



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

Iceland's involvement in bribes and corruption in Namibia's fishing industry - Discourse analysis of the media

Master's Thesis
Culture, Communication and Globalisation
September 15th 2020

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Abstract

This thesis aims to examine the discourse in the Icelandic media coverage on the so-called Samherja case from the period on November 12, 2019, until July 12, 2020. The case concerns a significant document leak including over 30.000 documents on one of the biggest fishing companies of Iceland, Samherji, and their considered corrupt involvement in the fishing industry in Namibia. The theoretical framework consisted of perspectives in both international relations and media with a focus on poststructuralism, trust theories, theories on small state and then media theory of agenda-setting. The researcher used of mixed-method, including content analysis of media coverage and discourse analysis of those. Three media were analyses *Stundin*, *Fréttablaðið* and *Morgunblaðið*, which should give a holistic picture of the discourse in the media in general. The purpose was not to form a new theory from the data; rather, the focus is on the complex relations between social structure and discourse situation at any moment. From the perspective of constructivism and poststructuralism, we identify objects or themes that spin through the discourse and form a regime of truth. The analysis of data revealed four ideological standpoints that shaped the discourse: *Corruption within*, *Exploitation of Namibian resources*, *Reputation of Iceland internationally*, *Mistrust and disputes in government*. It could, therefore, be concluded from the analysis that *corruption is considered a problem in the country*. The problem is not always limited to corruption as such, but also to its consequences, as corruption tends to undermine democracy, hurts reputation and creates mistrust. Such mistrust creates political instability and causes disconnections between the public and those in power. Consequently, it cannot be ruled out that the media has played a part in maintaining the discourse which supports to the theory of agenda-setting that the media is in fact in the role of the chair by putting issues on the agenda and thus shaping the public debate.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, Poststructuralism, Trust theories, Media, Iceland, Namibia, Samherji,

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Introduction

On November 12th, 2019, a significant document leak came on the surface including over 30.000 documents on one of the biggest fishing companies of Iceland, Samherji, and their corrupt involvement in the fishing industry in Namibia. The documents, referred to as Samherja files or case in the media were made available on WikiLeaks and introduced to the Icelandic people in a special news commentator episode, *Kveikur* (Stundin, 12.11.2019). In the aftermath, Namibia's justice and fisheries ministers resigned over bribery claims, and the CEO of Samherji briefly stepped aside. The scandal is still under investigation both domestically within Iceland and Namibia. Several individuals remain in custody in Namibia, but further information is yet to be made public (Fréttablaðið, 03.06.2020). The discourse on the case has been extensive within Icelandic society and the media and though the government of Iceland has not proved direct involvement in the case the state was involved in formal bilateral agreement in providing development assistance to the country from Namibia's independence in 1990 until 2010 (Bogason, 2014).

Although Iceland is generally successful in the international comparison of corruption, there is still constant news of unethical actions in Icelandic business and political life, and there seems to be a certain lack of provision to eradicate it. It can best be attributed to lack of supervision and legislation, but it has been shown over the years to be deficient in the country (Stundin, 22.12.2019). Due to the secretive nature of corruption itself, this paper will not make any attempt to judge how much of it is occurring in Iceland. Instead, this paper will analyse the discourse of the case in the media and discuss how it has developed. According to a survey conducted soon after the news of Samherji's involvement in Namibia Icelanders consider corruption high in the business sphere and government, measuring up to 73% on both parts (Maskína, 2019). As the information on the case could not have been accessible without the media doing their investigating work, the researcher thought it would be highly appropriate to focus on discourse in the media for this thesis.

In line with the discourse on corruption, trust has been another concept that has influenced the discussion. Trust in the government showed decreasing following the news on Samherji's case. Government responses to the situation where strategies that should increase trust to the government, among some that they stated were; Increase transparency in the operations of larger unlisted companies and large fisheries companies. Promote international assessment and

improvement of fisheries and protection against conflicts of interest and bribery (Stjórnarráðið, 2019).

1.1. Problem formulation

The paper aims to compile the news articles that have been written about the Samherja case in the media and then analyse the discourse that has evolved after the scandal broke out in Iceland by asking the following questions;

How is the division of news coverage of the case on each media?

What are the main ideological standpoints in the discourse, and how has it been displayed in the media?

In what way are the ideologies applied to the discourse, on the one hand, from the perspectives of international relations and, on the other hand, the concept of the media?

Here we will try to look at the manifestations of the discourse in the media and examine the objects that have become most apparent in the media coverage. Objects or themes are something that is repeated over and over again and forms a pattern in the discourse (Carvalho, 2008). Furthermore, an examination on whether contradictions can be detected in discourse in the period will be made. The study is based on both content analysis and discourse analysis, as well as relying on existing data and databases. The aim is not to determine the legitimacy of the facts as this is still an active case instead it is to analyse the discourse of the media concerning the theoretical perspectives this thesis relies on upon, as it is assumed that discourse may include power. The media plays an essential role in this, as they are often considered to reflect the present times. The images that the media paints can shape the public's understanding of what is happening at any given time.

The research is qualitative in the form of discourse analysis, and the study is based on theoretical perspectives in international relations and media. By applying theories, an attempt is made to explain how states behave in the international system, as different attitudes to the nature of states can be discerned. Diverse and complex relationships characterise the

international system, and there is no single theory that can explain all the situations that arise therefore, I will be supporting my argument to a few of them.

As far as the theoretical discussion on the subject is concerned so far, no comparable study has been made of the media discourse on this case as far as the author is concerned. However, many articles have been written by scholars about discourse in international relations and media which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter on theoretical perspectives.

2. Theoretical perspectives

This chapter will discuss the theories used in the thesis. Since the subject is related to both international relations and media studies, ideas from both of these disciplines will be used. Both constructivism and poststructuralism perspectives recognize power as an influence in communication, but with their own emphases. Constructivist thinking views power as an influence in the way of thinking and the process of communication. Poststructuralism believes that power is manifested through discourse and that discourse actually shows where power lies (Hansen, 2011). Theories within international relations seek to explain the behaviour and actions of states within the international system, there trust can be considered as one of the prerequisites for good connection (Weinhardt, 2015). The chapter also discusses the theory of small states, the diverse views that have been expressed on how to define small states, what limits are set for them and what possibilities they have for influencing foreign policy (Gstöhl and Neumann, 2006). As for the role of the media, it is debatable if they have any formal power, but the central part of the media in a democratic society is to promote a democratic and informed debate as well as to protect the interests of the public (McQuail 2005). Theories of media agenda setting are closely related to the notion of poststructuralism in which they were viewed as a reality, shaped by the idea of the power of the media to choose and reject the issue in order (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). The following perspectives within international relations and media studies will be discussed below. The theoretical framework does not aim to provide the only possible understanding, but the discussion takes into account what will be useful in the actual discourse analysis and interpretation of the results.

2.1. Approaches within International relations

Theories play an important role in all theoretical discussion. They place issues in a specific context, and with theories, one can weigh and evaluate arguments and come to a conclusion. They shape how people view international relations. By applying theories, one can shed light on the nature of the problem and distinguish between important information and minor information. By using theories within the theory of international relations, an attempt is made to explain how states behave in the international system, and different attitudes to the nature of states can be discerned. Diverse and complex relationships characterise the international system, and there is no single theory that can explain all the situations that arise. It is essential to have an idea of which theory or theories should be used at any given time.

2.1.1. Constructivism and Poststructuralism

Traditional theories such as realism sought to apply a scientific approach to international research relations, and many who espouse realism believe that international relations are subject to specific laws of nature. Hans J. Morgenthau is traditionally regarded as one of the leading theorists of realism in international relations who emphasised the necessity of understanding the rules that society lives by in order to improve. According to Morgenthau, international politics are mainly about power struggles. The desire for power is considered inherent in man, and the pursuit of power can be an end in itself, but by power is meant to control of one over the actions of others. To understand the characteristic of a foreign policy of a state and their foreseeable acts, we need to examine the political acts performed thoroughly. Thus we need to put ourselves in the positions of those state actors who meet specific problems of foreign policy to understand which of these rational choices they will go for (Morgenthau, 1985). Kenneth Waltz presented his theory in the spirit of realism, in which he explained the conflicts and behaviour of states based on the current state of the international system. The theory suggested that the main goals of governments are to secure power and maximise the state's position in the international system towards other neighbouring states depending solely on how others would behave. Waltz also argued that to maximise its security, governments would seek the graces of other nations and thus form alliances (Waltz, 1979).

In more recent times, constructivism has gained a foothold as one of the leading theories of international relations. Constructivism first appeared in international relations in the 1980s, following the changes that took place in the international system at the end of the Cold War. Following these changes, questions and doubts arose about previous theories and research methods and how the ideas potentially contributed to maintaining the position of those in power in the international system. Constructivism rejected the traditional view of a fixed structure and instead recognised the importance of international norms as a society. With these shifts in emphasis, scholars began to look at the internal forces that govern states, based on social processes and interactions and saw that power is not just based on the military (Barnett, 2011). One of the leading proponents of constructivist thinking is the scholar Alexander Wendt, who in his book *The Social Theory of International Politics*, presents his ideas on international politics, based on social constructivism. In the book, Wendt encouraged the reader to look at how actors of international politics are socially constructed. He sets out to explain conflicts between states and behaviour based on the idea that socially formulated norms exist in the

ungovernable international system. Self-identity affects how states, no less than individuals, see themselves and how these actors present their interests. The social framework causes self-identity to take on the image of becoming granted as a norm (Wendt, 1999). With the new constructivist thinking, the emphasis was now what has been proposed here, on the social dimensions of international relations, the interplay of norms, rules and languages in the shaping of social reality. Social interaction is based on language, and therefore our choice of words and ideas is important, that is how we see the world and how we communicate it to others (Barnett, 2011).

As in other theories of international relations, constructivist scholars view power as an essential phenomenon. However, they look not only at power in the traditional sense but also at the power inherent in ideas, culture and language. These ideas are also conceivable for poststructuralists, but their uniqueness is based on the emphasis on language and the importance of discourse when it comes to shaping reality (Hansen, 2011). Poststructuralism became a part of IR around the same time as constructivism in the cold war era of the 1980s. Poststructuralists, like constructivists, sought to examine what contradicts prevailing norms and encourage a critical examination of the social structure of society. The ideology became of self-identity being shaped by society and not by the nature of the individual who carries it. This also applies to the identities of states, in such a way that the identity is created through the foreign policy of the state. Poststructuralists seek to examine what contradicts prevailing norms and encourage a critical examination of the social structure of society. The general understanding that the world is socially structured is therefore fundamental, and all changes that take place are examined with that in mind. The critical perspective of poststructuralism placed great emphasis on the interpretation of reality as well as self-identity. However, focus should be on the interpretation of language and how the individual makes sense of the world through language. In order for us to make ourselves understood by other people, there needs to be shared codes of language that are captured by the concept of discourse (Hansen, 2011).

