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Differences in Thematic and Geographical Interests Among the Readers of News Portal Delfi
in Russian and Estonian language
MA thesis

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Tartu, 2021

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this master's thesis is to study whether and how the media consumption among Russian-speaking minority in Estonia has an effect on the integration of this group to Estonian society. For this, the character of the media consumption among two audiences: Russian-speaking minorities and Estonian-speaking group - is compared and analysed. The thesis uses the quantitative approach: statistical data about the media consumption of these two audiences is analysed, based on the data from the Estonian news portal Delfi.ee and its Russian-language version RusDelfi.ee. The main results indicate that, in general, the Russian-speaking audience has become over time more interested in consuming the content about the developments in Estonia, but these changes are significant only in several thematic groups and with a high probability are connected with the COVID-19.

1. Introduction

The role of media in modern society is ambiguous and obvious simultaneously. Fake news, media wars, and information noise produced by media are negative effects, which make some people blame media for numerous problems in society. Some of these blames are justified, but media also has some positive functions, which might help society to overcome some difficulties. One of the functions of the media is uniting the people in the society (Prokhorov, 2000), thus, the media has been argued to have a contributing effect also to the integration of national minorities within a society.

Integration can be defined and interpreted in many different ways, such as “removal of the differences between the minorities and the wider society” or “adoption of the values of the host society by minorities” (Costoiu, 2008). This thesis looks at the integration from the perspective of access and involvement: to what extent the ethnic minorities – in the case of this thesis, the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia - are involved in the social, political, economic, and cultural life of the society. This kind of involvement or integration can be analysed from different angles or spheres, such as labour market, education, language, contacts, politics etc, but also - the media.

This kind of approach has been previously used in Estonian Integration Monitorings, that have been carried out annually since year 2000. The monitorings analyse attitudes related to education system, language proficiency, political and social involvement, usage of media, and other dimensions. However, this thesis approaches this topic from the more quantitative perspective, since the digital media are capable to provide such an opportunity to have independent, reliable, and comprehensive statistical data about news consumption – this is one of the possible ways to approach the phenomena of integration. By the news consumption the process of familiarization of the audience with the media messages, provided by the media is meant - reading the text, watching the video material of listening to the audio podcasts; and interacting with it (sharing the news on the social web, writing comments, quoting).

In this thesis, the integration of ethnic minorities (Russian-speaking population) in Estonia will be studied by analysing the character of the media consumption. This is then compared with the character of the media consumption by the Estonian-speaking population (mostly ethnic Estonians). The data for the analysis comes from the Estonian news portal Delfi: both the

Russian-version as well as the Estonian-version of Delfi. This kind of dual approach allows to carry out comparison between these two audiences.

The theoretical framework for this thesis are based on the theories that demonstrate the link between the media consumption and the integration of the national minorities: for example, a connection established between the consumption of the majority media (media which primarily publishes the content for the ethnic majorities) and positive dynamic in the integration of the ethnic minorities by Peeters and d'Haenens (2005); and similar studies carried by Jeffres (2000) and Bonfadelli, Bucher, Riga (2007). Based on these theories, we can argue that the concepts of integration and media consumption have a relationship: less integrated minorities tend to consume more media content related to their (real or perceived) country of origin and its culture, etc; whereas the more integrated ethnic minorities are within their “new” society or country, the more they are consuming the media of the this country. The theories and methods for the analysis related to the media consumption are based on the theories of Katz and Blumler (1974), Hall (1980), Eco (2015), Luhmann (2004/1995), and Luckmann (1966).

For the analysis, a quantitative method (statistical analysis) is used. The data analysed is unique and has not been yet analysed this way in the past in Estonia: the data from Ekspress Meedia holding is used, in particular, the statistical data from the Estonian online news portal Delfi (Delfi EE) and its Russian language version RusDelfi (Delfi RUS). The research is based on comparing the character of media consumption by two audiences: the Russian-speaking minority and Estonian-speaking group of people. The data analysis focuses mostly on comparing which type of content is more or least popular among which audience.

Two main research questions for this thesis are as follows:

- 1) what are the features of the media consumption within the Estonians and Russian ethnic minorities?
- 2) if and how media consumption reflects the degree of integration of ethnic minorities in Estonia?

By the term “reflect” the ability to provide the information about the process of integration and its main features. The degree of integration in this research

This thesis claims that the character of the news consumption and interests within the Russian speakers and Estonians in Estonia are sharply different. One possible reason for it is related to the differences in the national identity of the minorities and ethnic Estonians. Geographically Estonia is situated between two different cultural entities – "Western" and "Orthodox" (Feldman, 2001) and Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia mostly share the "Orthodox" one.

The chosen method for this thesis is one of several possible ways to study the phenomenon of integration vis-à-vis the differences in media consumption and among the different population groups (especially majority ethnic group vs minority ethnic group). All of these methods do have different angles and may produce different types of results or interpretations. However, this particular method was chosen to add an additional layer of understanding the phenomena of integration and media consumption in Estonia.

The research resulted in the following outcomes. The most problematic sphere in terms of integration (integration in the sphere of media, in particular) is the cultural sphere – Russian-speaking minority in Estonia tends to consume mainly the content which is connected with the Russian cultural context. The topics, where the Russian-speaking minorities are interested in the news about developments in Estonia are public health, crime, and emergencies, and traveling. Russian-speaking minority has become more interested in the Estonian content on these particular topics (considering the period from 2016 to 2020). In general, Russian-speaking minority tends to read the articles, where the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia has been mentioned (or famous people of Russia); whereas the popularity of the content about the Estonian political and cultural leaders is lower among Russian-speaking minorities and higher among Estonians.

All in all, the result of this thesis indicates that the popularity of the content about some spheres of life may indicate the lower integration of Russian-speaking minority with the Estonian society, but in some other spheres the Russian-speaking minority has potential to be more integrated with the Estonian society – partly because of the spread of the COVID-19 and its effect on the changes or patterns of Estonia media consumption among the Russian-speaking minority. Thus, the basing on the analysis of the media consumption, the integration of Russian speaking minorities is low in some spheres (cultural life, politics), but higher in another (tourism, health). That is why this ambiguous situation might affect the accuracy of assessment of integration and shows how important the comprehensive approach to that phenomenon is.

The thesis consists of the theoretical part, where the theoretical background, main concepts and theories have been reviewed; empirical part, where the statistical data have been analysed; and the conclusion, where the main outcomes of the research are presented.

2. Theoretical framework

The linkage between media consumption and integration has been proved by previous scholars (Peeters and d'Haenens, 2005; Chen, 2014; Hassane, 2015; Cheskin 2015; Bonfadelli, Bucher, Riga, 2007). But it to apply their findings to the case of Estonia and interpret the empirical results the mechanism of media consumption is important to review. This chapter consists of two subchapters: description of media theories and how it is connected with the media consumption, and the subchapter explaining the character of the connection between the concepts “integration” and “media consumption”.

There are many different media theories that describe the phenomena of media consumption. Among them, there are interpretivists approach Active Audience Theory (Hall, 1980), Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch, 1974), and others. All of them study the way how people perceive the information which contains in the media. Some of the conducted studies are also connected with the field of integration.

It has been argued by several authors that integration of national minority groups is influenced by media, for example by Peeters and d'Haenens (2005), Hassane (2015), Cheskin (2015), Geißler & Pöttker (2006), Weber-Menges (2005), Elias & Lemish (2008) or Chen (2014). And vice versa, media consumption can be defined as an integration marker – the more interested minorities in the informational area of the majority media are, the more they consume the corresponding content and the more similar the interests of minorities and majorities are. Therefore, the smaller “split” between the identities of the ethnic minorities and representatives of the host society is. Moreover, in case the national minorities prefer to consume their ethnic media, the process of integration becomes slower (Jeffres, 2000). That is why studying the character of media consumption is important and can reflect the degree of integration within the society.

Ethnic minorities and titular nation have slightly different informational spaces – ethnic Estonians prefer to consume local Estonian-language media and sometimes Western-oriented sources, whereas Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia mainly consume local Russian-language sources and some media from Russia (TV channels “Rossia 1”, “Perviy kanal”)

(Vihalemm, Leppik, 2018). A small percent of these types of audience – as a rule, younger generation, consume Western media. Nevertheless, the amount of consumed content is relatively the same for both groups (Vihalemm, Hogan-Brun, 2013). It also has been argued that the young generation of Russian speakers is using different sources of information and consume Estonian-language media more actively than the older generation, which mainly uses only Russian-language news sources, thus, the informational space of the young Russian-speaking people is closer to the informational space of Estonian speakers (Vihalemm, Hogan-Brun, 2013).

2.2 Media theories, connected with media consumption

There are many media theories, which are trying to describe and explain the features of media consumption, including the Limited Effects theory (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, Gaudet, 1994), Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch, 1974), Active Audience Theory (Hall, 1980) and others. Understanding of the mechanism of the news consumption by the audience (what factors make one article more attractive for the audience than another and can media influence the audience?) is highly important because it allows to explain the results which have been obtained during the emphatical analysis and suggest the possible ways to reach more successful integration in terms of media.

The hypodermic needle theory had been developed by Harold Lasswell at the beginning of the 20th century and considers the audience as a silent crowd that has no choice but to consume the media message and eventually be affected by it in a way, which was determined by the author of this message (Nwabueze, 2018). Following this logic, the public is almost powerless in front of the media power. He considered media as a "membrane" or "filter" which is using by the audience to consumes the content (Nwabueze, 2018).

Lasswell's conclusion was in a way contested and complimented also by Paul Lazarsfeld and his Limited Effects theory. He found out that media messages actually do not have an absolute and unconditional effect, even though they are able to influence the audience to a certain extent (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, Gaudet, 1994). This influence is framed by such phenomenon as selectivity of the audience and is conditioned by such situational variables such as age, history of the family, and political preferences. It's also important to mention, that this theory concerns short-term effects and proved that is still possible to organize a democratic society when the

huge mass media exist. This fact contributes to the idea about the activeness of the audience, its ability to influence reality. This point of view has been subsequently confirmed by William J. McGuire. He mentioned Lazerfeld's theory in his "The myth of massive media impact" and pointed out that "the pioneer communications researchers were franker in admitting how surprisingly small the demonstrated media effects were" (McGuire, 1986). But despite the fact that he had been trying to prove the inability of the media to influence the audience and discusses in detail why the existing theories about the significance of media effects (Commercial Advertising Effects, Mass Media Political Campaigning Impacts on Voting, Public service advertisements effectiveness) are not accurate, he admits that indirect effects are still visible and there is a certain type of connection between people and media.

