who do not know Giethoorn. Nevertheless, the product of the village is not damaged, as this has remained as strong as ever and still attracts visitors from all over the world (Entrepreneur A). Besides local entrepreneurs, certain municipal stakeholders as well as the regional marketing organisation find the media presentation unfair because it does not correspond to reality. Even certain local residents do not always agree with the current media portrayal of Giethoorn, as it paints an unrealistic image of the village (Resident B). For example, the media portrays Giethoorn as a destination that is flooded by tourists every single day. This is, according to both local entrepreneurs and residents, not the case (Entrepreneur C). In addition, local entrepreneurs as well as the municipality question the definition of 'too crowded' and 'overcrowding', as this is subjective and differs per person. While local residents might associate Giethoorn with those terms, local entrepreneurs like to think of it as 'cosiness'.

Additionally, a number of respondents share the opinion that media does not paint a realistic image of Giethoorn. Some images are correct and some are incorrect. Both local entrepreneurs as well as the province believe that the portrayal of Giethoorn within the media has been rather one-sided so far (Policy advisor C; Entrepreneur E). The images related to overcrowding and the mass arrival of Chinese tourists are illustrating examples of this selective and unrealistic presentation according to them. Entrepreneurs notice that the media shares stories related to Giethoorn only receiving Asian tourists, while in reality other (international) visitors also come to the village. Only the Chinese are recognised, and not the Americans. Especially local entrepreneurs can get annoyed at the selective media portrayal of Giethoorn, as it does not shine a positive light on the village (Entrepreneur B & C).

''Of course, there are sometimes very busy days, but that is only during the high season in August'' (Entrepreneur E).

''Many Asians come to Giethoorn, not only Chinese, but also many people from other countries'' (Entrepreneur D).

Local entrepreneurs believe that the media has also shown a selective image on Giethoorn during the current corona crisis. Since international tourists are staying away at the moment, several news outlets have attempted to write stories about how the village has been suffering from the lack of tourists. The media has steered towards showing that the entrepreneur is having a hard time, while entrepreneurs express that Giethoorn is not entirely dependent on the tourism sector. Yet, that is how the village is portrayed according to local entrepreneurs (Entrepreneur D). Moreover, municipal stakeholders and the regional marketing organisation agree that the image in the media is not entirely accurate. According to them, Giethoorn can be too crowded in certain places and at certain times. However, this does not apply to the whole year and this does not apply to the entire village of Giethoorn. There are in fact quite a few places where it is pleasantly busy and there is no peak load. The municipality believes that this nuance is left out by the press (Tourism councillor). As a result, this gives rise to a lot of criticism from entrepreneurs in the village, as they want to defend the image of Giethoorn. Certain images in the media, e.g., crowded canals, are presented without any sort of context.

''Entrepreneurs can get defensive when a picture is taken of all the boats in the Dorpsgracht. That photo was taken while some artist was playing and all the boats were in front of it. Now it is presented as if it is always so busy there. So, they can get quite angry about that'' (Policy advisor A).

''Of course, we know about some of the photos, but sometimes a photo is taken from three years ago. Of course, some people then think it is a photo of today. But then you get the result that

people think that it is now very busy in Giethoorn during corona. Then you try to paint the wrong picture, and that of course offends the entrepreneurs'' (Entrepreneur F).

While the current media presentation is considered as a problem by several local entrepreneurs and governmental organisations, some local residents, on the other hand, believe that Giethoorn is not portrayed wrongly in the media. According to them, spreading awareness of the (sometimes too) crowded days in Giethoorn is not necessarily a bad thing, as it can lead to actions and measures by governmental organisations. Additionally, the regional marketing organisation states that while the media image does not do justice to the low season of the village, those images do support some of the situations that have happened in the village, which can sometimes be described as one large fairground (Area manager):

''There are some rumours that it is too busy, or that there are many Chinese. But guys, that's okay too, if hordes of buses with Asians arrive, hundreds of Asians are brought in on Sundays, then it's okay to say that Giethoorn is full of Chinese. Not that that's a problem. Just naming it is not wrong as far as I am concerned'' (Resident B).

''We think it is good that there is awareness that the village is being destroyed. We hope that the government and councillors will look at that and take action'' (Resident A).

Due to the significant media attention, Giethoorn has become well known among many tourists. However, the municipality, province and regional marketing organisation state that the attractions and sights in the village are not sufficiently highlighted in the media. In turn, this creates the idea that Giethoorn only consists of crowded canals with bumping boats as the media solely focuses on the most popular parts of the village. Hence, the surrounding (natural) environment around Giethoorn is barely seen within the media presentation (Policy advisor B; Tourism councillor). The municipality expresses that Giethoorn does not only consist of the centre of the village, but also of the beautiful natural area in the region. One third of the municipality is national park, which is also important. Hence, Giethoorn is located in an area where there is much to experience for people (Policy advisor A). This is why some municipal stakeholders are frustrated that Giethoorn is seen as a separate entity by certain parties, including the media, instead of being seen and presented as part of a larger area that is worth visiting. Specifically, the municipality and regional marketing organisation believe that this is a problem for Giethoorn, as the village now has a one-sided product, mostly related to boating (Policy advisor A). Very often, the connection is not made to the nature around Giethoorn, and the beautiful villages and towns in the area, such as the Zuiderzee towns around the village (Area manager). As such, the province believes that the aspects of the surrounding area should be emphasised more:

''When it comes to image, what matters to me is the connection between the village and its immediate surroundings, which shows a completely different picture. The surrounding environment is still given far too little attention. We have to take the time to portray the quality and values of the areas in a beautiful way, but very few people do that'' (Policy advisor C).

While the media mostly associates Giethoorn with overcrowded scenarios, several municipal stakeholders associate Giethoorn with peace and quiet, most specifically during the early mornings and evenings (Policy advisor B; Tourism councillor). Both local entrepreneurs and residents find Giethoorn to be pure outdoor, peace and nature. The green environment and surrounding nature are aspects that contribute to this characteristic of peace and quiet. Several local residents and entrepreneurs state that a majority of the visitors is attracted to Giethoorn due to its rustic character (Resident B):

''Relaxed people in a unique village in a unique nature. 99% of customers leave with a relaxed feeling'' (Entrepreneur A).

The municipality, local entrepreneurs and the regional marketing organisation realise that the media does not include the authentic aspects of the village within their presentation. According to them, Giethoorn is an authentic village. The tourist part of the village is still very authentic, including its waterways. For example, it is still not possible to enter the village by car, not even for residents (Policy advisor A). Several local entrepreneurs agree on the fact that Giethoorn is a unique village that is worth visiting (Entrepreneur E & B). Unlike most other places in the Netherlands, Giethoorn has fourteen kilometres of houses with water and bridges (Entrepreneur F; Policy advisor B; Area manager). In addition, entrepreneurs acknowledge that the wide-ranging family owned facilities within the village are another reason why Giethoorn can be recognised as an authentic village and why tourists are drawn to it:

''How cool is it when you walk 50 metres and see a nice restaurant or bar. We gave everything from a snack bar to a Michelin starred restaurant in the village'' (Entrepreneur C).

''We have 35 petit restaurants in Giethoorn, which you would never have otherwise in a village with 2800 inhabitants. And that is beautiful. So, it has actually remained very pure, we do not have the big brands and chains here, but just the families and family values of the various generations that are here'' (Entrepreneur D).

