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Media Representation and Evaluation of Non-travelers: A Media Analysis of the Phenomenon of Non-travel Since the Turn of the Millennium in Germany

Abstract

Although about a quarter of the German population are non-travelers, the economic and social consequences that may result from non-travel are still unexplored. For this reason, this study aims to examine via a media analysis the representation and evaluation of non-travelers in German newspapers since the turn of the millennium and gain first insights into the social consequences that non-travelers face. By conducting a discourse analysis, a part of the social reality of non-travelers can be reconstructed. The study concludes that travel is predominantly constructed as a norm in the media and that deviation from this norm leads to negative social sanctions. Over the last 20 years, however, mainly three events have had an impact on the media's assessment of non-travel: the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in 2001, the financial crisis in 2008-09 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a paradigm shift in the evaluation of the phenomenon of non-travel, during which a normalization process of non-travel occurred, at least temporarily. This media analysis thus provides the first indications of the social consequences for non-travelers in the past 20 years in Germany.

Keywords: non-traveler, media analysis, discourse analysis, sociology of knowledge, media evaluation, Germany

1. Introduction

Travel has become a cultural value for most citizens in today's industrialized nations and is therefore taken for granted (Kagelmann & Kiefl, 2020). In Western societies, travel has become a habit and is frequently considered an "*essential element of modern life*" (Chen & Petrick, 2016, p. 1). The importance of travel is also reflected in the media, and travel is even described as the "*most popular form of happiness*" (Kuntz, 2016). However, it seems to be often disregarded that a considerable 25 per cent of the German population does not travel (Forschungsgemeinschaft Urlaub und Reisen e.V. [FUR], 2023). There are numerous definitions of non-travelers (Schmude et al., 2023). Our work refers to the FUR (2023) definition, providing the most significant data on German non-travelers. The FUR defines non-travelers as people who have spent less than five days away from home in a calendar year. It should be noted, however, that non-travelers also have vacation time but do not use it for travel. Despite the high proportion of non-travelers, little is known about this group.

Research in tourism studies focuses primarily on travel and travelers. Through economic and social developments, travelling is often represented as a social achievement accessible to everyone. In this context, the literature frequently refers to the "democratization of travel," in which travel is no longer

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considered exclusive (Hlavin-Schulze, 1998; Spode, 1987). Most previous studies consider non-travelers only as complementary group to travelers, and few studies explicitly examine them. These studies have shown not only that constraints, such as financial or health limitations, are crucial for non-travel (e.g. Alvarez-Sousa, 2018) but also that individuals "voluntarily" decide not to travel (Passauer, 2019) and prefer other activities (McKercher & Chen, 2015).

As the motives for not travelling have already been studied (e.g. Passauer, 2019), our research does not examine these. Instead, it considers how non-travel is represented and evaluated by the media. Following Hall (2012), media representation can be understood as a process in which certain impressions of persons or objects are created through their portrayal in media texts. By valuation, we mean the extent to which non-travel is evaluated as generally positive or negative in connection with social expectation structures. To our knowledge, there is no research on the social perception of non-travelers and the consequences their non-participation may have for them. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the social evaluation of non-travelers to generate the first indications for the positioning of non-travelers in society. For this purpose, a discursive media analysis of well-known German newspapers from 2000 to 2022 is conducted. Based on the general argument that the media reinforce existing interest in travel and, at the same time, have a determining effect on trends (Kagelmann & Kiefl, 2020), this paper argues that the media also reconstruct perceptions of non-travelers in a condensed way and influence the social image of non-travelers. Because media function as "knowledge carriers" (Keller, 2011a), media analysis allows us to uncover some potential social consequences that non-travelers face. In addition, the media portrayal of non-travelers can be relevant for the local economy, as non-travelers also consume in their region of residence during their vacation (Schmude et al., 2023). They, therefore, represent potential customers for leisure service providers.

2. Literature review

In tourism demand research, the focus is on travelers, while non-travelers are less researched. For a considerable time, travelers' participation decisions have been studied as binary decisions (Losada et al., 2016), as a choice between travel and non-travel. Accordingly, previous research on travel participation mainly refers to influencing factors such as socio-demographic characteristics or previous travel experiences that influence a travel decision (e.g. Karl et al., 2020; Zimmer et al., 1995).