Though the nature of these effects is not connected with media directly – the author speaks about the way, how people adapt their behaviour to media reality, believing that the media does have a significant effect on people around them: "*these purported indirect effects via structural transformations may derive more from the illusion of media impact on the receivers even if it has little effect in actuality. The introduction of new media may have a structural impact on society by creating new institutions or by enlarging options*" (McGuire, 1986).

Though both theories are considered to be archaic by some scientists, they prepared the ground for further development in this field: Peter Simonson, who studied the Lazarsfeld theories closely, claimed, "though the limited effects model was itself rather limited, it still flows through our histories and contemporary work" (Simonson, 2003).

But then another approach to the role of media emerged – McLuhan claimed that media is not a "transparent membrane" as Lasswell claimed, but something which produces spectrum – he uses the term "hypermediated" to characterize this effect. According to his idea, there are four main effects that media have: it "enhances," "reverses," "retrieves," and "obsolesces" (McLuhan, 1968). He also invented the term "global-village" which has been using afterward while describing the processes which are taking place during the internet era and digital media. He said about "maximal disagreement on all points" which the global village ensures and claimed that it will "stimulate more discontinuity and diversity and division than the old mechanical, standardized society" (The Playboy Interview, 1969). But not only McLuhan had spoken about the diverseness.

In the 70s researchers acknowledged that the role of interpretation of the reader is much bigger than it was supposed before. First, the uses and gratifications theory had been introduced by Katz and Blumler (Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch, 1974). This theory implies that the consumption of the content is happening because of its ability to satisfy people's needs and desires, and by studying of the people's needs it will be possible to make a conclusion about the reason, why the specific media attracts the audience (Papacharissi, 2009).

More modern researchers are still basing their studies on the Uses and Gratifications Theory and admit the truth of a statement that consuming a certain type of media implied satisfying specific needs or desires (García Jimenez, Lopez, 2012).

Another important theory is called Active Audience Theory and one (and the first) of the scholars who developed it is Stuart Hall. His theory is based on the concepts of encoding and decoding – the main processes, which are involved in the producing and consuming of the media messages (Hall, 1980). Hall claimed that individuals are not only affected by the news but affected it in an individual way – one message can be "decoded" differently by different people (or groups of people). Moreover, in Hall's article (Hall, 1980) it's pointed out that sometimes broadcasters (or other sources of information) encode the message in a way, which will be misinterpreted by the customers, or decoded differently afterward. In other words, this theory proves the fact that audiences with different historical and cultural backgrounds can interpret media messages in a different way, and hence – they can consume the news differently. In particular, he brings out three types of hypothetical decoding, according to the extent of a person's "intervention" into the initial meaning of the message. There are dominant, negotiated, and oppositional models. Moreover, this model implies that creators of the content try to direct the reader to the initial meaning of the message, that's how the concept of the preferred reading emerged.

The dominant model is the closest to the initial thought of the author of the message (and following this model would be the concept of the preferred reading) – the person interprets the code correctly, shares it. Negotiated type is reflecting the position "in the middle" – the person shares the dominant code in general terms, but some moments had been interpreted according to his own experience and idea of life. The last "stage" of this gradation is an oppositional model – the situation, when a person has a sharply different point of view, experience, and attitude to the discussed things – he demonstrates directly oppositional relation to the code, which contains in the message.

But later Hall's theory was modified by other researchers, and the role of the dominant reading was neglected. Some authors claimed that the main way of decoding is systematic rejection, or significant transformation of the dominant ideology (Fiske, 1987).

Since Hall's work had become a real sensation and changed people's understanding of the media influences, Hall's theory had been criticized many times. For example, Morley (1981) and Lewis (Lewis, 1983) pointed out that only three categories for describing the character of the decoding are few, taking into account the multi referentiality of the text. But in the later research Hall developed a more advanced articulation theory, which complements the encoding/decoding theory and gives an opportunity to use it in future scientific works. This theory made the link between the concepts of the preferred reading of the decoder and the dominant ideologies weaker. In other words, if the Encoding/decoding theory implies equivalence among a preferred reading of the decoder and the dominant ideology, the deeper analysis showed that it's not necessarily the case – decoder can produce contradictory reading and at the same time exist within the framework of the dominant ideology (Hall, 1986).

Later researchers followed Hall's path and defined two characteristics which the process of the news consumption obtains – the activeness of the media audience and the polysemic nature of any message (Evans, 1990). These two aspects are a logical conclusion from Hall's theory and help to understand the nature of the process of news consumption more closely and answer the question, is that possible, that belonging to an ethnic minority group can lead to a different way of news consumption.

Another theory that should be mentioned in order to understand why ethnic minorities perceive the majority media in a special way is called "Interpretive Communities" and was developed by Stanley Fish. In his essay "Interpreting the Variorum" (Fish, 1976) he claimed that from the reader's point of view the meaning of the text is created by the reader, according to his own experience. He was proving his idea using the discussions around John Milton's poems, which had been recently published at that time. He noticed that there many critics who interpreted the meaning of the verses in diametrically opposite ways, referring to my own experience and appealing to the experience of readers. Nasrullah Mambrol, who studied Fish's works noticed, that «the notion of intersubjectivity on which Fish's idea of "interpretive communities" rests goes back of course at least as far as Hegel; it is developed by neo-Hegelian philosophers, hermeneutic scholars, and sociologists, as well as thinkers such as Nietzsche and Bergson» (Mambrol, 2008). Following Fish's idea, facts are not naturally independent from

interpretations, which constitute them. Thus, their problem of misinterpretations is arising, or in other words, many readers – information consumers – understand the meaning of the text according to their experience, which is different. Moreover, Fish highlights that the huge role is played by the context of the message. This idea he developed in more detail in the essay "Is There a Text in this Class?". This concept of meaning construction through the experience is the core thesis of this work: the sentence itself gains its meaning when "it is no longer an object, a thing-in-itself, but an event, something that happens to, and with the participation of, the reader". But if the meaning is empirically constructed with people's experience, therefore those who have specific experience – different living conditions, cultural background, perhaps, even different national identity – will perceive and estimate information differently.

According to a more ontological approach, which is offered by Niklas Luhmann (Luhmann, 2004/1995), mass media construct its own reality which might not correspond to the "real" reality, but for sure have their own purposes – political or commercial: "what one is dealing with in each instance is a constructed reality, then this peculiar form of production fits particularly well with the notion of an external influence". He wrote about the media influence and mentioned the Gulf War as an example of the "media event". The thing is that there was certain censorship, and the image of the war was constructed by the media according to their understanding of how the war should look like. Media make up a picture in people's heads, but these pictures are not necessarily a copy of the reality – they just cannot be. Therefore, different media are constructing different realities for news consumers. In this sense, media have a certain power and can change people's perception of the world – a similar idea was described by social constructivists Berger and Luckmann (Luckmann, 1966) earlier. But this claim creates a certain inconsistency since the reason for the "misinterpretation" of the news messages seems not to be clear. But summarizing these ideas, it is possible to conclude that on the one hand, media can produce different realities for the audience, and people can interpret media messages differently on the other hand simultaneously. In other words, these two processes do not necessarily exclude each other.

But it would be incorrect to claim, that there is no purposeful influence on the audience at all. David Morley insisted (Morley, 1993) on the thesis that modern researchers concentrate too much on the idea about polysemy of media products and "forms of interpretive resistance are more widespread than subordination, or the reproduction of dominant meanings". In fact, the activeness of the audience doesn't imply its power (Ang, 1990). His thoughts were based on

the work when the author encourage future researchers to study in more detail the process of decoding and the abilities of audiences in this field and warned against "totalizing the audience's abilities" (Condit, 1989). In fact, media can create a reality, that might be different from the truth - the corresponding example is given by Umberto Eco in his novel "Number Null". He describes the message in media about the Mussolini death just as hyperreality, which was masterly constructed by newspapers and official state information. In fact, some medical documents contain certain inconsistencies and indicate the fact, that another person was killed (Eco, 2015). As Fatma Altınbaş Sarıgül, who studied the theories of the Umberto Eco, points out, media can actually influence the popular culture (therefore, they influence the identity in some way) and they do it according to people's needs and interests. "The printed media is only one of the basic two reasons in the formation of the popular culture..." (Sarıgül, 2016). That means that on the other hand media take into consideration a certain set of topics, which people want to read. That is why media have to find a balance between the interests of the audience and defending the benefits of their owners. These two main purposes reach by creating the produce fake "realities" which would meet these criteria. Moreover, Eco is sure, that media teaches people to accept and interpret the created media reality in a way, which they are supposed to.

Summarizing Eco's idea with the ideas of Hall and others, we can conclude, that news tends to affect people in a different way, according to their life experience, socio-cultural position, and the context of the message. The meaning of the text that was originally assigned by the author can be interpreted in different ways by the readers, thus the true meaning is born while the process of text consuming. Therefore, it can be assumed, basing on the previous ideas, that the message from the majority media can be interpreted by national minorities in differ from the supposed way. The extent of such "misinterpretation" can be different, according to Hall's typology.

Even though the audience is "active" and decodes the media messages in its own way, if media knows the preferences and tastes of the audience, it will create a reality for this certain type of target audience, combining it with soft promoting of the interests of the media owners (or other beneficiaries). As for the claim about the domination of critique manner of consuming the news, it is considered controversial and undocumented by researchers (Corner, 1991), (Morley, 1993). Things are more complicated and the model of "consuming pluralism" is quite problematic. Murdock (Murdock, 1989) compares this process with the economy – firms are

not in the same circumstances, since all of them gain different recourses. This scheme works with other discourses too - some of them have wider opportunities and are "backed by greater material resources" (Murdock, 1989), that means that they are more wide-spread and have larger access to advertising tools, that is why some of the media have more opportunities to influence and reach the target. Going back to Eco's statement about the media striving to act in the interests of investors or owners, the process, that was described by Murdock complements well the Eco's picture of the world.

Basing on the theories mentioned it is possible to formulate a general principle of the relations between the media and its audience.

Table 1. The summary of the authors, theories and their validity for this research

Author	Name of the concept/theory	Description	Relation to this thesis
Hall	Active Audience Theory	The method of Decoding had been used. Have following sub elements: - Dominant - Negotiated - Oppositional	Explains the differences between the way people interpret the media messages (non-Estonians could decode the messages from the Estonian and western cultural environment differ from the expected way).
Fish	Interpretive Communities	The message in media is interpreted by people according to their own experience	Ethnic minorities have different from the host society experience. But the more they integrated into the host society, the more their life experience is closer to the experience of representatives of the host society.