6.2 Judgements of local stakeholders on media discourses about Giethoorn

In this section the judgements by local stakeholders on the media portrayal of Giethoorn will be presented. As such, this section will include the views of both the positive as well as negative aspects of the media presentation according to local stakeholders.

Media portrayal is mostly negative

While the definition of perceived (over)crowding might differ per stakeholder, the municipal stakeholders, local entrepreneurs and residents agree that Giethoorn is mainly described negatively in the media. As such, the negative aspects and stories about Giethoorn are picked out more quickly by the media than positive stories. As said by Entrepreneur A: *''good news is no news, so bad news is only fun for them''*. The media often highlights, in particular, the negative aspects of tourism in the village. For example, the municipality notices that the quick visits and tourist shops are often highlighted in the media. As a result, the good aspects of tourism remain underexposed and therefore unknown among most visitors. Both municipal stakeholders as local entrepreneurs realize that positive news is not a sexy and interesting story, which is why the media leaves those stories out. The media shows the excessive situations, for example a crowded canal or incidents in the centre. Those images go viral and, in turn, they define the image of Giethoorn (Area manager).

''The media always want stories about how it is too busy, how tourism is getting out of hand, how residents are angry and how entrepreneurs are at loss for words. Those are often the articles you read, while if you zoom in on bigger picture surrounding tourism and policies, and how much money is made and how important it is for the quality of life, and how you can make something beautiful out of it. I do not see many of those kinds of well nuanced articles, and that makes me sad'' (Tourism councillor).

''The composition has changed, though, and with all the new media online, a certain image sticks around longer. Image formation is influenced by a kind of incident management. There is a kind of sensation in what sticks and what sticks'' (Area manager).

"The media portrays the village as if it were very busy and a total mess all the time. If there is a fight, it is widely reported in the newspapers" (Entrepreneur G).

Local entrepreneurs find it frustrating that they are always reminded of the negative image of Giethoorn within the media (Entrepreneur C). As a consequence, Giethoorn is not exemplary for the rest of the area, especially not the way in which Giethoorn is often portrayed in the press. Consequently, the municipality of Steenwijkerland is struggling with the image of Giethoorn as it has consequences for the entire region (Policy advisor A). In the past, the municipality have looked at what kind of name they can give to their tourism brand. While they were tempted to choose Giethoorn, due to its well-known place in the municipality, in the end they decided to go a different way. They did not want visitors to only associate the entire region with bumping boats, since the area has something very different to offer. Hence, as said by Policy advisor A: *"we are not always happy with the image of Giethoorn".* Furthermore, some local entrepreneurs find it unfair that other destinations within the region, as well as in other parts in the country, use the media to spread the word that they do not want to be or become a second Giethoorn, and therefore shine a negative light on the village. This is why entrepreneurs try their best to tell the positive side of tourism-related stories to the press, although this is not always used:

"What I actually find very unpleasant, all kinds of tourist regions or destinations or colleagues, who misuse Giethoorn, for example the province of Drenthe or Friesland, villages nearby. Then the papers say that they do want tourists, or that they have new projects, but then it says that they don't want to be or become Giethoorn. There are many other destinations that are also very beautiful, why should that be Giethoorn, because I think you have to start from your own strength. You should never promote at the expense of another destination" (Entrepreneur A).

"Many newspapers visit me regularly, and I think it is important to let my voice be heard. But then you see that they don't include certain things. That's why I ask newspapers to show it to me first before they publish it, because otherwise I don't want it. It often focuses on the more negative things, so on things that are not nice. I always say that there are many things that are nice" (Entrepreneur C).

Nevertheless, the majority of local entrepreneurs realise that Giethoorn is not the only destination experiencing a negative image formation within the media. Other popular tourist destinations such as Venice and Amsterdam are often negatively portrayed in the media, yet these destinations are still often visited by tourists and therefore remain a popular choice among visitors. The same applies for Giethoorn: visitors keep coming to experience the village for themselves (Entrepreneurs A, B, C, G). Entrepreneurs also acknowledge the fact that negative aspects are more talked about and remembered in comparison to positive aspects or comments from, for example, tourists and newspapers.

"You should not dwell on it too long. But that is also typical of mankind; the moment you get one negative comment from a guest, while you get thousands of positive comments, you keep on talking about it for three days. But about all the other people who are very positive about my restaurant or about Giethoorn, you have to think and focus a lot more" (Entrepreneur C).

Due to the mostly negative media presentation, local entrepreneurs, the municipality and regional marketing organisation attempt to highlight the other, positive, side of tourism in their village which is not often found in the media presentation. The municipality explains that tourism significantly contributes to the local economy of Giethoorn, as the village earns approximately 34 million euros annually in turnover from the tourist economy (Tourism councillor; Area manager). In addition, approximately 36% of employment in Giethoorn is related to the tourist-recreational sector (Policy advisor A). As such, various local entrepreneurs believe that if they invest in their company, they are

in fact also investing in their local environment. As such, entrepreneurs believe that if the village remains attractive for tourists to visit, and if degradation is therefore prevented, a better image of Giethoorn can be created (Entrepreneur B). In addition, various local entrepreneurs as well as the regional marketing organisation state that tourism also significantly contributes to the level of facilities within the village. Entrepreneurs acknowledge that those facilities would not have been present in the countryside without the level of tourism (Entrepreneur D).

"Tourism and recreation have negative sides, but there are also positive sides that the media does not often portray. If you look at facilities that would otherwise be almost non-existent in rural communities, for example, tourism and recreation keep these facilities up to date" (Area manager).

Especially the local residents and entrepreneurs of Giethoorn have noticed that the popularity of the village has downsides as well, also in relation to the ways in which Giethoorn is portrayed in the media. Like many other tourist hotspots in Europe, the media often associates Giethoorn with terms like 'overtourism' and 'mass tourism'. Especially during the last couple of years, many news articles as well as several documentaries have focused on (over)tourism in the village, and how this impacts the local residents (Resident A). Residents and entrepreneurs state that the media portrays Giethoorn as a super touristic village where people have to sail through the canals in traffic jams and hordes of people (especially masses of Chinese) walk along the footpath (Entrepreneur E).

"But of course, there are also disadvantages to being at the forefront; you are often included in the list of tourist destinations that are not doing well. In terms of tourism, we are often mentioned in the list of Amsterdam and Venice, where people talk a lot about mass tourism" (Entrepreneur D).

"Overtourism, crowds and nuisance. Those three terms. That is how Giethoorn is portrayed in the media. Overtourism, crowds caused by tourists, nuisance caused by Chinese is suggested. That was the image to the outside world" (Entrepreneur A).

Local entrepreneurs find the image and perception of overtourism in Giethoorn within the media not entirely justified and part of a media hype. Excessive situations related to tourism happen in a small part of a village at certain times and in certain places. Especially international visitors tend to visit the village quickly. That means most of the boats are often taken over by international visitors and those same boats sail through the centre of the village six times. According to some entrepreneurs, this creates the illusion of overcrowding (Entrepreneur A). The crowded places which can cause bottlenecks at certain times and places are only a small part of the village. More specifically, some entrepreneurs within the village accuse certain local residents of contributing to the village's association to terms such as overtourism. Entrepreneurs are annoyed by the fact that local residents go to the press to share their stories about the negative impacts of tourism on their village and liveability. As a result, Giethoorn has a mainly negative connotation within media reports. Entrepreneurs find it hard to get rid of the negative image of Giethoorn, including its link to overtourism, and are therefore sometimes worried about the image formation of the village (Entrepreneur A & B).