If we look explicitly at research on non-travelers, we can find isolated studies on this topic, especially in recent years (e.g. McKercher et al., 2022; Schmude et al., 2023). Most of these studies focus on the motives behind non-travelling (e.g. McKercher et al., 2022). The motives of non-travelers can also be divided into constraints (e.g. financial situation, health problems) and motivations (e.g. other consumption preferences, bad experiences in the past) (Passauer, 2019; Popp et al., 2021). In addition, voluntary non-travel is also studied under the phenomenon of "staycation". Despite variations in the definition of staycation, the phenomenon is generally understood as a vacation spent in one's familiar surroundings (Muritala et al., 2022). It can thus also be considered a form of non-travel in a broader sense. The staycation phenomenon emerged during the 2008-09 financial crisis in the United States (Molz, 2009). Due to the poor economic situation, typical vacations were no longer affordable for many U.S. Americans (James et al., 2017). The staycation trend, therefore, emerged as a travel alternative and gained popularity, primarily through the media (Sharma, 2009). A decade later, the COVID-19 pandemic revived the staycation phenomenon (Muritala et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2023). While travel restrictions were in place, individuals attempted to create a psychological distance from home by staying in hotels in the area (Muritala et al., 2022). Furthermore, studies underline that the staycation phenomenon is most prevalent among Millennials (Moon & Chan, 2022). James et al. (2017) indicate that Millennials who practice staycation can be assigned specific lifestyles, such as socialites or culture enthusiasts.

To our knowledge, while there are no studies on the representation of the phenomenon of non-travel in the media as a whole, there are a few studies that examine the representation of staycation in the press: While Molz (2009) finds that staycation was represented in a very ambivalent way in the media and was portrayed as an undesirable "standstill" resulting from the financial crisis, Rosu (2020) shows that staycation has far more positive connotations in the media. Here, staycation is portrayed as a sustainable alternative to travel and supporting local economies, among other things. These studies thus indicate a change in the media's portrayal of the phenomenon, which our longitudinal analysis may confirm.

3. Methods

3.1. Conceptual framework and aim of the study

As outlined in the literature review, the portrayal of non-travelers in the media and the associated social impacts are mainly unexplored. Consequently, this research attempts to analyze the media evaluation of non-travelers via a media analysis. This analysis is not about the valorization of the phenomenon of non-travel but about the general social valuation of the phenomenon. Evaluation is not captured in the classical sense of valuation studies, which essentially examine formalized evaluation practices, such as ratings and rankings of universities or accommodations (e.g. Jeacle & Carter, 2011; Krüger & Reinhart, 2016). Our study examines how non-travelers' behavior is generally evaluated in the media. It is a key assumption of this research that different normative values are associated with non-travel in the media discourse, which are linked to specific expectation structures. Non-travel is evaluated as positive or negative depending on the degree of fulfilment of the expectation structures (Krüger & Reinhart, 2016).

Since discourse analysis allows for identifying such value concepts (Kivle & Espedal, 2022), we will analyze the media representation and evaluation of non-travelers in Germany based on this method. A sociology-of-knowledge discourse analysis, according to Keller, has been conducted because it combines approaches from the sociology of knowledge hermeneutics with aspects of Foucault's discourse analysis (Keller, 2019). The "social construction of reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1980), to which Keller links his discourse analysis (Keller, 2011a), forms the centre of the analysis. The basic assumption is that knowledge stocks have become more differentiated in modern society. The carriers of knowledge are, for example, scientific subdisciplines or "*socially differentiated fields of practice*", such as politics, economics, or even the media in the form of daily newspapers and magazines, as is the case in this media analysis (Keller, 2011a, p. 182).

It can be assumed that media discourses about the phenomenon of non-travel capture several discourse-specific interpretive patterns of non-travelers. These interpretive patterns may vary according to social knowledge stocks and change over time (Keller, 2011b). Therefore, this analysis focuses on the socio-types and underlying statements about non-travelers. This research aims to uncover and understand these "*socially transiently conventionalized interpretive figures*" (Keller, 2011b, p. 108) of non-travelers and how they may have changed over time. To sum up, the following research questions will be the focus of the analysis:

- How has the non-traveler group been represented and evaluated in the media since 2000, and how have these evaluations changed over time?
- Which interpretative figures of non-travelers does the media analysis uncover, and in which contexts and structures are these embedded?

