“Stop the ferry”
A Qualitative Study on Residents’ Attitudes During The COVID-19 Pandemic.

Author: Linnéa Ahlin
Supervisor: Stephan Reinhold
Examiner: Stefan Gössling
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Linnéa Ahlin
Abstract
A contagious virus appeared in late 2019 and later led to the COVID-19 pandemic being declared in March 2020. The pandemic has since seen detrimental socioeconomic effects worldwide which led to a halt in the global tourism industries. Sweden has used a different and criticized approach to combating the pandemic compared to other countries. The country has relied on the individual responsibility and the civic liability of its population. Meanwhile, the biggest island in the country, Gotland, has recovered its visitation figures during the pandemic and has been voted the most popular destination in Sweden in 2021. This recovery was, however, not without consequences. Residents of the island have voiced their opinions on the topic of the pandemic and tourism online and in newspapers. Residents have expressed fear of the virus spreading further, imposing health risks as restrictions on social distancing have not been kept by tourists. Tourism-related research on Swedish island destinations to this end is scarce in addition to there being limited research on residents’ attitudes during a pandemic and limited qualitative research on residents’ attitudes in general.

This is a qualitative case study that studies the islanders’ perceptions of tourism impacts with the help of semi-structured interviews and letters to the editors. The study uses Social Exchange Theory as the conceptual framework, a theory described as the most logical framework to explain residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts. The results from this study show that the residents perceive more negative impacts than positive impacts. Perceptions of positive impacts are mainly related to the contributions to rural areas. Negative impacts related to water scarcity, littering, the disappearance of natural areas, over-crowding, gentrification, seasonality, the economic interest of the tourism industry during the pandemic, and more.

**Key words:** COVID-19 Pandemic, Domestic Tourism, Gotland, Islanders, Social Exchange Theory, Perceptions, Impacts.
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List of Abbreviations
COVID-19 Corona Virus Disease 2019
DMO Destination Marketing Organization
GT Gotlands Tidningar (Gotlands Newspapers)
LTTE  Letter To The Editor
SDGs  Sustainable Development Goals
SET  Social Exchange Theory
1 Introduction

“Residents in tourist destinations cannot fully shield themselves from tourists, even if they try to protect themselves from COVID-19 by washing their hands or wearing a mask”

(Kamata, 2022, p.135).

The Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic turned into a pandemic and paralyzed the whole world as the number of infections rose significantly in early 2020. This unprecedented crisis has since then seen detrimental consequences to humanity unseen and unheard of before (Nkengasong, 2021; Tabish, 2020). Bankruptcies and unemployment rates have conversely gone up whilst millions of people have lost their lives (Deb & Nafi, 2020). This situation has required social distancing, travel restrictions, working from home, and the closing of borders, schools, and workplaces (Baum & Hai, 2020). The social and economic disruption of the pandemic is consequently jeopardizing the livelihood of people worldwide (Alamineh, 2022). The pandemic is still ongoing as of June 2022, although a vaccine has been developed and distributed to millions of people worldwide. Many borders have at the same time been opened with relevant travel requirements to limit the further spread of infection.

The global tourism industries went from the issue of over tourism to being non-existent in just a few weeks when the pandemic emerged (Gössling et al., 2020). Tourism was initially linked to being one of the contributing causes to the further spread of infection as it relies on the movement of individuals from one spot to another (Farzanegan et al., 2020; Qiu et al., 2020). However, the inability to travel internationally has instead created an increase in domestic tourism in some countries including Sweden (Gössling & Schweiggart, 2022; Joo et al., 2021; Volgger et al., 2021). Sweden has at the same time chosen a
unique and different but also criticised strategy towards limiting the spread of infection during the pandemic compared to other countries (Korhonen & Granberg, 2020; Habib, 2020; Weman Josefsson, 2021). Instead of implementing controlling and restrictive measures like lockdowns, the country has relied on the personal responsibility and the civic liability of its population (Weman Josefsson, 2021). Thus, creating herd immunity (Korhonen & Granberg, 2020). This approach led the country to have much higher COVID-19-related cases and fatalities than its neighboring countries (Brusselaers et al., 2022; Habib, 2020; Tegnell, 2021).

As a result of the strategic approach and the increasing domestic tourism, the country’s biggest island, Gotland, went from having a forecast of decline to recovered visitation figures during the pandemic (Tillväxtverket, 2021). This recovery was, however, not without consequences. Residents of the island have expressed fears over the increasing spread of infection due to incoming tourists, and simultaneously exacerbated criticism of tourism-related impacts in social media and the local newspapers throughout the pandemic (Sjögren, 2020). Namely, a Facebook group called “Stop the ferry” prompted a movement to stop ferry traffic to the island but faced significant backlash online and in the news in early 2020 (Karlsson, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted tourism researchers to adjust and redirect research efforts (Rogerson & Baum, 2020; Zenker & Kock, 2020; Zopiatis et al., 2020), albeit there has been considerable research available on tourism and crises before the recent pandemic. Despite that, one identified and potential research path is residents’ attitudes towards tourism during a pandemic (Kamata, 2022). Importantly, researchers argue that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected residents’ attitudes towards tourism (Godovykh et al., 2021). Schumann (2021), to this end, has pointed out that it is critical to monitor the residents’ attitudes in small island destinations as disruptive events may have residents reassess the tourism industry and their
relationship to it. Early research of the pandemic has additionally found a dilemma among residents between accepting tourism and helping the local economy and personal fears (Kamata, 2022).

The increasing need for sustainability in tourism has emerged from the growing awareness of adverse and diverse tourism impacts (Saarinen, 2006). The impacts created by tourism can be split into three different categories: social, economic, and environmental, and may be either positive or negative (Peters et al., 2018). Residents shape their attitudes towards tourism accordingly on their perceptions of the preceding three impacts (Martín et al., 2018a). Undeniably, researchers agree that an understanding of residents’ attitudes is critical for dimensions of social sustainability and their continuous support of tourism (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Gursoy et al., 2009; Hsu et al., 2019; Lee, 2013; Ribeiro et al., 2017; Uriely et al., 2003). There has been research conducted on residents’ attitudes for decades making it one of the most well-studied topics in tourism research (Nunkoo et al., 2013; McGehee & Andereck, 2004). Literature has interchangeably used terms like support, perceptions, and attitudes to explain the position held by residents with respect to tourism (Joo et al., 2021; Schumann, 2021; Stylidis et al., 2014). Most of these studies, however, have been quantitative (Hadinejad et al., 2019; Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2020; Sharpley, 2014; Zerva et al., 2019).

The present study is a qualitative case study, guided by a constructivist stance, and employs two methods to research islanders’ perceptions in Gotland for triangulation: semi-structured interviews and archival research. Social Exchange Theory will be used as the theoretical lens, a prevailing theory within tourism research on residents’ attitudes. The study seeks to answer the following question: “What are the islanders’ perceptions of tourism impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic?” Accordingly, the study is expected to contribute to the scarce research on residents’ attitudes towards tourism during
a pandemic by means of perception. The study will also contribute to the scarce tourism-related research on Swedish island destinations.

1.1 Background
To frame the background of the study, this section is commenced with an introduction to the island of Gotland, followed by the island’s context in terms of tourism and thereafter the COVID-19 pandemic. The background is succeeded by the identified research gaps, aim & objective, contributions to tourism and sustainability, personal statement, key concepts, and the disposition of the study.

1.1.1 Gotland
Gotland is the largest island in Sweden with a surface of 3184 km² (see figure 1 for a map of the island). The island lies in the Baltic Sea off Sweden’s southern-eastern coast and is home to approximately 60,000 inhabitants. Nearly half of the population (24,500 people) lives in the island’s biggest city, Visby. Gotland is commonly defined and distinguished by its medieval wall and history, culture, and many beaches. The part of Visby that is surrounded by the medieval wall is referred to as the Hanseatic Town of Visby and has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage Site list since 1995 (UNESCO, n.d.). This wall was originally built in the late 1200s to protect the inhabitants against enemies. The inside of the wall hosts several churches, medieval buildings, houses, and more maintaining the medieval history.

The island's major industries include construction, real estate, banking, trade, tourism, agriculture, and transportation (Tillväxt Gotland, n.d.). The island had the lowest unemployment rate in June 2021 with only 5.4% and hosts a rather old population with one of the highest average ages in the country. Gotland suffers from ongoing water scarcity and implements annual irrigation bans in parts of the island to limit excessive water use (Länsstyrelsen, n.d.). The island’s driest months coincide with its peak tourism season and have been a
recurring issue since 2016 despite extensive efforts to improve the situation (Länsstyrelsen, n.d.).

Figure 1. Map of Gotland (Google, n.d.)

1.1.2 Gotland & Tourism

Gotland is a hotspot for domestic tourism and annually receives around one million visitors and one million guest nights (Tillväxtverket, 2022). However, Gotland also attracts foreign tourists, which mainly come from Germany, Norway, Denmark, and Finland (Region Gotland, 2019a). Most of the tourists come during the peak season, the summer. Gotland can be accessed via ferry from Oskarshamn, Nynäshamn, and Rostock all year around. There are also daily flights departing from airports in Stockholm. During the peak season, there is an extended number of flight arrivals from Helsinki, Gothenburg, Malmö, and more. Gotland is also popular in terms of second home tourism with over 12,000 holiday homes, whereas 60-75 % of the holiday homes have owners who live in another municipality (SCB, 2020).
There are numerous hotels, B&Bs, hostels, resorts, cafés, and restaurants on the island, most of which can be found in the main city of Visby. The island has assets of food and beverage, culture, meetings, events, activities, and outdoor life (Region Gotland, 2019a). The main transportation modes on the island are private vehicles and buses. A new cruise berth was built and opened back in 2018 in the harbor of Visby, welcoming more tourists than ever as the previous cruise berth was inaccessible for larger ships. The new berth can simultaneously accommodate two cruise ships and has so far received a total of 320 ships and 330,000 visitors. Those figures may indicate and suggest significant economic contributions to the island; however, research has found that cruise tourists spend little money during their excursions to the island (Larsen et al., 2013).

The municipality of Gotland coupled with the destination marketing organization (DMO) Gotland’s Förenade Besöksnäring oversees the tourism development on the island. Current, overarching tourism strategies include attracting tourists all year round, increasing climate-positive ferry/air travel and guest nights, and the aim for Gotland to become northern Europe’s most attractive and sustainable destination (Region Gotland, 2019b).

1.1.3 Gotland, Tourism, & The COVID-19 Pandemic

Sweden has received significant attention and publicity in media worldwide for the strategy used to combat the COVID-19 pandemic (Irwin, 2020; Korhonen & Granberg, 2020; Weman Josefsson, 2021). Sweden has considered the voluntary actions of the population instead of imposing law enforcement to control the situation (Irwin, 2020; Weman Josefsson, 2021). With much higher COVID-19 cases and deaths than in neighboring countries, this strategy has been criticized (Brusselaers et al., 2022; Habib, 2020; Tegnell, 2021). However, the approach is influenced by the Swedish Infectious Diseases Act 2004:168 which highlights that people in Sweden have the right to move freely in the country (Socialdepartementet, 2004). Lockdowns have
therefore not been implemented (Weman Josefsson, 2021), which has led the country to instead provide recommendations to limit the spread of infection and occasionally legally binding regulations (Tegnell, 2021). Controlling measures have simultaneously not been seen as something sustainable for societies in the long term (Weman Josefsson, 2021).

To this date, the pandemic is still ongoing although COVID-19 is no longer recognized as a socially dangerous disease in Sweden since April 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2022 (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2022). The country has opened successively throughout the pandemic along with the decreasing infections and vaccine development. It is now possible for outbound and inbound travel given certain requirements depending on nationality, possession of a negative COVID-19 test, or vaccination certificate. As indicated in the introduction, the prior absence of outbound travel has enabled a trend of domestic tourism in Sweden following an initial increase in layoffs and decline in travel. Gotland as a destination has experienced a surge in increasing visitation all year round and particularly during its peak season (Liljeborg, 2021).

As the pandemic hit the island, residents of Gotland began to voice their opinions on the topic of the pandemic and tourism online. Prominent outlets included the social platform Facebook and local newspapers Gotlands Allehanda and Gotlands Tidningar where residents sent in letters to the editors. It has been possible to observe contrasting, but mainly upset and angry comments on Facebook pages or in groups linked to Gotland when the topic of tourism has been brought up. Residents have expressed fear of the virus spreading further, imposing health risks as restrictions on social distancing have not been kept by tourists (Karlsson, 2020). A Facebook group named “Stop the ferry” was created in early 2020, the group gathered members who wanted the local ferry company to discontinue its departures and arrivals to prevent tourists from visiting the island (Karlsson, 2020). This sparked controversy online and in newspapers. In response, another group was created
by residents of the island called “Gotland loves the outside world” which instead welcomed tourists and sought to save the reputation of the island. The new group quickly outnumbered the former that later was deleted.

The hospital in Gotland has entered a state of readiness on several occasions during the pandemic including in March (the same month the pandemic was declared), and in November 2020 plus April and August 2021. A state of readiness is caused by demanding events, requiring careful management and organization of resources in a hospital. The first three occasions were due to the elevated number of infections. On the last occasion, it was mainly due to the increasing influx of tourists in need of hospital care (Lännerborg, 2021).

The island has seen significant and quick spikes in infections on at least four occasions since the beginning of the pandemic: late summer, and autumn 2020, late summer 2021 with five times higher levels of infection than the national average (Holm & Marklund, 2021), and early 2022 (Region Gotland, 2022). The first spike might be explained by the two-hour travel limit restriction eased on the 13th of June 2020; the third spike has been linked to the range of restrictions that were eased on the 15th of July 2021.

The summer of 2021, again, saw reports of record-breaking figures in terms of visitation and at one point there were as many tourists as there were permanent residents on the island (Johansson, 2021). A nationwide survey conducted later that year concluded that Gotland was Sweden’s most popular destination of 2021. With 4.1 %, Gotland was the only county in Sweden that recorded an increase in tourism-related turnover, compared to an already high pre-pandemic level (Tillväxtverket, 2021). Most restrictions and general advice in Sweden relating to social distancing, vaccination certificates, and a maximum number of participants in social settings were lifted on February 9th, 2022. Figure 2 presents a timeline of events during the pandemic.
1.2 Research Gap

Numerous researchers have pointed out the COVID-19 pandemic as a good opportunity to re-think and re-start tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2021; Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2021; Sigala, 2020; Schumann, 2021; Várzaru et al., 2021). Given the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, there may be many areas of research that may be missing valuable information and insights (Zenker & Kock, 2020). Consequently, one identified and potential research path is residents’ attitudes towards tourism during a pandemic as few studies have considered this (Kamata, 2022). Furthermore, researchers have argued that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected residents’ attitudes towards tourism (Godovykh et al., 2021; Kamata, 2022). Meanwhile, most
studies on residents’ attitudes have studied the residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts (Thyne et al., 2022).

Current research on Swedish island destinations in terms of residents’ attitudes is limited and demonstrates an available research opportunity. Schumann (2021) advises that one should consider how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the tourism attitudes of residents in small island destinations to understand the prevailing relationship between tourism and residents. Schumann (2021) also points out the need to continuously monitor changes in residents’ attitudes towards tourism development in the small island destinations for sustainability reasons. Consequently, the event of the COVID-19 pandemic may have residents reevaluate tourism and change perceptions as the pandemic changes (Kamata, 2022; Schumann, 2021). At the same time, it is uncertain how the pandemic will unfold long-term (Arbulú et al., 2021).

Moreover, multiple researchers recognize the methodological research gap in using a qualitative approach in researching residents’ attitudes (Hadinejad et al., 2019; Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2020; Sharpley, 2014; Zerva et al., 2019). To this end, researchers have pinpointed that more qualitative research is needed to get an in-depth understanding of residents’ attitudes (Deery et al., 2012; Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2021). For this reason, the study explores the residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic in a Swedish island destination using a qualitative approach.