Apart from the many media stories about overcrowded situations in Giethoorn, the municipality notices that the media portrays Giethoorn as a village where none of the stakeholders can get along with each other. The municipality tries to nuance it here and there, as, according to them, it is not the case that residents scream blue murder about tourism. The municipality is in good consultation with local residents, and they are well informed (Tourism councillor). Local residents also notice that the media portrays Giethoorn as a village where the residents and entrepreneurs cannot get along due to the many conflicts of interest. The province considers this media presentation to be accurate, as the cohesion in the village is often hard to find. However, while certain local residents agree on the fact

that there is a certain lack of unity among the various stakeholders within the village, some residents mention that they notice more contradiction among the many entrepreneurs within the village than between entrepreneurs and residents (Resident B). The latter was always suggested by media reports, but some local residents find that this is absolutely not the case. According to them, it is very hard to find solidarity among the entrepreneurs. Even certain local entrepreneurs admit that they miss unity among entrepreneurs in the village.

''The entrepreneurs are not entrepreneurs who work together. The entrepreneurs in Giethoorn are all for themselves, they would rather see each other's business go down than help each other out. They also miss a bit of unity in the village'' (Entrepreneur G).

Positive side: bad publicity is still publicity

While various respondents experience negative sides to the current media portrayal of Giethoorn, that same presentation also presents a different side for local stakeholders: it creates publicity and makes Giethoorn known to the world. Local entrepreneurs realise that, because of the media attention, Giethoorn has become popular for both international as domestic visitors (Entrepreneur E). The municipality also acknowledges that there is national and international attraction to the area (Policy advisor B). As such, many entrepreneurs see the media attention as both an advantage and disadvantage. As said by Entrepreneur C: *"I have always learned that negative advertising is also a form of advertising. This past summer, you saw it very well: Dutch people could not and did not go abroad, and instead went to places in the Netherlands, including Giethoorn"*. Additionally, Entrepreneur B explains that Giethoorn used to be an average destination because not everyone knew that the village existed. However, nowadays people cannot stop talking about Giethoorn and the village is situated in the top 5 destinations of the country in people's minds, alongside Amsterdam, Zaanse Schans and Kinderdijk.

''Giethoorn is a world tourist attraction. You also see that people from all over the world come there'' (Policy advisor C).

''I have always said, you have to abuse the name of Giethoorn if you want to do a bit of business. But that also means that if something happens in Giethoorn, the media will make use of it because it is interesting for people, and so that people get an image of Giethoorn. That is also a disadvantage'' (Entrepreneur C).

Despite the negative image as portrayed by the media, visitors keep coming anyway. According to several local entrepreneurs, this illustrates the obstinacy of tourists. Tourists determine their own destination and want to judge for themselves what they encounter (Entrepreneur A). Some entrepreneurs believe that while the negative presentation of Giethoorn has affected the brand slightly, yet the product of Giethoorn has not been impacted and has remained strong. In fact, because of the negative image of the nuisance caused by Chinese tourists, both the municipality and local entrepreneurs have noticed that many Dutch people came to Giethoorn to see whether this was really the case (Entrepreneur A).

''Dutch, Belgian and German tourists have rediscovered Giethoorn last summer. They stayed away probably because of the images that were there, showing that it was very busy in Giethoorn. I can imagine that those images in the media have scared off a lot of people, who now might have thought that it is a chance to go to a quiet Giethoorn'' (Policy advisor A).

6.3 Assumed performative effects of media discourses

This section will present the assumed (potential) performative effects of the media portrayal on the destination and touristic image of Giethoorn according to local stakeholders. How do stakeholders deal with these effects on their destination and image? As such, this section will address the difficulty of shining a different light on Giethoorn, the ways in which stakeholders use the media attention for their own advantage, the damage of the media portrayal for the touristic image and the forced changes in tourism because of the media portrayal.

Difficulty to portray different images of Giethoorn

Various stakeholders try to influence and change the negative image of the village by selling and presenting Giethoorn differently, for example by showing the nature, history and culture of the village and area. However, this remains difficult. It has also led to the fact that both municipal stakeholders as well as local entrepreneurs do not always cooperate with journalistic articles that are purely aimed at sensation (Policy advisor A). The province, municipality and regional marketing organisation state that if the media presents Giethoorn as a village that came into existence because of its history and the different kinds of born crafts, and if they can attract a different target group with this, then Giethoorn will not go under because of its own success. Nevertheless, they do realize that it will take a lot of effort to achieve this ambition (Policy advisor A & B; Tourism councillor; Area manager). In addition, some local residents agree that the beauty of the surrounding area is not highlighted in the media, or the fact that Giethoorn is situated between a number of Hanseatic cities with beautiful harbours. According to them, it would be more positive if the media shows the beauty of the area instead of only the sensational incidents in the centre of the village (Resident A). Consequently, local entrepreneurs often try to find ways to make noise in defence of the image of the village. As entrepreneurs regularly receive requests to show Giethoorn, they try to link it to positive aspects of the village and surrounding area in order to receive more positive news (Entrepreneur B & F).

''If you take photographs in our area, you get a very different picture than when you go to the centre of Giethoorn, where lots of boats come together at some busy crossroads. And if you make the films and recordings there, well, you get a very nasty image of Giethoorn. News sources like The Telegraph are sources that show precisely this kind of images, they don't put in their newspaper that Giethoorn is a very beautiful village environment with beautiful nature, no you don't see that of course. So, I think that in that sense Giethoorn is portrayed negatively'' (Entrepreneur G).

''You have to do your best to get your village in the media, and if something happens, and it happens to be negative at the time, then of course you will be in the news. So, we have to make sure that we get more positive news than negative'' (Entrepreneur F).

Taking advantage of the media

Throughout the interviews, it emerged that many parties take advantage of media attention and presentation to achieve certain goals. Some parties consciously use the media to get things moving (Policy advisor B). The municipality, certain residents and entrepreneurs have used the media for their own advantage. Thanks to the fame of Giethoorn, the municipality has received financial support from the national government. The municipality says that they have sometimes helped with creating a certain portrayal of Giethoorn within the media. As a result, they now have an investment programme of 26 million euros for the tourism sector, mainly from national and provincial money. The municipality realizes that they would not have received those financial budgets if Giethoorn was not so popular in the press. Therefore, they took advantage of that (Tourism councillor; Policy advisor A).

''I think that our municipality is in the picture nationwide thanks to Giethoorn. The national government knows where to find us when we have problems, and they listen to us. When we invite

members of parliament to our area, and we mention Giethoorn, they often come. So, I think there are a lot of advantages to Giethoorn's publicity in the media'' (Policy advisor A).

Besides the municipality, several local residents have also taken advantage of the media from time to time in order to raise awareness about the consequences of tourism in the village, mostly related to the threatened safety within the village due to tourism. As such, local residents see the benefit of taking advantage of media attention to create awareness about the impact of tourism on their quality of life in the village and to ensure that certain measures and regulations are established to protect the village. In fact, some resident would be willing to contribute to ruining the image of the village in order to ensure more regulation and action on tourism in the village. Local residents know that the media highlights the negative sides of tourism, and realise that they could take advantage of this. While some residents have participated in interviews for news reports, and have shared positive things, they could also share the other side of the coin in order to be heard by politicians (Resident A & B).