3.2. Text corpus and coding

Since newspapers are "carriers of knowledge" (Keller, 2011a), their analysis is suitable for reconstructing the social evaluation of non-travelers. The following newspapers were used as the data basis for the study: The well-known national daily newspapers "Süddeutsche Tageszeitung", "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" as well as the weekly news magazine "Spiegel" and smaller regional newspapers, which were researched via a search database.¹ We chose the study period from 2000 to the end of 2022 to account for events that could potentially affect non-travel. These include the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the financial and economic crisis of 2008/09, and the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 onwards. Hence, the development of the phenomenon is analyzed over more than two decades.

When defining the keywords, a problem-oriented and heuristic approach was chosen, in which no exclusion criteria were used to generate a comprehensive text corpus without restrictions. Since no synonyms on the topic of non-travel and its key terms could be found in the Thesaurus "Open Thesaurus"², only the terms "staycation", "balconia", "vacation at home", and "non-travel" were initially selected as search terms. Subsequently, the articles were read, which made it possible to identify further search terms: "vacation refusers," "couch potatoes," "unwillingness to travel," "holistay," and "homebody." After the sampling was completed, 101 articles were used for analysis.

The original statements have been condensed and typified via the coding of important segments with MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2021) and the resulting systematic classification of text segments, allowing patterns of interpretation and narrative structures to be revealed. In discourses, meanings are present in structured forms, representing reconstructed parts of collective knowledge stocks (Keller, 2011b). By coding and structuring important text segments, it is thus possible to conclude the social reality of non-travelers because *"every use of language suggests [...] a specific existence of worldly phenomena"* (Keller, 2011b, p. 97).

For the coding process, the Grounded Theory, according to Strauss (1998), was chosen because it is an iterative process in which new categories are inductively opened, text segments are assigned, and categories are combined, differentiated, or selected until the phenomenon of non-travel and its dimensions are comprehensively and structurally captured. Finally, 91 codes and subcodes were created, and 750 text segments were coded.³

4. Findings

First, the media analysis results regarding the general structure of the phenomenon of non-travel in media discourse are presented. A specific focus on the negative and positive evaluations of non-travelers and the temporal course of the phenomenon follows this.

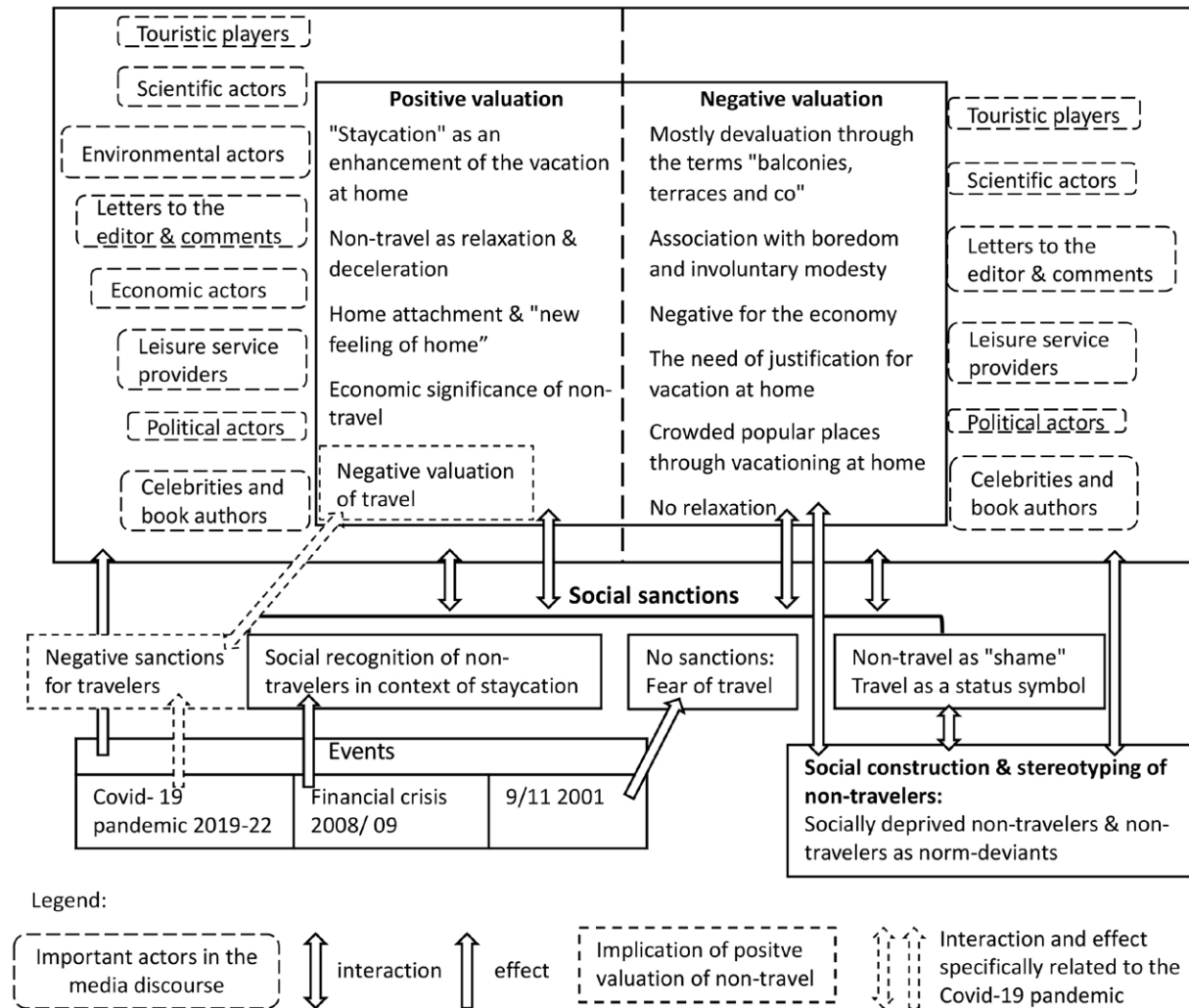
The structure and interrelationships of non-travel evaluations in the media discourse are illustrated in Figure 1. Here, the essential elements of the phenomenon are combined into one structure. The dimensions of non-travel reconstructed through coding were related and elaborated on in terms of content. The evaluation and representation of non-travelers and the construction and typification of non-travelers form the core category in this discourse, which is directly related to all essential categories.