1.3 Aim & Objective

The purpose of this study is to research, explore and understand residents’ attitudes in a Swedish island destination faced with recovering tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is done by focusing on the residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts that form and inform the attitudes (Martín et al., 2018a; Peters et al., 2018). Tourism is seasonality-related in the island destination of Gotland and has not only impacted water availability but also
imposed significant health risks to both tourists and residents in the context of the pandemic. Thus, the added health-related dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic may pronounce and influence certain perceptions in the presence of tourism (Ramkisson, 2020) as residents continuously reassess the perceived outcome of an exchange in dynamic and social settings (Waitt, 2003).

Prior and early observations have indicated diverse and split opinions among the residents of Gotland in discussions around the tourism situation during the pandemic (Bejerot, 2020). The discussion has revolved around whether to welcome tourists or protect the islanders. Sweden as a country has simultaneously had a less strict approach towards limiting the spread of infection (Korhonen & Granberg, 2020; Weman Josefsson, 2021). Based on the above, the following research question was developed to guide the research study:

“What are the islanders’ perceptions of tourism impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic?”

In line with the above, this study seeks to identify and explore the various perceived costs and benefits of tourism impacts during the pandemic using Social Exchange Theory. The study specifically looks at the residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts including social, economic, and environmental impacts. The pandemic has demonstrated longevity with two years and counting with socio-economic impacts that may be long-lasting and uncertainty of when the crisis will end (Arbulú et al., 2021). Accordingly, the longevity of the pandemic makes it timely to research perceptions in a context where many residents have expressed their concerns about tourism (Bejerot, 2020). The predominant social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are unseen before and have influenced the degree of tourism impacts substantially (Sigala, 2020).
1.4 Contribution To Tourism & Sustainability

Sustainability is a highly prevailing topic today and is reflected in three different dimensions: social sustainability, economic sustainability, and environmental sustainability (Hall et al., 2015). The unsustainable impacts of tourism have gathered great societal attention as tourism commonly contributes to emissions of greenhouse gases, crowding, exploitation, biodiversity loss, cultural commoditization, and financial leakages (Hall et al., 2015; Moraru et al., 2021). On the other hand, tourism creates job opportunities and commonly contributes to conservation activities, infrastructure development, and cultural exchanges (Martín et al., 2018). Therefore, it is critical for tourism planners, practitioners, and researchers to acknowledge and integrate responsible and sustainable practices. An integral aspect of tourism sustainability specifically is the residents’ attitudes towards tourism (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Gursoy et al., 2009; Hsu et al., 2019; Lee, 2013; Ribeiro et al., 2017; Uriely et al., 2003). The former aspect is an aspect that this study considers by looking at the islanders’ perceptions.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were developed and established in 2015 by the United Nations (n.d.) and propose various efforts to sustain people, the planet, prosperity, and partnership long-term. The present study is linked to three specific goals: SDGs 3, 11, and 17. SDG 3 involves ensuring healthy lives and the promotion of well-being for all, of all ages (United Nations, n.d.). The study considers residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts during a deadly and infectious pandemic meanwhile one of the targets of SDG 3 considers combatting infectious diseases. To this end, the residents may be confronted and exposed to the spread of infection caused by tourism. SDG 11 refers to making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Gotland has proven to be resilient and recovered its tourism activities quickly during the pandemic. The island has, at the same time, had issues with social distancing and crowding because of the
implemented recommendations and therefore proven to not be safe from proliferating spread of infection. Water resources have also been depleted due to the greater demand than supply, jeopardizing water security. With the above in mind, SDG 17 considers partnership for the goals, requiring the involvement and action of all tourism stakeholders, including residents (KC et al., 2021).

1.4.1 Personal Statement

For transparency, it is important to consider the positionality of the researcher in the study. I was born and raised on the island of Gotland and consider it my home. Although I lived abroad or on the Swedish mainland for five years and only recently returned, I have always maintained great interest in the issues that the island is faced with. This interest is especially influenced by the knowledge I have gained from my education in Tourism and Sustainability at Linnaeus University. I have observed the discussion around tourism on the island during the pandemic in newspapers and social media and it appeared to me that the voices of the islanders were not being heard with respect to the impacts created by tourism. My sense of the situation is that there are multifaceted issues linked to tourism on the island and that current tourism practices are inherently unsustainable. This, therefore, prompted me to focus on the islanders’ attitudes to tourism, since they are subject to tourism regardless.

1.5 Key Concepts

Some of the most apparent concepts discussed in this thesis are resident, perception, attitude, tourism, and island destination. For this reason, a definition is presented for each concept to delineate what they entail and the understanding of it.

**Resident**: A resident is defined as “an individual who reside (full time and part time) within a tourist destination” (Easterling, 2005, p. 50).
Perception: Perception is defined as “the process by which an individual selects, organises and interprets stimuli in a meaningful and coherent way” (Moutinho, 1993, p.11).

Attitude: An attitude is defined as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1).

Tourism: Tourism is defined as a “social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure” (UNWTO, n.d., para. 1).

Island destination: An island destination is defined as “an area with amalgamated tourism products and services that provide a tourism experience within an island environment” (McLeod & Croes, 2018, p. 4).

1.6 Disposition
The paper is divided into seven chapters, starting with the introductory chapter with relevant background and context to the study and its associated research gaps. The introductory chapter is followed by the second chapter that relates to the literature review that identifies the said research gaps. The third chapter presents the conceptual framework used as a structure to study the phenomenon. The fourth chapter will explain the methodological approach of the study including the philosophical stance of the researcher. Chapter five will uncover the results derived from the conducted research and is then succeeded by chapter six with a discussion of the results in conjunction with the conceptual framework. Finally, the conclusion along with implications for further research will be presented in chapter seven.
2 Literature Review

The following sub-sections will review past literature to provide a foundation of knowledge on existing research relevant to understanding the theoretical and empirical background of the present study. This includes research on island destinations, host-guest relations, residents' attitudes towards tourism, residents’ attitudes towards tourism during a pandemic, and tourism and health-related crises. The literature review will also identify relevant research gaps that this study addresses.

2.1 Island Destinations

Island destinations have been studied extensively for decades and are of particular interest given their remoteness, exoticness, vulnerability, and challenges (Buchan, 2000; Keane, 1996; McLeod et al., 2021). McCall (1996) introduced the concept and perspective of Nissology as “the study of islands on their own terms” (p.82). This perspective entails that the island worldview, island reality, and island integrity are unique to the islanders. Meanwhile, Hall (2010a) on the contrary, described island destinations as natural laboratories for examining and researching the effects of tourism and associated dilemmas relating to tourism development. Hence, there are different perceptions and approaches to island research, while the emphasis remains on island tourism as its own field and the necessity for more island research (McLeod et al., 2021).

Past research has generally focused on islands of various sizes in the Mediterranean (Cirer-Costa, 2017; Hof & Schmitt, 2011; Royle, 2009; Sharpley, 2001), Caribbean (Buchan, 2000; Connell, 2013; Ioannides & Holcomb, 2003), and Oceania (Cloke & Perkins, 2002; Scheyvens & Russell, 2012). Meanwhile, a review of the literature revealed that less attention in tourism research has been given to Baltic Island destinations. Swedish island
destinations, specifically, have been overlooked despite Sweden being the country with the most islands in the world (Källgård, 2005).

Foghagen (2011), for instance, researched the Swedish island of Öland in the context of camping tourism and harmful algae blooming. By following a quantitative approach, the study found that camping managers and camping tourists regarded algae blooming as an environmental concern that could affect tourism negatively as tourists may choose to visit other destinations. In the case of Gotland, Poort et al. (2021) compared the island to the island of Rapa Nui, located in the East Pacific Ocean in how authenticity could be used as an approach to sustainable cultural tourism. This study was done qualitatively and considered the local communities of the islands. Poort et al. (2021) highlighted that both islands were vulnerable for economic, environmental, and cultural reasons in addition to over-tourism. The study found that authentic experiences could create social acceptance among the communities. Meanwhile, Oxenswärdh (2020) investigated the sustainability practices of ten hotels in Gotland and found significant differences between them. These three studies demonstrate the most recent research focus within the limited tourism-related research centered on Swedish island destinations.

Tourism is reflected as a vehicle for social and economic development in most types of destinations, but particularly in the context of island destinations (Sharpley, 2001). An associated issue is, however, the potential dependence on tourism. In a study by Lasso and Dahles (2018), the authors emphasized how tourism dependence puts locals at risk of not being able to sustain their livelihoods if the tourism industry declines. They explored how locals in a village on Komodo Island, Indonesia went from fishing to selling souvenirs for a living. It was unclear from a long-term perspective if this was a good strategy given an array of threats associated with tourism including competition and seasonality (Lasso & Dahles, 2018). In the context of crises, Duro et al. (2021) found a correlation between tourism vulnerability to
COVID-19 and tourism dependence in island destinations. The underlying factors of tourism vulnerability during the COVID-19 pandemic were related to seasonality, market structure, tourism intensity, and tourism density.

Past research has further emphasized that careful attention is required for tourism development in smaller islands with special historic, socio-cultural, and natural contexts (Hall, 2010a; McLeod et al., 2021). This emphasis is due to the limited resources in addition to the environmental impacts induced by tourism. Tourism-related waste, transportation, and energy use are of particular concern when it comes to sustaining island destinations long-term given the emissions of greenhouse gases (Kelman, 2021). Scholars predict that many island destinations will be susceptible to climate change in the future with ongoing and gradual climate-related changes in combination with the biophysical characteristics of islands like geographic remoteness, low elevation, and limited resources (Duvat et al., 2017; van der Veeken et al., 2015). Adaptation strategies to climate change in island destinations include promoting off-season tourism and developing tourism activities that are less dependent on certain temperatures (Hein et al., 2009).

Climate change, along with socio-economic stressors, and demand confronts island destinations with challenging water management and often water scarcity (Phan et al., 2021). Water is a critical resource and a human right whilst tourism activities rely on freshwater availability (Cole, 2013; Phan et al., 2021). Numerous studies have shown, as a consequence, that tourists’ per capita use of water exceeds that of locals e.g., Gössling (2001), Becken (2014), and von Medeazza (2004).

2.2 Host-Guest Relations

Past research has termed the relationships between tourists and residents as host-guest relations. Host-guest relations have been a concern of research on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism (Wall & Mathieson, 2006), and have
been studied extensively through research on residents’ attitudes, visitor satisfaction, and community engagement (Zerva et al., 2019). Residents’ attitudes refer to the residents’ evaluation and stance towards something tourism-related like tourism development. Visitor satisfaction refers to the satisfaction of the tourists’ expectations and community engagement is how or to what degree the host community is engaged in tourism activities (Zeng & Yi Man Li, 2021).

The interaction between hosts and guests is typically brief, asymmetrical, and non-recurring (Şanlıöz-Özgen & Ebru Günlü, 2016). Sharpley (2014), to this end, developed a continuum of tourist-host encounters ranging from intentional encounters based on commercial exchange to just sharing space with no physical or verbal contact between the hosts or tourists (guests). This continuum demonstrates how each party may be affected by the other and how the encounters may occur. Su and Wall (2010) surveyed domestic tourists in Beijing, China, and found that their interactions with residents influenced the quality of their travel experience, subsequent destination choice, and judgment of the destination. Similarly, Pizam et al. (2000) conducted a study on working tourists in Israel. This study established a correlation between the higher tensity of social relationship between the hosts and guests, the greater satisfaction of the guests’ experience. Research has also revealed evidence of unsustainable host-guest relations as Tung and Tse (2021) have called for more attention to residents’ intolerance towards tourists as this has been witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic in various parts of the world. The reasoning is two-fold as residents exhibit blatant discrimination towards tourists whilst they, on the other hand, are not risk-proof and the presence of tourists may risk the health of residents (Tung & Tse, 2021).

Saarinen and Manwa (2008) have argued that the underlying competition and difference in needs by the tourism industry respectively of the hosting locals or the residents is a matter of power relations. Thus, host-guest encounters are
often unequal as the tourism industry’s needs are sanctioned whilst the needs of the hosting locals are not (Saarinen & Manwa, 2008). This was, however, not apparent in a study by Proyrungroj (2017) that researched host-guest relations in the context of volunteer tourism. The study found that the studied relations were both beneficial, reciprocal, and equal. The guests and hosts had a relation of exchange that was balanced as the guests helped the hosts with essential work.

2.2.1 Residents’ Attitudes Toward Tourism

Literature has interchangeably used terms like support, perceptions, and attitudes to explain the position held by residents with respect to tourism (Joo et al., 2021; Schumann, 2021; Stylidis et al., 2014). Studies have at the same time researched residents’ attitudes/perceptions towards tourism (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; Moraru et al., 2021; Lepp, 2007), tourism development (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Meimand et al., 2017) and tourism impacts (Almeida Garcia et al., 2015; Kuvan & Akan, 2005), but also: tourism events (Milićević et al., 2020), and tourists (Monterrubio & Andriotis, 2014). Most research on residents’ attitudes, however, has studied the residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts (Charag et al., 2020; Dyer et al., 2007; Easterling, 2004; Ovedio-Garcia et al., 2008; Ribeiro et al., 2013; Thyné et al., 2022; Vodeb et al., 2021).

The area of residents’ attitudes in tourism research is demonstrably well-researched and has mostly considered the large-scale side of residents’ attitudes (McGehee & Andereck, 2004). Factors that may affect residents’ perceptions and attitudes include age, gender (Sharma & Dyer, 2009), education, income (Turnois & Djeric, 2018), and length of residency (Jackson & Inbakaran, 2006). For this reason, it was early concluded that attitudes towards tourism in communities are often heterogeneous, meaning, there are different types of attitudes (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; McGehee & Anderbeck, 2004). Studies on residents’ attitudes typically refer to either
positive or negative attitudes (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; Lepp, 2007). A positive or negative attitude among residents towards tourism represents their psychological state about something, underpinned by their perception (Ambroz, 2008). More specifically, residents build their attitudes towards tourism “based on their perceptions of economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts” (Martín et al., 2018a, p. 232).

Positive attitudes among residents indicate that tourism is suitable for the local conditions of the area according to Lepp (2007) and that the perceived benefits of tourism exceed the costs of tourism (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; Wang & Pfister, 2008). Previous research has revealed that residents that are affiliated, and experience personal benefits from tourism are more likely to perceive positive tourism impacts and have positive attitudes (McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Nunkoo & So, 2016; Qin et al., 2021; Woo et al., 2018). Frleta et al. (2020) conducted research on residents’ tourism support and well-being in the mature island destination of Vir, Croatia which accommodates thirty times as many tourists as there are residents annually. The research found apparent differences in support of tourism between residents who were economically involved with tourism versus those who were not (Frleta et al., 2020).

Negative attitudes on the contrary indicate the opposite, that is, the costs of tourism exceed the perceived benefits of tourism (Martínez-Garcia et al., 2017; Wang & Pfister, 2008). Financial leakages and exploitation have been linked to negative attitudes among residents as well as the perception of tourists as excessive consumers of alcohol and sex (Ap, 1992; Lepp, 2007). Neither attitude, positive nor negative, does predict or assume that the residents will affect local tourism planners or tourism in some way (Jackson & Inbakaran, 2006). However, it will if they act upon their attitudes which could be in either a friendly or hostile manner. Meanwhile, the hospitality of residents is integral to sustainable tourism (Vinerean et al., 2021).
Residents are recognized as stakeholders as the local communities in tourism destinations are a critical consideration both in theory and practice (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005; Dunham et al., 2006; Vu et al., 2021). The residents of tourist destinations may have a complex interpretation of a destination given its familiarity and sense of place unlike tourists (Tournois & Djeric, 2019). Ap (1992) explained that “the perceptions and attitudes of residents toward the impacts of tourism are likely to be an important planning and policy consideration for the successful development, marketing, and operation of existing and future tourism programs and projects” (p. 665).