Poststructuralism believes that power is manifested through discourse and that discourse shows how we make sense of the world and where power lies (Hansen, 2011). Michael Foucault is one of the principal scholars that considered it essential to examine the interplay of power and knowledge in communication. Foucault said that power and knowledge are intertwined concepts and discourse is key to understanding the workings of power in modern knowledge societies (Wodak and Meyer, 2007). Hansen (2011) points out that poststructuralism emphasis

is fourfold and thus discusses concepts that serve the development of poststructuralism. First of all, it is necessary to look at the *discourse* itself but also to place it in the context of the social reality from which it springs. Secondly, to look at *deconstruction* of the discourse and how material words are given a specific meaning, but for that, it is necessary to look at the language system that is relevant at any given time. Thirdly, *genealogy* emphasises that language is a system of unstable classification, as some terms are considered superior to others. Fourthly, *intertextuality* refers to the public seeing politics as a text where all the text refers to a different text that came before them. Emphasis is placed on events that might be silent or absent discourse, that implies that certain things are taken for granted because previous texts have stated the importance before therefore it is no need to express it again. Thus we should ask ourselves what a given text does not mention (ibid).

2.1.2. Trust within International Relations

In the international level, unique challenges represent themselves often as urgent problems facing the world today require trusting relationships between actors. By building trust, we are avoiding anarchy which is known to obstruct the development of trusting relationships amongst states and thus creating mistrust with one another (Ruzicka and Keating, 2015). In the literature within the study of international relations, trust has received surprisingly little attention and been largely overlooked as a way of explaining the relations between states. This has, however, been changing in the last two decades. Three main approaches- rationalist, psychological and social have all contributed in their way to the processes of trust-building among states. These approaches help us understand further the behaviour and actions of governments with the classical IR theories (ibid).

The dominant literature on trust in international relations is deeply rooted in the rational choice paradigm (Weinhardt, 2015). According to Kydd (2005), the rationalist perspective of trust is based on the knowledge and belief that the other actor will reciprocate. One of the traditional ways to make more sense to this trust is using game theory. The most common game theory explanation is prisoner's dilemma, which describes the rational perspective of how people can choose between working together and betraying each other when they are in a situation that involves trust. Each individual makes a rational decision to defect based on self-interest even though one party might be willing to cooperate. It is more rational to betray rather than be silent where the benefits are more significant; therefore, actors of prisoner's dilemma preferences are

untrustworthy as they prefer betrayal rather than meet cooperation. However, people more often choose to work together than the prisoner's dilemma assumes, based on the fact that individuals make decisions solely based on self-interest. In the assurance game, however, actors prefer to cooperate if they think the other side will cooperate as well, meaning that their presences are trustworthy. Reciprocating cooperation rather than betraying the other actor makes more sense apart from what you would expect from the other side. Game theory can help us understand the balance between cooperation and rivalry in our daily environment and often used as examples of rational approaches to trust. It provides a comprehensive way to understand trust and mistrust among actors in international relations based on what they believe they know about the other actor (Kydd, 2005). Kydd interprets the end of the Cold War as a reassurance game, gradually changing Western perceptions and building trust. The fundamental mechanism of the reassurance game is what Kydd calls "costly signalling," "that is, making small but significant gestures that serve to prove that one is trustworthy" (Kydd, 2005, p. 5).

Rationalists have mostly pioneered cooperation in international relations, according to Brian Rathbun, which sought to explain how states "even when self-interested and interacting in an environment of anarchy, might nevertheless cooperate" (Rahtbun, 2017, p. 7). Trust in the context of cooperation is the belief that others will cooperate when one cooperates; therefore, actors will not exploit one's vulnerability but rather respond in goodwill. Rahtbun argues that rationalism concerning international cooperation has significant limitations as it relies on strategic trust. Strategic trust depends on the cooperation of other actors to maintain a cooperative relationship. If no behaviour indicates that they have invested in maintaining a collaborative relationship, there is no ongoing exchange. Reciprocity is a requirement for a conversation to take place. In short, a qualitative relationship between actors demands excellent trust, and rationalism cannot provide it. In cooperation, we need a deeper form of trust which cannot be found in rationalist approaches (Rathbun, 2017).

An unpopular opinion within the discourse of political scientists is that rationality depends on Psychology. Mercer (2005) argues that they are not separate from each other as motions cannot be directed. The current perception in international relations is that cognitive biases and emotions only lead to mistakes in the field of understanding the relationship between rationality and psychology when it comes to trust. Thus it is typically only exceptional to use psychology to explain irrational choices and mistakes that have come from emotional behaviour (Mercer,

2005). Mercer rejects these ideas and argues that “the belief that psychology explains mistakes implies that rationality is free of psychology: because rational models cannot be built on an irrational (or psychological) foundation, each must be distinct from the other” (Mercer, 2005, p. 79). Thus, trust cannot be actively decided upon and is a product of feelings and beliefs.

From a sociological perspective, trust must be conceived as a property of collective attribute rather than isolated individuals. The relations among people are what leads to the process of trust, and social identity is what drives that process. This perspective has its foundation in constructivism, where shared identity is what drives the process for cooperation either as a source of identification. Instead of trying to identify the most rational course of action, a constructivist approach will seek to understand what actors consider appropriate based on social rules and identification. Hence it is difficult to account for significant cooperation with those with whom one does not identify a problem that is frequently emerging in international relations (Weinhardt, 2015 and Rathbun, 2017). Alexander Wendt, one of the core researchers on constructivism, argues that anarchy in international relations is characterized by how states themselves interpret anarchy. He focuses on how anarchy affects the identity and interests of states. States have an influence on anarchy but not vice versa. Common identity plays an essential role in Wendt’s theory, and he argues that trust is logically before the formation of shared identity and created through interactions (Wendt, 1999). This argument is supported by most scholars of trust theories which believe that we can make predictions that specific scenarios are highly probable and others are too remote from collecting and processing information about our casual relationships. Trust building might, in fact, begin through a rational process of signalling and conveying information however for a process of trust to continue and develop states must overcome the fear of being overrun by those with whom they would identify therefore it would be easier to trust those who identify with them (Rathbun, 2017).

2.1.3. Small State Studies

In light of the fact that Iceland is a small state, it is interesting to use small state studies to explain the development of the discourse and Iceland's position in international relations to the research questions. Small state studies have mainly been concerned with the strengths and weaknesses of small states based on various criteria and their potential for influence. The classification of small states can be traced to the Vienna Summit in 1815. The Great Powers of Great Britain, Prussia, Russia, the Habsburg Empire and France classified states into three

groups; small states, central powers and great powers with the legal point of views that all sovereign states regardless of their size, would be equal before the law. From a political stance they were far from it. The “great powers” adopted at this time the procedure that all important matters should be resolved at their meetings. In contrast, some resolutions directly touched other important states and in such circumstances, more states were invited to participate in the meetings of the great powers. Over time, such states became known as central powers. States that were not considered sufficiently important to participate became to be named small states. The term soft powers however prevailed at the time then until well into the 20th century because of the presumption of lack of power (Gstöhl and Neumann, 2006).

Studies of small states are said to have reached its peak in the mid 1970s, in parallel to the wave decolonization of smaller states. In political sense the development and discourse taking place was that the size of state or their capabilities determined its behaviour internationally. Therefore, it was presumed that small states of similar size would pursue similar foreign policy. These assumptions did not last long and in the 1980s the interest of categorizing states by size were not considered relevant, alternatively the analysis focused on security matters and the global economy of states (ibid). The end of the Cold War called for new thinking in international relations. Social constructivism in particular focused on social shaping, with its emphasis on international norms, ideas and identity, that can be said to have opened the field for small states studies again and it is not excluded that these emphases changed helped to influence world politics in the 1990s. If identical factors are no less important than relative power, doors would open in the foreign policy of small states. They could become pioneers of international politics, debating and pursuing framing discourse with great powers about what is desirable in the international community and what is not (Neumann and Gstöhl 2006).

The definition of a small state is often debated, as there is no consensus among scholars in international relations or small state studies on how to define small states. Gstöhl and Neumann point out there are many scholars that use concepts like “micro states” that refer to those maintaining effective sovereignty on a territory but are in some way questioned by other states, as they lack to maintain minimum requirements in the international society of states. The perceived reasons for minimum is mainly lack of resources. Another weakness of traditional approaches in international relations is the way in which small size has been viewed over time in relation to capabilities. Great powers are the states that can enforce their will towards smaller states, while small states are the ones who cannot do so against great powers. Such approaches

focus on measuring capabilities and assuming that those with capabilities will use it (ibid). According to small state studies, the small size of the states is considered to lead to their weak position, less capacity and fewer resources than large states have. These small states seek to make up for these weaknesses in various ways, not least through international organizations. Smallness can be a disadvantage in foreign policy as small states have less aggregate structural power than larger states. Thus, it also leads to states being unable to take part in larger diplomatic missions which limits cooperation with other states and lacks forming of good foreign policy (Thorhallsson and Steinsson, 2017). Taking part in bilateral or multilateral cooperation smaller states are at risk to reap disproportionate benefits without eliciting a sense of relative loss on behalf of their partners based on their irrelevance to balance power calculations (Thorhallsson, Steinsson, and Kristinsson, 2018). Therefore, it is important for small states to prioritize the projects they want to present. Small states specialize and are most active in the issues that matter to them most important and therefore it can be said that the strengths of small states lie in those areas. In areas where they cannot specialize, they need to rely on the expertise of other larger countries or build cooperation with other countries. They can also form links with international organizations (Thorhallsson and Steinsson, 2017). A small state can also benefit from others for being a neutral and peaceful state as it is considered attractive in the international system today. They can use what Joseph Nye calls soft power which is based on the power of attractive ideas, culture and ideology. The term soft power describes how states achieve their will without the use of force or commands, so-called hard power (Nye, 2004). Small states can use soft power in their foreign policy and, as a result, influence the outcomes of other parties without using oppression or side payments. Many states pursue neutrality today as it focuses on softer and more subjective aspects of the international system, such as diplomatic and humanitarian cooperation and the position of small states in the international system. (Thorhallsson and Steinsson, 2017).

Small state studies point out that small states often need to seek shelter with larger and stronger neighbors in order to meet their “economic, political, and societal needs” (Thorhallsson, Steinsson, and Kristinsson, 2018, p. 16). When it comes to the importance of small states having economic and political shelter, it is examined in terms of states' ability to respond to certain situations or their vulnerability in the same circumstances. Economic shelter can take the form of a variety of financial benefits through a union with a powerful state or international organization, while political shelter refers to diplomatic and military support through a union with a powerful state or international organization (Thorhallsson, 2011). In the aftermath of the

financial crisis of 2007-2008 the literature of small states studies focused back to the vulnerabilities of small states and the importance for small countries securing assistance from larger powers (Thorhallsson, Steinsson, and Kristinsson, 2018). In Iceland before the crisis vulnerability was rarely acknowledged and the smallness of Iceland was rather characterized by “informality, flexibility and innovative capacity” (Bailes and Thorhallsson, 2014, p. 124). The narrative after the crisis changed drastically and the state became vulnerable and victim of its own incapability to deal with complicated economic skill and judgement. The banking “pioneers” with their little knowledge endangare the whole nation for their own profit and left the reputation of the state in crumble (ibid).