> *''You have to imagine that if someone tells you something about safety in the village of Giethoorn, and you are not really heard by the politicians, you will try to find a solution for it. For example, if you take a photo of a huge row of cars parked everywhere left and right, then that's a solution to show politicians that some of the current situations are too dangerous''* (Resident B).

> *''If we ruin the image ourselves, and if we post those photos on Twitter more often, and we make people not want to come to Giethoorn because of the mass situations, then maybe fewer people will come. Then we, as residents, will actually have our way, and people won't want to come anymore because it's portrayed in such a negative light, and because they no longer see it as a positive outing. I think it would be a shame, but if the game has to be played, then so be it, if it saves my enjoyment of living in Giethoorn''* (Resident A).

Various entrepreneurs outside as well as within Giethoorn, on the other hand, find it annoying that Giethoorn gets so much attention from the media. They are frustrated by the fact that certain local residents use the media to spread negative images of Giethoorn. They notice that the residents who do not earn a living from tourism are often the ones who seek out the media to make their complaints about it (Entrepreneur B). More specifically, some entrepreneurs believe that a revenue model is created to bash Giethoorn in order to receive money from the national government and Europe. For a certain self-interest, entrepreneurs notice that certain parties abuse the brand of Giethoorn. According to them, several destinations do this too. On the one hand, other destinations in the region and country do not need Giethoorn, but on the other hand, Giethoorn is used in a package of their product. According to those entrepreneurs, the earning model is the whole problem. The name of the village of Giethoorn is negatively used by other destinations and politicians in order to receive more money. Entrepreneurs find this type of earning model damaging for the village as those people and destinations are profiling themselves at the expense of others. In this case, the brand of Giethoorn is abused by others and solely the negative aspects are mentioned by them instead of also showing the positive aspects of the village.

> *''Negative images are used by politicians, by the media, by marketing parties, by tourist destinations and colleagues. There is a kind of earning model to name the village of Giethoorn negatively, whereby you can generate more news, whereby you can get money from The Hague, whereby you bring attention to your destination. Profiling yourself at the expense of others, in this case abusing the brand of Giethoorn, while they do not mention the good and positive things, and only the negative aspects''* (Entrepreneur B).

> *''It's more the annoyance that makes me wonder why people do this. They don't really know anything about the village. In one way or another, I find it damaging. You are trying to profile your*

activities at the expense of others. That goes against my sense of justice. So, I do take it personally''
(Entrepreneur B).

Media is damaging for the touristic image of Giethoorn

Several local residents in particular fear that the image of Giethoorn will diminish if negative associations continue to be highlighted in the media. In that case, Giethoorn will no longer be seen as the cosy family get-away, but as a chaotic situation instead since that is what the media shows. In turn, the image of Giethoorn will be destroyed (Resident A). More specifically, because of the negative and selective media presentation in the media, the regional marketing organisation and municipality have the impression that a certain group of visitors is staying away from Giethoorn due to the expectation that the village is overflooded by mass tourists on a daily basis (Entrepreneur G; Area manager). In addition, some local residents believe that the image of the ordinary citizen in the country can also become negative due to the media's emphasis on the negative side of tourism in Giethoorn (Resident A).

In addition, the province, municipality and several local entrepreneurs believe that the current media portrayal is damaging to the image of Giethoorn, as the media has created an image of Giethoorn as a destination that is structurally overrun by (Asian) tourists, while tourists are only there at certain times (Tourism councillor; Entrepreneur D). Local entrepreneurs realise that the articles about Giethoorn in newspapers are often the images of misery and negativity. They notice a lack of positive images and stories about Giethoorn in media reports. Additionally, local entrepreneurs have also heard that some visitors try to avoid Giethoorn because they expect the village to be constantly (over)crowded. Hence, entrepreneurs believe that the image of overcrowding prevails over other images that have been made of Giethoorn, for examples in documentaries. As such, they believe that the negative (media) images have more impact on visitors than the positive images, as they notice that people have different expectations about Giethoorn because of the media (Entrepreneur B & G). Besides that, both the province and the municipality believe that the media portrayal has quite a negative impact on the touristic image of Giethoorn. While they do realise that certain images, such as incidents, are information that sells, they find it, however, disappointing that there are very few parties who take the trouble to highlight the area in a different way (Policy advisor C; Tourism councillor).

> *''It does have quite a negative impact. If you are portrayed on the news or in articles as an area that is structurally too crowded, and as a village filled with bumping boats, and as a destination where tourism is getting out of control, then people will eventually have that image of you as an area. And if that does not quite match reality, fewer people will come''* (Tourism councillor).

As such, local associations and residents have tried to find a balance with entrepreneurs in terms of tourism within the village. Local parties want to start a conversation and discussion with the local entrepreneurs on how to avoid that the village is not destroyed by its own success, how the village can remain safe for everyone, and most importantly, how the brand of Giethoorn is not ruined. If the village of Giethoorn is avoided by people, as they expect the village to be too crowded, then fewer people will come, which is something that entrepreneurs also want to prevent from happening (Resident A & B).

Attracting the wrong audience

Several stakeholders from the municipality and the regional marketing organisation state that the current media presentation attracts an undesired target audience, which they describe as the 'hit-and-run tourist'. In the press, Giethoorn is repeatedly portrayed as a village that is overrun by Chinese tourists and where people constantly sail through the Dorpsgracht in a traffic jam. According to various municipal stakeholders, this is untrue and ensures that their preferred visitors stay away while the 'hit-

and-run' tourist keeps coming (Policy advisor A). In the current image as created by the media, Giethoorn is a destination that foreign tourists quickly want to experience, just like Kinderdijk and Zaanse Schans. Visitors want to tick these places off their bucket list and move on (Area manager).

''The fact that people now quickly visit Giethoorn and quickly walk around, quickly sail and then leave again, does Giethoorn no good. It would be nice if people stay a bit longer. Now it is an hour in the boat and then back on the bus, which means much more sailing and crowding, even with the same number of boats'' (Policy advisor B).

''People are still very welcome, but we will really discourage the large numbers and the quantity of people in the buses if this still proves to be the case in the coming years. We see that it does not benefit the area, as the area experiences a lot of pressure from it. You want the balance between daily quality of life and sustainable tourism to be in balance, so that you can live there, but that you can also receive people'' (Tourism councillor).

While there is a certain type of audience that is attracted to the village because of the media presentation, there are other groups who try to avoid the village because of that same presentation. The regional marketing organisation, municipality and several local residents believe that because of the image that is shared in the media, the preferred visitors stay away. The municipal stakeholders describe these preferred visitors as 'quality visitors' who contribute to contribute to the entire region by spending multiple days in the area. According to the regional marketing organisation, these visitors care about the environment and are interested in the surrounding area. In addition, local residents view that because of the media, the wanted visitors stay away. They describe those visitors as nature lovers who are looking for peace and quiet (Resident A).

''A target group we would like are the quality visitors, who like peace and quiet, culture, and want to stay for several days. If those people see an article often enough about the fact that Giethoorn is completely overrun by Asians, then that target group might just stay away'' (Tourism councillor).