Previous research has considered residents’ attitudes in the context of domestic tourism (Joo et al., 2018). Shen et al. (2016) for instance studied the attitudes of residents in Hong Kong, China towards Chinese mainland tourists. The residents perceived the mainland tourists important for economic reasons, as found in another study by Yeung and Leung (2007), but there were also apparent negative attitudes. These negative attitudes related to inflation, overtourism, overuse of medical resources, and stereotypes (Shen et al., 2016).

In the context of mass tourism, Zerva et al. (2019) explored how residents (tourism-phobic) versus destination management organizations (tourism-philic) perceptions evolved over twelve years in the case of Barcelona, Spain. This was done by analyzing the public discourse presented in a magazine by residents and annual reports related to the destination management organization. The findings indicated that there was a clear distinction between the perceptions, which structurally changed over time and eventually landed on some common ground regarding tourism (Zerva et al., 2019). In another context, Vargas-Sanchez et al. (2014) researched residents’ attitudes towards tourism and seasonality. They concluded that positive attitudes towards tourism were more apparent in the low season with the prevailing impacts of tourism and the tourists.
Earlier studies have studied residents’ attitudes towards tourism through various concepts like place attachment (Chen et al., 2017; Eusébio et al., 2018; Strzelecka et al., 2017), and emotional solidarity (Joo et al., 2021) to explore how they relate and predict attitudes. Eusébio et al. (2018) for instance studied the direct and indirect effects of host-guest interactions, place attachment, and perceived negative and positive impacts in Boa Vista, Cape Verde. The results showed that host-guest interaction was the strongest determinant of the residents’ attitudes towards tourism development and suggested that they were positively affected by resident place attachment.

A handful of studies on residents’ attitudes have used the classic Irridex Model by Doxey (1975) to explain the attitudes possessed by residents relative to the development stage of the destination (Amuquandoh, 2010; Liang et al., 2021; Şanlıöz-Özgen & Günlü, 2016). This model considers both the social relationship and power relationship through four stages of euphoria, apathy, annoyance, and antagonism (Doxey, 1975). The model illustrates the initial welcoming of tourists to a destination through euphoria, moving on to visitors becoming taken for granted and hosts developing misgivings as saturation is reached, finally, hosts express irritation openly with unbalanced power (Beeton, 2006; Liang et al., 2021). Şanlıöz-Özgen and Günlü (2016), to this end, researched whether two villages in Antalya, Turkey had differing attitudes toward tourism development. The study found a non-linear change in attitudes and a set of social, economic, and physical problems associated with tourism development in the areas.

Concludingly, tourism researchers agree that an understanding of resident’s attitudes is integral for a sustainable tourism industry as it depends on the continuous support and participation of the residents (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Gursoy et al., 2009; Hsu et al., 2019; Lee, 2013; Ribeiro et al., 2017; Uriely et al., 2003). Furthermore, the overall focus and research on residents’ attitudes have been conducted using quantitative measures like surveys as attitudes may
be measured (Hadinejad et al., 2019; Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2020; Sharpley, 2014; Zerva et al., 2019). Few studies have utilized qualitative measures that can capture attitudinal and perceptual dimensions not found in quantitative research (Nunkoo et al., 2013). Several researchers have for this reason called for more research utilizing qualitative research methods (Hadinejad et al., 2019; Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2020; Sharpley, 2014).

2.2.2 Residents’ Attitudes Towards Tourism During A Pandemic

There is scarce research on residents’ attitudes towards tourism during a pandemic (Kamata, 2022). To preface, all the following studies used quantitative measures to research the attitudes of residents with several hundred thousand residents or more. Tung and Tse (2021), did a longitudinal study by surveying Singaporean residents before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study found decreasing positive stereotypes, assimilative emotions, and accommodative behaviors toward tourists. Schumann (2021) concluded based on longitudinal research on residents’ attitudes before and during the pandemic that it is critical to monitor residents’ attitudes in small island destinations to uncover potential issues that may jeopardize the sustainability of a destination. Thus, unpredicted events at either the local, national, regional, or global level like the COVID-19 pandemic may have residents reassess the relevant tourism industry (Schumann, 2021).

Woosnam et al. (2021) researched residents’ pro-tourism behavior during COVID-19 in the state of Georgia, United States, and found that perceived positive and negative impacts of tourism both significantly predicted pro-tourism behavior. This aligned with the findings found in research before COVID-19 (Woosnam et al., 2021). Vinerean et al. (2021) studied the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on residents’ support for sustainable tourism development and concluded a negative relation between the residents’ perceptions of the pandemic and future support. Joo et al. (2021) recognized residents’ perceived risk by exploring the interrelation between it, emotional
solidarity, and support for tourism amidst the pandemic. The study used Jeju island, located in South Korea as the study site. Jeju island is an island that faced a domestic influx of tourism during the pandemic. The study revealed that the residents’ perceived risk inhibited their support for tourism and their emotional solidarity as tourists were seen as a risk source (Joo et al., 2021).

Kamata (2022) did a study on residents’ attitudes towards tourism during and after the COVID-19 pandemic and surveyed residents in four different tourist destinations in Japan. The country had a national campaign to boost the economy through domestic tourism and thus, traveling was allowed at some points during the pandemic. The study found a dilemma among the residents between helping the economy and the care for their fears of getting infected throughout and after the pandemic (Kamata, 2022). Rey-Carmona et al. (2022), similarly researched the same dilemma in Cordoba, Spain and found a positive relationship between positive impacts and support for tourism development. The study showed a negative relationship for negative impacts. Unlike the above studies, the present study will use a qualitative approach to study residents’ attitudes towards tourism during the pandemic in a smaller island destination. The former is done with a focus on the residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts in a context where the national strategy of the country to combat the pandemic has been different and critised.

2.3 Tourism & Health-Related Crises

Crises may be explained as a period of extreme difficulty and may be either immediate, emerging, or sustained (Parsons, 1996). Past research has identified different types of crises which may all immediately affect tourism industries including financial (Hall, 2010b), technological, natural (Faulkner, 2001), and human-made crises (Hajibaba et al., 2015; Schumann, 2021). Tourism is especially susceptible to the latter two and is particularly vulnerable to health-related crises (Liu et al., 2013; Sönmez et al. 1999). Crisis could be
a descriptor of the current era with the respective climate, health, and financial crises according to Hopkins (2021).

There have been several health-related crises in the past two decades. These crises include the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome pandemic, also known as SARS in 2002/2003, the Ebola virus epidemic between 2013-2016, the Zika virus epidemic in 2015, the Swine Flu pandemic in 2009, and now, the COVID-19 pandemic that emerged in late 2019 (Hopkins, 2021; Larsen, 2011). The initial four crises were geographically contained to closely located countries, unlike the COVID-19 pandemic, though they sustained impacts on communities and tourism (Hopkins, 2021). For instance, the SARS pandemic was impacted by travel bans followed by a decline in hotel occupancies, tourist arrivals, and tourism-related expenditures in China and Singapore (Henderson, 2004; Johnson Tew et al., 2008). In regard to previous crises, Hopkins (2021) noted how tourism is often used as a strategy for recovery in the context of crises and how the tourism-crises relationship often becomes a part of the public discourse. The author also noted that there is a prevailing notion in tourism that it is possible to manage crises through risk mitigation by considering alternative tourist markets like domestic or alternative activities of income generation (Hopkins, 2021). On the other hand, epidemics and pandemics are susceptible to negative media coverage and impact tourists’ destination image and destination choices (Liu et al., 2013; Novelli et al., 2018).

The emergence of infectious diseases is exacerbated by the global tourism industries and tourism, therefore, has an apparent role in contributing to global health consequences (Gössling et al., 2020; Lapointe, 2020; Richter, 2003; Qiu et al., 2020). Richter (2003) predicted at the time of the SARS pandemic the risk of emerging health-related crises as a result of sharp tourism growth almost two decades ago and advised on several things that had to be done. The advice related to the implementation of more travel requirements, strict
industry standards, and encouragement of preventive measures for illnesses (Richter, 2003). Thus, as mobility of tourists requires transportation, creating risks of person-to-person transmission in cramped areas (Gössling, 2020), like aircrafts and cruise ships.

The above claim of the role of tourism is supported by Farzanegan et al. (2020) who studied the relationship between tourism flows and the COVID-19 outbreak in the first few months of the pandemic in over ninety nations. Some of the nations included China, Italy, France, and Sweden. The study established that countries with a great deal of international tourism were more susceptible to COVID-19-related cases and deaths, supporting the effectiveness of closed international borders. Nunkoo et al. (2022), similarly, studied the relationship between domestic tourism and COVID-19-related cases and deaths in over ninety nations. These nations included Oman, Ireland, Italy, and Sweden. The study found that countries with high levels of domestic tourism were more susceptible to COVID-19-related cases and deaths in the first six months of the pandemic. The subsequent six months, however, showed a decorrelation due to various local factors in the nations including population size, population density, and population aged 65 or above (Nunkoo et al., 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen significant social, economic (Gössling et al., 2020), and environmental impacts (Jones & Comfort, 2020). The impacts of the pandemic on the tourism industries have been heterogeneous across different countries. Socially, the pandemic has required social distancing and working from home to minimize the spread of infection (Baum & Hai, 2020). Economically, the pandemic has required the temporary closure of some businesses, putting jobs at risk, and many businesses have had to file for bankruptcy (Gössling et al., 2020). To this end, some industries, like the tourism industry have lost billions of dollars in revenue (Jones & Comfort, 2020). Finally, the pandemic has signalled significant environmental changes
in terms of improvements. The decline in the use of transportation and travel has resulted in reduced greenhouse gas emissions and pollution levels (Jones & Comfort, 2020). However, it is not expected that these improvements will be kept when the economies recover (Jones & Comfort, 2020).

Tourism researchers early pointed out the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to restart and re-think tourism post-COVID-19 (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2021; Sigala, 2020; Vârzaru et al., 2021), particularly the characterizing growth trajectories (Gössling et al., 2020), and to make tourism more sustainable. To this end, several researchers predict that tourism will not be the same when the pandemic is over (Assaf & Scuderi, 2020). Some other early research notes published during the COVID-19 pandemic, however, highlighted that a re-emergence of mass tourism in destinations would be probable with the introduction and distribution of vaccines along with lifted restrictions (Butler & Dodds, 20221; Tiwari & Chowdhary, 2021). Thus, it is likely that destinations would want to return to business as usual (Gössling et al., 2020). Venice, Italy, and Barcelona, Spain are two destinations that faced mass tourism, also known as over-tourism, before the pandemic in addition to residents-tourism conflicts (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019; García-Hernández et al., 2017; Hughes, 2018; Martín et al., 2018b). These two historic cities faced pressure from visitor flows concentrated in the most central areas of the cities, inhabiting historic centers (García-Hernández et al., 2017). Moreover, both conflicts were linked to underlying cultural, economic, and ecological contexts coupled with over-tourism and quantitative growth (Hughes, 2018; Seraphin et al., 2018).

In terms of tourism-related crises research, past research on perceived risks related to tourism has largely focused on the perspective of the tourists (Antony, 2016; Lee et al., 2021; Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2009; Rindrasih, 2018; Simpson & Siguaw, 2008) rather than the residents, as argued and agreed by Qiu et al. (2020), Joo et al. (2021), and Sharifpour et al. (2014).
Traveling to another location for a period may confront tourists with different risks including financial, physical, weather, health, and security risks. Whilst these risks might be less apparent and therefore manageable for residents of a destination, the situation may be much different in the case of accommodating tourists during a pandemic in terms of health risks (Joo et al., 2021; Zenker & Kock, 2020). Zenker and Kock (2020) therefore implied that residents may become less welcoming of tourists amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Qiu et al. (2020), at the same time, observed that little research has considered how “tourism can amplify crisis events and have negative effects on the public interest and well-being of residents and stakeholder groups at tourist destinations” (p.1). Thus, it is of interest to consider the perspective of the residents in destinations receiving tourists amidst health-related crises.

Past crises have experienced significant economic disruptions, though, the ability to recover from the previous crises has led tourism researchers to believe that tourism is a resilient industry (Butler, 2020). However, none of the above-mentioned crises witnessed such devastation to the global tourism industries seen during the COVID-19 pandemic (Gössling et al., 2020). Though, with exceptions like the case of Gotland, that has experienced a prominent recovery amidst the spread of infection. The overall, unprecedented nature shapes the relevance and unique context of the present study.

2.4 Conclusions From The Literature Review

Previous research has overlooked tourism-related research on Swedish island destinations, further, there is a lack of research on residents’ attitudes towards tourism during a pandemic. The literature review also illustrated that tourism is tied to the exacerbation of infectious diseases and that there is a dominance of quantitative research on residents’ attitudes. The present study will therefore qualitatively research residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic in a destination that has experienced a recovery of tourism throughout the crisis. Besides, the COVID-19 pandemic presents a
unique opportunity to research residents’ attitudes in an unprecedented context that humanity is facing.

3 Conceptual Framework

The following sections present Social Exchange Theory (SET) as the underpinning theoretical framework used for this study. The chapter then introduces the conceptual framework that visualizes how the theory informs the study.

3.1 Origins & Theoretical Foundations

SET is a theory that emerged from sociology with Homans (1958), Thibaut and Kelley (1959), and Blau (1964) among other sociologists contributing to the theory upon its formation (Özel & Kozak, 2016). The three works have apparent differences to them (Emerson, 1976), whilst forming the basis of how we know of SET today. SET, in the perspective of Homans (1958) suggests that “for a person engaged in exchange, what they give may be a cost to them, just as what they get may be a reward, and his behavior changes less as profit, that is, reward less cost, tends to a maximum” (p. 606). Individuals engage in exchanges in pursuit of something valuable according to SET, though, the exchange between two individuals does not have to involve something tangible or economic (Andereck et al., 2005). Homans (1961) referred to the exchange of symbolic values such as approval, anger, or happiness (Özel & Kozak, 2016).

Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) explained with respect to Blau’s (1964) work that SET considers a combination of interactions and obligations. These specific interactions are interdependent and dependent on the exchange partner’s actions. Consequently, individuals assess exchanges based on two things prompted by the exchange: costs and benefits (Charag et al., 2020; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). If an individual
perceives an exchange to be beneficial overall, then they are most likely to assess it positively. It is also likely in this case that both parties of the exchange have high levels of social power (Jurowski et al., 1997; Waitt, 2003). Social power in this case refers to the ability to control and impact a resource that the exchange partner needs or values (Waitt, 2003). On the contrary, if perceived costs outweigh the benefits, the exchange is likely to result in a negative assessment, implying low social power levels.

SET today is a flexible theory with different views and remains one of the most salient perspectives in sociology, management, anthropology (Cropanzano et al., 2017), and tourism (Hadinejad et al., 2019). SET is momentous in tourism research as it has addressed the atheoretical shortcomings in research on residents’ attitudes (Nunkoo, 2016; Ward & Berno, 2011) and thus leads us to the subsequent section of SET in tourism.

3.2 Social Exchange Theory In Tourism

SET is one of the dominating theories used to explore residents’ attitudes in tourism research (Hadinejad et al., 2019; Nunkoo et al., 2013). SET was related to tourism contexts early by Sutton (1967) who acknowledged the exchange as the social aspect characterizing the host-guest encounter. Further, he recognized the nature of the host-guest encounters as unbalanced and asymmetric. Ap (1992) later elaborated on SET and tourism more extensively and recognized SET as the suitable and logical theoretical framework to explain the residents’ perceptions of positive and negative tourism impacts. SET has been emphasized in tourism-related research according to Harrill (2004) as “tourism development comes with economic benefits in exchange for social and environmental impacts” (p. 260).