¹ Access to these newspaper archives was provided by the LMU Munich and via the search database "LexisNexis".

² Thesaurus used: <https://www.openthesaurus.de>

³ The resulting codes and subcodes are shown in the Appendix.

Figure 1
Structure of the valuation of non-travel in media discourse



As shown in Figure 1, the discourse centers on the evaluation of the phenomenon of non-travel. The media discourse about the phenomenon is determined, for example, by actors from tourism, the economy, or politics. They produce and reproduce the representation of non-travel in the media discourse. Depending on the (power) resources, their interests, and the social knowledge stocks they can draw on, these actors influence the social evaluation of non-travel.

Social sanctions can be understood as mechanisms that reveal normative values. In our media discourse, travel is often constructed as a norm and sometimes even as a status symbol. These structures become particularly evident when a deviation from this constructed travel norm exists. Thus, non-travel is often negatively sanctioned socially and sometimes even portrayed as a *"disgrace"* (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2006, p. 49). In this context, non-travelers are interpreted as deviating from the norm and/or socially deprived. The deviation of the travel norm leads to specific constructions and non-travelers' typification. While both positive and negative valuations of non-travel practice can be found in the discourse, our analysis shows that social constructions of the non-traveler as a person are mainly

associated with negative evaluations. The media construction of the non-traveler usually occurs through negative stereotyping. Our analysis revealed no positive stereotypes of non-travelers. These social constructions influence the way a particular behavior is sanctioned. In addition, they shape and change social knowledge about non-travel, which also influences the respective interpretation patterns of the discourse-determining actors.

Conversely, positive evaluations of the practice of non-travel are often associated with positive sanctions such as social recognition. Moreover, the temporal context is also crucial for assessing the phenomenon.

4.1. Negative valuation of non-travelers and non-traveling

As expected, a central aspect of the media discourse on non-travel is that travel is often presented as the norm. Non-travel, on the other hand, is constructed as something deviating from the norm. Terms such as "crazy" and "mad" or even "forbidden" (e.g. Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2016) are often used in this context. This norm is usually expressed implicitly. e.g., "Vacationing at home doesn't have to be boring" (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2000, L5), which implies that it is often considered boring. Similarly, one usually needs to justify why one does not travel. This shows that non-travel does not correspond to the general social expectations and that a corresponding justification for this deviant behavior is required. Deviating from the travel norm results in negative social sanctions for non-travelers. Exaggerated stereotypes of non-travelers are constructed in the media, especially in connection with the terms "balconians," "couch potatoes," and "travel naysayers." Non-travelers are portrayed as "stuffy", "provincial" (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2020), or even as backward and stubborn oddballs.