2.2. Media studies

The relationship between the media and politics, regardless of the current system of government, is significant as the media provide communication channels for politicians to present their issues and politicians provide the media with information to disseminate to the masses. Therefore, neither could exist without the other in reality, we know today (McQuail 2005). Necessary preconditions for a democratic debate is that the public has access to the right information, which has been verified to the best of its ability, to be able to form informed opinions on current issues. One of the leading roles of the media is to provide restraint to politicians and other authorities in society and to ensure that they do not abuse their position. In this way, the media should promote critical discussion and transparency in society, in addition to being a forum for information flow, exchange of views, news coverage, culture and entertainment (Valtýsson, 2011). In this context, the media is often referred to as the fourth arm of state power, referring to the threefold division of state power into legislative power, executive power and the judiciary (McQuail 2005).

Gilboa (2002) points out that the information technology of the 20th century has fundamentally changed the power dynamic in foreign policy as people have gained more access to news channels. Based on that, global news media has also affected the policy-making of states. Gilboa argues that scholars studying foreign policy and diplomacy have not given enough credit and attention to the significant roles of global communication and refers to the CNN Effect, as an aspect of the changing situation. The CNN effect claims that in international crises, global television has become the dominant actor influencing and even replacing current policymakers. In the post-Cold War era central global communication mainly CNN covered

many crises and humanitarian interventions which attracted much attention making leaders in loss of control when it came to decisions to intervene or not to intervene (Gilboa, 2002). Joseph Nye (2004) also supports this and argues that the increased information flows through the media taking American television news as an example has had evident political change.

2.2.1. Agenda setting and framing

Through exposure to the mass media, people have become more aware of significant issues in their environment beyond their immediate personal awareness. This aspect of learning is the core of the agenda-setting process which was put forward in 1972 by scholars Maxwell McCombs and Don Shaw and is based on a similar basis to theories of poststructuralism, in that sense it is based on a socially shaped reality. McCombs and Shaw argued that the media have the power to choose and reject whether they cover specific issues and thereby shape the discourse of society. The Chapel Hill study consisted of observing hundreds of undecided voters during the 1968 US presidential election and examining how strong the relationship was between voters' views on them. Issues that they felt were most important and what issues were on the media agenda. McComb and Shaw (1972) hypothesised that there was a correlation between the issues that the media covered and what that the voters considered important. The investigation formed the term "agenda-setting" which demonstrated the power of the media that played a large and significant role when it came to what issues people considered necessary (ibid).

The theory of agenda-setting does not imply that the media are omnipotent, and their influence is absolute. The theory also does not mean that society can be programmed through news coverage. The theory, on the other hand, emphasises the ability of the media to cover issues and initiate a debate on specific topics in society. As discussed above the information obtained through the news is of great importance when we draw pictures of reality, and one must always take into account the experience and personal characteristics of each individual (McCombs, 2004). It can be argued that the media not only has an impact by putting specific issues on the agenda and excluding others, but the effect also lies in how issues are framed. The media influences by putting matters in a particular framework, and that affects how the public perceives this specific issue. It is therefore essential to focus on how news is presented or in what framework issues are presented and its possible impact (McQuail, 2005).

Like discussed before in the chapter on poststructuralism, different aspects of how discourse is framed need be considered. For example, with wording, selection of photographs or quotes can give specific examples that frame news. Therefore, it can be said that framing information is a way of providing a holistic interpretation of separate facts and it is almost impossible for journalists to avoid this and at the same time to do so on a completely neutral basis (McCombs and Ghanem, 2001). The media obviously cannot cover all the events that take place and must therefore choose from current events what to cover at any given time. Every day, the media bring information to their viewers that the media themselves have decided important, or at least more important than other events that are happening at the same time. The media, therefore, provide a constant flow of information to their viewers (McQuail, 2005). McQuail points out that framing involves a reciprocal processor has two sides. One side is that the media design news; another is that media users accept the assumptions or the reality presented in the media. If users accept the reality that is shaped in the news, then they accept it as their own, or in other words, the public sees the reality through the glasses of the media but on their terms (ibid).

Given the ever-increasing and essential role that the media play today, as well as their unequivocal involvement in public affairs, it can be argued that the media has great power. One of the prominent roles of the media is to restrain politicians and other influential members of society and ensure that they do not abuse their position. This has been referred to as the concept of gatekeeping or public watchdogs (McQuail, 2005 and Coban, 2016). “The media’s acting as the *public watchdog* works out a check on elite behaviour, thus it can help make political actors accountable to the public, assisting in the empowerment of the latter as citizens and voters” (Coban, 2016, p. 49).

2.2.2. Media in Iceland

Worth taking into account concerning the research questions is the small society of Iceland in relation to the media. Bjarki Valtýsson (2011) argues that in Iceland, we can see relatively transparent power blocs that stretch their arms all over society. Due to power and acquaintance relations, he believes that not all institutions in society are run with the same professionalism as is known in our neighbouring countries, and here the media are at least excluded. It can be thought of as dangerous because, in our time, the media has significant influence and quickly reaches the public. During the privatization process of recent decades and the end of the old party newspapers, ideal conditions were created for the formation of media power blocks. The rise of such power blocs is typical of a small society. It is perhaps the clearest example of how

financially strong and powerful parties try to shape the views of an entire nation according to the rhetoric. Thus it's crucial to keep in mind about ownership and connections in the Icelandic media market (Bjarki Valtýsson, 2011).

In an international comparative study of Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS) conducted among Icelandic journalists, considered that the owners of the media in which he worked, or the management of the company, had little or no influence on his work. The idea was however refuted in a report of the Special Investigation Commission. It concluded that there was a lack of criticism in the presentation of news about financial companies before the collapse. The news was much more often positive than negative and was often based on press releases from the financial companies themselves (Kolbeins, 2017). Another thing to keep in mind in this context is the debate whether or to what extent ethics can replace legal rules in certain areas. On the part of the media, it has often been argued that few legal provisions as possible should bind their hands in their work - otherwise "free media" will not benefit properly. The code of ethics for journalists in Iceland does not belong to actual legal sources. Still, it does provide an indication of what conduct is considered to be a recognized work ethic. They are, for the most part, rooted in the principles that have generally been laid down in connection with the duties of the media (Jónsson and Þorsteinsdóttir, 2017).

The articles and research that have been written about political communication in Iceland have in common some of them that cover media coverage of a specific event or period in political history. Guðbjörg Hildur Kolbeins, PhD in media studies, for example, compiled and discussed media coverage of the Constitutional Council elections in the autumn of 2010 in comparison with the Reykjavík municipal elections in the spring of 2010 and the parliamentary elections in the spring of 2009. Her research concluded that media coverage of the Constitutional Council elections had been considerably less but a discussion of the city council elections and the parliamentary elections. Turnout was much lower in the constitutional elections than in the other two, therefore it could be argued that the lack of media coverage of constitutional parliamentary candidates and the elections has led to lower turnout (Kolbeins, 2012).

2.3. Summary and application of the theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of the thesis has now been introduced. As we can be seen it consists of different theories; constructivism, poststructuralism, trust and, agenda-setting and the framing of the media. Those theories connect in that way which assumes that reality is the

product of social formation and is therefore always subject to change. These theories together form the basis for an analysis of the discourse of the media during this particular period. Small state theories are then intended to place the debate in the context of Iceland's position as a small state in the international system in order to examine how that position affects and is reflected in the discourse. It is therefore interesting to examine the discourse of the Icelandic media to what norms have been formed in Icelandic society. The media and politics are two different things but in a way very similar. The premise of both is communication because there would be no such thing if there were no active communication between people. Communication is a prerequisite for the media and politics as the media provides an everyday basis for issues for dispersed nations, thus uniting citizens into political entities. Thus, the theoretical framework is intended to shed light on how accepted ideas are projected through the media, which the public may accept as truth and on which to some extent base their reality.

3. Methodology

In this part of the thesis we can find a description of the research and the methodology on which it is based. In an research of the Icelandic media's coverage of the Samherja case during this particular period mixed methods based on discourse and content analysis as well as relying on existing data and databases. The first part of the chapter has perspectives of the study and its quality presented with an emphasis on qualitative methods. The second part is on data collection and the choice of analysis discussing discourse analysis in detail. The third part of the methodology section contains explanations of how the research was conducted, and how data and the available empirical data were analyzed. Finally there will be some discussion on validity, reliability and limitations of the study.

3.1. Research design and strategy

The idea for this thesis was born last autumn after news and documents started leaking out in Iceland about Samherji's involvement in bribes on fishing quotas in Namibia. Consequently the events that followed were of immediate interest, in the media and with both nations where some powerful people involved were held responsible and some not. Since then the author has followed news and events that have occurred with great interest, gathering information such as articles, data and viewpoints on the way. The research purpose for this thesis is to analyse the discourse that has taken place in the media on the case. It can be presumed from the discourse of the case that strong dissatisfaction prevails amongst citizens of Iceland regarding trust to

their government dealing with the aftermath of the event and from past experiences such as the Panama paper and the financial crises. Therefore, the topic at hand is not only of interest to the author but also to the population of Iceland and the countries that have something at stake such as Namibia.

The formulation of the research design for this thesis is a case study. The purpose is to investigate one or more cases in detail to develop as detailed an understanding of the case as possible. Qualitative case studies are diverse and challenging methods. One of the many emphases is specially chosen, and the focus of the study is therefore narrow. Case studies have their limits; it can be difficult to draw general conclusions - results apply to the case being examined, and it is not permissible to generalize about other cases. Therefore, they are ideal when examining a specific sociological situation (Yin, 2011). Unlike quantitative strategy, qualitative research usually "emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data" (Bryman 2012, p. 36). The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and techniques, including content analysis of media coverage and discourse analysis of those. Mixing both methods was necessary, firstly quantifying the content for analysis and secondly using qualitative discourse analysis was most applicable for this research as the chosen discourse analysis emphasizes on the meaning of words. The research strategy thus strives to collect and analyze secondary data presented through a variety of sources, mainly news articles.

Content analysis is a quantitative methodology that uses statistical information to shed light on the research topic. Scholars have often used content analysis in research on various types of media. Content analysis needs to be systematic, neutral and quantitative. The data must be selected systematically, and certain rules must be followed with precision. This also applies to the processing of the data. Each item must be evaluated in the same way and the same method used throughout the study. The researcher must describe the research process and methods in detail and define all variables precisely so that the study can be repeated later. The third factor is that a sufficient amount of text must be analyzed for the analysis to be descriptive. Content analysis is all about to justify a certain amount of material, and for that, the amount must be considerable (Bryman, 2012).

Furthermore, the research will lean on an iterative approach which preserves a conclusion from the continuously repeated analysis and interpretation of the collected data and theoretical

reflection. According to Bryman (2013), the iterative approach is demonstrated by going back and forth between the data and the theory. It is closely related to induction where the data determines your theory; however, the researcher may want to collect further data to improve the research, thus generating theory is not the focus (Bryman, 2013).