Pizam and Milman (1986) highlighted early that tourism is not only an economic phenomenon, they, therefore, concluded that an assessment of tourism impacts must also consider tangible and non-economic effects.
Accordingly, Martín et al. (2018a) and Peters et al. (2018) have highlighted that the residents’ perceptions of economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourism on host communities make up and shape their attitudes towards tourism. Numerous studies, to this end have investigated residents’ attitudes towards tourism by examining residents’ perceptions e.g., Charag et al. (2020), Dyer et al. (2007), Easterling (2004), Ovedio-Garcia et al. (2008), Ribeiro et al. (2013), and Vodeb et al. (2021).

Simply put, if the residents perceive more benefits than costs from tourism, then they will exhibit positive attitudes according to SET (Martín et al., 2018a; Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; Sharpley, 2014; Wang & Pfister, 2008; Waitt, 2003). The same goes for the opposite, if they perceive more costs than benefits, they will exhibit negative attitudes. The former scenario represents the ideal exchange, as one should actively try to maximize benefits whilst keeping costs to a minimum (López et al., 2018, Sharpley, 2014). Importantly, positive impacts and benefits are two terms used interchangeably, whilst negative impacts and costs are two terms used interchangeably in research (Archer et al., 2005; Craik, 1995).

In times of the COVID-19 pandemic, Woosnam et al. (2021) have noted the importance of acknowledging the residents’ perspectives “to ensure communities do not turn into COVID-19 hotspots where medical treatment facilities may struggle to care for an influx of patients” (p.2). In the same study, they linked SET to be the most relevant theory in exploring the associated costs and benefits of tourism perceived by residents during the pandemic (Woosnam et al., 2021). With that said, there is justification from existing studies that SET can be used to study residents’ attitudes and perceptions during the pandemic. Consequently, based on SET, the present study intends to highlight residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts in an island destination in the context of a pandemic.
The assessment of tourism impacts on communities is integral to perpetuating sustainability (Diedrich & García-Buades, 2009). Sharpley (2014) noted from a planning perspective how understanding residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts is equally as important as understanding the impacts themselves. Similarly, Diedrich and García-Buades (2009) observed how if the residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts reflect reality if only to some extent, then it could provide critical insights on the degree of actual impacts. Positive versus negative impacts of tourism are typically divided into categories of social, economic, and environmental impacts (Andereck et al., 2005; Chuang, 2010; Ribeiro et al., 2013), though some tourism impacts may be interrelated (Mason, 2003). For this reason, the three subsequent sections are organized the same way and justify how it helps to understand residents’ perceptions of tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2.1 Social Impacts

Social impacts refer to the impacts “experienced by host communities as a result of the direct and indirect relationships with tourists” (Rutty et al., 2015, p. 52). Positive social impacts include cultural exchanges, job opportunities, a good destination image, and community pride among residents (Almeida Garcia et al., 2015; Ramkissoon, 2020; Sharma et al., 2008). Some associated negative social impacts include seasonal unemployment and an increase in behavior like prostitution, littering, vandalism, and criminality (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Additionally, tourism can contribute to the gentrification of a destination, that is, increasing the status of an area to accommodate the needs of the affluent through neighborhood transformations (Cole et al., 2021). Gentrification may therefore actively displace the permanent residents of a destination (Andereck et al., 2005; Qiu et al., 2020). Holiday homes and short-term accommodation rental through for instance Airbnb also adds to the gentrification of areas with floating populations (Cole et al., 2021; González-Pérez, 2020). Other social impacts of tourism include the contribution to and
association with conflicts, crowding, uneven distribution of benefits, and disruption of the residents’ lives (Tovar & Lockwood, 2008).

Social distancing, staying at home, and only conducting essential travel have been encouraged during the COVID-19 pandemic to limit the spread of infection (Baum & Hai, 2020). The increment in domestic travel in Sweden has jeopardized that with a focus of personal responsibility and civic liability (Weman Josefsson, 2021). Therefore, it is critical to consider how residents perceive the social impacts in a destination faced with recovering tourism during the pandemic. Qiu et al. (2020), for instance, assessed the social (costs) impacts of tourism during the pandemic by surveying residents of three different urban destinations in China. The residents perceived negative impacts of tourism relating to the risk of cross-infection, the threat to public health, challenges in infection control, and shortage of medical supplies. The study did, however, not research the social benefits or positive impacts perceived by the tourists, unlike this study. Further, as noted earlier, previous research has highlighted a dilemma in the perspective of the residents between helping the local economy and protecting their health amidst the pandemic (Kamata, 2022).

3.2.2 Economic Impacts

Economic impacts refer to the financial effects of tourism which may be either direct or indirect (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Some positive economic impacts include employment, and business opportunities, tourism expenditure, investments, improvement of infrastructure, foreign exchange, and contribution to gross domestic product (Li et al., 2018). Consequently, it is for this reason that tourism is recognized as a vehicle for economic development (Graci & Dodds, 2010; Manzoor et al., 2019; Sharpley, 2001) and recovery (Dogru & Bulut, 2018; Jucan & Jucan, 2013), and simultaneously serves as a mean to relieve poverty (Li et al., 2018). Negative economic impacts may be presented as financial leakages, where revenue generated by tourism does not
remain locally (Cernat & Gourdon, 2012). Increased cost of living may be a result of gentrification caused by tourism to elevate the status of areas. Moreover, there may be a loss of traditional jobs, as individuals move from one industry like agriculture to tourism (Jolliffe & Farnsworth, 2003). The seasonal nature of tourism in many destinations also creates issues of recurring, seasonal unemployment.

As uncovered earlier, the economic benefits of tourism may come at the cost of social and environmental impacts (Harrill, 2004). This may especially be apparent in the context of tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had detrimental effects on economies with reports of job losses and bankruptcies (Gössling et al., 2020). The eagerness of going back to “business as usual” with the old growth trajectories is therefore probable to resume tourism activities during the pandemic along with loosened restrictions or control over the virus (Gössling et al., 2020; Tiwari & Chowdhary, 2021). Notwithstanding the economic contributions, the health risk is still apparent (Joo et al., 2021). Resuming tourism activities during the pandemic would therefore be at the cost of social impacts and further spread of infection and would not only affect tourists but the residents of the host community (Qiu et al., 2020). This is an apparent trade-off between positive economic impacts and negative social impacts. Consequently, there is reason to research residents’ perceptions of the economic impacts caused by tourism.

3.2.3 Environmental Impacts

Environmental impacts refer to how tourism influences the physical environment of destinations (Şahin & Akova, 2019). Environmental impacts are therefore the most visible tourism impact as the environment is a part of the attractiveness of a destination (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Tourism typically impacts urban and rural environments differently because urban ones are commonly and partly built to manage high visitation (Mason, 2003). The character and intensity of tourism impacts depend on the activities of the
tourists, as some activities are less resource-consumptive. Destinations subject to seasonality face environmental impacts for a limited time of the year, and could therefore recover in the absence of tourism, though, some impacts may be permanent (Mason, 2003).

Tourism may prompt support for nature and preservation of wilderness, parks, world heritage sites, and increase recreation opportunities (Andereck et al., 2005; Mason, 2003). The negative impacts of tourism, however, remain the most significant. Air pollution has been linked to tourism because of the emissions emitted from transportation, water pollution is linked to rubbish thrown into the water, and noise pollution is associated with bars or discos. Depletion of water resources, land degradation, littering, deforestation, and loss of biological diversity are other types of impacts linked to tourism (Andereck et al., 2005; Mason, 2003; Sunlu, 2003; Zhong et al., 2011). The degree of tourism impacts is contingent on the number of tourists visiting, and the spatial and temporal concentration of usage (Archer et al., 2005). The degree of tourism impacts also depends on the environment itself and tourism planning.

In the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the absence of non-essential travel in many parts of the world, there have been significant improvements to natural environments (Jones & Comfort, 2020; Lokhandwala & Gautam, 2020). Though, it is expected that emission and pollution levels will return to their usual numbers as suspected by the increase in domestic travel instead (Jones & Comfort, 2020; Joo et al., 2021; Kamata, 2022). Whilst the social and economic impacts of tourism may be more apparent during the pandemic, the environmental aspect is critical to consider as it coupled with social impacts may come at the cost of economic benefit (Harrill, 2004).
3.3 Conceptualization

The conceptual framework represents the researcher’s map in pursuing their research objectives (Miles et al., 2014). Hence, the conceptual framework is typically outlined at the beginning of the research process and then evolves as the study progresses (Miles et al., 2014). This has been the case for this thesis project.

The conceptual framework is conceptualized as illustrated in figure 2 by examining three types of impacts: social, economic, and environmental impacts. This conceptualization was built on the preceding sections regarding SET. This framework will help the author understand the islanders’ perceptions of tourism impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic specifically. The framework also illustrates how the impacts inform and underpin the attitudes. The three types of impacts are interrelated and highlight the importance of their inclusion.

Figure 3. Conceptual framework (Adapted from Peters et al. 2018 & Jurowski et al. 1997).

3.4 Social Exchange Theory & Sustainability

The increasing need for sustainability in tourism has emerged from the growing awareness of adverse and diverse tourism impacts (Bramwell & Lane, 2000).
Negative tourism impacts need to be anticipated, recognized, and managed accordingly to assist the achievement of the SDGs. To this end, the categories of tourism impacts reflect the three dimensions of sustainability; social, economic, and environmental (Kuščer & Mihalič, 2019; Rutty et al., 2015). As highlighted in the introductory chapter, the study addresses SDGs 3, 11, and 17.

One of the main concerns of SET is to minimize the costs/impacts that residents are confronted with in the social exchanges of tourism (López et al., 2018, Sharpley, 2014). The benefits of tourism must therefore outweigh the costs long-term to sustain positive attitudes among the residents (Munanura & Kline, 2022). SET acknowledges and includes the perspective of the residents as the residents’ participation and inclusion in planning processes is critical for sustainable development (Ap, 1992; Woosnam, 2012). Consequently, as concluded in section 2.2.1, a general agreement among tourism researchers is that an understanding of residents’ attitudes is integral to a sustainable tourism industry as it depends on the continuous support of the residents (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Gursoy et al., 2009; Hsu et al., 2019; Lee, 2013; Ribeiro et al, 2017; Uriely et al., 2003).

Previous accelerated tourism growth and concentration in destinations have harmed sustainability (Graci & Dodds, 2010; Kuščer & Mihalič, 2019), it is therefore critical to monitor tourism impacts to limit them. Particularly, as it is likely that tourism will return to business as usual to make up for the loss of revenue throughout the pandemic (Tiwari & Chowdhary, 2021). Since tourism always creates some impacts, it comes down to the matter of determining which impacts are tolerable and to what extent (Saarinen, 2014).

4 Methodology
This study employed a qualitative research approach to study the residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Qualitative
research is employed to gather an understanding of individuals’ attitudes, experiences, and beliefs (Pathak et al., 2013). Some characteristics of qualitative research include having multiple sources of data, inductive analysis, and emergent design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Interviews and the collection of texts are at the same time two of the main methods of data collection in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012).

Unlike in quantitative research, the researcher’s role in qualitative research is not objective. The researcher’s involvement is central in qualitative research together with the beliefs, values, and background of the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denscombe, 2017). Qualitative research is concerned with describing and emphasizing the context of the setting and findings to understand the prevailing values, behaviors, or attitudes being studied and how it impacts the individuals’ ways of thinking (Bryman, 2012). For this reason, an extensive background of the study was provided in the introductory chapter.

The study addressed and contributed to the identified methodological gap by using a qualitative approach. Further, the study sought to answer the following question: “What are the islanders’ perceptions of tourism impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic?”

4.1 Methodological Positioning

There are underlying philosophical ideas to any study although they are not always explicit (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A philosophical stance refers to a specific worldview that is interconnected with the research approach, research design, and research method of a study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A philosophical stance has a set of ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions. Ontology refers to the nature of reality, as researchers may recognize several (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge and how it is established. Methodology refers to the procedures and processes of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
For this study, I chose to position myself with a constructivist worldview, not to be confused with the constructionist worldview. The constructionist stance implies that we neither know what is universally true or false nor right or wrong, unlike in constructivism where the mind of individuals reflects a “true” reality (Galbin, 2014). Further, the constructivist stance assumes that meaning is always constructed socially through interactions between human beings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Humans, in essence, make sense of their world through a combination of engagement in addition to social, and historical perspectives. Accordingly, the study intends to study the residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic by studying the narratives presented in the (in-time) public discourse and retrospective interviews. The said perceptions make up the residents’ attitudes (Martín et al., 2018a), which, in line with the constructivist stance are shaped through lived realities and social experiences (Nunkoo et al., 2013).

4.2 Method
This study used a case study design to answer the identified research question. The purpose of a case study design can be either descriptive, explorative, comparative, or explanatory in nature (Denscombe, 2017). Case studies essentially provide an in-depth understanding of a specific case (Creswell and Poth, 2018). A case study research design is at the same time flexible and can entail different types of research methods and data (Denscombe, 2017). Advantages of this design include its holistic insights, flexible approaches, and appropriateness for small-scale research. Thus, it is in line with the chosen, qualitative research approach. The case of the study is the tourism perception of the residents in the island destination of Gotland.

With the above in mind, the study used two methods of data collection: semi-structured interviews and archival research. Interviews are fitting for studies interested in the perceptions, feelings, and experiences of individuals (Denscombe, 2017). Interviews can also be seen as a site of narrative re-
production (Csarniawska, 2014), and the elicitation and co-production of the narrative is critical in line with the constructivist stance. Interviews can be either structured, semi-structured, or unstructured depending on the level of flexibility sought in the interview. The study employed semi-structured interviews, entailing a set of predetermined questions, and the ability to develop follow-up questions as the interviews progress. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to cover the most essential questions but at the same time allow flexibility to fit the conversation and allow spontaneous follow-up questions to develop the answers of the respondents.

Besides the interviews, the study also used archival research. Archival research refers to the collection of preexisting data found in newspapers, journals, or letters (Vogt et al., 2012). An advantage of archival research is that the material has been produced without the researcher’s involvement and influence unlike the interviews (Vogt et al., 2012). Archival research was chosen as a second method based on observations of narratives presented in the local newspapers where residents write about tourism in a letter to the editor (LTTE). These LTTEs presented information that can help answer the research question and were therefore determined suitable. LTTEs represent a forum for public debate in newspapers (Dupre, 2002) whilst the content from newspapers is described as a potential source for scientific analysis (Bryman, 2012). As highlighted in the literature review, there is a lack of prior studies conducted qualitatively in researching residents’ attitudes, especially in terms of archival research. One study, however, was found by Zerva et al. (2019) that used archival research to study the perceptions of tourism stakeholders. The data collection method, therefore, has limited application in research on residents’ attitudes, although it has been highlighted that this method can provide in-depth insights on residents’ attitudes (Hadinejad et al., 2019).

By combining semi-structured interviews and LTTEs, the study considered in-time and retrospective insights to explore the residents’ perceptions of tourism
impacts during the pandemic. This combination made it possible to triangulate the information for a comprehensive understanding (Lapan et al., 2012). The LTTEs were also used to inform the follow-up questions in the interviews to see if the respondents recognized these impacts, and help the respondents develop their responses.

4.2.1 Interviews With Gotland Residents

The interviews were carried out in the spring of 2022 over one week through regular phone calls. I used online recruitment to recruit respondents for the interviews. Thus, I posted a post on Facebook in two different groups relating to the island – Gotlands Bulletin Board, and Gotlands Market. The first group is used for tips, information, help, and inquiries and has 4,700 members. The latter is a buy and sell group with 42,600 members that may also be used for questions, inquiries, and help. See appendix 1 for the recruitment message posted in these Facebook groups. A total of 8 respondents were recruited which was deemed as an appropriate number given that the study also utilizes LTTEs. A criterion for the respondents of the interviews was that they had to be an (all-year round) resident on the island of Gotland and lived on the island for a minimum of two years. Second, they were eighteen years old or over. Third, they were comfortable with the interview being recorded, and fourth was open to answering questions relating to tourism on the island. See table 1 for a summary of the interviewed respondents.