Katz and Blumler	Uses and gratification theory	Acknowledges that consuming the media do satisfy peoples different needs.	Needs of ethnic minorities is differ in some way from the representatives of the other society. In case these needs are too specific (representatives of the minorities are too different from the majorities) and can not be covered with the majority media, minorities consume the ethnic media.
Eco, Luhmann, and Luckmann	The concept of different realities, emerged due to the media	Acknowledges that media can create different realities for the different types of audience, which do not necessarily correspond the reality	For minorities and representatives of the host society the two “realities” was created by different media
Eco	The thesis about the audience shaping the media agenda	Acknowledges that audience and its interests are an important factors, which influence the content in the media.	Peoples’ preferences and interests indicate the features of people’s identity. And if they can shape the media agenda and influence the topics of the articles in media, then analysis of the content, which is popular among minorities, can help to make some assumptions about the features of their identity.
Lasswell, Nwabueze, Lazarsfeld	The hypodermic needle theory and Limited Effects theory	Studied the ability of the media to have any influence on the people	In case, media can influence the audience, the effect of different realities, which was mentioned earlier is possible.

source: author’s compilation

Taken together, these theories suggest the following logic of news consumption, basing on which the idea of the empirical part of this thesis will be built and the results of my analysis will be interpreted.

First of all, media has a certain impact on the audience and sometimes it can be strong (Nwabueze, 2018). The audience makes meaning of the media message according to its specific experience and needs, it is possible, that the initial meaning that had been "inferred" by the author and the way, audience interpreted it was different - the idea is based on Hall's works (1980, 1986, 1973).

People consume media content among other reasons because it satisfies their needs, that is why from the perspective of the editor, it makes sense to form the news agenda taking into account these needs of the audience (needs take the form of interests in this case). Thus, the media agenda is influenced not only by those who directly setting it or those who own the media but also by the needs and interests of the audience, since only in that way the media will be demanded and cost-effective - this claim bases on the Uses and gratification theory by Katz and Blumler (1974).

In the context of this research, the situation with the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia is considered. As it had been stated in the ECMI Report #2 "Minorities and Majorities in Estonia: Problems of Integration at the Threshold of the EU" (1999), Russian speaking population was isolated from the Estonian society and needed to be integrated in order to provide these people with a feel of belonging to a community. As the data of Integration Monitoring shows, the process of integration has been showing a positive trend during the last years, but nevertheless, the problem is not solved yet. That's why one of the needs which media in the Russian language satisfies is a need in belonging to the community. That is why the minority media's content has to be oriented to a specific interest of the minorities – for example, write more about the regions which are usually associated with the Russian-speaking population (for example, Ida-Virumaa, including the cities of Narva, Kohtla-Järve, Sillamäe) or to pay attention to the developments which are taking place in Russia or with the participation of Russians. All these assumptions will be checked during the data analysis of this thesis (chapter 4).

2.3 Integration theories and their connection with media consumption

In this chapter the theories which explain the possible connection or relationship between news consumption and integration are reviewed. It starts with the description of the main concepts which should be introduced first in order to further use them. Then the overview of the main theories which study the connection with media consumption and integration is done.

2.3.1 The review of the central concepts

In the previous chapter (2.2.) the basic media theories, which explained the mechanism of the information consumption was examined – they are the basis for the further analysis and help to understand the deeper reasons of the character of media integration within the audience. This thesis is studying the media consumption in a broader context of integration of the minorities. In this paragraph the integration related theories will be shortly reviewed.

There are many approaches to the term “integration”, and one of the closest to the subject of this research is formulated by Anja Fudiger and Sarah Spencer: “*the process by which people who are relatively new to a country (i.e. whose roots do not reach deeper than two or three generations) become part of society*” (Rudiger, Spencer, 2003). The important detail here is that this process is considered as bilateral for migrants and established ethnic minorities – in other words, it is not only the ethnic minorities who changes in order to be “more integrated”, but representatives of the host society are also adopting some of the cultural characteristics of minorities.

Therefore, we can create an operational definition of "integration": *by integration we mean the process of cultural, economic, political incorporation of the minorities into the host society, but with the keeping of some national features*. In other words, this is the process of “strengthening relationships within a social system, and of introducing new actors and groups into the system and its institutions” (Heckmann & Bosswick, 2006).

The second central concept of the thesis is "ethnic minorities". Some scholars suggest defining groups of people as "ethnic minorities" according to their country of birth or citizenship (Bisogno, 2005). But this simple scheme is not universal – such classification would be problematic in countries when representatives of the minorities have been living in the territory of the state for several generations. That is why such criteria as background (native or foreign) and connection with the country of origin had been added (Oudhof, 2007).

Thus, by the term "minorities" we mean the ethnic minority – the group of people who had been living in the territory of the foreign country for a long period, but they do have their national state (with some exceptions) – they might have the citizenship of this state of just cultural or connect themselves (culturally, historically, spiritually) with another country. But for different reasons they are not living there – it can be the wave of migration of the process of the border changes due to political factors. The existence of a kin state is a big factor, which influences the minorities and their identity: it implies having a large own-language media presence, especially in cases where the kin and host states do not actually maintain friendly relations, as in the case of Estonia and Russia.

Due to the historical circumstances, Russian speakers had been leaving in Estonia for decades, moreover, most of these people originally were not minorities, since Estonia was a part of the USSR. Geographically Estonia is situated between two different cultural entities – "Western" and "Orthodox" (Feldman, 2001) and Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia mostly share the "Orthodox" one. Now state policy in Estonia is aimed at integrating the minorities, but there is still a relatively big group of people who do not fully belong to the Estonian society. As Historian David Vsevirov pointed out, there are about 10% of Russian speakers in Estonia who are absolutely cut out from the Estonian society. Nevertheless, "even 10% of a population can be exploited for political purposes, with serious consequences for stability" (Dougherty, Kaljurand, 2015). This implied the need to integrate the Russian-speaking minorities.

Therefore, to have a clear understanding of what is meant by the integration of the ethnic minorities, it is necessary to define, what the ethnic identity is and is this concept applicable for Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia. As previous researchers claimed (Duvold, Berglund, 2014), minorities in Estonia have primarily Russian identity (New Baltic Barometer, 2004). Moreover, Baltic identification among minority groups decreased slightly from 1993 to 2004 (New Baltic Barometer, 1993, 1995, 1996, 2001, and 2004).

Since the term "identity" means a feeling of belonging to a certain group, national identity – feel of belonging to a certain nation, identifying yourself with the country of ethnos, basing on particular values, norms, and cultural features (Likhacheva, Makarov, 2014). Since the Russian-speaking minorities are the target group of this research, it is necessary to define this concept. By "Russian identity" therefore the obtaining of the values and cultural affiliation of the Russian Federation is meant. Some scientists (Likhacheva, Makarov & Makarova, 2015) highlight, that this particular type of national identity is built on the external threat (Gudkov,

2014) and called “negative identity”. He argues that Russian Federation is not able to provide “positive values”, which would be the same for all inhabitants of RF, that is why it is impossible to say that all the Russians naturally have one identity. But the governance “imposes” a certain narrative, according to which Russia is surrounded by enemies and hostile ideologies (Gudkov, 2014). But the Russian speakers who are living in Estonia have an identity, which is different from the Russian and Estonian one, because of their complicated location "between their historical roots and reality" (Cheskin, 2015).

The national identity issue and the danger of disintegrated society had been discussed in more detail by Mary C. Waters. "Perhaps this is an inherent danger in any pluralist society. The celebration of the fact that we all have heritages implies equality among those heritages. This would obscure the fact that the experiences of non-whites have been qualitatively and quantitatively different from those of whites" (Waters, 1990). The situation when there are different nations with different historical backgrounds and social experiences is typical not only for the USA. The case of Estonia also belongs to this paradigm. This is evidenced by the concept of the triadic nexus which was introduced by the Brubaker (1996). According to him, the society of the post-soviet European countries (including Estonia) tend to be disintegrated and the roots of this state are in the triadic relationships between the kin state, which is trying to build the monoethnic society, national minorities, who used to live there during the USSR period and the country of origin of the minorities – “external national homeland”. Moreover, the exclusion of Russian speaking minorities from many spheres of life have been highlighted by Kristina Kallas (Kallas, 2016).

As Merje Feldman (Feldman, 2001) claims in her article “European Integration and the Discourse of National Identity in Estonia”, Estonia is situated between the two big worlds - "Western" and "Orthodox" civilizations, but nevertheless, Estonian culture is belonging to the Western realm. She pursues a more geopolitical approach in the question of integration and speaks about the reconnection of Estonia with the West since they have one historical past and same cultural heritage – different from the "Orthodox" world. Concluding, it is obvious, that the impact of this "polarization" between the bearers of Western and Eastern cultures, their identities, and cultural orientations is visible in all spheres of social life, including the media.

Citizens of the USSR tended to identify themselves as soviet people, then Russians (Cheskin, 2015). That's why after the collapse of the USSR the question of national belonging became for these people a real challenge – some of them even identifies themselves as Ukrainians or

Belarusians. But in general, scholars usually speak about the Russian-speaking identity, instead of Russian identity (Cheskin, 2015). Thus, there are two distinctive features about the Russian speaking minorities in the Baltic region: on the one hand, the identity of the ethnic minorities fragmented and sharply different from the Russian Federation one, but on the other hand, they are tightly bonded with a linguistic identity, which, in turn, is connected with cultural aspect.

As Ammon Cheskin claims in his article about the Integration of Russian Speakers in the Baltic States, "*Russian-speaking identity in the Baltic states shows some signs of consolidating around cultural preferences, notably the Russian language. At the same time, political and territorial links with Russia seem to be weakening*" (Cheskin, 2015). It follows from the quote that the hardest for integration sphere is culture since it is inextricably linked to the mother tongue and historical heritage.

Pawel Boski mentioned another approach to the integration of the minorities, which had been described by Victoria Benet- Martinez in her research on populations of Chinese-Americans. The main idea is connected with the concept of biculturality: "*biculturality assumes that either identity can be activated with meaningful and affectively binding symbols; similarly, each of the two languages can be spoken with equal ease and competence (complete bilingualism)*" (Boski, 2008). Following this logic, integration is not necessarily meaning a rejection of the primary culture, but an important thing here is that these two identical sides are equally represented and switching between them is fast and doesn't require much effort. The case of Russian-speaking minorities has common features with the described phenomena – partly the traffic (the flow of the unique users at the web page) which the minority media have might refer to the group of people, who achieved a high degree of integration and consume both minority and majority media sources. By minority (ethnic) media the media which uses the language of the minorities and which focuses on their needs of is meant. It covers the life of the ethnic minorities in the country and news about their origin country. Therefore, majority (mainstream) media – the media which audience consists of the citizens of the country and the whole population of the country.