3.2. Discourse analysis

According to Bryman (2013), discourse analysis in the sense of the social science can be used to examine the interplay of social reality, expression and language. “As such, it can be and has been applied to forms like texts, such as newspaper articles” (Bryman, 2013, p. 528). There is no single “discourse analysis” but many types and approaches. What unites the different perspectives is to reject the idea that language is a neutral and straightforward way of reflecting or describing the world and the conviction that discourse is central and important in creating and shaping social reality. One method of discourse analysis is a critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Wodak and Meyer, 2007). CDA is used most often nowadays to refer to a more specific approach of a form of deconstruction through challenging and questioning the meaning of words. Words can never be permanently fixed, and connections between words create meaning which will never be finally known. CDA is rooted in classical rhetoric and in social and text linguistics and is characterised from the assumption that all discourse is historical and therefore only be understood concerning their context. CDA focuses on the complex relations between social structure and discourse structure and seeks to achieve a holistic analysis of the interplay of discourse and the environment and situation it is in at the moment (ibid). Rosalind Gill (2000) points out that discourse analysis is rooted in that attributed to the ideas of post-structuralists and those who espouse constructivist thinking. The key to discourse analysis is to take a critical stance on the knowledge we previously took for granted. Part of that is to question that by looking at the world, we see its true and unchanging nature. We need to realise that knowledge depends on other effects such as historical and cultural circumstances, that it is socially shaped, such as constructivist and poststructuralism assumes. Lastly, we need to look at how knowledge relates to actions (Gill, 2000).

An ontological assumption of CDA is that there is a relation between society and the means of communication, such as the language of the society. However, the origin of discourse analysis requires complex epistemological considerations on how we understand and interpret the social world, which is embedded in constructivism. Thus, stating that we understand our world through our interpretation of it, which is determined and situated within social, cultural,

historical and cognitive circumstances (Gill, 2000). Scholars who have engaged in critical discourse analysis are concerned with the complicated relationship between discourse and power, how power lives in discourse and how power governs discourse. It is not uncommon that powerful others such as state, police or mass media can affect the minds of others with their discourse. Thus we need to formulate some specific conditions to investigate this discourse control (van Dijk, 2008).

Some scholars have regarded discourse analysis as a method in analysing data. Wodak and Meyer (2007) however, do not consider critical discourse analysis as a method but rather a bulk of approaches with theoretical similarities and research questions of a specific kind. That is mainly due to the lack of rules and operation of data-gathering, which are not considered relevant as new questions will always arise in data collection of CDA. Nevertheless, discourse analysis can involve some specific procedure for analysing data. From the analysis, themes are found that reflect what the researcher considers most significant and is descriptive of the data. Wodak and Meyer (2007) imply that structural analysis is relevant when analysing a characterisation of the media where general themes have to be made. Rosalind Gill (2000) says that within discourse analysis some different approaches and methods have in common that they want to show that language is not a neutral tool for describing the world and also how much discourse has an influence on the shaping of our social existence. Rhetoric can refer to any form of text, traditional conversations between people, interviews or written texts. Instead of looking for the truth in the text, discourse analysts are often more interested in the content and structure of the text. Thus, in order to further code the data into themes, it is necessary to read the data many times until they have become well known to the researcher. This is not about the main points of the text as Gill points out, but how the language is seen as a narrative and how you make sense of it and interpret it (Gill, 2000). Consequently, van Dijk argues that studies in CDA are not only limited to the description of text and talk. Particular emphasis is placed on analysing discourse and putting it in relation to the social conditions to understand how the discourse is constructed (van Dijk, 2008).

The research that will be carried out here will be based on critical discourse analysis and in part on the “procedure” of Anabela Carvalho (2008) framework for discourse analysis which focuses on ideologies framed in social contexts. The procedure is divided into six stages. In the first stage, the layout of the text itself is looked at; the length of the text, the headline, paragraphs, if there are any visual elements like photographs and so on. This structural layout

can play a key role in the importance of the text; thus we need to examine the structure as well. Steps two and three are about identifying the objects and actors of the text as they bring us closer towards deconstruction and understanding the role of the discourse. Step three to six relate to the discourse analysis itself, where we focus on the linguistic analysis of the text (Carvalh, 2008).

3.3. Data collection and processing

As the research is qualitative and based on available data, data collection is fundamental and the basis of the research material. The available data were selected to answer as clearly as possible, the research questions posed at the outset and consisted of a wide range of secondary sources. The data was collected through media; *Stundin* an independent investigation media, which in collaboration with Kveik, Al Jazeera and Wikileaks has written a series of articles on the case segment. *Fréttablaðið* daily newspaper in Iceland both printed and online on *Frettabladid.is* and *Morgunblaðið* newspaper and online media *Mbl.is*. Other sources gathered included peer-reviewed journal articles and books, and relevant documents. Most of these sources were obtained through an internet search and open access library with a random search. This search was a useful starting point that helped narrow down my research topic and sharpened my focus on topic terminology. At the beginning of the study, an attempt was made to also analyse news coverage in Namibia. However, it fell under as it was considered more complicated than initially thought, e.g. due to language barriers and time constraint.

Since the research is twofold and is based on both content analysis and discourse analysis, the implementation was such that content analysis was performed first and data was processed in accordance with that approach. A discourse analysis was then carried out, in which the content of the news was examined in more detail. It should be noted that the results of the search in the database included all news during the analysis period November 12, 2019, until July 12, 2020. Use of content analysis was necessary to gather information about the extent of news written about the topic. That approach seeks to quantify the content of documents and texts in predetermined categories which can give us a better overview of relevant data available. It is more of an approach rather than a method in that sense of generating data. It is therefore important that the researcher defines in detail the subject matter and the whole process to ensure quality analysis. Particularly when analysing mass-media content analysis has been one of the main approaches used (Bryman, 2012). As has been stated, the data on which the study is based on are mostly available news, news commentaries and news conductors which discuss

Samherji's case. Because it would be unrealistic to analyse all the thousands of documents related to this case, I selected a handful of news I thought are relevant. To ensure the broadest possible search criteria for finding the news on which the study is based, three keywords were used in the database of *Creditinfo*; *Samherji** | *samherjamálið** | *samherjaskjöl**. It is worth noting that the word *Samherji* has two meaning in Icelandic, it is the name of the fishing industry in this case, and it is a word for a fighter for the same cause as another, or a member of the same team, often in sports (Íslensk nútímamálsorðabók, 2020). Therefore, news that did not fall under the research topic was taken into account and sorted out. The keywords used were starred * to cover all of their inflectional forms. To expand the search criteria, the use of | between words was used to view any news item containing any of the selected words.

I applied content analysis to the data bank *Creditinfo* in Iceland and their news collection database called *Fjölmiðlavaktin*. With it, you can search all the news from newspapers, television and radio from March 1, 2005 (creditinfo.is). I then picked the media I wanted to view specially stated before using my keywords. The content analysis, therefore, shed light on the frequency of certain words and concepts that were used to delimit both importance of which news to use and give a better idea of themes that would be useful in the discourse analysis. After evaluating which news was relevant in this study, they were categorised into predefined categories. The way that I found these themes was through reading the chosen news and by looking at repetitions. Generally speaking, discourse analysts are less interested in the repetition of a text (Gill, 2000), and Bryman (2012) does mention that repetition can be an insufficient criterion when finding themes. However, due to a large number of articles, repetitions were important and less time consuming to create these objects and are essential since they are relevant for the problem formulation, and the case.

3.4. Validity and reliability

The quality of research covers many different factors. Validity refers to whether the image that the research paints is comparable to reality, whether the correct data was obtained with regard to the subject of the study, whether the conclusions drawn were justified and whether the interpretation was clear and transparent (Bryman, 2012). Reliability is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study can be repeated (Bryman, 2012). In order to demonstrate the validity of a study, it is important to demonstrate how data collection can be repeated and obtain the same or comparable results. This needs to be done in such a way that the whole process of data collection and processing is clear and transparent and so is the

theoretical context (Yin, 2011). This research is dependent on the author's interpretation therefore if another researcher conducts the same study it is unlikely to show exact same outcomes. Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method and as such it is basically based on the analyst's interpretation of the available data. Categorization of the data into themes is based on the researchers subjective assessment. The author assesses which news belongs to which category and therefore it is not at all certain that the result will be the same if the study is repeated by someone else. The researcher can never completely separate himself from the subject as the analysis is based on his interpretation and ideas about the subject. Therefore one must be aware of being able to separate from the material, ie. to step out of the analytical framework and to look critically at the discourses.

3.5. Limitations

As with other research methods, this one has its limitations. In that respects, the leading risk factor relates to methodological implementation. For example, the use of mixed methods is considered to increase the level of complexity of research, and it is, therefore, vital to have a good overview and good organization when embarking on such a method. However, the researcher considers it advantageous that the data analyzed using these different methods. With good organization, the two can support each other and provide a broader and more in-depth interpretation of the material being studied. Another thing to keep in mind is that the scope of research is quite large, which is reflected in the large number of data on which the analysis is based on. A final thing to keep in mind is that results of research should be neutral so that certain principles can be set out that have generalization value, regardless of time and context at any given time. As the researcher has followed the discussion of the case in detail from the beginning, it is important to ensure professional work methods and researchers should, therefore maintain neutrality and control factors that could affect research results.

4. Analysis

As stated in the introduction to the thesis, the aim of the study is not to delve into the actual event of the case and its facts, but to analyze the coverage of the Icelandic media on the matter. Emphasis is placed on analyzing which ideas emerged, with special emphasis on justification or criticism. In order to understand the analysis, however, it is necessary to give a short introduction of the matter therefore the chapter begins first on the background to the case following with results from content analysis and then discourse analysis in detail.

4.1. Background to the case - Iceland in Namibia

To understand the extent of the case and put it into a bigger perspective we need to look at the background of the case of Icelandics involvement in Namibia from development assistance in the early 1990s to the so-called fishrot files today. Namibia had for about century been under European oppressors first the Germans then South Africans before the apartheid in 1989 when soldiers from the country were called back from Namibia after international pressure. Finally, thousands of refugees and exiles could return home, and changes for independence started to happen. SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) won the election on March 21, 1990, and Sam Nujoma, became the first president of the country. Namibia is full of natural resources and has 1.500 km long coast to the Atlantic ocean, which about 20 types of useful fishes are to be found, inside Namibia jurisdiction. Namibians had fished little to nothing before independence, and through nordic ambassador of the United Nations Namibia's authorities heard about this small nation in the north which had been successful in utilising their resources, this nation was Iceland. As a result, Namibia sought for partnership and assistance in the fisheries sector (Seljan, Kjartansson and, Drengson, 2019).