As a result of attracting the wrong audience, the so-called 'hit-and-run' tourists, local residents express that their quality of life is decreasing. Residents experience nuisance caused by tourists, including damage to private properties such as the private bridges (Resident A). As a result, there is a certain tension between the amount and type of guest that Giethoorn can carry, and Policy advisor C therefore questions: *''Is there still a normal living environment for residents?''* Moreover, local residents also notice that the social context of the village is changing, as an increasing number of houses in the village are given tourist functions. This spoils the residents' enjoyment of living in Giethoorn, as those tourists are not part of the social context of the village. As stated by Resident A: *''A sense of social insecurity is created as I live in a street where fifty percent of the houses have a tourist function''*. In addition, several stakeholders, including the province, regional marketing organisation and local entrepreneurs, notice that various news articles often present Giethoorn as an open-air museum or theme park. According to those stakeholders, Giethoorn should get rid of this impression. It is not the intention that visitors think that they can use everything in the village for free (Area manager). As a result, a few residents have moved away because they did not want to live in a tourist village any more. That is, according to some residents, the negative and shameful side of tourism. People who are born in Giethoorn see the village getting destroyed by the number of tourists, and they do not want to be part of it anymore (Resident A).

Media portrayal leads to forced changes in tourism
Partly due to the numerous articles and reports in the news about the negative side of tourism in Giethoorn, it is time for a new direction for tourism according to the municipality, province, local

residents and the regional marketing organisation. The province believes that the media attention leads to a number of necessary regulations and adjustments because otherwise the village could lose its status (Policy advisor C). This is why the municipality of Steenwijkerland has created a future vision for the village, including a new vision on tourism, in collaboration with the local entrepreneurs' association and the local residents' association. This future vision describes the assignment for the future of Giethoorn: spreading and regulating tourism as well as establishing a better balance between tourism and liveability. As such, the new direction of tourism in Giethoorn focuses more on quality visitors and multi-day stays instead of quick visits and day tourists. As stated by the Tourism councillor: *''We imagine a different Giethoorn in the future''.*

In addition, the new vision on tourism in Giethoorn includes spreading visitors to the surrounding region. Both the municipality and the province therefore hope that the (desired) image of Giethoorn in the future will show more the peace and quiet of the area. As such, Policy advisor C believes that *''if the qualities of nature are emphasised, then Giethoorn has the opportunity to receive a different public, such as people interested in history and nature''.* Like the province and municipality, several local residents would also like to see more visitors who are interested in the culture and history of the village as well as the nature of the surrounding area (Resident A). According to residents, those kinds of visitors significantly contribute to the village and area. Additionally, the regional marketing organisation wants to focus more on the multi-stay visitors who want to immerse themselves in the area. As stated by the Area manager: *''that is the only way for the area to benefit from tourism. If visitors come to the area for a different reason, to experience the area, a different image can be created for both Giethoorn as the surrounding the area''.* Therefore, the municipality believes that this kind of new tourism strengthen the rest of the region (Policy advisor A).

6.4 Summary of results

To summarize this empirical chapter, Table 3 below presents the findings of this study as categorized into four sections: accuracy of media portrayal according to local stakeholders, the judgements by local stakeholders on the media portrayal (negative and positive) and the performative effects of the media portrayal on the destination and touristic image of Giethoorn.

Findings of this study	

Accuracy of media discourses according to local stakeholders	• Media portrays a simplification of reality
	    ○ One-sided and selective presentation
	    ○ Lack of presentation on surrounding area and village character

Judgements of local stakeholders on media discourses about Giethoorn	• Mostly negative media portrayal
	    ○ Overtourism
	    ○ Conflicts between stakeholders
	• Positive: bad publicity is still publicity
	    ○ Giethoorn is a popular tourist destination

Potential performative effects of media discourses on destination and touristic image of Giethoorn	• Showing a different image of Giethoorn remains difficult
	• Stakeholders take advantage of the media for their own interests
	• Media portrayal is damaging for the touristic image of Giethoorn
	    ○ Attracting the wrong audience (hit-and-run tourists)
	• Media portrayal leads to forced changes in tourism
	    ○ More regulation and spreading of tourists
	    ○ Balance between tourism and liveability

Table 2: Overview of the findings of this study

7. Analysis

In this analytical chapter, the main research results will be discussed in relation to the conceptual framework as provided in the third chapter. This chapter consists of three main sections. First, various discourses of dealing with the media image will be explored. Second, the performative reality effects of media discourses about destinations will be discussed; how do media discourses become performative and influence destinations? Third, the knowledge/power framework among local stakeholders within Giethoorn will be discussed: how are opinions and interests linked? Finally, this chapter will conclude with a revised version of the conceptual framework.

7.1 Discourses of dealing with (negative) media portrayal

Based on the findings of this study, it can be noted that the media leads a life of its own. Media discourses have their own logic and their own laws. In that sense, media discourses can be seen as being separate from reality. Media discourses resonate with the world, for example with destinations such as Giethoorn, but at the same time it follows its own laws. For example, media discourses must always be news-worthy, entertaining and provocative for its audience, especially within commercial media platforms. Hence, media discourses follow certain laws that ensure that a majority of the world stays out of the media, as it is not interesting enough for the intended audience. Therefore, certain aspects and stories are selectively highlighted by the media, one example being the negative sides of tourism in Giethoorn. Hence, other aspects, for example the village character, the surrounding area and positive aspects of tourism, are selectively ignored by the media as it is not interesting or news-worthy enough for the audience. In addition, while most people read news articles and scroll past it, those articles, however, have significant impacts on their subject, for example destinations such as Giethoorn. The findings of this study have showed that discourses operate according to a certain logic in regard to reacting to and dealing with the (negative) media images. This study has illustrated different ways in which discourses transform themselves in response to (negative) media attention. Therefore, various types of discursive strategies in order to cope with the media attention and portrayal were established throughout this study:

Discourses of acceptance

This type of coping mechanism refers to the acceptance of the current media images of Giethoorn among stakeholders. Within this discursive coping strategy, local stakeholders are happy with the current media image of Giethoorn. For example, some stakeholders believe that it is justified that awareness is spread of how tourism can severely impact a destination like Giethoorn, and therefore accept the current media portrayal of the village.

Discourses of rejection

Within this type of discourse, stakeholders reject the current media images as they do not agree with the way in which Giethoorn is portrayed. For example, some stakeholders believe that the current media portrayal is a simplification of reality and shines a negative light on the village. According to them, the media can be highlight more nuanced stories and images. This is why, for example local authorities and local entrepreneurs, try to show different positive images of the village in order to restore the village's status.

Discourses of (strategic) engagement

This discursive coping strategy refers to the strategic use of media attention and portrayal by stakeholders for their own benefit. 'If you cannot beat them, join them' is a fitting phrase that explains this coping mechanism. If stakeholders cannot outperform their competitors in a certain activity, in this case media discourses, they might as well collaborate with them and get an advantage. Stakeholders incorporate the media portrayal in their own story of Giethoorn, hence certain images

and stereotypes of Giethoorn are used by parties and propagated as a resistance against the stereotypes circulated by media discourses. As appeared throughout the findings of this study, multiple stakeholders, including local residents and authorities, expressed that they have used the media for their own advantage in order to, for example, increase the awareness and attention from necessary parties such as the national government. Local stakeholders have contributed to a certain media image of the village, especially images related to overcrowding, to (financially) benefit from it. As such, stakeholders recognize that if Giethoorn had not been so well-publicized, the national government would not have given them as much attention and compensation. Therefore, stakeholders have misused and taken advantage of the media attention of Giethoorn. As such, those stakeholders are willing to contribute to the image of Giethoorn within the media, and therefore also damage the image of Giethoorn, in order to achieve certain advantages such as measures, regulations and financial compensations.