2.3.2 The theoretical foundation of the linkage between the media consumption and integration

There is a number of theories about the relationship between news consumption and integration. Studying the media of the minorities is highly important since this approach allows the scholars to study not only “split” – pronounced differences between two media types, but

between their respective target groups, which are basically the host society and minority groups (Hassane, 2015). The size of this "split" would show how successful the integration of ethnic minorities is.

Chun Chen (2014) in the research "Media Use and Integration. A Study on Students with Migration Backgrounds in Switzerland" claims with a reference to Jeffres (2000), that "*ethnic media use led to stronger ethnic identification across time, whereas mainstream media use was negatively related with ethnic identity. However, the effects in the reverse direction were not clear. Ethnic media consumption had a negative relation with assimilation but was positively related with separation*". She also points out that different authors assess the linkage between news consumption and the character of integration differently: Elias & Lemish (2008) – for "strongly related", D'Haenens & Peeters, Hwang & He and Trebbe – for mixed related and Erk & Neuwöhner for less or rarely related. But certain correlation is noticed by all of them.

A strong linkage between the news consumption and positive dynamic in the integration of the ethnic minorities was detected by Allerd Peeters and Leen d'Haenens (2005). They also highlighted, that integrated people (those, who consume majority media) do not necessarily stop consuming homeland media or media, which would maintain their connection with their ethnicity/nationality. They with a high probability would use more time on media overall, to cover both media types. But in the case of the media which is considered (Delfi.ee), the situation is slightly different. RusDelfi includes both types of content – about Russian developments and developments in Estonian society. And readers of RusDefli have an ability to combine their needs to feel themselves as a part of Estonian society and maintain the connection with Russia. But less integrated individuals prefer only the content about their native culture and country (Peeters and d'Haenens, 2005), that is why the balance between different groups of the content (according to their regional thematic – news about Russia, news about Europe, news about Estonia) indicates the degree of integration within the society.

Another dimension, when the role of media in integration is high is child-rearing. Previous studies showed that media plays a visible role in the identity-formation processes of children with an immigrant background (Bonfadelli, Bucher, Riga, 2007). This process is highly important since the young generation integrates easier and faster in general and using media factor to reach even better results would be rational in this case. From this point of view, media have a big influence on the integration of ethnic minorities.

Elias & Lemish (2008) pointed out that media can influence two types of integration: internal – within the community, if we are speaking about the ethnic media, and external – within the whole society, if we are speaking about the host media. In other words, ethnic minorities' media strengthen the identity within the small group, which may hinder the integration into the host society. As for the majority media, it also influences the minorities, but this influence is limited by the existence of ethnic media.

From this perspective, this research will show a certain contradiction between these two processes, but at the same time, the observed situation is slightly different. There is no pronounced struggle of these two types of media for minorities' attention since these media belong to one holding.

But some of the researchers highlight, that for an editor it is important to take into account the interests and ideological components of the minorities' picture of life. Such an approach is not easy to apply in the case of majority media, that's why the content in ethnic and ordinary media might be different (Souley Hassane, 2015).

The previous research (Integration Monitoring of the Estonian Society 2017) in the same sphere showed that the ranking order of media channels by importance for Estonians and representatives of other nationalities is different. More precisely, Estonians consider the Estonian-language media more important than Russian-language ones. And vice versa, Russians assess the local Russian-language media as more important ones. Since one of the claims in Integration Monitoring of the Estonian Society (2017) was that younger generations are moving away from traditional media and prefer social media, we have to take into account that popular internet media uses Facebook as a platform when it possibly will be able to cover those who prefer to get news from the social media, that's why big news portals are still considered to be a prime news source.

But these differences cause a certain issue. Different type of news distribution in Russian media (and in a certain extent – in Russian-language Estonian media) and Estonian media leads to emerging of "two realities" for Russian speakers and Estonians, which means different perception of reality and different involvement into all spheres of life (including politics, cultural and social life). This situation may seem to be strange since the major local Russian-language newspapers and news portals are part of bigger Estonian-language corporations, but in fact, they have different audiences. And taking into account the tendency of the media to

assort the content for different target groups and thus create "different realities" for these groups (had been described earlier by Niklas Luhmann and Umberto Eco), it can be assumed, that this process take place in the case of Estonian media space – Russian language and Estonian language media have different agenda setting, which has a different target audience.

Such assumption is partly proved by the Estonian researcher Peeter Vihalemm (Vihalemm, 2006). He studied the media usage in Estonia from 1991 to 2006 and among his conclusions is the thesis that "the majority of Estonian Russians are oriented to Russian media". Since people are interested in content from Russia, the Estonian media in the Russian language have no choice but meet the needs of the audience and cover the news of Russia.

Summarizing the ideas and claims of different authors (Souley Hassane, 2015; Peeters and d'Haenens, 2005; Chun Chen, 2014, Cheskin, 2015), news consumption and integration of the ethnic minorities are related to each other. The character of the news consumption is "indicating" the degree of integration (Peeters and d'Haenens, 2005). Consuming the ethnic media leads to stronger ethnic identification, while the consumption of the ordinary (mainstream) media indicates a weakening of ethnic identity among minorities (Chun Chen, 2014; Jeffres 2000).

2.3.3 What affects media integration?

Here the main factors which might affect the media integration (integration of the minorities from the media perspective) are considered and will be used during the explanation of the results of the empirical part.

One of the features of the media consumption of the Russian-speaking minorities is consuming the Russian media content. Why people, who live most of their lives in the territory of the European country can possibly be affected by the Russian narratives and tend to consume Russian sources more (not Russian-language-sources)? The mechanism of the hostile media perceptions has been described by Yariv Tsfati and Jonathan Cohen (2012) and they claimed that if media message obviously contradicts with the beliefs and sympathies of the audience, it will consider this message as not true and important – that is how hostile media phenomenon (HMP) occurs, which allows people to avoid dissonance. Taking into account that first time after the establishing independence young Russian-speaking people (most of them didn't speak Estonian well) had to go to Russia to study journalism, as European Centre for Minority Issues

points out, which means that these experts are more used to work with the different agenda and use the approach, different from the European one (ECMI Report #2, 1999).

As some researchers claimed (Tsfati, Cohen, 2012), trying to explain this effect, people, who can be defined as a partisan audience, with a high probability will react in a defensive manner to the news about the topic, they are actively involved in. "This sort of processing makes the coverage seem more negative" (Tsfati, Cohen, 2012) – claimed authors. One of the conclusions that had been proved in their article is that such concepts as trust, hostility, and influence are connected and people who are involved in the discussion on the media topic or highly interested in it tend to be more defensive according to their point of view, which would provoke their disenchantment and frustration with these media. Another reason is that the impact of media from the Russian side is still visible.

Important research on news consumption within the Russian-speaking minorities was done by Estonian researchers Triin Vihalemm and Jānis Juzefovičs. They highlight that the Russian-speaking audience in Estonia and Latvia is different from people who live in Russia since it is affected by multiple news sources and tends to be more critical towards the political news (Vihalemm, Juzefovičs, 2020). But nevertheless, the impact of Kremlin propaganda is still visible. It happens even despite the increasing mistrust of the media among media audience which who are open to new media formats and can easily change their preferences because of the accessible variety of media. "The ensemble of seemingly diverse sources of news and points of reference tend to support the maintenance of the hegemonic geopolitical storylines – for the most part, those offered by the Kremlin. Thus, despite the self-reported 'analytical work', audience members tend to subscribe to the dominant narratives" (Vihalemm, Juzefovičs, 2020). That is why the "split" between the Estonian's and Russian speaker's news picture of the world exists at least because of this influence and a wider range of sources that can possibly have an impact at Russian speaking population.

Previous research had also shown a link between the level of education, the level of Estonian language, and availability of the work from the one side and exposure to the influence of Russian media from another side. People who are less successful financially and socially more often "look at the world through a Russian lens, authors of this research claim" (Dougherty, Kaljurand, 2025).

Another effect, that had been noticed by Fleras (Fleras, 2006) is that people with the national identity which is positively pictured in the media tend to be more loyal towards these media. But in the case when a certain ethnic group is mentioned from the negative side, such an approach will provoke rejection and negative attitude of the representatives of the minorities. But this approach is not fully applied for the case of this research, since the local Russian speakers do not tend to consume Estonian language media often. Nevertheless, it might be a reason why they prefer reading the Russian language Estonian media – their representatives are mentioned there more often and from a positive point of view. This assumption has been proved or refuted during the descriptive analysis of the Delfi media content.

3. Research methodology

This thesis argues that news consumption (the concept and principle of the news consumption were described by Hall in his Encoding/decoding model) and informational requests within the ethnic majorities and ethnic minorities are different and the extent of this difference shows the “split”, major differences between identities of the Estonians and Russian speaking minorities. The causing link between news consumption and the needs of people, which are forming news requests was described by Katz and Blumler in Uses and gratification theory (Katz and Blumler, 1974). Thus, the mentioned “gap” between the identities can be explained by different realities, that had been created for different groups of people via media (was described by Eco, 2015; Luhmann, 2004/1995; Luckmann, 1966).

To analyze the character of the media consumption in Estonia in two these groups of people and assess how this character had changed for the period from 2016 to 2020 years, this thesis builds its inquiry on comparative and descriptive analysis, using statistical tools and data. It will be done using the data of one of the biggest online media channels in Estonia, Delfi, which also has a version in the Russian language, RusDelfi.

The main approach which is used in this research is quantitative, but the analytical framework is based on the media theories which were described in more detail in chapter 2 – such as Encoding/Decoding Hall's theory, Uses and gratification theory by Katz and Blumler, Eco's idea about the ability of media to create their own realities for the audience.

Thus, the research idea of this thesis is formulated as studying the integration process through the prism of media consumption (in this context, by media consumption the process of reading news in the digital media is meant). The two research questions, therefore, are formulated as:

RQ1: what are the features of the media consumption within the Estonians and Russian ethnic minorities?

RQ2: how media consumption reflects the integration of ethnic minorities in Estonia?