From Namibia's independence in 1990 until 2010 Iceland International Development Agency (ICEIDA) had a formal bilateral agreement in providing development assistance to the country more so the Namibian Maritime and Fisheries Institute (NAMFI). The main focus of the development assistance was to provide aid and support to the fishing industry of the country and make it one of their significant economic revenue. The initial emphasis was to provide the expertise necessary for establishing fishery research capacity that a few years later also turned into training programmes for fishery workers. During the second decade, more focus was made in supporting the Ministry of fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) in developing its internal systems so they could have more oversight of the fishery sector as it was becoming a

significant contributor to Namibia's economy. The overall budget invested by ICEIDA into the industry for those 20 years was 14.8 million USD, with NAMFI being the most extensive intervention (Bogason, 2014).

ICEIDA 2014 evaluation report on the project concluded that the work down in Namibia by ICEIDA and Namibian authorities is what could be termed "a real industrialisation miracle" (Bogason, 2014, p. 2). By establishing a fishery industry in a country that had no experience on sea, the project had achieved great success and created one of the core industries for the country providing people with new employment opportunities and increased share of the national income. It is not questioned in the report that the success stories over these 20 years have yielded tremendous results however, after ICEIDA formal exit strategy in 2010, there has been no bilateral agreement with Namibia. The report argues that mistakes were made by not preparing a good enough exit strategy that would leave a sustainable impact and a follow-up timely project evaluation 1-2 years later. Therefore, incentives lacked to ensure complete success and sustainable effects which lead to the failure of NAMFI to achieve the IMO (International Maritime Organization) accreditation (Bogason, 2014) The accreditation as described by the IMO is "system, based on similar systems operated by the United Nations and other agencies, which will allow automatic access to meetings of IMO technical bodies to accredited representatives of the media" (IMO, n.d.). One principal recommendation of the report is that ICEIDA should take responsibility for the failure of NAMFI to achieve the IMO accreditation as it is a "crucial system to become a regional training centre and keep up with the emerging needs in the Namibian maritime sector" (Bogason, 2014, p. 25).

Shortly after the exit of ICEIDA representatives of the Icelandic shipping company Samherji arrived in Namibia. Namibia was not the only country that Samherji showed interest in, among other countries in Africa, also were considered as countries to the Persian sea and Brasilia. The abundance of fish and horse mackerel is what Samherji was tempted to get over and began then negotiation to those in positions of power in the industry. After the first meetings of the Icelandic representatives in Namibia, questions of a technical nature were written down. Those questions turned to legislation and quotas, and then questions about bribes, who to pay, on what level. Contact was then established with the Minister of Fisheries of Namibia and other political players especially those of SWAPO with the goals of firstly to make a political connection by all means and secondly, find ways to bring the most profit out of the country (Seljan, Kjartansson and, Drengson, 2019a). Consequently, many complicated events took place where

the owners, senior members and other staff of Samherji in partnership with big Namibian players started a deal that became to be known as one of the most significant corruption cases in Namibia (ibid). It should be noted that this is not the first time Samherji has found its way into the media involving corruption. The company has been implicated in alleged foreign exchange violations before which relate to foreign currency and transactions of Samherji, and to that its subsidiaries have not been returned to the country legitimately (Stundin.is, 16.09.2015). However, that case and those implications will not be discussed in more detail in this thesis.

November last year over 30.0000 documents were made public about the corrupt involvement in the fishing industry in Namibia. News coverage became massive within both countries and internationally. The year before, 2018, Jóhannes Stefánsson former employee at Samherji and the key informant to the case met with Kristinn Hrafnsson CEO at WikiLeaks and journalist Helgi Seljan where he started to explain in detail on what had been going on in Namibia (Seljan, Kjartansson and, Drengson, 2019a). In short, according to the informant and the documents available since 2012, companies owned by Samherji paid hundreds of millions of ISK in bribes to secure the company horse mackerel quotas in Namibia. Samherji then used multiple tax havens in the Marshall Islands, Mauritius and Cyprus that went through Dubai and the Norwegian bank DNB. A few years later DNB closed down the transactions of Samherji's companies due to suspicion that they were being used for money laundering.

The origin of the case can be traced back to 2011 when Jóhannes the informant and Aðalsteinn Helgason the CEO of Samherji in Africa sat down with a young man on the roof of a five-star Hilton hotel in the centre of Windhoek, the capital of Namibia. This man was the son-in-law of the Minister of Fisheries which had no experience in the fishing industry. Still, he became someone to negotiate fishing quotas and introduce Samherji to a trio of men referred to as the "Sharks". These men were; the son-in-law Tamson Hatuikulipi, his nephew, James Hatuikulipi, the director of a financial company, and Sacky Shanghala, a senior SWAPO member and the Minister of Justice of Namibia. Þorsteinn Mátsson CEO of Samherji and Aðalsteinn the CEO of the branch in Africa, made a special trip to Namibia which was arranged on the Minister of Fisheries' ranch so that it would be kept secret. According to the informant, trust was being built there, and promises of comfort in getting reasonable prices for quotas (Seljan, Kjartansson and, Drengson, 2019b). Quota agreements stretched to neighbouring country Angola where Namibia concluded a bilateral quota swap agreement. The agreement called for a Namibian

and Angolan company to be set up, which would then give Samherji a quota of ten thousand tonnes a year, guaranteed for many years. To reach such an agreement, Jóhannes said and is quoted; “it was natural to have to feed many pockets, and it requires enormous political support. Naturally, this needs to run through the government” (Seljan, Kjartansson and, Drengson, 2019b). Samherjis total payments to the “sharks” so-called drawer associations, amount to ISK 1.4 billion over a five years period where the main explanation listed was “consulting fee” (ibid).

4.2. Introduction to analysis

This section will present the results of the content analysis. The data on icelandic media was collected through *Fjölmiðlavaktin* database. In order to ensure the widest possible search terms in finding the news on which the study is based, three icelandic keywords were used; Samherji* | samherjamálið* | samherjaskjöl*. News, news commentaries, news conductors and submitted material are included in the content. Since the research is twofold and is based on both content analysis and discourse analysis, the implementation was such that content analysis was performed first and data was processed in accordance with that approach. A discourse analysis was then carried out where a review was made further in the content of the news.

Total number of search results in creditinfo database: 668, which relate to the specific classification of the analysis and periods in question. Of which were combined; 223 in *Stundin*, (red and orange) 214 in *Fréttablaðið* (black and brown), 231 in *Morgunblaðið media* (blue and yellow).

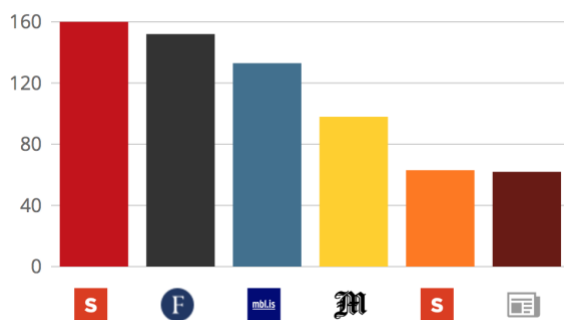


Table 1. Frequency of coverage by media

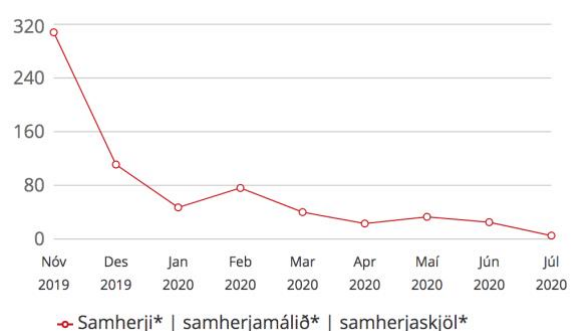


Table 2. Development of news coverage

As can be seen in Table 1, the search showed similarity in the news through the websites of the media, which are the first three poles. However, if compiled together with the papers of these media, there are a similar number of results in *Stundin*, *Fréttablaðið* and *Morgunblaðið*,

although slightly more texts in *Stundin* fell under the criteria of the analysis. Table 2. shows the development of news throughout the period. Many of the search results fell outside the research criteria and were not considered to meet the conditions of the discourse analysis. These reasons were, e.g. irrelevant, repeated news and too short news. Furthermore, due to the massive number of news texts, not all could be analysed.

Through the news, it was possible to identify patterns that spun like threads through the discourse. There, certain words and concepts dominate and become bundles of discourses that form the realms of truth that become general norms. It should be noted that the ideologies in question are interconnected and intertwined so that it is sometimes not easy to distinguish between them. In addition to the ideologies, it was possible to discern in the discourse how the interplay of social relations matters and how what is not said indicates what is being said, but this is in the spirit of poststructuralist ideas.

To analyse the discourse, that is, to map the ideas that were used in the coverage of the media, the aforementioned critical discourse analysis is used. This involves identifying particular *objects* that characterise and shape the discourse of the Icelandic media on the Samherja-case and give us an overarching aspect of the text. Like Carvalho (2008) describes, and has previously been discussed, the central claim of discourse studies is to identify the *ideological standpoints* of text as it is the fundamental shaping influence. To do so, we need to follow some framework which will be relied upon here. Firstly, by identifying the *actors* and then the *objects* of the text. Objects are closed to topics or themes that construct the text that is being analysed. Through the discourse, points of conflict can be identified with the use of *language, grammar, rhetoric* or *discursive strategies* as an indication of what powers are dominant in the discourse and give an idea of what *ideological standpoint* appears.

4.3. Discourse analysis in the media in Iceland

The texts that were analysed during the period and are described in the following subsections deal with four main *ideological standpoints* that were analysed in the coverage from *Stundin*, *Fréttablaðið* and *Morgunblaðið*. They are:

- *Corruption within*
- *Exploitation of Namibian resources*
- *Reputation of Iceland internationally*

· *Mistrust and disputes in government*

In the following chapters, each overall *ideology* will be introduced in more detail, and selected examples will be used to justify each of them. As the media coverage is very extensive, it was impossible to show all examples found. The samples taken should shed light on the case.

The evening of November 12, 2019, a news commentary tv-episode *Kveikur* introduced to the population in Iceland the case of *Samherji* involvement in *Namibia* which marks the beginning of a period in which the discourse is analysed in the media in question. During the analysis period, news appeared in almost all Icelandic press. It was largely characterised of the sequence of events and facts about the case where many *objects* were identified. One of the first pieces of news published on *Stundin*, on November 12, 2019, is the headline: “Samherji pays hundreds of millions in bribes to get quotas in Namibia” (*Stundin*, 12.11.2020). The text is a thorough research work that cites the documents that *Stundin* has in its possession on *Samherji*’s fishing in *Namibia* and show large-scale payments, amounting to another billion ISK, to parties that make decisions on fisheries matters on behalf of the *Namibian* state. Worth mentioning is that many other media cited *Stundin* as they did a thorough analysis of the documents. This chapter and the following ones analyse the texts and highlight those points that lead to the ideological standpoints and the fundamental aspect of the discourse.