Discourses of (positive) reversal

This discursive strategy refers to reversing negative discourses as presented by the media, and reframing discourses as positive. Hence, this coping strategy includes showing the positive side of media attention and turning criticism around. As an example, there are stakeholders who see the bright side of the negative media images by the media, as it leads to popularity and awareness of the destination. Bad publicity still generates publicity, and therefore Giethoorn remains a popular destination for (inter)national tourists.

7.2 Performative reality effects of media discourses on destination and touristic image

Within this research, performative (reality) effects are considered when material aspects or regulation is changed and/or adapted due to certain discourses. Hence, this next paragraph explores the different mechanisms of how discourses become performative in the 'real world', hence the reality effects of media discourses within Giethoorn; how is Giethoorn changing because of the media discourses?

Increasing popularity among tourists

The findings of this study have shown that especially the negative portrayal of Giethoorn within the media has led to positive attention for the destination, as bad publicity still generates publicity. As such, Giethoorn continues to be discussed in the media, whether it is positively or negatively related. Therefore, Giethoorn remains popular among tourists because many visitors want to experience the village for themselves. For example, various interviewees expressed that whereas Giethoorn was a popular destination for international visitors before the corona crisis, it has now also become a popular destination choice for Dutch visitors as many of them have been rediscovering places within the country due to the current pandemic and the travel restrictions.

Strategic use of media by stakeholders to serve local interests

The fact that local people strategically use the media attention and portrayal to serve their own local interests, can be seen as a performative reality effect of media discourses on Giethoorn. Hence, media discourses can be used as revenue models to increase awareness and achieve certain goals and ambitions, such as financial compensation for investment projects. The rather negative media portrayal of Giethoorn has ensured that the destination has received attention from local authorities and national governments and is therefore taken seriously by those parties. Therefore, the popularity of Giethoorn in the media is used for its own benefit and the interest of stakeholders.

Stakeholders, especially local authorities, express the complexity of the media as it remains difficult to change and/or highlight different (positive) images of Giethoorn within the media. In fact, certain entrepreneurs have a lack of trust in certain media outlets, as they only pick up negative stories and selectively leave out certain positive and uplifting stories. As such, the selective presentation of Giethoorn within the media has consequences for the target audience of the destination. Stakeholders believe that the current media image of Giethoorn leads to a selective target audience being attracted to the village, which they define as 'hit-and-run' tourists. Instead, several local stakeholders would like to receive more 'quality visitors' who are interested in the history, culture and nature of the village and its surroundings. Stakeholders believe that these kinds of preferred visitors are scared off by the current media portrayal of Giethoorn and therefore decide not to visit the village because the village is often associated with chaotic situations and described as an amusement park and open-air museum.

Changing regulations related to tourism

Different news articles within the media have often negatively associated Giethoorn with problematic sides of tourism. For example, images related to overtourism and mass tourism have been frequently circulated by media discourses on Giethoorn, including the impacts of (over)tourism on the quality of life for local residents. In turn, this particular media portrayal has led to forced changes and adjustments within the village in order to maintain and improve their status and image. As such, the municipality of Steenwijkerland has cooperated with different local associations of Giethoorn in order to establish a new direction for tourism within the village. This new direction aims to establish a better balance between tourism and liveability, which includes the balance between tourism, economy, and ecology. Stakeholders are compelled to regulate and manage tourism in a better manner in order to achieve the previously mentioned balance and create a better image of Giethoorn in the future to avoid losing the status of the village.

7.3 Power/knowledge framework

As Foucault has stated, an opinion or knowledge statement is always linked to power or interests. Stakeholders realise that there is a conflict of interests and a lack of unity within Giethoorn because each stakeholder has a different role and interest on certain matters. Every local stakeholder in Giethoorn speaks from their own perspective. The opinions of the local entrepreneurs and residents differ enormously. This has to do with the different interests of the actors. Entrepreneurs are largely dependent on the incoming tourists who visit the village. Residents who live in the village and are not involved in the village's tourism sector, on the other hand, have less to do with tourists and may therefore have a lower tolerance. As a result, residents can intervene more swiftly, for example by sharing their (negative) experiences with the media, in the hopes that members of the municipality will listen and take action.

Although the opinions of residents and stakeholders of government organisations are similar, there is a difference between the interests of these groups. Local authorities have contributed to the image of Giethoorn within the media in order to receive funding for projects and investment programmes within the tourism sector. Therefore, they have an interest in creating a certain image of Giethoorn, mostly related to crowded scenarios, in order to move things in their direction. Entrepreneurs, however, have a completely different interest when it comes to the tourism sector. While residents and municipal stakeholders focus on creating a better balance between tourism and liveability, entrepreneurs who are directly involved in the tourism sector believe that tourism should not be regulated or spread as this would affect the number of incoming tourists. Hence, there are quite a few different interests of parties in the village since residents, entrepreneurs and authorities all have their own role to play.