From there, the two formulated hypotheses of this thesis are:

H1: Russian-speaking news consumers (by news consumers the readers of Delfi RUS are meant) are more interested in content about Russian developments (content, which contains information about developments, which took place in Russia or actions of famous Russians) and less interested in reading news about Estonian developments.

But taking into account recent data from Integration monitoring (IM) (2020), the process of minorities integration is actively going on and brings some results. Thus, we can assume, that the interests of the Russian speakers made a certain shift from the Russian agenda to the European or Estonian one. To test this hypothesis the statistical comparative and descriptive analysis and content analysis will be done.

H2: there are more news in Delfi RUS about the Russian developments (including social, political, and cultural life sphere) and there is more news in Delfi EE about the Estonian developments.

3.1 Operationalization

To test the hypothesis, the shares of news about developments in Russia, Estonia, and other countries on Russian and Estonian versions of Delfi will be analysed. If the hypothesis turn out correct, it will be possible to conclude, that Delfi RUS is comparable to the minority media, thus the situation reminds a “moving in a circle”: the media produces more news about Russian developments, which contribute to the fact that minorities read this type of news more than majority do. And this process works the other way around.

In particular, we considered the popularity of the specific topics (using the data about the number of views) on Russian and Estonian versions of Delfi by using thematic categories. The content has been divided according to topics into the basic groups by spheres of life: entertaining content, health, sport, woman-oriented content, environment, and socio-political developments, and each of these groups has been sorted to Estonian, Russian or European context of the article. All these big groups have been the same for Estonian and Russian-language versions of the news portal. In other words, all the articles have been divided into groups by topic (sphere of life this article belongs to) and geographical belongs (by this term the answer to the question "which country this article is mainly about" in meant). The cases which are not fitted into these frames should not be taken into consideration, since they have not given us any information about the changing of the cultural orientation of the minorities.

3.2 Description of the data

The data which have been used in this research is provided by the IT department of the "Ekspress meedia" holding. The initial dataset is not public and has been given for scientific purposes to the author of the thesis in February 2021. It consists of the following columns:

- "title" – the title of the article;
- "publish_date" – the date of publishing of the article. In this research only articles published in 2016, 2017, and 2020 are used;
- "lang" – binary variable, which defines the language of the article (Estonian or Russian);
- "primary_channel_name" – variable, which defines a segment of the holding in which the article was published;
- "primary_category_name" – sub-section of "primary_channel_name";
- "readcount_total" - the number of unique readers of the article.

Table 2. Number of channels, categories and articles in the initial dataset

Year	Language	Number of primary channels	Number of primary categories	Number of articles
2016	Russian	6	61	28 996
	Estonian	44	392	97 245
2017	Russian	7	69	26 950
	Estonian	44	395	90 157
2020	Russian	8	108	27 804
	Estonian	38	373	71 924

The total dataset consists of 343 076 articles. General information about the number of channels, categories is presented in Table 1. The number of primary channels in the Estonian segment is significantly bigger in comparison to the Russian segment. This can be explained by the fact that in the observed dataset are presented also paper versions of media and some media sources which can be considered as independent media owned by "Ekspress meedia" holding. Since the main goal of this thesis is a comparison of internet-based versions of RusDelfi and Delfi only, paper-based channels and channels which belong to independent of Delfi media sources were removed from the dataset.

Additionally, articles with less than 100 views were detected. Such a low number of views can be explained by the technical issues – the daily editor had not put the article on the main page, which gives the main traffic. Since the share of these articles is insignificantly small (<1%) these articles were not taken into account for further analysis.

The final dataset contains information about 262 444 articles. It means 23.5% of articles from the initial dataset were removed. The distribution of the number of channels, categories, and articles by years and language is presented in Table 2.

Table 3 Number of channels, categories and articles in the dataset after data cleaning

Year	Language	Number of primary channels	Number of primary categories	Final number of articles
2016	Russian	6	61	28 983
	Estonian	19	281	66 068
2017	Russian	7	69	26 548
	Estonian	21	297	62 117
2020	Russian	8	108	27 720
	Estonian	17	236	49 094

The number of categories, which are presented at the news portal, significantly differs in the Estonian and Russian segment of Delfi and is changing over time. The initial cleavage by categories, presented in the dataset, is not accurate in a sense of thematic stratification, since some of the categories duplicate each other and have to be united. Moreover, there are two categories, called "News of Estonia" and "News from abroad" in the dataset, which contain

different types of content, which is not differentiated by the topics. Hence, the structure of the dataset should be modified and some manipulations with data should be done before the analysis of the stated above hypothesis.

Firstly, all primary categories have to be united according to their topic into the thematic groups. By the end of this process following groups have been created for both Russian and Estonian segments of Delfi: tourism, sport, social life, science and technologies, politics, health, entertainment, economics, cultural life, crime, family and home. A detailed description of these groups is presented below.

Table 4. The detail description of the concerned groups

<i>Tourism</i>	News about traveling, sights and trips of people.
<i>Sport</i>	Content about sport events, famous sportsmen.
<i>Cultural life</i>	Content about cultural events, personal life of celebrities or famous people from different areas (basically, the “yellow” type of content), content about show business.
<i>Science</i>	Cognitive content with a bias towards science.
<i>Politics</i>	News about political developments, decisions of politicians and changes in political agenda.
<i>Health</i>	The news about the public health and the ways how to maintain the personal wellbeing.
<i>Entertainment</i>	Humour, lightweight news from social networks.
<i>Economics</i>	Content about finances, business, spending money and news about national of world economics.
<i>Social life</i>	Content about life in society, interaction of people with the state apparatus and each other.
<i>Crime</i>	News about crime and emergencies.
<i>Family</i>	Content about householding, raising the children and building of the romantic relationships.

Table 5. Initial distribution of articles by thematical groups in Russian segment of Delfi

Topic	Total
Tourism	4970
Sport	5919

Social life	263
Science	517
Politics	111
Health	1819
Entertainment	3916
Economics	9541
Cultural life	10134
Crime	5664
Family	3953
Checked manually	34528
Removed	2149

An example of the distribution of articles by thematical groups in the Russian segment of Delfi is presented in Table 3. As it is possible to see, the number of articles on such important topics like "Politics", "Social life" is too small. It can be explained by the fact that most of the articles with named topics belong to categories "News of Estonia", "News of Russia" and "News from abroad". These categories have to be considered apart from the rest since they describe the geopolitical affiliation of the news. In Table 3 they are marked as "Must be checked". It was decided to determine the list of the most frequent words for every topic (based on the subset of articles that have already had thematical group) and the group remained articles using these key words. For example, articles with the titles containing "COVID-19" belong with a high probability to the thematical group "Health" and titles that mention names of famous politicians are from the thematical group "Politics". After that correctness of the distribution of these articles by thematical groups was manually checked.

Also, it is possible to see that 2149 articles were removed from the dataset. Here belong articles with product-placement, advertisements, weather forecast and other types of content which cannot be classified as informational news. The final distribution of articles of Russian and Estonian versions of Delfi by thematical groups and years is presented in Appendix 2.

Secondly, a brief content analysis was done for all the thematic groups in order to identify the belonging of these news to the European, Estonian, Russian, or other world context. The described process is necessary for both Russian and Estonian segments of the dataset.

This last step is necessary for concluding the geographical interests of the audience – if Russian speakers prefer reading news, which have been got from the Russian sources or European ones? And are Estonians interested in the same things as Russian speakers? It is also necessary to define what type of agenda is considered, local or international. Thus, using this approach, it has been possible to define the level of interest in the national and foreign developments among minorities and the host society.

The news sampling has been done within three-time intervals: 2016, 2017, and 2020 years, which would allow us to draw a trend or, at least, mark some changes that had happened in the society within the observed period. According to the last data of Integration Monitoring (2020), the character of media consumption has changed in dramatic ways. Among these changes, there is a rapid increase of the reading interest in Delfi EE and other local Russian news portals among local Russians. All calculations have been done in RStudio.

3.3 The framework of the analysis of the data

First, the important index, which should be considered is the degree of difference in the news consumption by the considered thematic categories (without dividing at the sub-categories according to the geopolitical affiliation) within the Russian-speaking minorities and the host society.

Table 6. Median number of views by years in RusDelfi and Delfi EE

Year	Segment	Median number of views
2016	Delfi RUS	1847
	Delfi EE	2578
2017	Delfi RUS	1216
	Delfi EE	2325
2020	Delfi RUS	2604
	Delfi EE	4599

The median number of views in Delfi EE is significantly bigger in comparison to Delfi RUS. This can be explained by fact that the number of unique visitors of Estonian Delfi is bigger than Delfi RUS. Also, it was detected that the number of active readers was changing over time. Therefore, it is not necessary to compare the number of viewers in absolute terms, and hence, the relative numbers are preferable. I assume that the median number of views of articles on Delfi RUS in a certain year and Estonian Delfi in the same year are z_1 and z_2 respectively.

We need to divide the number of views of specific articles on RusDelfi by z_1 and the number of views of specific articles on Estonian Delfi by z_2 . Let's call received ratios as "coefficient of popularity". For example, assume that some articles on Delfi RUS in 2020 gained 10 000 views. In this case, its coefficient of popularity is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Coefficient of popularity} = \frac{\text{Number of views}}{\text{Median number of views on RusDelfi in 2020}} = \frac{10\,000}{2604} = 3.84.$$

The coefficient of popularity shows how many times any specific article published on Delfi EE or Delfi EE is more/less popular than the median article on a specific portal in a specific year. For example, if the coefficient of popularity is equal to 2, it means that this article has two times more views than the median article on this portal and if the article's coefficient of popularity is 0.5, it means that the article has two times fewer views than the median article on the specific portal.

In this case, the median value was preferred to average because of the distribution of the number of views in the initial dataset – it contains some articles with an extremely big number of views, which would affect the objectivity of the results.

In this way, the median coefficient of popularity for all thematic groups in the Russian and Estonian segments of the dataset will be calculated. Thematic groups with the most similar coefficient of popularity for Delfi RUS and Delfi EE will be defined. When comparison will be done the categories with the most similar indexes of popularity for Delfi RUS and Delfi EE and the Estonian and Russian geographical markers have been defined (by geographical marker the thematical belonging to the context of Estonia, Russia, European Union, or other countries is meant). These spheres are the most likely to make a «transition» of the readers from one subcategory to another. In other words, those, who in principle are interested in sport or cultural events are more likely to "open for themselves" new side of their interest and pay attention to this sphere in the more European context, for example.