4.3.1. Corruption within

News reported after the *Kveikur* episode went on air was characterized by the course of events and citation to the thousand documents collected. One of the first and most prominent *objects* that appeared in the analysis data reviewed is about *corruption*. Several objects can be identified within these texts in relation where most all the news report the about *payments* being made by *Samherji* in any form such as *advisory payments* which is the informant and former employer at *Samherji* description. It is also mentioned that *bribes* are of course, never called ‘bribes’ and in similar corruption cases where *bribery* is involved, the *payments* are often called other names (*Stundin*, 12.11.2020). Proofing that these connections were real, network mapping was provided, showing the timeline and pictures of all those implicated to bribes, including Icelanders and *Namibians* (*Stundin*, 12.11.2020). *Objects* regarding gaining *access to quotas* in *Africa* frequently occur when discussed concerning the complex payments which go through *Dubai* from its partner in *Cyprus*, *Esja Seafood*, which is referred to as the centre of international operations of *Samherji*

(Stundin, 12.11.2020). “*Big man politics*” is cited to describe business practices in Namibia. Samherji’s management has referred to Bernhard Esau, one of those “big man”, the most powerful and influential politicians in the SWAPO party. The term *Big Man* is known from discussions on corruption in many African countries to describe societies where there is almost a *dictatorship* which is permeated by corruption. In addition to paying *bribes*, Samherji has set up offshore companies where the company conducts capital transfers with little *transparency* and unclear tax payments (Stundin, 12.11.2020). Most of the media specify the name and position those involved and implicated to the case in both countries. Then a great emphasis is placed on the amounts that went between those and how those approaches were made. However, only Namibians implicated in the case have gotten a “nickname” in the media. The term “sharks” is used over those three “kingpin” so-called, both in the media in Iceland and Namibia (Fréttablaðið, 12.11.2019)

Transparency appears regularly throughout the news texts. Fréttablaðið reports on November 19th 2019, on the government procedure to ensure *trust* in the Icelandic economy and increased operational *transparency*. The proposals are in seven sections and include improvements in international fisheries and protection against *conflicts of interest* and *bribery* (fréttablaðið.is, 19.11.2019). Mbl.is refers to a speech by Katrín Jakobsdóttir prime minister, where she discussed the need for increased *transparency* in the economy in the aftermath of what the Samherja case has shown us. Those who are investigating the case have been guaranteed sufficient funding to be able to handle it in a high-quality manner, said Katrín. From the text, it can also be distinguished that *transparency* is generally essential when providing information as Katrín says; “In today’s debate, a political debate based on data and facts is unfortunately under attack. Informed debate and the importance of keeping accurate information based on facts is urgent” (Mbl.is, 07.02.2020). Published by Fréttablaðið on January 2nd 2020, is an opinion piece by Þórhildur Sunna Ævarsdóttir, a parliament member for the Pirate Party. There she discussed a *significant* and *persistent* problem in Iceland that is the *corruption* that stretches its roots into the pillars of society. *Objects* such as *transparency* and *trust* found within the text as *accountability for actions*. This text also reflects the position of the Pirate Party and Samfylkingin as they have advocated for the adoption of the new 2012 constitution and the critical step in promoting *transparency* and eliminating *corruption*. Þórhildur said it is without a doubt possible with the adoption of the new constitution based on the proposals of the Constitutional Council, but the constitution has yet not been adapted since its approval by the population in 2012 (Fréttablaðið, 02.01.2020).

Corruption Index Transparency International (CPI 2019) has paid particular attention to the fact that Icelanders are among the nations that have shown their displeasure at the *corrupt governance* of the country's highest authorities on the streets. Iceland sits now in 11th place out of 180 measured countries, but Iceland was once in the first place. Thus the text puts in the context that changes need to be made to “eliminate the effects of authoritarianism in public policy-making and to allow it to be shaped rather by the public's call for the public interest” (Mbl.is, 23.01.2020).

May 15th 2020, news about *dividends* paid by fellow owners of Samherji to their children appeared in the media. The primary owners of Samherji held an 86.5 per cent stake in the company. Following the changes, they only have a combined two per cent share in the company and their children over 80 per cent (Stundin.is, 15.05.2020 and Fréttabladid.is, 15.05.2020). It is also stated that two of the former primary owners of Samherji will keep their position. The explanation for these changes as quoted from the CEO is to “*strengthen and maintain the important family ties that the company has always been based on and have been a cornerstone of its operations*” (Stundin.is, 15.05.2020). Stundin also discusses the events that have occurred and the hundreds of millions ISK that have been paid in bribes. Samherji's case is still under investigation by the district prosecutor's office. In that context; it can be assumed that emphasis is placed on dishonest business practices where the case is still under investigation (ibid). In *Stundin* on June 8th states that the Prime Minister and other members of Parliament have taken up the discussion about *dividends*. It is the prime minister's position that it is unacceptable that the right to use *fishing quotas* is inherited. She says she will present a bill on resource provisions in the constitution to prevent this (Stundin, 08.05.2020). Discussion on Iceland's unique position is the fishery resource has appeared in the texts, but more emphasis is placed on the debate to oppose the concentration of ownership of quotas in the fisheries sector (Stundin, 05.12.2019 and Stundin, 03.02.2020). Many news referring to something abnormal occurring regarding the quota system may be mentioned. For example, one piece in the paper *Morgunblaðið* reads as follows; “Cheats and tricks in the quota system” (Morgunblaðið, 13.03.2020).

Contradictions that appear in the texts turn to Samherji's denial of the accusation that Jóhannes the informant had involved Samherji in illegal business on his own and on what the documents are based. “We were very *disappointed* to find out that Jóhannes Stefánsson, former CEO and board member of Samherjifélagið in Namibia, *appears* to have been involved in critical

business practices and possibly complicating Samherji's transactions that *may be illegal*," said Þorsteinn Már Baldvinsson, then former CEO of Samherji, (Mbl.is, 12.11.2019a). Samherji also gave out a Christmas card to their employers stating that they were investigating their operation in Namibia, shying away from all the accusations. It was also stated that the documents did not affect the company's operations (Fréttablaðið 23.12.2019). These texts can be viewed as a discursive strategy as the language implies manipulation questioning the informant truth and is not uncommon to act in this way when trying to defend. All the news media mention this other argument from Samherji, where they are given voice to answer for themselves. In itself, it can be said that the counter-arguments also reflect the ideology, and together these opposing views are part of one and the same bundle of discourses. In this way, one can see how the voices of the different powers of society are reflected in the discourse.

Another *object* which also characterizes the discourse is the *comparison of corruption*. It is not called into question in the texts of the absence of corruption in Iceland. Instead, the debate is more weighted towards the *difference between corruption* and given a different weight in Namibia, where corruption is known and has lasted a long time and is given little justification compared to Iceland which has, for the most part, measured *good* in terms of corruption (Fréttablaðið, 16.11.2019). An Icelandic couple from Namibia were asked for their opinion and stated that news of bribery and corruption did not surprise her. "There is a lot of persistent corruption in the country that has been difficult to eradicate," said Leilanie, who thought it was a positive sign that the ministers had resigned. However, she finds it unfair to focus on corruption in the country of birth. "We in Iceland also need to address corruption," (Fréttablaðið, 16.11.2019). Examples of this belief are represented in many of the news as many people are quoted saying that corruption is also part of Icelandic society, although it is maybe more evident in Namibia. Iliia Shumanov, Deputy Secretary-General of the Russian division of Transparency International, says that despite Iceland's positive image abroad, the Samherji case has shown how *vulnerable* the country is to *corruption*. It could best appear in the manifestation he calls "*friendliness*" Which refers to the abuse of the power of public policy-making, to benefit personally or rewards connections favours to friends and family over competence (Stundin.is, 18.12.2019).

As the case stretches to different countries, it is currently being investigated in at least nine countries including Namibia, Iceland and Norway, beside Namibian authorities have requested the assistance of the international police Interpol in the investigation (Fréttablaðið,

03.06.2020). Most of the news media also discuss the situation in Namibia as trials have started where six men have been arrested and accused of *accepting bribes* from Samherji. One news headline quotes an investigator of the ACC Corruption Police in Namibia who says that “the Icelandic government has been uncooperative so far” (Fréttablaðið, 27.05.2020). This thread often resonates throughout the period, which mentions the progress of affairs in Namibia compared to the lack of improvement in Iceland. Iceland has never tried the legal provision that makes bribery in other countries punishable. Hence they should have a responsibility to ensure that they do not export corruption said a representative of an anti-corruption organization in Sweden in an interview with Stundin. Corruption is widespread internationally and it has been challenging to control it. For this reason it is essential that the legislation clearly states that bribes are not acceptable neither at home nor internationally (Stundin, 14.12. 2019).

4.3.2. Exploitation of Namibian resources

The image of Namibia is also drawn into context many times both directly by showing pictures and in discourse that implies rural *poverty* and in discourse. For example, one of the news texts has pictures showing living situations in Namibia and written under one of them, “Common form of residence About 40% of Namibians live in shacks” (Stundin, 12.12.2020). This might imply a discursive strategy as the intention might be to display a particular situation or an issue to achieve a specific effect or a goal. It is also emphasized to get politicians and other people of power opinion on the case. Prime minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir says; “this is an awkward reminder of the behaviour of old colonial masters who are taking *advantage* of *weaknesses in the systems* of newly independent countries.” (Stundin,13.12.2019). Guðmundur Andri Thorsson, MP for Samfylkingin party, mentioned that Icelandic people had been in a similar position centuries ago, that is not having the resources and initiatives to advantage from the fishing industry. With our knowledge, we were able to bring it forward with the *development assistance* and establish a quota system. And then that has been *taken advantage* off by “handing over the resources to Samherji on a silver platter in collaboration with an avid political class in a country where one party controls more or less everything - then move the wealth out of the country, all by the book” (Mbl.is, 13.11.2019a).

It is often mentioned that Iceland was one of the countries that provided *development assistance* to Namibia while trying to improve the situation in the country (Stundin, 12.11.2020 and (Mbl.is, 13.11.2019a). The *development assistance* is repeatedly included in the discourse, for example, by Drífa Snædal, President of the Confederation of Icelandic Labor. She draws

off the news of the case as “imperialist, greedy exploiters [...] Men who came in the wake of successful development cooperation and vacuumed up resources for their benefit behaved like the most outrageous colonial masters” (Mbl.is, 13.11.2019). Most of those asked for an opinion on the case unanimously agree that there is something unethical going on. The discourse can therefore have a dual meaning as people are providing their own opinion or truth built their knowledge to the case but also the media itself writing that news with the context of *exploitation* of a nation in *poverty* and *dependency*. The media placed much emphasis on individuals who have come forward and called for informal discussion in their news.