In the initial phase of the phone calls, I informed the respondents about the purpose of the study, their contribution, confidentially, and anonymity. Upon agreement to record, the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured fashion. The interviews were conducted in Swedish, as it was the native language of the respondents and the interviewer. Moreover, it allowed the respondents to express their thoughts and feelings in a language that was comfortable for them. See appendix 2 for the interview guide in Swedish and appendix 3 for the interview guide in English. The questions in the appendices
were tweaked and adjusted over the one week that the interviews were carried out to make the questions more simplified and easily understood. The interviews were recorded using Screen Recorder Pro on a computer and a voice recorder app on a phone for backup. The interviews were then translated into English during the transcription, the translation should, however, not affect the quality of the results as I am proficient in both languages. Each interview took around 20-30 minutes to complete.

Table 1. Summary of interviewed respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewed respondent</th>
<th>Years of living in Gotland</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Non-tourism</td>
<td>24/3-2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Non-tourism</td>
<td>24/3-2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Non-tourism</td>
<td>24/3-2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Non-tourism</td>
<td>25/3-2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>25/3-2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Non-tourism</td>
<td>28/3-2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Non-tourism</td>
<td>29/3-2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>5/4-2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2 Archival Newspaper Data

Upon collecting the data for the archival analysis, a few criteria were considered to limit the scope. Two local newspapers in Gotland are published/delivered daily, *Gotlands Allehanda* and *Gotlands Tidningar* (Gotlands Newspapers) (GT). These newspapers contain similar content and I, therefore, decided on using the latter for this study as it has the biggest readership of the two. To limit the data, only LTTEs that had been published between May 1st, 2020 to August 31st, 2021 were included. These two dates represent a timeline starting ahead of the first summer with COVID-19 in May 2020, it then covers the subsequent summer, autumn, winter, and spring before
the second summer of COVID-19 starts, ending the timeline at the end of summer 2021.

With the timeline in mind, I searched for published LTTEs that in some way addressed tourism by using the keywords “TOURISM”, and “TOURIST” in Swedish. This search resulted in several hundred results. Given that the study is interested in residents’ perceptions only, LTTEs that were signed with the authors' associated political parties or tourism organizations were rejected. Those LTTEs were rejected as the content of those letters indicated that the authors were in a stakeholder position where they represented the respective party or organization, rather than a position of themselves as residents. LTTEs that indicated that the authors were not residents were also rejected, resulting in a total of 33 LTTEs. Upon further investigation, another three were rejected as they only mentioned tourism or tourists casually, resulting in 30 LTTEs. Judging from the overview of the LTTEs (see appendix 4), most of them were written between the end of May and the end of August 2020. The number of LTTEs then went down before going up significantly in July and August 2021, suggesting that the discourse was considerable during the peak season.

4.2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis refers to the process of making sense of text derived from the data collection efforts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Coding is a type of analysis and refers to the process of assigning a label of symbolic meaning to a set of data (Miles et al., 2014). By doing this, the data is reduced, making it more manageable to manage whilst simultaneously providing thorough and comprehensive insights (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019; Stuckey, 2015). Coding, importantly, makes sure that the identified research question has been answered. The study employed thematic analysis, a type of analysis that makes it possible to make sense of the shared meanings and experiences derived from the narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2012). A theme is a result of the coding
process that organizes a set of repeated ideas on a certain topic (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Saldaña, 2013). A common way of identifying themes is by looking at recurring topics and considering the similarities and differences presented in the data (Bryman, 2012).

As the LTTEs were readily available for collection at any point, they were collected early in the research process to get an indication of the content. I familiarized myself with the data and highlighted and noted important points. Getting acquainted with the LTTEs was important for me to note down aspects to keep in mind for the semi-structured interviews and potential follow-up questions. The coding process could then begin after the transcription of the interviews. The coding was conducted manually in MAXQDA, a software program, by following a six-step coding process by Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis. See figure 3 for the coding process.

I initially coded the archival data and interview transcripts separately to avoid confusion as the nature of the data was different. I looked for overlapping and similarities to synthesize the codes and generate themes when both types of data had been coded. For example, “the most addressed topic is actually the lack of water which is so obvious” (Respondent 2), and “the water shortage is a fact and it is perhaps not so surprising given that we are more than twice as many right now” (LTTE 25) were both coded as “water scarcity”. Importantly, I continuously kept the research question and conceptual framework in the back of my mind when reading the various data to guide the coding process. Finally, I wrote memos to highlight explanations, thoughts, and ideas to help the coding process.
4.3 Limitations Of The Study

There are a set of limitations to this study. The strategy of gathering respondents through Facebook is a limitation as it excluded non-users that could have participated in the study. However, Facebook allows a wide reach as it has a lot of members. The study was conducted amidst the pandemic and the interviews were held via phone to limit the spread of infection although most restrictions and recommendations had been lifted at the time. Further, the interviews were held via phone as I expected that the respondents (of various ages) may have different levels of technological skills, making it difficult to conduct video calls. Therefore, phone interviews were decided to ease the interview process and to attract respondents. A limitation of phone interviews, however, is not being able to observe nonverbal data like facial expressions, and gestures that can enrich the verbal data (Knox & Burkard, 2009). Instead, sound expressions from the interviews were transcribed and coded.

The timeframe used in sourcing LTTE was a deliberate limitation because of its timeliness, though a more extensive timeframe could have generated more LTTEs. More LTTEs could have revealed increasing and diverse perceptions given the development of the pandemic. Furthermore, I could not influence the quality or quantity of these LTTEs as they were produced and published without my involvement. The newspapers that published them also disclosed
that shorter LTTEs were published quicker and that there was a queue for publication. Topical LTTEs were also prioritized in the same queue. Lastly, I could not reliably uncover from the LTTEs whether the authors were working in the tourism industry or not unlike the interviews.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

The study will reflect an ethical and transparent research process and practice from start to end. Accordingly, there are several ethical considerations to acknowledge and evaluate. There are four main principles of research ethics according to Denscombe (2017): the protection of the participants’ interests, voluntary participation and informed consent, scientific integrity, and compliance with the law. Firstly, participants of studies shall not be hurt by their participation, which, second, shall be voluntary based on their own will and sufficient information provided by the researcher. Third, the approach of the study should be open and honest, final and fourth, obey the law (Denscombe, 2017). These four principles are reflected in this study.

In terms of the interviews, I anticipated after the recruitment of the participants that they may be of various ages and with differing levels of technology skills. I therefore informed the participants orally about the consent to record the interviews, instead of having the respondents sign a consent form via email. Furthermore, I informed them that the interview would be dealt with confidentiality and that the recordings will be deleted after transcription. To encourage participation as the topic of tourism on the island may be a sensitive topic, they were informed that their participation would be anonymous. Further, I declared my position of neutrality on the topic and my role as the researcher. In terms of the archival research, the material of the LTTEs is considered public as it is sought to reach larger audiences and therefore does not require prior consent to use (Denscombe, 2017). A relevant and ethical concern is whether to disclose the names of the authors of the LTTEs, especially since consent is not authorized. About half of the LTTEs were
signed with the authors’ names and the other half were anonymous. I decided on keeping all the names anonymous in the study for consistency and ethical reasons.

In line with the qualitative research approach and the philosophical stance, my role as a researcher is apparent and central. Therefore, reflexive thinking is critical in terms of my past experiences (like education and work experiences), and how they shape my interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As acknowledged in my personal statement, I was born and raised on the island that is being studied, and I have tourism-related educational experiences and work experiences from the island. With that said, the connection between the study and me as a researcher is evident and influences the potential connection between me and the participants of the study. This connection was revealed to the respondents of the interviews for transparency. Moreover, when recruiting respondents to the interviews, I purposely excluded potential respondents that were close family, friends, or acquaintances to me as they may influence my interpretations whilst my relationship with them might have influenced the resulting interviews.

5 Results
This chapter presents the empirical findings from the semi-structured interviews and the LTTEs. The thematic analysis revealed three themes of social, economic, and environmental impacts. The chapter is organized accordingly with its sub-sections and highlights the narratives of the respondents and those of the authors of the LTTEs. The interview excerpts in this chapter are translations of the original quotes in Swedish. Importantly, the terms “author” and “LTTE” will be used interchangeably. The results will also mainly refer to positive/negative impacts instead of costs/benefits. Finally, it is important to note there may be some overlapping between the themes as the
impacts are interrelated, meaning that one impact may be tied to another impact.

5.1 Social Impacts
The respondents were broadly asked “How has tourism impacted Gotland during the pandemic?” in the beginning of the interviews. The following subsections present their perceptions of the social impacts of tourism. These perceptions mainly relate to tourism prioritization (over the residents), seasonality & tourism dependence, gentrification, over-crowding, and the strained situation of the hospital. Additionally, there is a sub-section that highlights the general, positive perceptions from the empirical findings.

5.1.1 Tourism Prioritization
Respondents 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7 and LTTEs 7, 10, 18 all perceived that tourism was in some way prioritized over the residents or that they had to accept and get used to tourism:

“I sometimes think that there is too much lenience towards tourism, for example now when they want to develop the public defence on Tofta, they cannot do that because there are summer tourists who have opposed the building permit. I think in that instance that they are too lenient. When, for example, a road was to be built in Klintehamn, that goes around Klintehamn, then there were no problems, but when it comes to our [public] defence, it is different. This applies to our public defence and it should be a priority. I think there is a general blindness to do things for tourism that you do not do for the Gotlanders. That’s my feeling.” (Respondent 2)

Respondent 4 reasoned along the same lines about things being done for tourism or tourists but not to the residents:
“We Gotlanders live here all year round as well, but we are considered second to the tourists when they come.” (Respondent 4)

The author of LTTE 18 shared the following in reference to the island being marketed as a tourist municipality “we believe that most of the resources should be invested in the population who live here and not the other way around.”

LTTE 7 questioned the municipality and county administrative board’s decision to accept cruise tourists in an already cramped inner town:

“How can Region Gotland / the County Administrative Board accept that cruise tourists are now streaming into Visby's already cramped inner city, at the same time as a pandemic is going on? Is not the situation on Gotland already quite fragile?” (LTTE 7)

The cruise companies are providing relevant information to protect their travelers from the spread of infection during their trip. LTTE 7 continued to write: now we wonder what measures the region/county administrative board intends to take to protect us Visby residents and Gotlanders?”

Respondent 5, who works in tourism reasoned differently when asked if they perceived that tourism was perceived as a priority over the residents of the island:

“I don’t know, I think it’s a win-win situation. It benefits everyone if you invest in tourism that there will be better service and things like that, that you extend the seasons, that way the Gotlanders are involved and get to be a part of it.” (Respondent 5)

This person working in tourism also shared that one should highlight how important tourism is for Gotlanders and how it is a huge source of income and job opportunities. The same respondent did not recognise any negative impacts
of tourism during the pandemic. Respondent 8 who also worked in tourism did not have any comments on the matter of priority.

The title of LTTE 10 reads “Tourism or healthcare journeys?”. The author of LTTE 10 shared a story in their narrative about their cancer-sick family member that needed health care on the mainland during the summer of 2020. The author explained how their sick family member had to sit in the public lounge of the ferry between Visby and Nynäshamn with many other passengers since all the rooms had been fully booked weeks ahead. Therefore, making it impossible to book a room. The author suggested that the ferry company Destination Gotland and the municipality need to agree on setting aside rooms for passengers that are traveling for health reasons.

5.1.2 Seasonality & Tourism dependence

LTTE 2, 8, 22, 11, and 28 were critical towards the seasonality and dependence on tourism on the island, particularly, as there are other available industries. This dependency jeopardizes long-term sustainability and may have detrimental outcomes according to LTTE 2:

“The corona crisis shows how vulnerable Gotland has become by relying on tourism for development. The hospitality industry is not only extremely seasonal, it also jeopardizes our long-term sustainability” (LTTE 2).

The author then went on to state and ask the following question regarding the next, future crises:

“We must move away from an overly seasonal economy. In the next crisis, which in time will come, how do we want to prepare?” (LTTE 2)
Moreover, the dependence on one single industry is risky as is and has been witnessed in other places of the world and could happen to Gotland. The author of LTTE 22 wrote:

“Continuing to up-scale an unsustainable and fragile hospitality industry would be a fatal mistake. Gotland is already too dependent on tourism, which makes up a third of the island's economy. Becoming dependent on only one industry is dangerous - whether it is tourism, finance or cars. Look at Detroit in the USA - when the car industry moved, the city was left in a mess of dilapidated buildings, broken windows, hollow streets and burnt-out family homes. If Gotland is made even more dependent on the hospitality industry, the same thing can happen here. Empty bottles, blown-out hotel complexes and plastic packaging that drift with the waves along our coasts remain.” (LTTE 22)

Respondent 4 perceived that tourism was prioritized over other industries. LTTE 2 highlighted the fact that “the 15 largest employers on the island together employ over 10,000 of Gotland's the 30,000 people that are able to work. That does not even include agriculture and the creative industries”, consequently, they perceived that “Gotland is more than tourism” (LTTE 2). LTTE 25 was curious to hear about the evaluation of the summer of 2021, and implied that it might be time to consider more industries to rely on:

“Looking forward to hearing what emerges from the evaluation of the summer by the county administrative board, the region, and the hospitality industry. The hospitality industry is important, but it may be time for us to find more legs to stand on!” (LTTE 25)

Another author, LTTE 11, wrote about the tourism entrepreneurs and how they (the entrepreneurs) were sleepless over the redundancies, dismissals, and
bankruptcies that happened at the beginning of the pandemic. The same author questioned if it should remain like this:

“The tourist season could start, albeit a little late but as it seems right now, not entirely diminished. Hopefully it saves Gotland's economy, and the entrepreneurs can start sleeping at night again, but I cannot help but think about this a bit. Is this how we want Gotland to look and function? Should we make ourselves so vulnerable that even a pandemic can knock out Gotland? Or do we need to start thinking differently or new?” (LTTE 11)

The author continued to say that this is the result of relying on tourism to continuously be the same:

“What happened will undoubtedly be the consequence of us building Gotland on tourism and trusting that the influx will continue to look as it has in recent years, but as I said, things can happen that do not look like that.” (LTTE 11)

Respondent 8, on the other hand, was more in favour to having tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic because of the associated dependency:

“I am thinking of Gotland, where there are many small business owners who are very dependent on tourism. there are many large companies that would not have survived without tourism. it would have been a very big financial loss for individuals, Region Gotland and that with tax revenues and such. and that many of the companies that depend on tourism are also open all year round to survive.” (Respondent 8)
5.1.3 Gentrification

Several LTTEs (2, 13, 18, 30) and respondents (3,4,7) noted how the main city of Gotland, Visby is subject to gentrification because of tourism. LTTE 13 described it as “ruthless gentrification”. Housing prices have increased, and Visby is depopulated for summer tourists. LTTE 30 would therefore like to forbid Airbnb and similar rental services in Visby inner town, like other major cities in the world like New York, Berlin, and Paris have done as it actively displaces permanent residents and simultaneously affects the housing prices. The increasing number of tourists is leading to fewer permanent residents according to LTTE 13. Respondent 3 shared that they thought that it is a shame that most big buildings in the inner town are for hotels and that now few residents own properties there. LTTE 2, similarly, shared the following:

“Rich summer guests are raising the prices of homes along the coasts and in Visby inner city. Gotlanders can no longer afford it and many homes are empty during the 10 months of the year that the residents from mainland do not like staying on the island.” (LTTE 2)

The rising prices had respondent 1 say “there is no morality at all, just money money money”. Respondent 7 argued around the fact that a lot of the housing that could be for the permanent residents is instead used only for summer tourists. Not only does that affect the prices but creates a housing shortage that affects the young Gotlanders. Gentrification is however nothing new according to LTTE 13:

“In recent decades something has changed dramatically. Life inside the walls has become empty, quiet, and expensive. Houses go from being homes to becoming luxury hotels, restaurants, and summer entertainment.” (LTTE 13)

LTTE 13 finished their letter by writing the following:
“Maybe people move back to the inner city. Maybe some of the now empty luxury hotels go bankrupt and make room for cheap rental apartments. You can always hope.” (LTTE 13)

The fact that some houses are bought by tourists only to be left empty most of the year frustrated respondent 8:

“And this with the fact that I experience that the houses cost a lot and that the Gotlanders cannot afford to live and so on and it is a very negative aspect of tourism. I can personally feel frustrated seeing all these nice, big houses empty and only be inhabited 4 weeks a year and then they fill the pools with our ground water and then they are barely there.” (Respondent 8)

Increasing prices in the housing market is a general problem and lead to consequences in the countryside as it impacts the countryside’s ability to keep itself alive according to LTTE 18. LTTE 18 also suggested that the main contributors to the gentrification include the cruise tourism and the yearly Almedalsveckan which brings plenty of politicians and organizations. Gentrification is not only raising the prices but also increasing the gaps between people:

“The gaps between those who live outside and inside the city wall grows. The inner city is getting richer and whiter - outside the wall there is a greater diversity in income groups and origins.” (LTTE 13)

LTTE 30 argued that Gotland should implement residency requirements seen in other neighboring countries like Norway and Denmark to address the increasing housing prices:

“As an owner, you are obliged to use your accommodation for at least 180 days in a year. If the rule is not complied with, then the municipality has the right to forcibly rent out the house. With similar systems, we can once again have thriving settlements in
Östergarnslandet, Storsudret, in Fårösund and Visby inner city.”