In addition to this exaggerated portrayal of stereotypes, the media construction takes place from a more socially critical perspective. In contrast to the image of the strange travel refusers who voluntarily do not participate in travel, non-travelers are interpreted here as a socially deprived group who usually cannot travel for financial reasons. Non-travelers are thereby portrayed as a socially neglected group who are on the margins of society, as expressed in this quote:

"You just don't see the ones [non-travelers] in the shadows. [...] Tourism is seen as a social achievement for all, although it is not." (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2001, V2/2)

At the same time, travel is seen as a status symbol. Those who do not travel have a lower social status, as the following quote illustrates:

"Because people don't dare admit bankruptcy and consequent lack of vacation to their neighbors. Vacation is status. The further away, the better. The longer, the better. The more often, the more desirable. Staying at home is for losers" (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2016).

For those affected, not being able to travel is often associated with shame. In this context, being unable to travel is regarded as so bad socially that those affected sometimes even fake a vacation for fear of social exclusion, as reported in newspaper articles.

4.2. Positive valuation of non-travelers and non-traveling

Furthermore, there are also positive sanctions where the desired behavior is rewarded with social recognition. Under the term 'staycation', for example, staying at home is portrayed as an opportunity to "re-experience one's home" (Bild Deutschland, 2019) and has a very positive connotation, especially "in times of climate change" (Allgemeine Zeitung, 2020, 15). Accordingly, voluntary staycations are socially recognized in this context. In contrast, against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic, travelers have been negatively sanctioned by being framed as inconsiderate.

"Staying at home can be exciting [...] Why not surprise your children by spending the coming summer night adventuring in a tent on the meadow behind the house? [...] Avoid flying wherever possible. - and not just in times of Corona. [...] Flight shame is booming" (Frankfurter Rundschau, 2020, F7).

The narrative of non-travel in this context is very positive. The focus is on sustainability; however, the narrative of non-travel goes far beyond this. This environmental actor constructs vacations at home as exciting and adventurous. The addressees here are primarily the parents, who can offer their children an exciting vacation at home while simultaneously creating a feeling of being away from home that one would also like to convey to one's children. In this way, the meadow behind the house becomes a space for adventures, all ready to be discovered again. At the same time, it suggests that staycation is constructed as an exclusive trend that presupposes a certain prosperity, like the meadow behind the house. It is also clear from this quote that the term "staycation" is associated with a positive evaluation of non-travel.

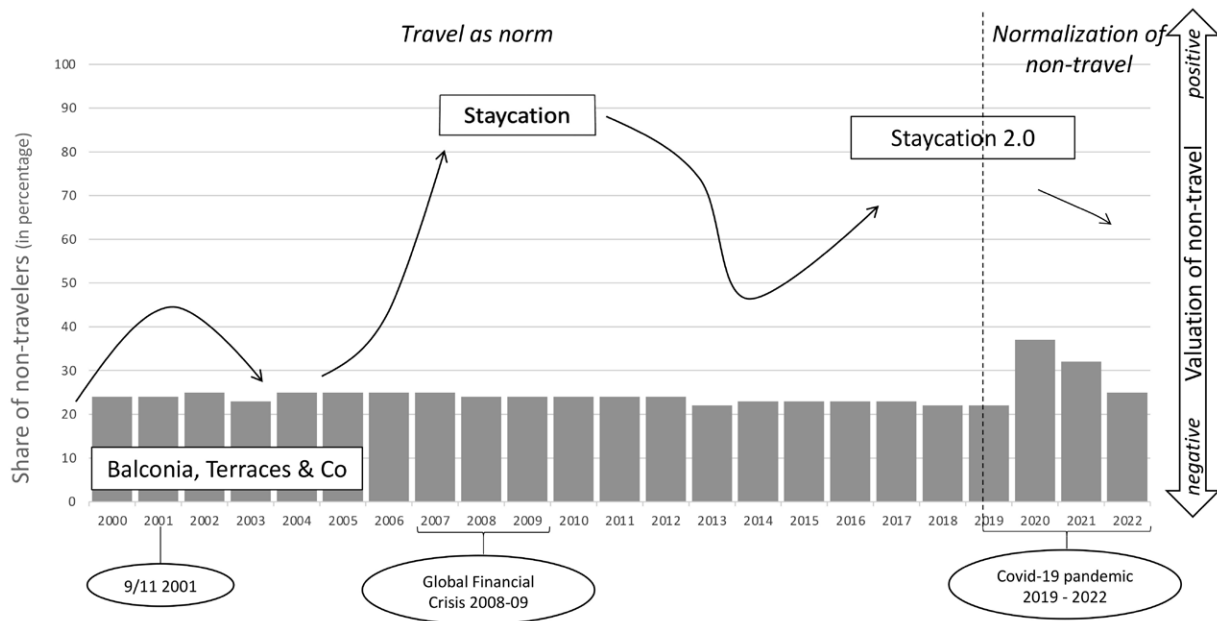
In contrast to the "boring" balcony, a staycation is considered exciting and environmentally conscious. Here, the term appears in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and is experiencing a renaissance, so to speak, from the times of the financial crisis around 2008, when the term "staycation" was born, primarily due to the financial hardships at the time, as articles testify (Sharma, 2009). At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the media discussion of the issue of "flight shame." The term "flight shame," which originated in Sweden in 2016, gained popularity across Europe, primarily through the "Fridays for Future" movement in 2018 (Becken et al., 2021; Gössling, 2019). Our analysis shows that the narrative of flight shame was also used in the German media discourse during the pandemic.