7.4 Revising the conceptual framework

Finally, the revised version of the conceptual framework, hence a visual summary of the results of this research, can be found underneath in Figure 2. This visualisation describes the different assumed (potential) performative effects of the media portrayal on the destination and touristic image of Giethoorn, including the interpretations of local stakeholders.
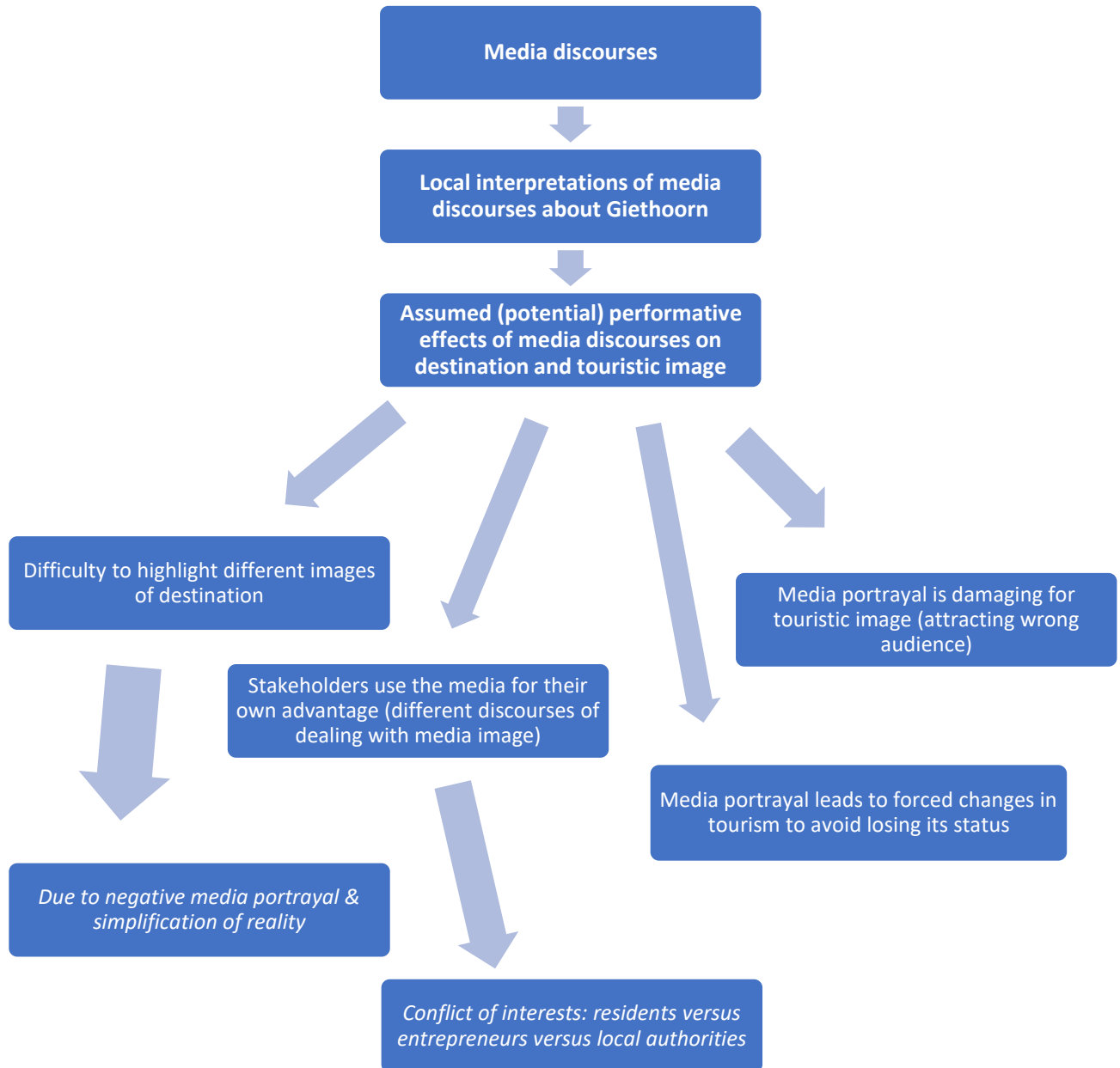
Media discourses

Local interpretations of media discourses about Giethoorn

Assumed (potential) performative effects of media discourses on destination and touristic image

Difficulty to highlight different images of destination

Stakeholders use the media for their own advantage (different discourses of dealing with media image)

Media portrayal is damaging for touristic image (attracting wrong audience)

Due to negative media portrayal & simplification of reality

Media portrayal leads to forced changes in tourism to avoid losing its status

Conflict of interests: residents versus entrepreneurs versus local authorities

Figure 2: Revised conceptual model

8. Conclusion and discussion

This thesis has aimed to contribute to the still relatively small number of exploratory studies on the perspectives of local stakeholders on the media portrayal of (tourist) destinations. More specifically, this research has contributed to the lacking research focusing on the (potential) performative effects of media portrayal on destinations and their touristic images. This final chapter will first provide a brief conclusion to the main research questions: *What are the perspectives of local stakeholders on the media discourses about Giethoorn and its (potential) performative effects on the destination and its touristic image?* Second and last, the research's theoretical contributions will be discussed in relation to existing theoretical and empirical literature, which also includes several suggestions for future research on this topic.

8.1 Conclusion

The empirical study shows that there are mixed perspectives among local stakeholders regarding the current media discourses about Giethoorn. Some stakeholders question the accuracy of the media coverage of Giethoorn as it often portrays a simplification of reality. Media discourses often leave out nuanced stories and certain images in the media are presented without any sort of context. As such, certain selective and one-sided images are dominant in the media portrayal of Giethoorn, which mostly concern sensational and chaotic situations related to tourism in the village. Due to this dominant preference for sensational and newsworthy images in media discourses, certain other elements of the village and its surroundings are ignored. This includes the presentation on the positive aspects of tourism in Giethoorn and the natural, cultural and historical aspects of the surrounding area. Stakeholders express frustration that the destination is determined by the image that is created by the media. Images of excessive situations (e.g., crowded canals or incidents) are magnified by the media and in turn become the standard of how Giethoorn is portrayed and defined as a destination.

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that a majority of images of Giethoorn in the media have a negative connotation. Giethoorn is often compared to attraction parks and open-air museums. More importantly, Giethoorn is structurally labelled as a destination that struggles with excessive situations due to overtourism. These kinds of labels have significant consequences for the reputation and touristic image of Giethoorn. Stakeholders consider these negative labels created by media discourses as problematic because people can get unrealistic expectations of the village. Consequently, because of the current media images, Giethoorn is not exemplary for the rest of the area. Local authorities and surrounding destinations therefore do not want Giethoorn to be seen as a benchmark for the rest of the area.

Furthermore, this research has explored several potential performative effects of the media discourses on the destination and touristic image of Giethoorn. First, it can be concluded that media discourses are based on and driven by sensational and provocative images. As such, it is difficult for local stakeholders to distance themselves from current media images of Giethoorn and highlight other (more positive) images of the village and surroundings instead since good news is no news for (commercial) media platforms.

Second, this research has found different discourses of dealing with the media image of Giethoorn. This research has shown that certain stakeholders accept the current images of Giethoorn as portrayed by media. Especially entrepreneurs see the media attention as an advantage since it generates familiarity and popularity among tourists. Furthermore, some local residents do not consider the current image of Giethoorn as problematic because it is important to create awareness of impacts of tourism on their quality of life in order to ensure that certain measures are taken to protect their enjoyment of life in the village. Other stakeholders, however, reject the current media image of

Giethoorn as it shines a negative light on the village. Additionally, there are some stakeholders who either strategically engage with or positively reverse the current media discourses about Giethoorn for their own personal interests and therefore their own advantage. Hence, the different discourse of coping with the media images by local stakeholders illustrate the highly dynamic power relations and conflicts of interest within Giethoorn. Local residents, entrepreneurs and authorities each have their own role to play which leads to a lack of unity and cohesion.

Finally, it can be concluded that the current coverage of Giethoorn within media has significant consequences for both the actual destination and its touristic image. Local stakeholders struggle with changing the narrative of Giethoorn within the media. Due to the fact that Giethoorn is structurally compared to attraction parks and associated with terms such as overtourism, the village is much visited by a certain target group, which local stakeholders consider to be the wrong target group as these visitors do not invest in the village and its surroundings. In particular, the current media images of Giethoorn therefore ensure that their preferred target audience stays away because of the given images and associations of the village within media discourses. Lastly, the current media portrayal has led to forced changes in tourism in Giethoorn because otherwise the village could lose its status. Local authorities are forced to focus on new tourism visions and policies that are more geared towards regulating and spreading tourism, and thus finding a better balance between tourism and quality of life within the village.

8.2 Discussion

This research has made an empirical contribution to critical case studies on destinations that struggle with problematic images within the media. In doing so, this research provides support for Becken et al. (2017) who argue that while most destination image studies focus on positive characteristics, negative factors are also likely to influence and shape the image of destinations. As such, this research has shown that especially negative images and associations within the media have contributed to the overall touristic image of Giethoorn. The one-sided focus of the media on incidents and sensational situations do not make room for highlighting other elements of the village or the surrounding area. Media discourses specifically focus on certain aspects within destinations and selectively leave out other aspects. This creates the impression that a destination only consists of the selectively highlighted aspects, while in reality, the destination could have a diverse offering of other attractions and sights.