(LTTE 30)

Respondent 4 did not mention housing but did talk about increasing prices on food and similar services:

“Then it is negative during the summertime when all the tourists come here that all the prices and stuff are raised. We Gotlanders are affected by such things. It feels like tourists who come here have more money than Gotlanders have. They can afford it, even if the prices are raised. They will not suffer from it, it is mostly us [Gotlanders] who suffer from it.” (Respondent 4)

5.1.4 Over-Crowding

A recurrent topic in the data was the topic of over-crowding. Respondents 3, 5, 6, and 7 explained how they actively followed the recommendations by staying at home and buying groceries during the time of the day when there were fewer people in the stores. The empirical findings, in general, indicated that the residents’ perceptions of the tourists’ behaviors indicated that the tourists were far less considerate of restrictions and recommendations. LTTE 9 explained how it was impossible to see family, friends, and acquaintances cause of the spread of infection, though, if they took the car anywhere, they would witness people everywhere. As only essential travel has been recommended during the pandemic, there has been a trend of “hemester” in Sweden where people holiday near their living environment. LTTE 17 explained that it was not possible to have “hemester” or do holiday activities as there were people everywhere:

“Hemester in all its glory, but NOT for us residents of the island, as it is flooded with tourists! I also want to be able to swim at nice beaches, be able to eat a piece of good food in a restaurant, be able to listen to
live music, be able to stay in nature, shop, etc. without it being FULL of people ....” (LTTE 17)

Respondent 8 also shared in their narrative that there had been a lot of people, but that it is the case every summer. Respondent 7 believed that greater consideration should be given to the permanent residents and their daily lives whilst multiple authors, including LTTE 6, reminded tourists to follow the COVID-19 recommendations and restrictions as they were still implemented:

“Rethink and think again, follow the example of the rest of Europe and the WHO. During the current covid-19 pandemic, mouth protection should be mandatory or at least recommended for everyone staying on Gotland, especially in areas where crowding cannot be avoided, on the ferry, in shopping malls and streets, in the alleys, inside the wall.” (LTTE 6)

Respondent 4 shared that they actively avoided places like the harbor and the city centre of Visby because of the cruise ship arrivals with passengers that did not maintain the social distancing. In the experience of respondent 8, they felt that the tourists took the restrictions less seriously just because they were on vacation.

Respondent 2 believed that both residents and tourists were too much in a hurry to accommodate the lifted restrictions. They were, consequently, convinced that we need to get used to pandemics in the future cause of globalization: “people can travel as easy as possible to China, USA or anywhere. So, if there is a disease somewhere it will soon be everywhere”. Meanwhile, respondent 1 perceived tourism to be very important financially speaking, but that tourism and tourist had felt “very careless and hectic” and that no one cared when the restrictions were loosened or lifted:

“It's like when the restrictions are gone then the virus is gone. I do not know, it's weird, it's a bit sickening to [do so], I do not have a great
need to travel and [be a] tourist myself, so I have it even harder to accept that people behave like that.” (Respondent 1)

LTTE 8, similarly, expected that tourists would take responsibility in the summer of 2020, but that same summer showed the same invasion of tourists as any other year. An infected Gotland would leave it up to the Gotlanders to take care of.

“It is not over even though it's summer. Keep your distance, respect us who actually live here. Then we can hold back this awful thing. We want to be able to continue living, working, living, supporting ourselves on 'our' island also in the future, but [until] then you can celebrate your holiday somewhere else. You are welcome when it's all over again, let's all get well first.” (LTTE 8)

Unlike the above, respondent 5 believed that restrictions and social distancing had been followed by the tourists throughout the pandemic and that it had not been a “big deal”. There had therefore not been any negative impacts associated with tourism according to respondent 5. Meanwhile, respondent 8 did understand why people chose to visit the island as they used to be a tourist themselves before moving to Gotland:

“I think tourism is important for Gotland, and I understand why people want to come here and you can of course not close a part of Sweden to other people, we are an open country.” (Respondent 8)

Respondent 8 further recognised that the spread of infection associated with tourism is a negative factor, yet, with their experience from the tourism industry, they did not blame the tourism companies:

“I think the companies have done what they can, then I think [the restrictions] have not been followed by the individuals.” (Respondent 8)
Mass tourism, that is, tourism that deals with the extreme concentration of tourists in a specific area, was mentioned in two LTTEs. The title of LTTE 22 reads “Mass tourism can become dangerous for Gotland” and the title of LTTE 13 reads “Mass tourism is killing the inner town of Visby”. LTTE 22 wrote:

“Gotland is far from alone in suffering from the consequences of over-tourism. The hospitality industry has grown exponentially in recent decades. The number of arriving tourists globally has increased fivefold since the mid-1980s. Without talking about carbon dioxide emissions, it is easy to see how mass tourism and sustainable development are incompatible.” (LTTE 22)

One author observed through several instances how common decency was absent from the tourists’ behavior as they disobeyed societal rules through bribing, cutting in line, and blocking the roads. Tourists were, however, welcome:

“You are of course welcome to visit Gotland, but common decency, good behavior and normal social rules still apply. You who are a tourist, or possibly call yourself a "summer Gotlander", do not have the right of way when a red light is on in the traffic light. You have no more right than anyone else to take the lead in the queue. Public parking spaces are not reserved for your vehicle. Nor is the road to your favorite bathing spot private. Your time is not worth more than anyone else's. Other people are not there to enrich your vacation experience. Gotland does not exist for your sake. On the other hand, you are a part of life and everyday life for everyone around you.” (LTTE 19)
The author, after writing about the said instances, concludingly wrote “next time you pack your suitcase, be sure to also bring common sense and (human) decency.” (LTTE 19)

5.1.5 Strained Situation Of The Hospital
Several respondents (3, 2, 6) and authors (LTTE 4, 6, 27) addressed the fact that the local hospital had been on “its knees” during the pandemic. That is, being in a strained situation of the state of readiness with many patients and limited staff. The general understanding and perception are that the hospital is only built to handle the capacity of the permanent islanders. The influx of tourists during the summer was therefore doomed to impact the stability of the hospital. Respondent 3 reasoned the following about the issue as they argued that the hospital cannot increase its capacity to fit the number of tourists:

“Then it is the case that the hospital on the island is adapted to our measurements on the island [of] just over 60 thousand. In summer, they cannot cope with the pressure. That’s not good either. But at the same time, we cannot build a hospital that is adapted for 400 thousand inhabitants who are here for 5 weeks. There is a squeak between having a lot of people, a little people, a lot of people, a little people.”
(Respondent 3)

LTTE 6 reasoned that the combination of receiving more people during an uncontrolled pandemic leads to an obvious outcome as it affects the public healthcare:

“60,000 inhabitants with some capacity increase in summer for summer residents and tourists. Unfortunately, the virus pandemic that is affecting the world today is far from under control. Healthcare is struggling with summer staffing. Employees fear that they will be ordered to interrupt their much-needed holidays if covid infection
increases on the island. With more people, it is not far-fetched to believe that covid-infected and sick people will become greater” (LTTE 6)

LTTE 3 suggested prioritizing healthy tourists and prohibiting older tourists with underlying diseases to travel to Gotland as they would jeopardize and “burden” the situation of the hospital. Respondent 2, however, argued that the strained situation of the hospital was not the fault of the tourists. Instead, there are underlying issues that have caused the strained situation:

“It is not very strange, and it probably has nothing to do with tourism because there have been a lot of people in the hospital because many have been ill. But I do not know because I have no research I can present. The healthcare has never been prepared, the health care has always cut off staff. It has been made worse then all of a sudden a lot of people come and it becomes a disaster.” (Respondent 2)

In the discussion around the “Gotland Loves The Outside World” Facebook group, LTTE 4 asked two questions: “are those who welcome tourists ready to take responsibility if the spread picks up on Gotland?”. And: “is a person's longing for summer pleasure worth more than another [persons] worry about the strained healthcare?”.  

5.1.6 General Positive Perceptions
A general indication from the respondents is that they do recognize (some) positive impacts and contributions from tourism and that tourism in essence is positive. This indication, however, was missing from the authors of the LTTEs.

“I think that tourism in itself is positive, but I think that we as a host or how to say invite to too much. So, if we set the standard for how we are and how we want it, we might be able to work more sustainably and long-term.” (Respondent 1)
However, it is also a matter of its execution, the same respondent later said:

“I think the positive thing about tourism is to show a culture, to broaden people's perspectives and I think that Gotland does not take advantage of that. So, it is probably a good idea with sloppy execution. That’s how I think about the tourism on Gotland.” (Respondent 1)

Meanwhile, respondents 1 and 4 thought that the main positive aspect of tourism is its economic contribution. Respondent 5 described tourism as “fun” and “fantastic”. Respondent 7 reasoned that it is positive that people are traveling domestically for the environment and the country.

“I think you have to think a little positively going forward, so that’s it, how can you do that. I think it is better to be a tourist locally than for us to go to Thailand, I think. If you think about the environment and everything, people discovering Sweden is an advantage instead of going far away, so I am for that.” (Respondent 7)

Respondent 7 also appreciated that tourists come to the island with cheerfulness and happiness and that they are taking photos of things that they as a resident had overlooked to appreciate.

5.2 Economic Impacts

The following subsections present the respondents’ perceptions of the economic impacts of tourism during the pandemic. Numerous LTTEs noted how the tourism industry and its businesses have cheered over the revival of tourism. There is, however, another side to the story as residents wonder how they benefit from having tourism during the pandemic. Perceptions of economic impacts related to economic interests over the health and lives of residents, the survival of the countryside, and lack of taxes.
5.2.1 Economic Interests Over The Health & Lives of Residents

A prevailing topic in the findings was the link between social impacts and economic interests. Despite travel restrictions and social distancing requirements, residents believed that the economic interests of tourism were prioritized over common sense and the health and lives of the residents. LTTE 2 was critical towards saving tourism entrepreneurs and how the industry claims that residents complain a lot when it is the industry that goes against the restrictions:

“The fact that in times of crisis we see how vulnerable the tourism industry is does not mean that we should jointly spend millions on saving individual entrepreneurs. The hospitality industry complains that we should be more welcoming to those residents who defy the Swedish Public Health Agency’s recommendations. But is it perhaps their own wallet, rather than the Gotlanders’ health and life, that they mainly have in mind?” (LTTE 2)

LTTE 7 similarly wrote:

“According to information provided in one of the major evening newspapers, premiere passengers cried out of happiness over finally being allowed to cruise again. So that life again feels worth living? We almost cry out of helplessness over the selfishness people display and over the fact that economic interests (as always) seem to outweigh common sense.” (LTTE 7)

And another author wrote:

“As a resident of the island and safety representative [at my job], I am deeply concerned that economic interests outweigh common sense. It has long been clear that larger gatherings significantly increase the risk of spreading the infection. To always keep two meters away is at least unrealistic when many people are in the same area. And the
problems are already starting on the way to the island. Do you remember the narrow stairwell of the ferry on the way up from the car deck?” (LTTE 6)

With the prevailing spread of infection in mind, respondent 4 believed that the island would have survived without tourism during the pandemic: “I believe that Gotland, Gotlanders, and the business community [would] survive even if we lose all tourism for a year or two. we cannot perish just because of that”. Respondent 6 and LTTE 2 reasoned along the same lines and argued that there are other available industries on the island.

LTTE 4 wrote about the Facebook group “Gotland Loves The Outside World” and that the group is taking a stance on a difficult topic, ultimately supporting the financial contributions over the health of the Gotlanders:

“The opinions that are spread in the group are in line with the hospitality industry's financial interests - not the health and lives of people who are in a risk group, or the conditions for those who work in healthcare” (LTTE 4)

LTTE 1 had a different perspective on the matter as they wrote about the other Facebook group, “Stop The Ferry”:

“It’s now called Stop the ferry! We Gotlanders must at least protect ourselves. But how much is left to protect when all small businesses are gone in the absence of customers, guests, orders. When it has become obvious for everyone to shop online. The summer we saw ahead of us is cancelled. Summer Gotlanders and tourists should stay away from here. Should we now live on washing each other's shirts?” (LTTE 1)

The short-term economic interest of tourism with its seasonality jeopardizes the function of the societies all year around and needs to account for several other things, LTTE 2 wrote:
“We need to adjust; sustainability, self-sufficiency, culture, and economic equality must take precedence over the short-term profit interests of the hospitality industry.” (LTTE 2)

In the end, it is unclear what the residents benefit from having a so-called tourism invasion during the pandemic. LTTE 9 asked: “why should we who live here back down from this invasion?” and then wrote “money rules, you know, but what will happen later in the year when many have left here and perhaps infected many of us?”. Another author, similarly, wrote:

“The businessmen rejoice again but the rest of us, we who stay here, live here? When the tourist season is over and everyone has gone home again, what will be left? A Gotland infected by the terrible corona virus that we have to take care of.” (LTTE 8)

5.2.2 Contribution To The Rural Areas

Respondents 2, 3, 5, and 8 expressed the benefits of having tourism during the pandemic to help the rural areas and small businesses. Respondent 3 explained that they were a commuter on the ferry from time to time and that they had observed that more people are traveling to the island all year around, particularly the elderly to get away from the spread of infection:

“I go by car and when I sit and watch those who get off [the ferry], I can state that as a 60+ [year old] I can feel quite young in some cases. It's more year-round than before. You could sit on the boat and go over in the winter when they were like 200 passengers and now it's like anything between 500/600-1200 people. There has been a sharp increase, I think.” (Respondent 3)

Consequently, the efforts of the elderly to hide from the virus has led to more purchases from the local businesses in the rural areas which the respondent perceived positively:
“I think that these pensioners who have come here and closed themselves [in their houses] in the countryside, have made the countryside businesses have a slightly greater influx than other years.” (Respondent 3)

Respondent 8 appreciated the season extension since it makes the summer less intense:

“I think it's a good strategy that they are trying to use, and you probably need to get better at extending the tourist season that is being talked about. I think it is very important so that it does not become these intense weeks where it gets difficult to get to places. But yes, I think it's a good thing and it benefits the companies and the island in itself that there will be an extension of the season.” (Respondent 8)

Respondent 5 also perceived the increasing vacationing as a positive thing as people could come here and work remotely. Respondent 2 said: “when it comes to businesses in the countryside, then it's more profitable than costly”. The economic impact of tourism is what helps the rural areas maintain their businesses all year round as respondent 2 later expressed the following: “what I can say is that if we had not had the tourists then we would not have had businesses in the countryside in the winter”. Respondent 4, thought, unlike the above that “there have been fewer people here, among other things. So that is less money for all companies and tourism industry of Gotland”.