However, positive evaluations of non-travel do not only take place precisely in connection with staycation but can also be found generally in media discourse. The economic importance of vacationing at home for the immediate region and Germany, by and large, is emphasized in media discourse. In addition, spending a vacation at home is associated with a special bond to one's homeland. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, vacationing at home was interpreted as a positive experience that allowed people to rediscover the beauty of their homeland. In addition, vacationing at home is often portrayed as an act of deceleration, in contrast to the stress of travel, which can positively affect well-being.

4.3. Valuation of non-travelers and non-traveling over time

To summarize the change in the media valuation of non-travel since 2000, Figure 2 illustrates the media valuation along the temporal course (X-axis). The right y-axis models the relative valuation of non-travel in the media discourse on a qualitative level, as shown in our discourse analysis. It, therefore, does not reflect any quantifiable values but illustrates the direction in which the valuation of the phenomenon develops in connection with central temporal events. The development of the proportion of non-travelers in Germany is illustrated by the bars (left Y-axis), with a significant increase in proportion caused by the COVID-19 pandemic being particularly striking here. Regarding the distribution of articles, it can be noted that most newspaper articles (15) appeared in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the remaining years - except for 2002, due to the terror attacks of 9/11 with ten articles - the articles were in the low single-digit range.

Figure 2
Valuation of non-travel over time



Note. Source of the share of non-travelers: FUR 2000-2022.

Depending on the temporal context, non-travel is valued and represented differently, as shown in Figure 2. In the context of "balconia," non-travel tends to be socially sanctioned, while staycation tends to be constructed as a trendy, sustainable phenomenon. Three events emerged from the analysis that strongly influenced views on non-travel: the terrorist attacks around September 11, 2001, the financial crisis of 2008-09, and, finally, the COVID-19 pandemic as the most recent event.⁴

Especially at the beginning of the millennium, terms such as "balconia," "terraces," or "gardenista" were very present in the media, and these terms also recurred over time. As explained earlier, non-travel was mainly negatively evaluated concerning these terms. In this context, non-travel was predominantly associated with involuntary modesty and boredom, and non-travelers were often given negative social sanctions. With the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, there was a temporary shift toward a more neutral evaluation of non-travel. Due to the generally prevailing fear of travelling, negative sanctions were also absent from the media discourse.

Because of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008-09, the staycation trend emerged, starting in the USA (Molz, 2009) and later spreading to Germany. In connection with the staycation phenomenon, the interpretation pattern of non-travel in the German media changed, moving to a highly positive image. Nevertheless, travel continued to be constructed as the norm in the media at this time, and the staycation trend also subsided over time. It was not until the COVID-19 pandemic that the term staycation and the associated positive evaluation of non-travel regained media momentum, as shown in Figure 2 with the label "Staycation 2.0."