According to the Stundin examination, the evidence in the case shows that behind the Samherji’s operations are *deceptions* and *conspiracies* aimed at getting behind these legal provisions in the country. The politicians and rulers in question are therefore *exploiting* their own country and putting money that should have gone into the treasury of Namibia into their own pockets (Stundin, 12.12.2020). This text is not objective but somewhat coloured by something that resides in the author’s words or beliefs. References from Jóhannes, the critical informant are prominent in the text where he says the decision to step forward and speak out publicly was made mainly because of *poverty* and *inequality* in Namibia. This *object* is prominent during this period, i.e. criticism of *exploiting* a “*vulnerable*” nation and the metaphor of the white colonial masters who exploited an impoverished nation has been used in that regard (Stundin, 12.12.2020). Sighvatur Björgvinsson, former Minister and Secretary-General of the Icelandic International Development Agency is also quoted where he said he was “shocked” by the content of the Samherji’s documents. All the work that has been done in Namibia had collapsed with the arrival of Samherji (Morgunblaðið, 14.12.2019). Another news article refers to an interview from 2012 in which Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, then a working historian and the current President of Iceland, talked about Icelandic fishing in Africa. “The profits from Icelanders fishing off the coast of West Africa has not been left in the countries where the fishing takes place except to a small extent. [...] Icelanders are in sixteenth place among the richest nations in the world in terms of GDP are still taking *dividends* from those who are much *poorer in resources* than they are” (Stundin.is, 02.12.2019). It should be noted that no comment was made by the President when Stundin requested it. Typical rhetoric in the discourse of the Icelandic media is this *exploitation* of Namibia, and this is also best achieved in these texts by getting people’s reaction and opinion on the case. Several news articles discuss the situation in Namibia involving fishers as the future of 210 of them that have worked for Samherji in Namibia is now at risk. Samherji issued an announcement earlier in January stating

that the company was reducing its operations in Namibia intending to cease operations in the country altogether. Future of those fishermen is therefore at risk, which is focused in a few of the texts. Pictures from the protest are shown, and president of the fisherman union is quoted where he expresses his concerns of the consequences the case has had for ordinary fishers and their families (Stundin, 02.12.2019 and Stundin, 10.02.2020).

During the beginning of the analysis period, several protests took place in Iceland to protest corruption and demand action. The protesters' demands were threefold, the resignation of the Minister of Fisheries, secondly, that the parliament legislate a new and revised constitution and, thirdly, that dividends from the utilization of the nation's common resources flow into public funds. These protests were covered in all major media (Mbl.is, 23.11.2019a and Fréttablaðið, 23.1.2019). As a result, the rhetoric was directed in the direction that was actually witnessed, that the discourse of the Icelandic media has to a large extent echoed the discourse of the society about the dissatisfaction of the Samherji's involvement in Namibia.

4.3.3. Reputation of Iceland internationally

The third *object* that was reported during the period is characterised by the discourse on foreign affairs of Iceland and the fear of hurting the *reputation* internationally. On November 19th, 2019, states in *Fréttablaðið* that at a government meeting, the Samherji case was discussed concerning international relations. Neither the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassies nor trade representatives had received inquiries or comments from the governments of other countries or international and regional organisations. It is noted that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is monitoring the discussion abroad and has prepared a response due to a possible reputation breach, but has not seen any reason to take the initiative in a special presentation of the case (*ibid*). However, news media throughout the period race to get feedback from political MPs members and other important people in the society about the reputation of Iceland abroad.

Heiðrún Lind Marteinsdóttir, CEO of the Association of companies in the fisheries sector said to *Mbl* that the accusations against Samherji are serious and that “it is clear that issues of this kind can affect the reputation of the Icelandic fishing industry and its position in the international market” (Bbl.is, 13.11.2019b). Prime Minister, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, said to *Mbl* “that if allegations against Samherji are substantiated, it is a matter of great concern for the Icelandic economy and shame for Samherji. The issue can affect the nation as a whole”. In the same article, it is stated that Iceland was placed on the grey list of the FATF, an international

working group on measures against money laundering and terrorist financing, almost a month ago. Katrín says then that being on the list is disappointing and that she has concerns about our reputation but states that Samherji's case "is not descriptive of Icelandic society as a whole" (Mbl.is, 13.11.2019c). The foreign minister was also quoted in another news by Mbl; "It helps us now to be a party to a variety of international agreements that make it easier to investigate the conduct. But what effect this will have on Iceland's reputation remains to be seen. It goes without saying that this is not good for Iceland's reputation" (Mbl.is, 13.11.2019d). *Fréttablaðið* mentions that the Icelandic Ambassador to Angola has received a letter from the Angola Reflection Platform requesting that the Icelandic government suspend trade with Angola due to Samherji's involvement in corruption (Fréttablaðið, 05.12.2019). Hage Geingob, President of Namibia, has also made himself heard regarding the case and he says that the Namibian media, as well as the international media, have attacked Namibians, and in particular the ruling forces in the country. Geingob says it is not fair only to mention those who received bribes, and there should be more talk of those who had given the bribes, adding that the Icelanders should also investigate corruption in their own country (Mbl.is, 23.11.2019b). Daniel Balint-Kurti, a senior researcher at Global Witness, has also been quoted on the matter where he says; "this undermines the goals of Iceland's foreign policy. A company that comes and pays a bribe to secure a quota undermines the management of an entire nation-state. (Mbl.is, 12.11.2019b). Another news concerning businesses is that the British supermarket Sainsbury's has stopped buying fish from their operations in Namibia. Reason for that is that the supermarket is "very clear about our demands that our suppliers act by the law, and we take these allegations very seriously" (Fréttablaðið.is, 26.06.2019). There is a strong emphasis in the texts in the direction where the case is thought to harm the country's image and its interests to other states.

In a submitted article in *Stundin* the author puts the discussion in a historical context when it comes to Iceland's *reputation*. Various officials seem to be concerned about the impact of the debate on Iceland's *importance* abroad, which, unfortunately, those concerns seem to arise often. He takes an example of the banking collapsing, and several *scandals* that came to light where wealthy Icelanders were in the lead roles. When the Panama Papers came out, it was said, among other things, "that wealthy Icelanders had world records in the number of offshore accounts when compared to how few we are" (Stundin, 25.1.2019). The article discussed that the leaders of the nation had then and now emphasised that we must be careful not to "talk Iceland down", as it could affect Iceland's international reputation, which refers to

some *silencing attempts*. Along the way, the Minister of Finance has also pointed out that what counteracts the effects abroad is mainly how we Icelanders respond when such scandals arise (ibid). It is clear that the Icelandic media's discourse on the Samherji case was to some extent about a comparison with other older cases involving corruption and mistrust.

4.3.4. Mistrust and disputes in government

The final *objects that* are prominent in the debate concern *dissatisfaction* in the society as the Samherji case has rekindled the anger that flared up in the financial collapse. Article in *Fréttablaðið* on December 12, 2019, points out the protests that have occurred following the publication of the Samherji documents. It seems that a large section of the society does not *trust* that the Samherji case will be thoroughly investigated. It appears to be little trust is in the politicians, as many of them have indicated they do not particularly want the issue to be discussed in society. "It's like they prefer to put it in a lengthy process where it will burn out. This is exactly what people are afraid of happening" (Fréttablaðið, 12.12.2019). Article in *Morgunblaðið* on December 3 2019, discusses the Samherja case concerning the *trust*. There it is mentioned that the offences described in the document are severe and lead to mistrust in various fields such as business community and government. The government's subsequent actions to increase confidence in the Icelandic economy is considered powerless. The same system that is to work out proposals against corruption, bribery and money laundering is the same system that enabled Samherji to come like this reprehensible (Morgunblaðið, 03.12.2019).

Mbl.is reported February 6, 2020, issues in parliament regarding a comparison report of Samherji's fishing fees in Iceland and Namibia but the opposition had requested further information. In parliament, the Minister of Finance Bjarni Benediktson said that it was a case of "populism" and the Minister of Transport called it a "political nonsense". In contrast, the opposition MPs said that this was a perfectly normal request. Þorsteinn Víglundsson, Viðreisn's MP, said that the MPs of the majority could be understood as wanting to be allowed to edit writings on the report request. He said that this was a simple request for a report at "it is perfectly normal for the public to know the comparison in this regard" (Mbl.is, 06.02.2020). It had been repeatedly pointed out that fishing fees in Iceland had been declining and were low so that a comparison would be a reasonable claim. Twenty-seven votes finally approved the issue against seven (ibid). An article in *Stundin* on May 22, 2020, reported from the debates of the parliament regarding the elimination of stamp duties to larger companies. The opposition

slammed the government's priorities when stamp duty on large ships was abolished by law. The operation was called a "summer gift" to the large companies, but much criticism was spoken against it. In light of what is stated in the so-called Samherji documents, parliament should proceed very slowly in this matter, one MP said. "This is a peculiar priority, but shows so well what interests always prevail here," he added. "These same government parties did not hesitate to include a proposal here that would enable students to enjoy unemployment benefits this summer" (Stundin, 22.05.2020).

Suppose the results of the analysis are summarised. In that case, it shows that what characterises this *ideology* is the discourse of the Icelandic media revolving mainly around the *disputes* of the government parties and the opposition on the issue. The Icelandic media, as a whole spent a considerable amount of work in covering the current situation, that is the division that formed in the Icelandic government due to the different positions of the two government parties. One may wonder why the discussion of the disputes between the government parties has been at the forefront of the discourse, as is evident. As a result, the rhetoric was directed in the direction that was actually witnessed that the discourse of the Icelandic media has to a large extent echoed the discourse of the society.

4.4. Overall result of analysis

In analysing the discourse, certain ideologies were found for the period that reflects the prevailing discourse of these three media, although a particular emphasis can be noted on that discourse. From this coverage, it can be deduced that, on the whole, the Icelandic media's coverage of the Samherja case was somewhat similar. What was considered when using discourse analysis is the purpose of examining the interplay of words and situations. Thus, it was necessary to look at the context, what was said and written and under what circumstances. When analysing discourse, it was also essential to look for silence and ask yourself which voices are not allowed to be heard and why. What can be interpreted from the text is that most people's voices are heard. Samherji has had a chance to reject the allegations, the MP's and other officials have had the platform, including international opinion leaders. However, represented less in the texts is Namibia, especially the official there investigating the case, but this corruption case has been the biggest within the country since independence (Stundin.is, 14.12. 2019)

The ideologies that were discovered through the analyses are in many ways similar. First can be mentioned the *objects* about *corruption*, but the discourse is constructed to present the picture of actors that are considered corrupted. The Icelandic fishing company Samherji, high-seated individuals in Namibia including minister of justice and minister of the fishery, and then questions are also aimed at the involvement of the Icelandic government. Proof of *bribes* gives more justification for assuming corruption, and the lack of *transparency* also pushes to it. The problem is not always limited to corruption as such, but also to its consequences, as corruption tends to undermine democracy, trust and living standards of the people. Not only is the corruption focused on Samherji within the texts, but the focus is also on *internal corruption*. The root of the problem cannot be ignored. The accumulation of quotas for the few is the result of political connections being used to consolidate ownership, minimise payments to mutual funds and maximise profits. In that context, *dividends* are given a negative meaning, but there seems to be great dissatisfaction with the dividends from the natural resources that are being *exploited* that are said to be nationally owned. That also applies to Namibia, where the *ideology of exploitation of Namibia's resources* becomes apparent. The discourse shows evidence of *organised exploitation* of another nation's resources, *regular bribes* to officials and politicians from companies that have been pioneers of the Icelandic fishing industry and based their accumulation of wealth on the utilisation of Icelandic resources. In a way, it is assumed that the progress made from the *development assistance* had been exploited. And the picture painted of Namibia is of a vulnerable nation. *Icelandic reputation* has been harmed and not only because of this case but repetitions of corruption through time, e.g. the bank collapse and the Panama papers, which undermines the goals of Iceland's foreign policy. Attention was also drawn to the fact that the headlines of many of the news contained the word *reputation*. The result of those examples above shows that *mistrust* is a dominant factor. There seems to be *little trust* to officials to handle the case, and *disputes* prevail within the government where the views of many are different.