Second, the comparative analysis of the popularity of the different geographical markers within each category for all years was done. On the one hand, it allowed to draw the trends in all spheres of people's interests and answer the question about the changing of people's preferences from the consuming of the minority content to the national or European one. On the other hand, the emerging of interest in the minorities' life among the host society can be detected, using this method. The data is represented in bar charts.

The same calculations were done for both Delfi EE and Delfi RUS.

The **third part** contains a content analysis of all headlines in Delfi RUS and Delfi EE to define how many times the names of famous Russian, Estonian and European political leaders had been mentioned, how popular these articles are, and what is the trend.

The **fourth part** of the research is based on the content analysis of the most popular news (with the highest number of views) in the Russian version of the news portal. The first 50 most popular articles will be considered in the 2016 and 2020 years, and content analysis will be done to define the core categories – the main semantic components, which are constituted the message of the article. To define main codes the method of coding has been used, following the path that has been described by J. Saldana (Saldana, 2013). The second step will be to arrange codes in groups – categorize them and calculate the average number of views per category. Thus, the most popular semantic components have been defined for the Russian-speaking audience for 2016 and 2020 years, and conclusions about the changes within the interests of the ethnic minorities and moving them towards the Estonian and European direction will be defined.

3.4 Representativeness of the data

Taking into account the fact that Delfi is one of the highest news portals in Estonia and have a relatively huge audience (total page views during the last year exceeds 40 000 000 weekly, total unique browsers during the last year – more than 1 000 000 weekly), we can assume the representativeness of the Delfi's audience. As for the Delfi RUS – the Russian version of the news portal, the total unique visitors for the 2019 year is from 150 000 to 250 000 weekly (there are 383,118 people in Estonia who name Russian their mother tongue, based on the data of the Statistics Department of Estonia in 2011¹). But to make stronger conclusions about representativeness we have to investigate the audience in more detail, considering regional distribution and age/sex composition of the audience.

To have a more concrete image of the audience of the Delfi EE the overview of the unique viewers for 2017, 2020 years had been done (the results are presented in Appendix 1).

¹ There are 383,118 people in Estonia who name Russian their mother tongue, based on the data of the Statistics Department of Estonia in 2011 according to the Statistikaamet. RL0431: rahvastik emakeele ja soo järgi, 2011

It should be taken into account, that some of the Estonian news had been translated into Russian and published in Delfi RUS at the same time with Estonian Delfi and the main sources (for example, the Estonian police) are the same for both. That's why the main incidents that have been taken place in Estonia are covered at the same time and in the same manner of presenting the facts.

4. Data analysis and the results

4.1 The comparison of Russian and Estonian interests by the thematic groups

The data presented on the plots below shows the changing of the popularity of the articles in different thematic groups in 2016, 2017, and 2020 years. As it is possible to notice, the general trends in most groups are similar.

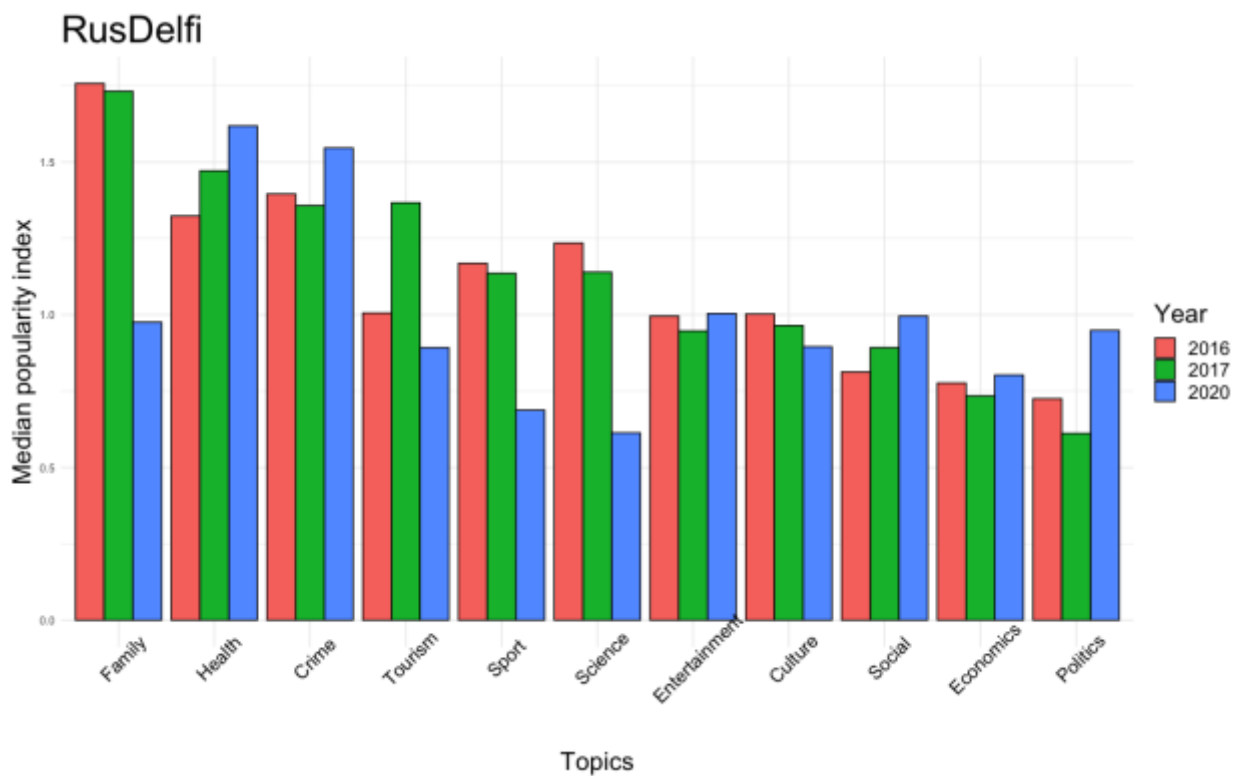


Figure 1. The changing of the popularity of the articles in different thematic groups in Delfi RUS

The most significant changes in Delfi RUS occurred within the "Family", "Science" and "Sport" thematic groups. The first case is connected with the technical problems of the page, where the articles on this thematic are publishing – the traffic became extremely small last year because of the technical features of the portal. The decrease in the popularity of "Science" is also noticeable in the Estonian segment, it might be

explained by the quality of the content which is publishing (since there is a big share of content which is translated from the one version of the portal to another, and this trend is also negative in Estonian Delfi). The reduction of the popularity of the "Sport" might be explained by the emerging of the coronavirus and cancelling of many sports events.

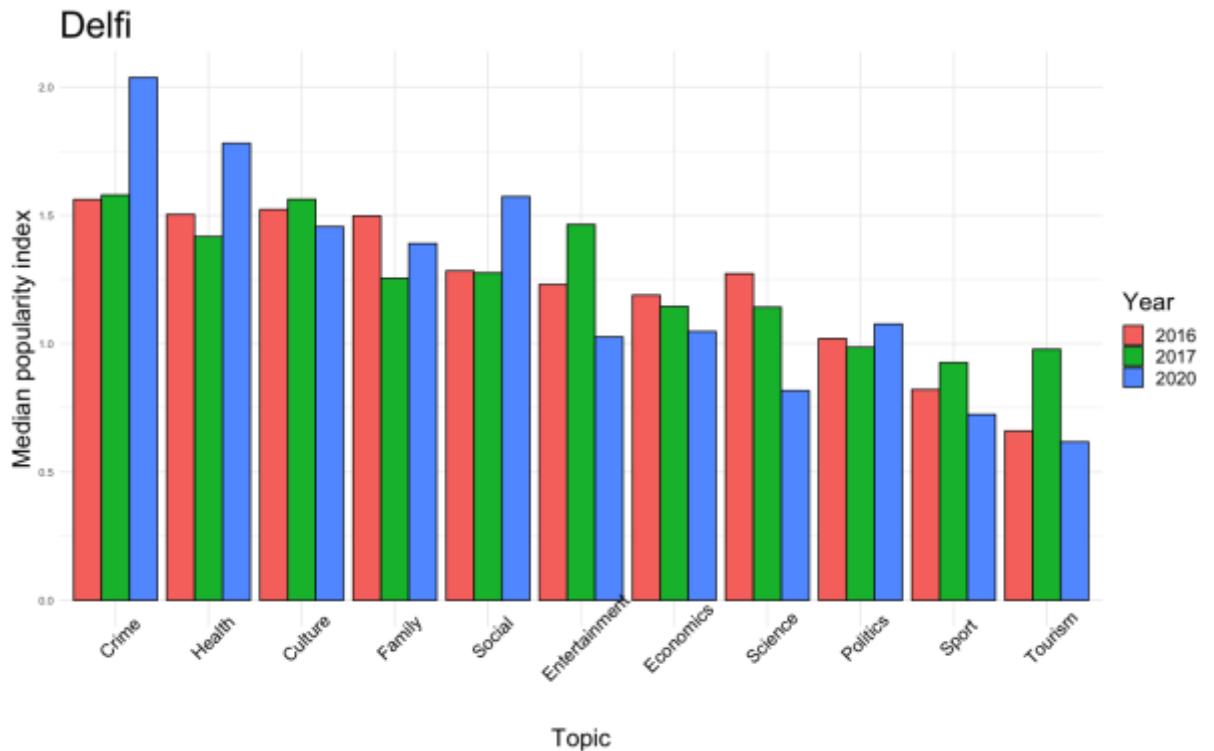


Figure 2. The changing of the popularity of the articles in different thematic groups in Delfi EE

The most drastic changes in Delfi EE occurred within the "Crime", "Health", "Science", "Social life" thematic groups. The increasing of the "Crime" topic might partly be connected with the increase of the newsbreaks (including more effective cooperation with police) since the popularity of this topic is also increased in the RusDelfi. The popularity of the "Health" can be explained by the spread of coronavirus.

In conclusion, the popularity of following thematic groups increased in 2020 in both versions of Delfi EE – "Crime", "Social life", "Health", "Politics". These spheres are interesting for Russian and Estonian audiences and theoretically, they are capable to provide a "transition" from one geographical marker to another. If the audience of the Russian speaking minorities in principle is interested in these topics and the Estonian version of Delfi is working on them to cover the needs of Estonian readers and provide them with quality content, Russian speakers with a high probability will be interested in consuming of the translations of Estonian content too.

4.2 The popularity of the different geographical markers

In this subchapter, the comparative analysis of the popularity of the different geopolitical markers for Delfi RUS in all available years had been done.