However, one author saw it differently. Implied that the connection between tourism and maintaining a thriving countryside should be understood differently as it implies a dependence on tourism:

“The concept of a living countryside is negatively conditioned as it refers to something rural that needs support activities to be kept alive instead of just being seen as a society where people can live without limitations due to their geographical position. A living countryside
sounds like something that needs to be financed by tourists, where life should be seen as picturesque and something foreign that suits the needs of tourists a few weeks a year.” (LTTE 18)

As noted earlier regarding gentrification in section 5.1.4, LTTE 18 also perceived that the increasing prices in the housing market on the island is impacting the countryside’s ability to keep itself alive.

5.2.3 Lack of Taxes

A reoccurring topic found in findings related to taxes, specifically, the lack of paid taxes by tourists and tourism companies on the island. LTTE 2, and 18 perceived that the tourists do not pay taxes to the island. Similarly, respondent 3 believed that the companies that go to the island in the summer do not pay taxes.

“We have to gather our voices to be heard against a place that markets itself as a tourist municipality, despite the fact that the largest proportion of tourist nights here are paid with taxes in municipalities outside of Gotland (thus, the money and benefits are not provided to us at all).” (LTTE 18)

Critically, in the narrative of LTTE 2, the lack of paid taxes and the use of infrastructure leads to depletion:

“The tourists pay no taxes here, but still use our community services and our roads. It leads to a depletion of our common assets.” (LTTE 2)

Along the same lines, LTTE 28 thought that the residents are paying for the costs of tourism.

“The merchants, restaurateurs, and people who rent out their rooms are rejoicing after the last year's restrictions and as they need to fill up their bank accounts, but the question is whether others on the island who do not have income from visitors should pay via the tax slip for the
downsides. Admittedly, some service is increasing thanks to tourism, but should it not be financed by the visitors, not primarily by the residents?”

(LTTE 28)

Respondent 8 also reasoned similarly to the above and felt that the Gotlanders had to pay for the consequences of the tourists:

“On the other hand, something that could change is to implement something so that Region Gotland gets in enough [money] so they can handle all the tourists. It will be a big cost for the taxpayers, of course, as with littering, they are here for a week and litter, but it’s like us who pay taxes here in Gotland who have to pay and take care of it.”

(Respondent 8)

LTTE 30 suggested an implementation of a fifty-crown tourist tax on hotels and an increased property tax on holiday homes specifically. In terms of the latter, the author wrote:

“The tax goes to the municipality where the property is located, not to the municipality where the property owner is registered. ” (LTTE 30)

5.3 Environmental Impacts

The final theme presents the respondents’ perceptions of environmental impacts. These impacts relate to water scarcity, disappearance of natural areas, and littering. In sum, the residents perceived mainly negative tourism impacts on the environment.

5.3.1 Water scarcity

The analysis found that the residents were generally aware of the recurring water scarcity issues on the island. The link between tourism and its contribution to water scarcity was apparent in the findings as one author wrote: “water consumption is increasing in line with tourism, despite the current water shortage” (LTTE 2). The more people, the more water is needed.
“It is so wonderful that many want to come to our island and enjoy it! We are happy to share with you but now there are very many here at the same time and problems arise. The water shortage is a fact and it is perhaps not so surprising given that we are more than twice as many [people] right now.” (LTTE 25)

The issue of water scarcity, accordingly, needs to be dealt with as it is not possible to influence how much it rains. LTTE 29 suggested that: “we need to become much better at managing what we have. Clean water is not a matter of obviousness”. Consequently, the author suggested that we must demand more from the tourists. For instance, tourists with motorhomes, caravans, or boats should bring fresh water with them and those who fill their pools with tap water should pay hefty fines. LTTE 21 asked: “why is a differentiated tariff not applied on water?”. The author explained that such a solution of increased price in the summer and decrease in the winter would help the investments necessary to solve the constant issue of water scarcity. The author concluded: “if we cannot get the tourism and summer businesses that cause the scarcity to take the cost, [then] we permanent Gotlanders will have to pay”. Meanwhile, LTTE 25 suggested implementing a cap on the number of visitors per day as seen in other destinations to deal with the water scarcity.

Managing the water scarcity may, however, be difficult but the topic is at least being acknowledged:

“And you cannot ask the tourists to bring water here. That's hard. It is a good thing that this has been addressed because there has not been a major discussion around it before.” (Respondent 2)

5.3.2 Disappearance Of Natural Areas

Another recurring topic from the findings is the tear and disappearance of nature caused by tourism. When asked about the benefits and costs of tourism in the island, respondent 2 replied the following: “when it comes to
environmental wear, it is more costly than profitable”. Respondent 3 believed that the island is selling out its nature to accommodate the people from the mainland, that is, the tourists with housing. The same respondent shared that once the housing is built, then that is it for nature as it is gone.

“What I think is a negative side of tourism is that we tend to sell out as well as natural values to people from mainland, then, you cannot press delete, it cannot be taken back. There are many places where the beach protection is implemented where buildings close to the beach have now appeared and where it has previously been possible to walk and move, I think that is very negative.” (Respondent 3)

Consequently, the reputation of the beautiful nature on the island is being challenged, the same respondent continued:

“Gotland was previously known for having untouched nature, beautiful nature, etc. but now we are devoting ourselves to building in it. Which I find very sad. For example, the coastal stretch from Visby's west coast up to Lummelunda, where it is built from the 142 road right out to the water. Those natural values have just disappeared, which I think is very sad.” (Respondent 3)

Respondent 7 likewise argued the following about tourists building houses in nature:

“Environmentally speaking, these people prefer to live in nature, and without neighbors, where it is most beautiful and then they apply for a building permit to build in nice places, then the environments and cultural landscape, and the natural coasts are destroyed by exclusive holiday homes.” (Respondent 7)

The author of LTTE 12 was critical towards the democratic processes and decision making of the municipality and highlighted that it impacts nature negatively in the priority of tourism:
“If there happened to be opinions in a [public] meeting that are a little uncomfortable, then the region would typically choose to not address them. They provide their standard answer: consensus cannot be reached on all of the issues, tourism must be a priority. The natural values must stand back.” (LTTE 12)

5.3.3 Littering

The influx of tourists has come with issues of littering and was recognized by several authors including LTTEs 2, 14, 23, 25, and respondents 1, 3, and 6. The amount of trash makes the trash bins full, causing people to leave their trash beside the bins and litter as they are not emptied often enough. The place branding of the island, therefore, does not coincide with the reality:

“There has been a lot of talk and writing about Gotland’s place branding. How “open, attractive and magical” Gotland is to be. That concept should also include the world heritage Visby, right? But have you who are trying to market the island ever wandered around in Visby inner city and seen what it really looks like?” (LTTE 14)

The said littering leads to complaints and makes it unclear to one author how tourism can avoid affecting the environment with the number of tourists visiting the island:

“Those who empty the trash cans have an unappreciated job because they do not even have time go around everywhere and it cannot be fun to hear all the complaints that it is dirty. We all do what we can so that everyone can enjoy our island, but it feels very crowded everywhere this summer and I do not understand how we can receive so many / more without affecting the environment of Gotland.” (LTTE 25)
6 Discussion

The following chapter presents a discussion on the results in regard to the conceptual framework of SET and in reference to the existing literature presented in chapter two.

6.1 Social Impacts

The results show how tourism socially impacts the island and its residents in different ways. The authors of the LTTEs were concerned about the seasonality and the tourism dependence of the island as the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the vulnerability of the tourism industry. However, one respondent that worked in tourism was positively inclined to tourism during the pandemic just because of the associated tourism dependence. Yet, the reliance on one major industry was criticised by others and was proven to be vulnerable when redundancies, dismissals, and bankruptcies hit the tourism industry in the initial phase of the pandemic. This is in line with Lasso and Dahles (2018) argument that tourism dependence puts locals at risk of not being able to sustain their livelihoods if the tourism industry declines. Similarly, a study by Duro et al. (2021) has established a correlation between vulnerability and tourism dependence in island destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Past research has highlighted that host-guest encounters are often unequal as the encounters acknowledge the needs of the tourists and tourism industry and not the needs of the residents (Saarinen & Manwa, 2008). Both authors and respondents perceived that tourism was being prioritized over the residents and that some things were done for the tourists but not the residents. This relates to the argument of Saarinen and Manwa (2008) that the different needs of the tourism industry respectively of the residents (the hosts) are a matter of power relations. Accordingly, in the case of Gotland, the tourism industry has higher power than the residents to fulfill its needs. Previous research has also revealed
that residents that are affiliated, and experience personal benefits from tourism are more likely to perceive positive tourism impacts (McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Nunkoo & So, 2016; Qin et al., 2021; Woo et al., 2018). In this study, only two out of the eight respondents disclosed that they worked in the tourism industry. The results from this study partly align with previous research since one of those two respondents only perceived positive impacts of tourism. The other respondent who worked in tourism was equally aware of positive and negative impacts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not been geographically contained unlike previous pandemics (Hopkins, 2021). Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of social distancing and staying at home to limit the spread of infection (Baum & Hai, 2020). Sweden, however, has used a different and much criticised approach and relied on the civic liability and the individual responsibility of its population during the pandemic (Korhonen & Granberg, 2020; Weman Josefsson, 2021). Consequently, the results from this study found that the residents had experienced over-crowding on the island, which is a (negative) social impact associated with tourism (Tovar & Lockwood, 2008). Moreover, two residents addressed the presence of mass tourism in their LTTEs, which is in line with Tiwari and Chowdhary’s (2021) prediction of the re-emergence of mass tourism as vaccines begin to be distributed. Both respondents and authors expressed in their narratives that they had actively stayed at home during the pandemic and stressed that the tourists need to respect the social distancing recommendations and the everyday lives of the permanent residents of the island. With absent restrictions on domestic travel, it is not surprising that a destination regarded as a hotspot for domestic tourism is confronted with the issue of over-crowding, especially since it has not been possible to travel internationally.

The authors of the LTTEs had the impression that the economic interests of tourism were being prioritized over the residents’ lives and health. They also
stated, in line with the over-crowding, that the recommendations had not been adhered to by the tourists. It was unclear to some of the authors how the residents’ benefits from having tourism during the pandemic. The authors highlighted that having tourism would mean and lead to the tourists leaving the island in a state where many residents will get or have gotten infected. Uneven distribution of benefits, to this end, is a negative social impact linked to tourism (Tovar & Lockwood, 2008). Residents are at the same time not risk-proof and thus, the presence of tourists may risk the health of residents (Tung & Tse, 2021). Similarly, previous research during the pandemic has shown that the residents’ perceived risk has inhibited their support for tourism as tourists were seen as a risk source (Joo et al., 2021). The overall results also show that the respondents and authors mainly considered the interest and safety of the residents as they referred to the “Gotlanders”, rather than the individual health. Thus, they considered the public interest.

The results in general also found that the increasing number of tourists during the pandemic, especially during the summers, had led to a strained situation in the hospital. Critically, this links back to the quote of Woosnam et al. (2021) who highlighted the importance of acknowledging the residents’ perspectives “to ensure communities do not turn into COVID-19 hotspots where medical treatment facilities may struggle to care for an influx of patients” (p.2). In this case, it is apparent from the perspective of the residents that the island has emerged as a COVID-19 hotspot and medical treatment facilities have struggled to care for the influx of patients. The hospital on the island is built for the population of the island and is therefore unable to cope with increasing pressures. The findings also suggest that there may also be underlying issues to this problem with reported layoffs in the hospital. Yet, the struggle of the hospital may also be a consequence of the aim to create herd immunity in Sweden (Korhonen & Granberg, 2020). The findings, in general, correspond somewhat to the study by Qiu et al. (2020) as it revealed that the residents
recognize risks of cross-infection, the threat to public health, and challenges in infection control.

Researchers have pointed out the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to restart and re-think tourism post-COVID-19 (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2021; Sigala, 2020; Vârzu..., 2021), particularly the characterizing growth trajectories (Gössling et al., 2020). Earlier crises have at the same time used tourism as a recovery strategy with risk mitigation efforts through alternative markets like domestic markets (Hopkins, 2021). The growth trajectory does not appear to have been reconsidered as the island has reportedly experienced record-breaking visitation figures by means of domestic tourism (Johansson, 2021). The island was simultaneously the only county in Sweden that recorded an increase in tourism-related turnover during the pandemic (Tillväxtverket, 2021). With an already high turnover pre-pandemic, the aforementioned further supports the idea that the tourism industry on the island has returned to business as usual as predicted by Gössling et al. (2020).

In regard to the record-breaking visitation figures, previous studies have established a correlation between high levels of tourism and high levels of COVID-19-related cases and deaths in the context of international tourism (Farzanegan et al., 2020) and domestic tourism (Nunkoo et al., 2022). These studies were conducted within the first year of the pandemic and both included data from Sweden. Although the latter study found a decorrelation of the above in the second six months of the pandemic, the two studies highlight the danger of accommodating high levels of tourism during the pandemic and the potential outcomes of it. Thus, the high visitation figures and over-crowding are of serious concern.

Earlier research has suggested that tourism can contribute to the gentrification of destinations (Andereck et al., 2005; Qiu et al., 2020). Holiday homes specifically are a contributing factor to gentrification in destinations (Cole et al., 2021; González-Pérez, 2020). Statistics show that there are over 12,000
holiday homes on Gotland, whereas 60-75% of them are owned by individuals who live in other municipalities (SCB, 2020). The findings show that the increasing number of tourists has led to the depopulation of permanent residents on Gotland. The residents shared a perception that the tourists buy properties or so holiday homes but only stay a few months of the year. Thus, the residents need to compete with non-residents for housing whereas the competition leads to an increase in the prices of the housing. Meanwhile, most big buildings in the inner town of Visby are turned into hotels to accommodate tourists, leading to a neighborhood transformation. One resident, therefore, argued that the island should implement residency requirements seen in other countries to see thriving societies.

Regarding the research methods used in this study, the thirty LTTEs collected from the local newspaper for this study support the idea that tourism-crises relationships usually become a part of the public discourse (Hopkins, 2021). The eight interviews were furthermore conducted in the low season and unlike the study by Vargas-Sanchez et al. (2014), did not indicate that the residents perceived the tourism impacts more favorably off-season.

6.2 Economic Impacts
The results show that tourism economically contributes with both benefits and costs to the island during the pandemic. The residents shared a perception that the tourists and tourism companies do not pay taxes to the island municipality. Regarding the latter, they explained how some companies only come to the island in the summer yet only pay taxes to other municipalities. This has led to the residents perceiving that they must pay for the consequences (e.g., littering and water use) of the tourists and tourism businesses. According to SET, individuals engage in exchanges in the pursuit of something valuable (Andereck et al., 2005). In this instance, it does not appear that the residents receive something valuable. The lack of taxes may also be recognized as financial leakage, as the tourism tax revenue does not remain locally (Cernat
Financial leakages have previously been linked to negative attitudes among residents in previous research (Ap, 1992; Lepp, 2007). Financial leakages have previously been linked to negative attitudes among residents in previous research (Ap, 1992; Lepp, 2007).