The COVID-19 pandemic can be interpreted as a particularly impactful event that has led to a paradigm shift regarding non-travel evaluations. The narrative pattern here changes from justifying why one does not travel to the narrative 'vacation at home is nice'. Moreover, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, travel

⁴ Other events can be found in the Appendix.

is increasingly problematized and critiqued, while non-travel is interpreted as appropriate. The ecological debate about travel is also being taken up again in the media. Not only are the ecological benefits of staycation discussed, but travelers are also frequently criticized for their ecological footprint:

"Climate change is changing the face of our earth, probably not to our advantage, but we rich Europeans must, of course, if not travel around the world, then at least through Europe, with the claim to maximum vacation and recreation - when in the past it was enough to go to grandma in the countryside." (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2021).

An essential aspect of this paradigm shift is the normalization of non-travel. In this context, normalization means *"the process of the introduction of new norms"* (Krzyżanowski, 2020, 435). During the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, political actors tried to introduce the new norm of staying at home, at least in the short run. These normalization processes can be viewed along the lines of Foucault's (1990, 1995) theory of power. They function top-down as a hegemonic power that defines a social reality. Through establishing and legitimizing norms, certain kinds of behavior are proscribed to the social individual (Krzyżanowski, 2020). Behavior that deviates from these norms, such as travelling during the COVID-19 pandemic, leads to a negative valuation of travelers. The following quotation showcases the paradigm shift that took place during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding the valuation of non-travel:

"Please stop feeling sorry for parents and their children. The Corona epidemic affects everyone, after all. [...] One would think that responsible parents would not expose their offspring to the danger of infection in a high-incidence area" (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2021).

This quote illustrates that traveler, or even people wishing to travel during the pandemic, are in part subject to negative social sanctions. They are often constructed as reckless and irresponsible. It should also be noted that event-related motives for not travelling, such as the fear of an infection during the COVID-19 pandemic or an increased need for security around September 11, also affect non-travelling evaluation.

5. Discussion

This media analysis aimed to shed light on perceptions and evaluations of non-travelers since 2000 and to analyze how these evaluation dynamics have developed over time. The discourse analysis provided initial insights into media portrayals and evaluations of non-travelers in Germany. It should be noted that it is impossible to deduce what is defined as non-travel from the media. For example, "staycation" and "vacation at home" can include vacations within one's own four walls and overnight stays a short distance away from one's place of residence (Muritala et al., 2022). Despite this conceptual blurring, the media analysis allows us to uncover social constructs and interpretive patterns of non-travelers. At the same time, it also points to social implications for non-travelers.

On the one hand, the media reflect societal views about non-travelers and this group's social consequences. On the other hand, media constructs also shape the social perceptions of non-travelers. Consequently, this study illuminates the media evaluation of non-travelers from a social perspective and reconstructs, to some extent, this group's "social reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1980). Thus, this research sheds light on the social consequences for the non-traveler's group. For example, it points to the partially existing social exclusion of non-travelers or even the social advancement of non-travelers caused by events.

Furthermore, looking at the current state of research, a few studies have examined the portrayal of staycation in the media (Molz, 2009; Rosu, 2020), but not the phenomenon of non-travel, as our research does. Nevertheless, part of our findings refers to the staycation trend consistent with previous studies (Muritala et al., 2022; Rosu, 2020). Staycation is also constructed in the German media as a sustainable, economically valuable, and recreational phenomenon, a portrayal which was again increasingly adopted by the press

during the COVID-19 pandemic. From a theoretical perspective, our longitudinal study demonstrates the need to consider various influencing factors when analyzing the phenomenon of non-travel. While previous studies have focused on internal factors such as personal constraints and motivations for non-travelling (e.g. Passauer, 2019), our analysis shows that external factors such as crises and social expectation structures also impact the phenomenon of non-travel. At the same time, our results point to practical implications. Since it can be assumed that non-traveler's also have economic effects (Schmude et al., 2013; Knežević Cvelbar & Ogorevc, 2023), the positive perception of non-travelers can be used for the development of specific (local) offers and services, which also strengthens the resilience of tourism to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, it is also in the interest of local providers to counteract the negative image of non-travel in the media.

This study has some limitations. One point is that this media analysis refers to newspaper articles and, thus, traditional media. On the other hand, the representation of the phenomenon in social media was not considered. Here, it may be possible to identify other evaluation dynamics vis-à-vis non-travel. Nevertheless, it should be noted that traditional media, significantly expanded by their online extensions, are much used and thus function as essential opinion leaders and "knowledge carriers" (Keller, 2011a). Another aspect is that the analysis refers to Germany. Although the previous studies on staycation in the U.S. and Sweden (Molz, 2009; Rosu, 2020) show parallels to our analysis in the media representation of staycation, the results of this study cannot be transferred to other countries. Differences in the media representation of staycation can be observed, for example, between the U.S. and Germany during the 2008-09 financial crisis. While the portrayal of staycation in the U.S. media was ambivalent (Molz, 2009), the phenomenon was represented positively throughout the German media. In general, it can be assumed that depending on the impact of an event on the respective nation, the media evaluation of non-travel also varies.