Before the detailed description and interpretation of the results, an important point has to be made. News with Estonian geographical marker are translated from Estonian to Russian by journalists and published in Delfi RUS in a large number of cases. The process of "selecting" the news, that should be translated, is based on the popularity of the article. In case the text is not actively read and has been removed from the main page of the portal quickly by the daily editor, such texts are not translated by journalists and published in Delfi RUS. But if the article is really popular and big amount of people are reading it, the journalists translate this text into Russian, trying to do it fast. As it is noticeable, Delfi RUS publishes only the "selected" content, which was extremely popular within Estonians. As for the news about Russia, journalists do not have access to the information about the popularity of the news in the Russian news portals, that is why the content about Russia which is published in Delfi RUS was not specially selected for its popularity, thus the concentration of the news which are "triggering" is lower in case of content about Russia. This is a reason, why the content with the Estonian geographical marker is relatively high. Taking into account this point, the actual popularity of the Estonian news should be slightly lower in Delfi RUS (it would be lower if journalists were not selective and published all the news which had occurred in Delfi EE).

Another factor that might affect the results is the tendency which had been described by Loit and Harro-Loit (Loit, Harro-Loit 2012) - the tendency in digital media in Estonia to decrease the quality of the publishing material. The reason is that the format of digital media doesn't imply long-term work on articles. And since the production of quality news demands more effort and time, their percentage of the total amount of materials is decreasing. The same claim was done in 2013 "the news flow via digital media, especially online news, has increased the total news output. However, this has not increased the quality and, indeed, may have contributed to a deterioration" (Loit, Siibak, Dragomir, Thompson, 2013). But at the same time, the quality content is borrowed in foreign recourses (such as BBC or Deutsche Welle). That is why one of the possible reasons of the people's interest in the foreign agenda might be just higher quality of the articles in such topics as politics or economics.

4.2.1 Thematic group: Crime

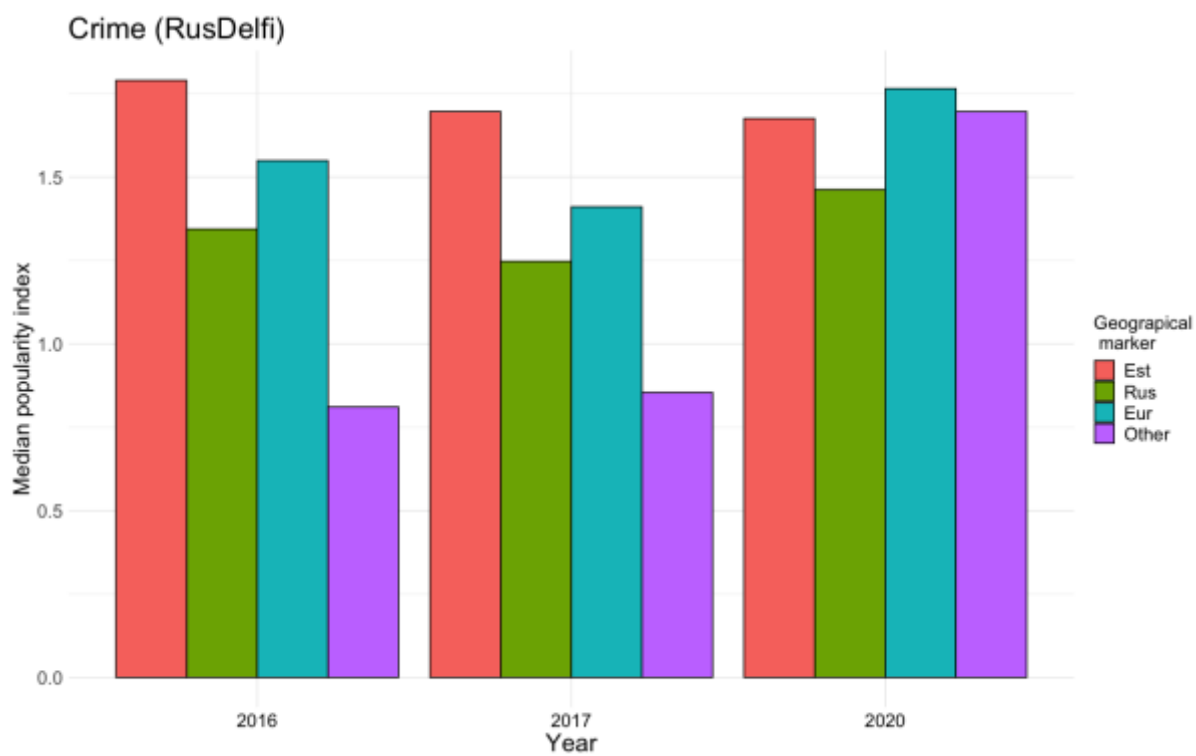


Figure 3. The median popularity of the geographical markers for the "Crime" thematic group

The sphere of crime is specific because it directly applies to the well-being of the people, their ability to feel safe in everyday life. That is why the closer and the more serious crime or accident, the more people are interested in it. Thus, the Estonian news about crime and accidents are the most popular in 2016 and 2017 and remained the relatively same level with "Europe" and "Other countries" markers in 2020. The increasing of the popularity of the European and other world's markers is a tendency which is noticeable in all the spheres, that is why the explanation might be the increased quality of the work with the international sources and establishing the contacts with professional world media (such as BBC, Deutsche Welle (DW)). Moreover, the increase of popularity of the European markers also points at the emerging of the features of the "European identity" – people identify themselves as a part of the European community, that is why the developments in Europe, connected with crime and accidents have a certain relation to them either.

As a conclusion, thematical group "Crime" stay popular within considered time period in the Russian version of Delfi. Median article about crime in Estonia is more than 1.5 times popular

in comparison to median article in Delfi RUS for all three years. The index of popularity of news about Russia is fluctuating between 1.24 and 1.48 in observed years. Also, in 2020 the popularity of news about criminal accidents in Europe and other world significantly increased in comparison to 2017 (1.4 and 2.1 times respectively).

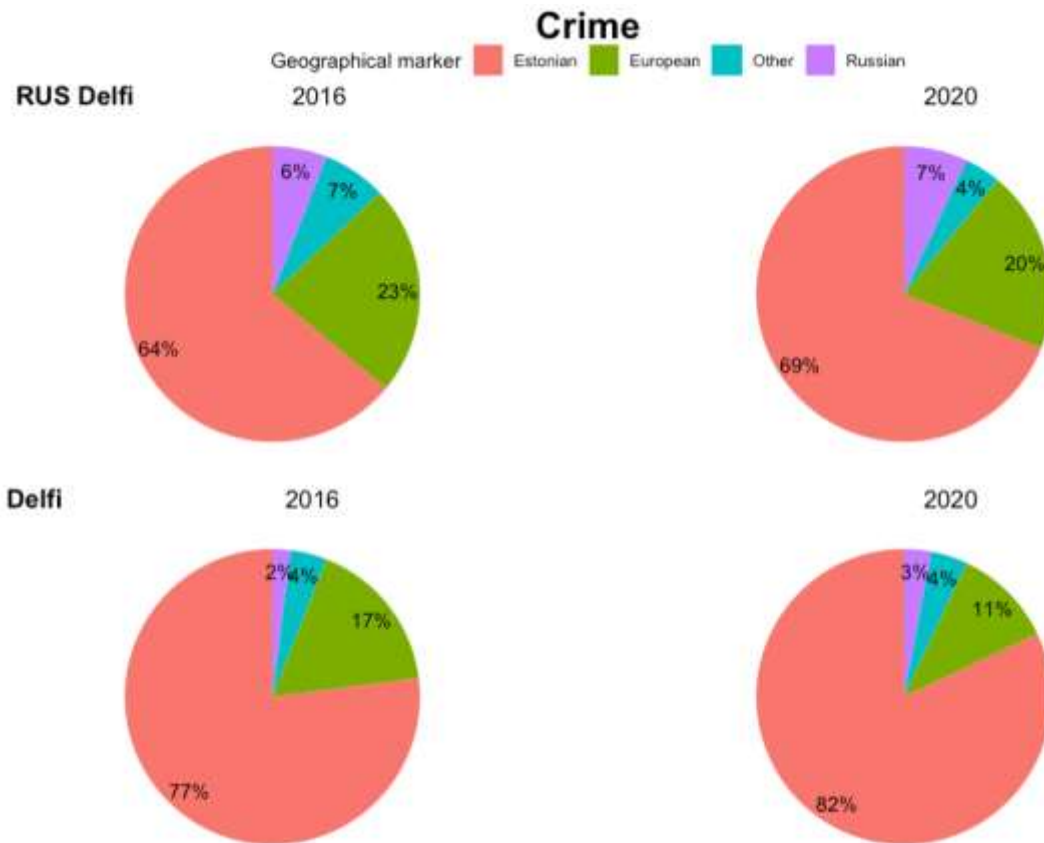


Figure 4. The distribution of the amount of content by geographical markers for the thematic group "Crime"

The biggest share of news in the thematical group "Crime" is about Estonian development for both Estonian and Russian versions of Delfi for 2016 as well as for 2020. In Delfi RUS the share of Russian development is 2-3 times bigger in comparison to Estonian Delfi (6-7% and 2-3% respectively). Also, it is possible to see that the share of news about crime in the European Union decreased in both Estonian and Russian Delfi in 2020 in comparison to 2016. But the share of these news is still higher in the case of Delfi RUS.