As previously introduced, the main objective of this thesis was to analyse the discourse of the media of Samherji's case in the period from November 12, 2019, until July 12, 2020. Although it was not initially intended to analyse the differences in the coverage of the news media in particular, but rather to examine the discourse in general, the study revealed a specific difference in the framing of the news. Of the three media outlets in the study, it becomes apparent that Stundin is the most thorough as it uses investigative journalism to deliver information built on the researched documents. Fréttablaðið and Morgunblaðið build most of

their news on other news media such as Stundin, the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service and international press. What characterises them from Stundin is that in many cases, they consider it appropriate to seek comment on opinions from leaders of the community such as members of parliament and organisations within the field. The news articles further evaluate the situation through its use of quotes making the boundaries between the two sometimes unnoticeable to the reader.

Now we have discussed the main ideological standpoints of the discourse and how they have been displayed in the media. In the following subsections, the main results in connection with theoretical perspectives that the researcher presented at the beginning will be explained in more detail.

4.4.1. Analysis of the discourse from an international relations point of view

The discourse analysis was carried out in the context of the methodology and framework presented in chapter 3. The results of the analysis are thus based on the ideologies that this approach highlighted. It can be said that the objects that were found within the period reflect quite well the political and social conditions of that period. The perspectives discussed in chapter 2 reflect certain ideologies associated with the Samherja case. Constructivist thinking is a fundamental theory when it comes to international relations in the modern-day. The social side of international politics has never been more critical than it is today. The international community is continuously changing and examining how discourse is not, how self-identity is shaped and how we take shape (Wendt, 1999). Icelandic politicians have said that Icelanders are proud of their expertise in certain areas, such as sustainable fisheries management, and consider themselves able to share that knowledge internationally (Bogason, 2014). Iceland's image in terms of fisheries is, therefore, an essential part of the nation's identity and can have a formative effect on its interests and how disputes are resolved in the future. As stated in section 2.1., it is in the spirit of both constructivist and poststructuralist ideas that foreign policy is used to build an identity. The state uses relations with other countries as a guide through a combination of threats, risks and not least provocations from the other states. In this way, the state reflects itself and forms an identity based on it. This is very strongly reflected in the policy of the Icelandic government.

From a poststructuralist perspective, we see that discourse is dependent on social reality and to understand the development of discourse, it is important to look at it with that in mind (Hansen,

2011). This explains how the discourse can fluctuate in line with external circumstances and the prevailing social vision at any given time, as well as the fact that interest groups, politicians and others emphasise the importance of rooting out corruption and establishing transparency, this can be seen in texts of the news media. Thus, through a changed social image, space is created within the discourse for more points of view and resistance to the dominant discourse acquires a distinct voice within the discourse that influences the truth politics that governs discourse and values at any given time. Foucault's theories discuss, among other things, how discourse can form a framework around a specific topic that governs which perspectives are in the foreground and what criteria are recognised within the discourse at any given time.

The concept of trust is complex, and the understanding of it depends somewhat on the topic at hand. Accordingly, trust in the international arena is an ongoing process that is not instantly established. It is only formed when state leaders reach a certain level of interaction among one another. We can look at theories of trust from two angles regarding our ideologies. First, with the ideological standpoint of the reputation of Iceland internationally. This falls mostly under rational trust as the lack of behaviour indicates that the government has not invested in maintaining a collaborative relationship to Namibia; therefore, there is no ongoing exchange. Rationalism cannot provide trusting relationships between actors; trust must be conceived as a property of collective attribute as a sociological perspective shows us (Rathbun, 2017). The relations among people are what leads to the process of trust, and social identity is what drives that process (Weinhardt, 2015 and Rathbun, 2017). This can also apply at the internal level that the Icelandic public's distrust of the system of government, can partly be attributed to the fact that not enough attention has been paid to such policies. The government is therefore incapable of responding, accepting and learning from criticism. It can also be debated whether they lack the necessary tools and equipment to review decisions and communicate with the public in advance. Distrust of the government is, of course, not unique in Iceland, but a problem that plagues many contemporary democracies. Such mistrust creates political instability and causes disconnections between the public and those in power. A constructivist approach will seek to understand what actors consider appropriate based on social rules and identification. Hence it is difficult to account for significant cooperation with those with whom one does not identify a problem that is frequently emerging (Rathbun, 2017).

Lastly, when the discourse is examined in the context of small state studies, one can see signs that smallness can be a disadvantage in foreign policy. The evidence, in this case, has shown

that the state has been unable to take part in more extensive diplomatic discussions which limit cooperation with other nations and lacks forming of good foreign policy (Thorhallsson and Steinsson, 2017). Iceland uses soft power in its foreign policy, which more emphasis is placed on unconventional power. Public diplomacy is an essential tool in the use of soft power. States use their public diplomacy to attract the international community to their policies by, for example, spreading the message of their culture, increasing international trade and using the media and other forms of entertainment (Nye, 2004). However, taking part in bilateral or multilateral cooperation, smaller states are at risk to reap disproportionate benefits without eliciting a sense of relative loss on behalf of their partners (Thorhallsson and Steinsson, 2017). This has been in the discussion, as shortly after the news spread out on the case but the government has decided to take action in order to increase confidence in the Icelandic economy, e.g. to promote international assessment and improvement of fisheries in developing countries. The initiative is for the World Food Organization (FAO) to carry out an audit of the business practices and working on proposals for improvement in cooperation with other international organisations working on sound business practices, anti-corruption, bribery and money laundering (Fréttablaðið, 19.11.2019).

4.4.2. Analysis of the discourse from media studies of agenda setting and framing

The media play a vital role in any democracy. Professional journalism aims to simultaneously publish information and facts from different sources for the public to take a stand on important issues. After taking an informed stand, the public can then call for change if necessary, and thus the discussion is a crucial factor in the development of society. According to this, a great responsibility rests on the shoulders of those who work in the media. It is also not without reason that the media is considered the “fourth power” regarding the three elements of state power (McQuail, 2005). The extent of media coverage of specific issues affects our perception of the importance of those issues, as has been discussed in previous chapters. Thus, the agenda-setting of the media is considered to include the power to direct the public’s attention to certain events. The events on the media agenda are deemed necessary in society, especially when the coverage is extensive (McCombs, 2004). What to keep in mind is that the media created the material that has been analysed here. Working from thousands of documents, they have put efforts to trace events, analyse files etc. to bring into the light. Therefore, it may be concluded that the main reason for the coverage is not that the media is reverberating the discourse of society; the political discourse; instead, it is a matter of media agenda-setting. The role of the media is generally considered to be to disseminate information to the public and provide the

government with necessary restraint. This applies regardless of who is under the microscope, the government or other powerful actors, media will still disseminate information. In this light, it cannot be ruled out that the media has played a part in maintaining the discourse which supports the view that the media is in fact in the role of chair by putting issues on the agenda and thus shaping the public debate.

5. Discussion

Probably a few words have been more widely used in the discourse that has become of corruption. Since the economic collapse, the discussion on corruption and political relations has had a more significant impact on society than before. What characterised the new discourse within Iceland is perhaps that many people seemed to see that individual members of Icelandic society had been allowed to become wealthy because they had the “right” connection or relationships. There is little doubt that the debate on corruption has been vast in the Icelandic media in recent years and that people are divided into different groups regarding normal boundaries between business and politics. The media has the power what to put on the agenda. It is interesting to consider what interests the media is guarding. Either way, public trust in the credibility of the media is an essential factor in creating a transparent and open society. In small communities such as Iceland, the importance of the press becomes particularly tangible as their number is limited and public access to them is high. It is also clear that the influence of the media is multifaceted and can be both an opinion-forming and moderate discussion.

While conducting this research, much new information was brought to the surface. Six current and former employees of Samherji have now the legal status of defendants in the district prosecutor’s investigation into the Namibian case, and they were questioned this summer. This shows that the Namibian case is being investigated by the office (11.11.2020). It has also turned out that Samherji has been attacking the freedom of the media and expression with unprecedented actions. Not only that, but Samherji has put together a whole series of episodes on Youtube with the sole aim of portraying the journalists who have performed the investigation research of the case (Kjarninn, 08.11.2020). The company has sought inspiration across to cover negative media coverage. Many people have expressed their views on the matter, including on social media, Twitter where few people seem to have much regard for Samherji’s part and have mostly mocked their attempts to diminish the case.

Subsequently, the debate about the new constitution has also taken up again. A referendum on the proposals of the Constitutional Council took place on October 20, 2012, and all recommendations were approved. However, it is still awaiting implementation and pressure to finalise that are substantial. Among one of the focus is national ownership of natural resources which has been highlighted primarily in the context of the aftermath of the Samherja case to stimulate interest (Fréttablaðið, 09.11.2020).

Lastly, this thesis would never have been possible if it were not for reporters and journalists and the investigation they have done to shed light on the various issues for the benefit of our society. Therefore I am infinitely grateful for the ongoing work they do.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to analyze the discourse of the Icelandic media on the Samherja case. The objectives of the thesis were achieved by using the methodology of content analysis and discourse analysis. With the discourse analysis, it was intended to try to capture the image of the social reality, the system of power and the truth that prevails in society at any given time. It should be noted that the analysis is not about taking a stand on the Samherji case, nor about assessing which points of view are the right ones in the discourse. The aim is to describe how the discourse developed during the period.

The research questions that were set up, aim to shed light on how particular themes or objects appear in the discourse. Thus, we are not taking a stand on the views of different groups in society who take part in the debate, only reflecting how their views are expressed in the discourse and how they are presented in the media coverage. The result of the analysis, as discussed in the previous chapter, were conducted on three media during the period 12.11.2019 – 12.07.2020. The division of the news appeared to be similar; however, more detailed articles were found on Stundin media. The ideological standpoints in the discourse centred towards corruption, exploitation of Namibia's resources, fear of reputation and mistrust of the government. The theoretical framework shed light on how accepted ideas are projected through the media. It is important to keep in mind that discourse analysis is the interpretation of the discourse analyst. Therefore, the narrative of the discourse is based on the researcher's interpretation and the context in which he places the discourse.

There has not been much discussion about the content of media coverage of politics within the academic community in Iceland. By examining what political issues are on the agenda of the media and the significance of the discourse on society as a whole, this research carried out here seeks to add to the field of political communication. It is essential to research this kind in light of the fact that media discourse, to some extent, shapes our understanding of social issues. It should be borne in mind, however, that the conflicting picture of political discourse is often exaggerated in the media. Thus the conflict surfaces appear clearly in the pages of the media.

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