Tourism is commonly recognized as a vehicle for economic development (Graci & Dodds, 2010; Manzoor et al., 2019; Sharpley, 2001) and economic recovery (Dogru & Bulut, 2018; Jucan & Jucan, 2013). Unlike the study by Kamata (2022), the results in this study did not imply a dilemma among the residents between helping the economy and individual fears of getting infected. Instead, the residents perceived that the (short-term) financial interests of the tourism industry were prioritized over the residents’ health and lives. Or so, there was an exchange of economic interests in exchange for the spread of infection. Further, the residents highlighted that there are other available industries on the island and not only tourism. The other industries employ over one-third of the residents on the island that can work. The residents, again, highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the vulnerability of relying on tourism. The residents’ have therefore reassessed the tourism industry which is in line with the assumption of Schumann (2021) that the COVID-19 pandemic may have residents reassess the relevant tourism industry.

The results revealed, at the same time, that the influx of tourists all year round instead of only in the summer had led to contributions to the rural areas and small businesses of the island. These findings align with the findings of two other studies on domestic tourism as the residents of Gotland perceived tourism important for economic reasons (Shen et al., 2016; Yeung & Leung, 2007). Attracting tourists all year round has been the strategy of local DMO but may also be recognized as an adaptation strategy to climate change by promoting off-season tourism (Hein et al., 2009). Most respondents in this study perceived this (all-year tourism) as something positive, unlike one author who perceived a “living countryside” as something negatively conditioned. The resident reasoned that this makes it seem like a living countryside must be
something supported and financed by tourists instead of just acting as a society where people live. This also relates to the earlier discussion about tourism dependency.

6.3 Environmental Impacts

The pandemic initially signalled significant environmental improvements due to the decline in the use of travel and transportation resulting in reduced greenhouse gas emissions and pollution levels (Jones & Comfort, 2020). However, as predicted by Jones and Comfort (2020), it is unlikely that those improvements will remain when economies recover. The results of this study show that tourism from the perspective of the residents impacts the environment of Gotland in several different ways through the disappearance of natural areas, littering, and water scarcity. The residents of tourist destinations may have a complex interpretation of a destination given its familiarity and sense of place unlike tourists (Tournois & Djeric, 2019). Nature in Gotland, to this end, has been reputable for its beauty and has been highly appreciated by the residents. However, nature is now being devoted to building holiday homes, making it inaccessible for residents to experience the places they used to visit e.g., beaches. The island is therefore “selling out” and “destroying” its nature to provide housing, which is similar to deforestation in the sense that land is purposely cleared. Deforestation is moreover identified as an impact associated with tourism (Andereck et al., 2005; Mason, 2003; Sunlu, 2003).

Past research has highlighted that careful attention is required for tourism development in smaller islands with special historic, socio-cultural, and natural contexts due to the limited resources (Hall 2010a; McLeod et al., 2021). Several studies have shown at the same time that tourists’ per capita use of water exceeds that of locals (Becken, 2014; Gössling, 2001; von Medeazza, 2004). The residents in this study perceived a clear link between tourism and its contribution to water scarcity as more people equals increasing
demand. Water use is accordingly a concern in sustaining island destinations as they have limited resources available (Hall, 2010a; Kelman, 2021; McLeod et al., 2021) in addition to high demand (Phan et al., 2021). Further, it is clear from the results that residents believe that water management needs to be improved. Solutions included demanding tourists with motorhomes, caravans, and boats to bring water and the island should implement a cap on visitors per day.

The degree of environmental impacts is partly contingent on the number of tourists visiting (Archer et al., 2005), meanwhile as uncovered earlier, residents have perceived that there has been overcrowding. Thus, the overcrowding may explain the water scarcity, disappearance of natural areas, and littering. Conclusively, the results revealed no beneficial impacts of tourism on the environment.

6.4 Economic Benefits In Exchange For Social & Environmental Impacts?

The above sections discussing the social, economic, and environmental impacts reflect the components that form the residents’ attitudes (Martín et al., 2018a). Thus, in reference to a key argument of SET (Harrill, 2004), one can ask: does tourism come with economic benefits in exchange for social and environmental impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic in the case of Gotland? The results show that the residents recognize the importance of the economic contributions from the tourists to help the rural areas all year round. Further, as indicated in section 5.1.6, a few residents recognize that tourism is essentially positive. The overall results, however, uncover predominantly negative impacts both socially and environmentally. Residents perceived that the economic interests of tourism were prioritized over the health and well-being of the residents. The residents had also experienced over-crowding whilst the local hospital had been in a strained situation. Meanwhile, no benefits were imposed on the environment. Consequently, it can be concluded
for the sake of this study that tourism has contributed with economic benefits in exchange for social and environmental impacts. At the same time, the ideal social exchange according to SET implies minimal costs coupled with maximised benefits (López et al., 2018; Sharpley, 2014).

6.5 Overlapping
Residents continuously reassess the perceived outcome of an exchange in dynamic and social settings according to Waitt (2003). Thus, the added health-related dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic might pronounce and influence certain perceptions in the presence of tourism (Ramkissoon, 2020). As the research question seeks to explore the residents’ perceptions of tourism impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic, the empirical findings presented some overlapping between during and pre-COVID-19. This was illustrated in the narratives that some things had happened over time. To follow up on some of the respondents’ statements they were asked “Have these impacts been apparent before the pandemic?” in the interviews.

For instance, in the narratives of respondents 3 and 7, they discussed how houses had been built in nature over time on the island, making some natural areas disappear or get “destroyed”. Meanwhile, both LTTEs and respondents addressed the topic of water scarcity which has been recurring yearly since 2016 (Länsstyrelsen, n.d.). Similarly, the topic of gentrification has been a process as indicated in the narrative of LTTE 13 “but in recent decades something has changed dramatically”. Residents may change perceptions as the pandemic changes (Kamata, 2022; Schumann, 2021). Yet the point with the above text is that some tourism impacts are not novel or unique to the COVID-19 pandemic, yet they remain perceived by the residents. Importantly, the results and discussion did highlight that COVID-19 mattered to the residents’ perceptions regarding seasonality & tourism dependence, over-crowding, a strained situation of the hospital, economic
interests over the health & lives of the residents, and contribution to the rural areas.

7 Conclusion

Sweden has used a different and criticized approach towards combatting the pandemic in comparison to other countries. The purpose of this study was to research, explore and understand residents’ attitudes in a Swedish island destination faced with recovering tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, this was done by focusing on the islanders’ perceptions of tourism impacts that form the attitudes. The islanders’ perceptions were studied as the residents’ participation and inclusion in planning processes are critical for the sustainable development of tourism (Ap, 1992; Woosnam, 2012). Using a qualitative approach, the study considered eight retrospective semi-structured interviews and thirty in-time LTTEs that were collected from the local newspaper.

The leading research question of the study asked: “What are the islanders’ perceptions of tourism impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic?”. The thematic analysis revealed various perceptions regarding social, economic, and environmental impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of the social impacts, the findings showed that the islanders had negative perceptions concerning seasonality, tourism dependence, gentrification, overcrowding, and the strained situation of the hospital. The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the vulnerability of depending on tourism to look the same every year on the island. The hospital has simultaneously been unable to cope with the increasing number of patients caused by tourists visiting the island. Accordingly, the island has been subject to overcrowding because of the strategy implemented in Sweden, whereas studies have shown that higher levels of tourism equal higher levels of COVID-19 cases and deaths. The island has, moreover, been subject to gentrification over the years as it has
become depopulated and therefore led to fewer permanent residents. Buildings in the inner city have at the same time become hotels and the prices of housing have increased.

In terms of the economic impacts, the islanders felt that the (short-term) economic interests were considered over the health and lives of the residents and that the tourism businesses and tourists did not pay taxes. This is contrary to the findings found in Kamata’s (2022) study, as this study did not reveal a dilemma among the residents between helping the economy and caring for individual fears. The residents instead highlighted that there are other industries on the island to consider and not just tourism. Yet, the residents perceived it positively that more tourists had traveled all year round to the island during the pandemic which had helped the rural areas and small businesses.

In terms of the environmental impacts, the islanders had only negative perceptions as tourism on the island contributes to water scarcity, littering, and the disappearance of natural areas. Previous research has highlighted the importance of careful attention to tourism development in smaller islands with special historic, socio-cultural, and natural contexts. Water use specifically is a concern for island destinations, and Gotland is no exception to it. The residents perceived a clear link between tourism and its contribution to water scarcity. The disappearance of natural areas had led to nature being devoted to building houses, which meant that the island was “selling” out and “destroying” its nature to provide housing. The findings did not present any benefits or positive impacts on the environment.

The study ascertained that some tourism impacts are not novel or unique to the COVID-19 pandemic, yet they remain perceived by the residents. The study also ascertained that the COVID-19 pandemic mattered to the residents’ perceptions. Lastly, the study concluded in line with Harrill’s (2004) argument that economic benefits are being exchanged for social and environmental
impacts in the case of Gotland. In sum, the study addressed three research gaps: tourism-related research on Swedish island destinations, research on residents’ attitudes towards tourism during a pandemic, and lastly, qualitative research on residents’ attitudes. To highlight overall, this study looked at the components of the overall assessment of the residents’ attitudes by means of studying perception using, rather than just the summary result of it (e.g., positive, or negative attitude).

Additionally, several limitations were acknowledged in this study. These limitations are related to the absent involvement in the production and publication of the LTTEs along with the limited timeframe used to source them. Further, the study only recruited respondents using Facebook whilst the interviews were held via phone, which meant that nonverbal data could not be observed.

7.1 Implications For Further Research
This study welcomed residents to engage in interviews notwithstanding their affiliation to the local tourism industry. Only two out of eight respondents declared that they worked in tourism whilst it was not possible to uncover from the LTTEs whether the authors were affiliated with the industry or not. Thus, further studies could consider a more comprehensive number of respondents that work in tourism to make a comparison to respondents who do not work in tourism. This study partly considered the evolution of perceptions over time as it considered retrospective interviews and in-time LTTEs published over sixteen months. The importance did, however, not lie in the evolution of the perceptions. A suggestion is therefore to conduct a study with a similar approach to that of Zerva et al. (2019). Their study focused on the evolution of the narratives and perceptions of the residents and the DMO in the public discourse.
The results showed some criticism towards the role of the municipality of Gotland. A suggestion for further research is to research how municipalities and DMOs are working towards protecting the residents in destinations with recovering tourism amidst the pandemic. This may include policies, communication, and recommendations. It would also be interesting to see research on how DMOs reason or argue in favor of having tourism during a pandemic. Another suggestion is to do a longitudinal study on residents’ attitudes during the pandemic and post-pandemic to reveal potential differences. This study only considered the public discourse in terms of LTTEs published in the local newspaper but also highlighted that the discourse on tourism crises has been ongoing on Facebook. Future research could be conducted on the discourse presented on various Facebook pages or groups relating to tourism in certain destinations.

Qualitative research on residents’ attitudes remains limited despite the contribution of this study. With that said, further qualitative research is encouraged to contribute to the in-depth understanding of residents’ attitudes. Further research on residents’ attitudes during the pandemic is encouraged in destinations faced with recovering tourism since it may provoke negative impacts and concerns among residents.
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Appendix 1

Facebook post to search for interview participants

Hi,

My name is Linnéa Ahlin, I am a student studying my last semester in the master’s program in Tourism & Sustainability at Linnaeus University in Kalmar. I am currently writing my master's thesis and I am therefore interested in interviewing residents from Gotland for my study.

The interviews will take place by telephone for a maximum of 20-30 minutes. The interviews will be about tourism on the island from the residents' perspective and all answers will be completely anonymous and be dealt with confidentiality.

I would be very grateful if you would like to participate in my study.

Feel free to write in the comments below, in private, or via email (la223tb@student.lnu.se) if you would like to participate.

Sincerely,

Linnéa Ahlin
Appendix 2

Interview guide in Swedish

Syfte med studien/intervjun:

Mitt namn är Linnéa Ahlin, jag är student vid Linnéuniversitetet i Kalmar och är intresserad av att lära mig mer om gotlänningarnas uppfattningar kring turismen under pandemin. Jag är intresserad av dina erfarenheter och åsikter. Ditt deltagande hjälper således min forskning att förstå livet på Gotland under dessa exceptionella tider.

Bra att veta om ditt deltagande

- Deltagandet i denna intervju är frivilligt och du kan när som helst dra dig ur.
- Det är upp till dig om du vill svara på en fråga eller inte.
- Dina svar kommer att anonymiseras och kan inte spåras tillbaka till dig.
- Med ditt muntliga samtycke så kommer intervjun att spelas in. [Med det sagt, är det okej om jag spelar in intervjun?]

Generella frågor:

Hur länge har du bott på Gotland? Arbetar du inom turismindustrin?

Hur har du upplevt ön i samband med turismen under pandemin?

Hur har turismen påverkat Gotland under pandemin?

Turismens effekter:

- Hur ser på turismens sociala påverkan på ön? Hur har du upplevt/uppfattat det?
- Hur ser du på turismens ekonomiska påverkan på ön? Hur har du upplevt/uppfattat det?
- Hur ser du på turismens miljöpåverkan på ön? Hur har du upplevt/uppfattat det?
- Har dessa (sociala, ekonomiska, miljömässiga) effekter varit uppenbara även före pandemin? Om så är fallet, hur har du uppfattat dem?
Attityd:

- [Om de stöttade turism tidigare] Stödjer du turism även under COVID-19 pandemin?
- Vad är din inställning till turism just nu?
- Bör turismen behållas som den är eller tror du att något kunde ha gjorts annorlunda när det gäller turismen under pandemin?

Avslut:

- Finns det något mer du vill berätta?
- Känner du någon som skulle kunna vara intresserad av att delta i en intervju?

Tack för din medverkan!

Om du vill ändra något du sagt, ställa en fråga eller ångra din medverkan så kontakta gärna mig här på Facebook eller via email: la223tb@student.lnu.se
Interview guide in English

Introduction/Purpose of the study:

My name is Linnéa Ahlin, I am a master’s student at Linnaeus University interested in learning more about islanders’ perceptions of tourism during the pandemic. I am interested in your experiences and opinions. Your participation helps research understand life on Gotland during these exceptional times. Your participation is therefore very appreciated.

Good to know about your participation

- Participation in this interview is voluntary and you may withdraw at any moment.
- There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in what you have to say. You can express yourself however you feel is best for you.
- You are free to refuse to answer questions asked.
- Your answers will be anonymized and cannot be traced back to you.
- Lastly, the audio of the interview will be recorded with your permission. [I would therefore like to ask you if it is OK for me to record the interview?]

General questions:

- How many years have you lived in Gotland? Do you work in tourism?
- How have you experienced the island in connection to tourism during the pandemic?
- How has tourism impacted Gotland during the pandemic?

Tourism impacts:

- How do you view the social impacts of tourism on the island? How have you experienced/perceived it?
- How do you view the economic impacts of tourism? How have you experienced/perceived it?
- How do you view the environmental impacts of tourism? How have you experienced/perceived it?
- Have these (social, economic, environmental) impacts been apparent before the pandemic? If so, how have you perceived them?
Attitude:

- [If they supported tourism before] Do you support tourism even with COVID-19?
- What is your overall stance toward tourism right now?
- Should the tourism in Gotland be kept as is or do you think something could have been done differently in terms of tourism during the pandemic?

Ending:

- Is there something else you would like to tell me?
- Do you know anybody else that could be interested in engaging in an interview?

Thank you for your participation!

If you would like to ask a question, change your mind about something you said, or withdraw your participation, please contact me on Facebook or via email: la223tb@student.lnu.se
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*Gotlands Tidningar*