6. Conclusion

In summary, this discourse analysis offers the first insights into the media representation of non-travelers in Germany. It thereby reveals the valuation dynamics regarding non-travel in the last 20 years. The central research questions of this study were how the group of non-travelers has been represented and evaluated in the media since the year 2000 and which interpretive non-traveler figures a discourse analysis can uncover. The study shows that travel is often constructed as a norm and that non-travelers are negatively sanctioned socially for their deviant behavior. These negative social sanctions are reflected in the negative constructions of non-travelers, such as the 'stubborn and stuffy travel naysayers' or the 'backward, provincial balconians'.

Furthermore, this study underscores the media evaluation of non-travel changes depending on the temporal context. It can be stated that the financial crisis of 2008-09, especially the COVID-19 pandemic, had a positive impact on the evaluation of non-travel. Especially under the staycation trend during the 2008-09 financial crisis (Sharma, 2009), vacationing at home was portrayed as highly positive, sustainable, and recreational. This positive view of staycation reasserted itself in the media discourse during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a paradigm shift in evaluating the media discourse normalizing non-travel. At the same time, the discourse analysis showed that, parallel to this, travelers were sometimes negatively sanctioned socially and often portrayed as reckless, given the risk of infection. However, since the proportion of travelers in Germany has already returned to pre-pandemic levels (FUR, 2023), it can be assumed that this normalization of non-travel is only a short-term phenomenon and that with the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, travel will once again become the dominant norm. In the future, it should be investigated whether the media construction of non-travelers reverts to its pre-pandemic views or whether a more profound change in the evaluation may have taken place. In conclusion, this research also shows the importance of looking more closely at non-travelers and that future research still needs to examine, for example, the economic impact of non-travelers.

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Appendix

Resulting categories and subcategories from the media analysis: Important categories and their frequencies

Categories	Subcategories	
Causes/motives for non-travel	Constraints	e.g., Financial reasons; Need for security; Time commitments; Health; (total 77)
	Lack of motivation	e.g., better rest at home; negative experience; habit; preference for other activities; (total 54)
	Environment (5)	
	Interval travelers/ temporary non-travel (3)	
Arguments of institutionalized actors	Environment (10)	
	Vacation at home as valuable (4)	
	Economic importance (2)	
Evaluation & representation of non-travel	Positive evaluation of non-travel	Positive evaluation related to staycation (24); non-travel as recreation (17); Home attachment & new sense of home (13); Economic importance (8);
	Negative evaluation of travel	General negative evaluation of travel (8); Critical questioning of travel (7); Criticism of pro-holiday discourse (3);
	Negative evaluation of non-travel	Negative evaluation in connection with balconies, terraces and co (21) and in general (5); Not traveling = boredom (12) & non-recreative (4); Justification for not traveling (12); Vacation at home as cause for crowding of popular places (5); Negative for economy (7);
Construction & typification of non-travelers	Non-travelers as deviants from the norm	Stereotyping of travel refusers/ couch potatoes (18) & balcony people (9); Distinction in in- & outgroup between travelers and non-travelers (9);
	Deprived non-travelers (8)	
Social sanctions	Negative social sanctions for non-travelers (13)	
	Positive social sanctions for non-travel (24)	
	Negative social sanctions for non-travel (13)	
Actors	E.g., scientific actors (26), travel industry (22); reader response and commentary (21); political actors (21); (total 117)	
Events	Covid-19 pandemic (27)	
	2008/09 financial crisis (8)	
	9/11 2001 (6)	
	Other events (e.g., inflation, terrorist attacks aside from 9/11; Soccer World Cup 2006 in Germany) (total 19)	
Activities during the vacation	e.g., activities during vacations in general; tips for vacations at home; advertising activities; (total 49)	

Note. Additional categories: Narratives with spatial references (37); Evolution of travel (15); Sociodemographic characteristics of non-travelers (5); General terms for non-travel (51); non-travelers as an unexplored group (4); Definition of non-travel (2).