Therefore, the findings of this study support the studies of Shields (1992) and Avraham (2004) who distinguished between rich/open and one-dimensional/closed images. Places with a rich and open image in the news media are those that are frequently covered for a wide range of topics and events. Places with a one-dimensional and closed image, on the other hand, are only covered by the media when certain events take place, such as incidents. When the media labels a destination as solely hosting specific types of events, it becomes a symbol for such events. As a result, additional events and activities are not included in the media coverage. This can be connected to the fact that local stakeholders of Giethoorn struggle with changing the current image of Giethoorn in the media and highlighting other features. Therefore, future research should focus on building resilience to media discourses and therefore going beyond dominant media discourses and instead taking the perspectives of local stakeholders into account in other destinations in Europe that struggle with problematic one-dimensional and closed media images.

Additionally, the results of this study are in line with the findings of Avraham (2004) and Muhoho-Minni and Lubbe (2017) who have argued that it is difficult to modify a stereotype about a certain destination once it has been developed by the media. More specifically, the authors argue that it is even more difficult to persuade the preferred target audience to be open to a different and/or new image of a destination. This research on Giethoorn has shown that because of the media's selective

focus on incidents and sensation, the village is attracting a specific target group that is not preferred by every local stakeholder. In turn, the preferred target group, which is interested in the culture and nature of the area, stays away because of the selective and negative presentation of Giethoorn within media discourses. Local stakeholders express that they struggle with changing the current images of Giethoorn in order to attract a different target group that contribute to the village and its surroundings. Hence, this research is also in line with the findings of Avraham and Ketter's (2013), who stated that stakeholders in destinations with negative image formation struggle to overcome long-held unfavourable stereotypes about their destinations because the associated negative perceptions were formed and maintained by sensational media coverage for years. Hence, since media images can have significant impacts on destinations and its local stakeholders, future research should focus on how negative images created by sensational media coverage and stereotypes can be counteracted and/or overcome by local stakeholders within destinations.

Contrary to the findings of Cotirlea (2015), who stated that the formation of destination images cannot be completely controlled, this research has shown a different perspective. The findings of this study have illustrated that local stakeholders can certainly contribute to creating and sharing certain images of destinations and thus the way in which destinations are perceived by the public. In Giethoorn, for example, local authorities and residents have contributed to the current (rather negative) media images of Giethoorn for their own advantage, whether it is to protect the village by ensuring regulations or to achieve financial investments from governments. Hence, the formation of images of a certain destination can be partly controlled by, for example, local people. Future research should therefore include the perceptions of local stakeholders on their own influences on the particular image of their destination within media discourses, including the reality effects of their own actions on the destination and touristic image.

Theoretical contributions

The perspective of this research overlaps with certain constructivist studies related to destination images by authors, such as Avraham (2004), Cotirlea (2015) and Muhoho-Minni and Lubbe (2017). However, the intention of this thesis was to look more critically at the research material by following a post-structuralist research approach. Whereas most constructivist research focuses on causality and impacts, this research has focused on the role of power of discourses by examining how media discourses exert power within destinations. In line with the findings of van Leeuwen (2006), the findings of this research show that discourses contain social motivations that serve the interests of particular historical and/or social settings. Indeed, the results show that there are different discursive strategies to coping with the current media portrayal that are very much linked to certain interests of stakeholders. The reason why stakeholders either accept, decline, strategically engage with or positively reverse media discourses on Giethoorn is linked to specific interests of stakeholders. For instance, certain local stakeholders would rather accept and/or strategically engage with the current media presentation of Giethoorn for their own advantage, whereas other stakeholders reject the media images of Giethoorn as the current portrayal can negatively affect the village and the number of incoming tourists.

In addition, while authors such as Shields (1992) and Avraham (2004) distinguish between rich/open and one-dimensional/closed images, this study took a more critical approach to the material and looked beyond the average image-related studies by focusing on the potential performative reality effects of media discourses. Referring back to the quote of van Assche et al. (2012) as stated in the theoretical framework, performativity can be described as ''the self-fulfilling prophecy of discourse''. When certain stories on Giethoorn are repeated and circulated by media discourses, those stories are perceived as true and real because of prior discourse.

Hence, in line with the findings of van Assche et al. (2012), performativity can be described as the influential feature of discourse that makes it seem real, while other (alternative) discourses are ignored. More importantly, the results of this study further illustrate that the theory of performativity is created by the social script of power, and can therefore be compared to Foucault's rethinking of power (Larsen, 2005). It is important to look critically at *why* certain open and closed images of destinations have been created. The results of this research show that certain discourses and images are magnified and circulated in the media because interests are linked to power. Some parties, especially local authorities and residents, want certain selective discourses and images to be magnified by the media, and thus want Giethoorn to be selectively highlighted, in order for these discourses to contribute to their own interests. Hence, it would be recommended to further research the link between performative reality effects and power/interests within destinations that struggle with negative media portrayal. What social motivations are linked to certain opinions, actions and/or interests of stakeholders? What are their discursive strategies to cope with negative media portrayal of their destination, and, more importantly, why? It is crucial to explore the link between opinions and interests of stakeholders in order to understand why certain interpretations and performative reality effects take place.

9. Media images awaken local stakeholders of Giethoorn

The last chapter of this thesis serves as a brief blog post in order to explore the practical application of the results of this study by elaborating on the consequences as well as recommendations for the involved parties in Giethoorn.

The current portrayal of Giethoorn within the media has awakened of local stakeholders. It is a reality check for stakeholders of both the positive and negative consequences for the destination and its touristic image. Whether it is for the right or wrong reasons, Giethoorn has become a massively popular topic within media reports. Endless amounts of news report describe Giethoorn as a free amusement park and open-air museum that is flooded and damaged by tourists. As such, the eyes of various local stakeholders have been opened: how can one escape from a (perhaps permanent) negative and stereotypical image within media coverage? How can one turn back the clock and start with a clean slate, if that is even possible?

More important is the question of how to strike the right balance between local stakeholders in a village divided by so many different interests. The media has spread the word that some of the local stakeholders in Giethoorn do not see eye to eye. By working together, they might be able to strengthen each other, but some of them would rather remain each other's competitors. Because of the many conflicting interests in Giethoorn, there are different ways of coping with the media attention of the village. Therefore, there is little collective effort to create a better image for Giethoorn in the future. Local stakeholders from different sectors should work more together in order to formulate a clear and unified vision for the image of their destination. It would be beneficial for the village if stakeholders would search together and set up a communicative platform to make a long-term plan for Giethoorn, including plans on how to deal with tourism in the future. Despite the many different interests of stakeholders within the destination, stakeholders must come together to formulate and circulate a more appropriate and sustainable image for Giethoorn. Finally, in the words of Henry Ford, *''coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success''*.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guide (in Dutch and English)

Appendix B: Overview of the media analysis of Giethoorn

Appendix C: Transcripts of the in-depth interviews with local stakeholders

Appendix D: Coding schemes of in-depth interviews with local stakeholders

Appendix E: Coding scheme of media analysis Giethoorn