4.2.2 Thematic group: Health

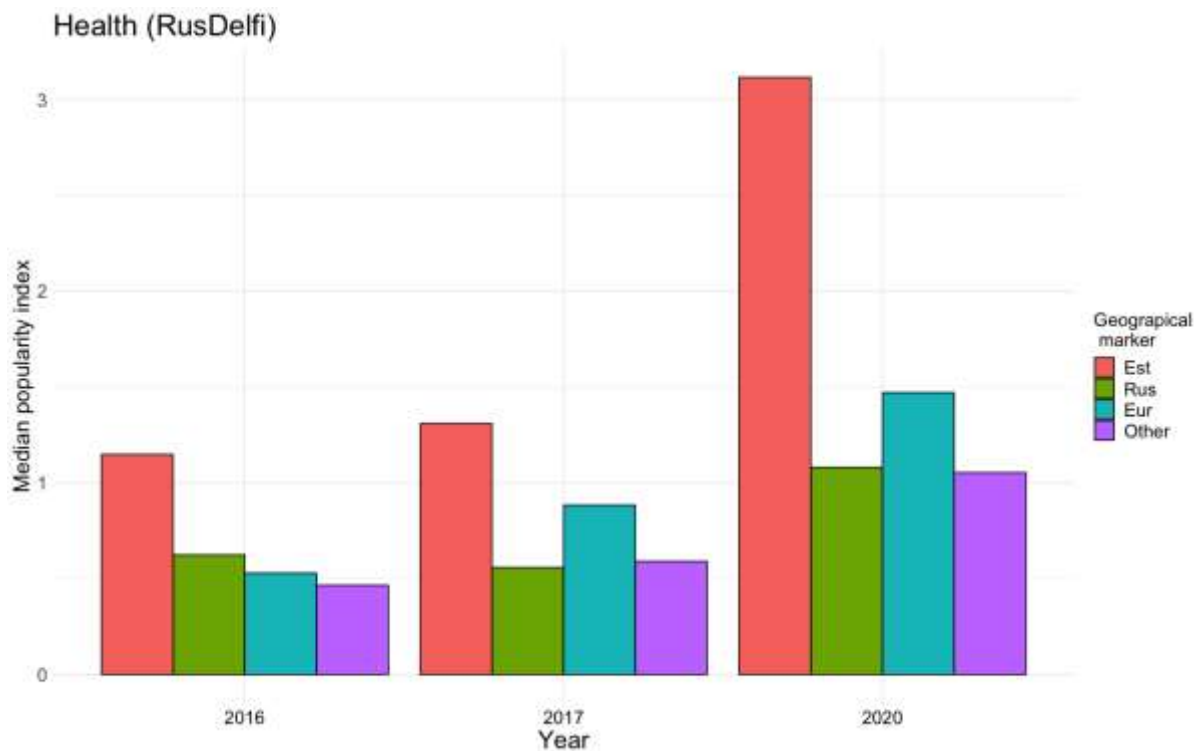


Figure 5. The median popularity of the geographical markers for the thematic group “Health”

The sphere of health is also the topic which is connected with the people's feelings of safeness – alarming reports of diseases nearby interest people more than similar messages, but from distant countries of regions. The character of distribution is relatively the same for all years except the case of the Estonian marker for 2020 – the interest in the news from the Estonian sphere of health became extremely popular because of the pandemic and its spread in Estonia. In comparison to 2017 the index of popularity of news about Estonia in this thematical groups increased 2.4 times in 2020. So, median article about healthcare in Estonia has 3.1 times more views in comparison to median article on Delfi RUS in 2020. The index of popularity of news about healthcare in Europe increased either (from 0.8 in 2017 to 1.5 in 2020) what shows the more closeness to the European community in case of topics which are directly connected with people's wellbeing and safeness. Integration in these spheres is faster since the belongingness to the Estonian and European world of those who constantly lives in a certain territory is obvious.

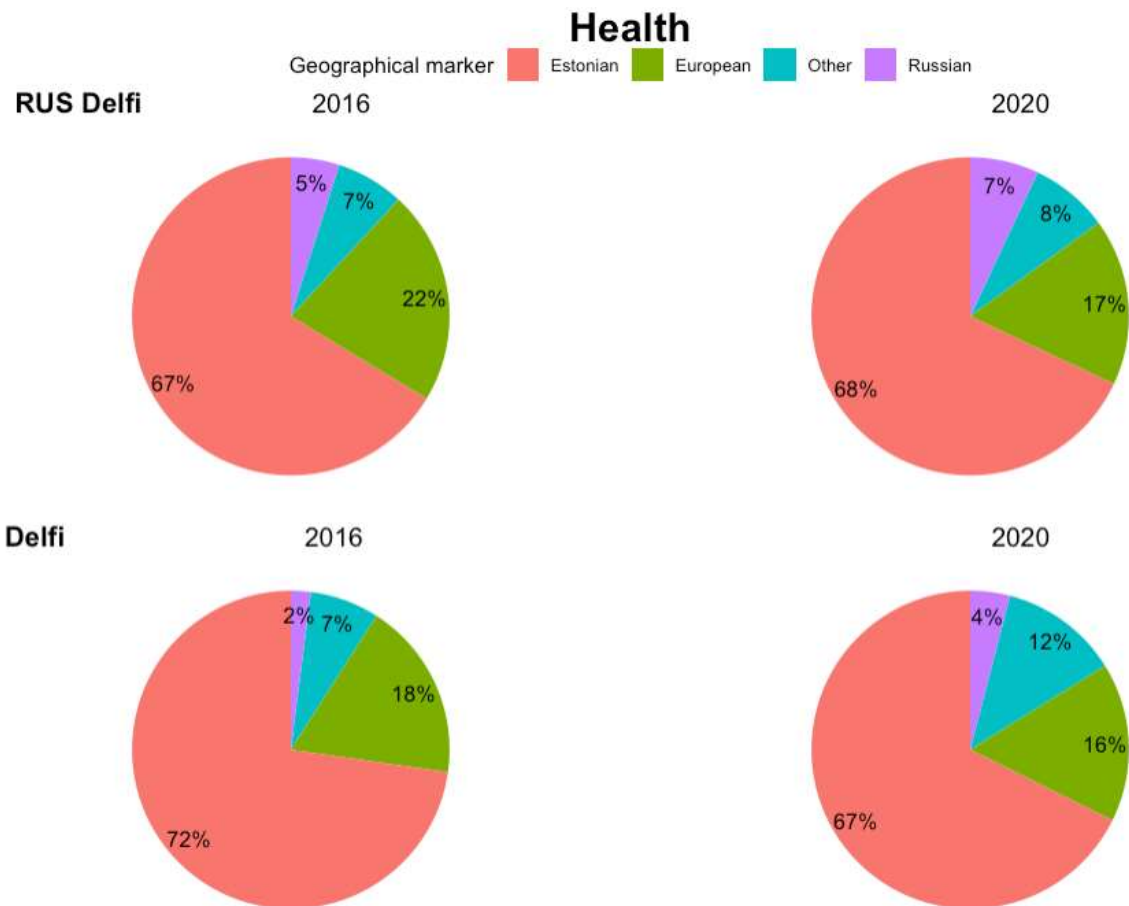


Figure 6. The distribution of the amount of content by geographical markers for the thematic group “Health”

The general character of the distribution of the content by geographical markers has remained the same in Delfi and Delfi RUS. The changes which happened in 2020 are not significant and could be indicative of the news flow about coronavirus from China (that is why the share of "Other countries" sector increased). But despite the fact that the number of publications about Europe slightly decreased, the actual popularity of this geographical marker increased visibly – that shows that the abundance of certain content will not necessarily increase its popularity with the audience in case, such trends are not clearly pronounced. But in general, the data shows that the biggest group of geographical markers in Delfi RUS (news about Estonia) is the most popular one within the minorities.

4.2.3 Thematic group: Cultural life

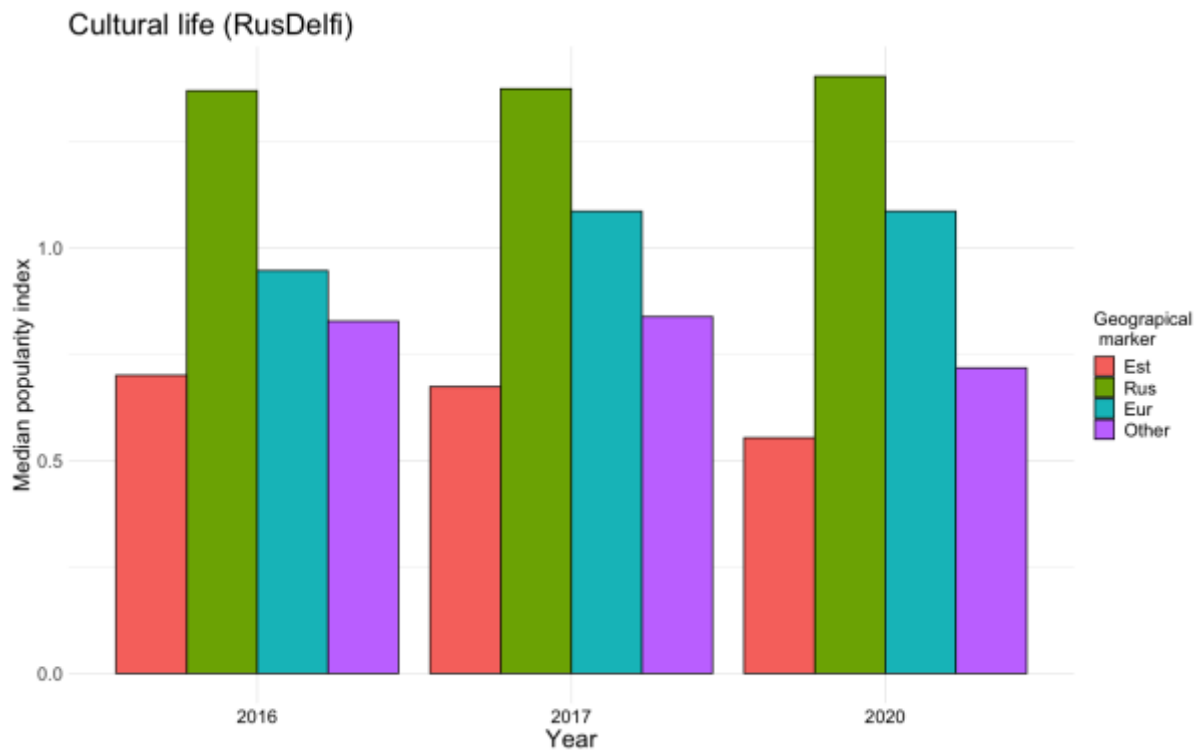


Figure 7. The median popularity of the geographical markers for the thematic group “Cultural life”

The distribution of the popularity of geographical markers within the “Cultural life” category. The character of distribution is the same in all the cases with a slight fluctuation. As it is visible from the graph, the less popular geographical marker in this thematic group is "Estonian" – it is even slightly decreasing, while the "European" marker increases its popularity. But the most stable and the most popular variable is content about Russian developments in the concerned sphere. For example, in 2020 the articles about Russian developments are 1.5 times more popular than articles about European developments (which are on the second place by popularity in all three years). The news about cultural life in Estonia are most unpopular. In 2020 the popularity index for these news is more than 3.5 times less in comparison to news about Russia. Moreover, the gap between the popularity of Russian and Estonian news slightly increased. That means, that Russian-speaking minorities culturally associate themselves with the Russian cultural environment. The explanation of such phenomena is that there is not much content on this topic in Estonia with the involvement of the representatives of Russian speaking minorities.

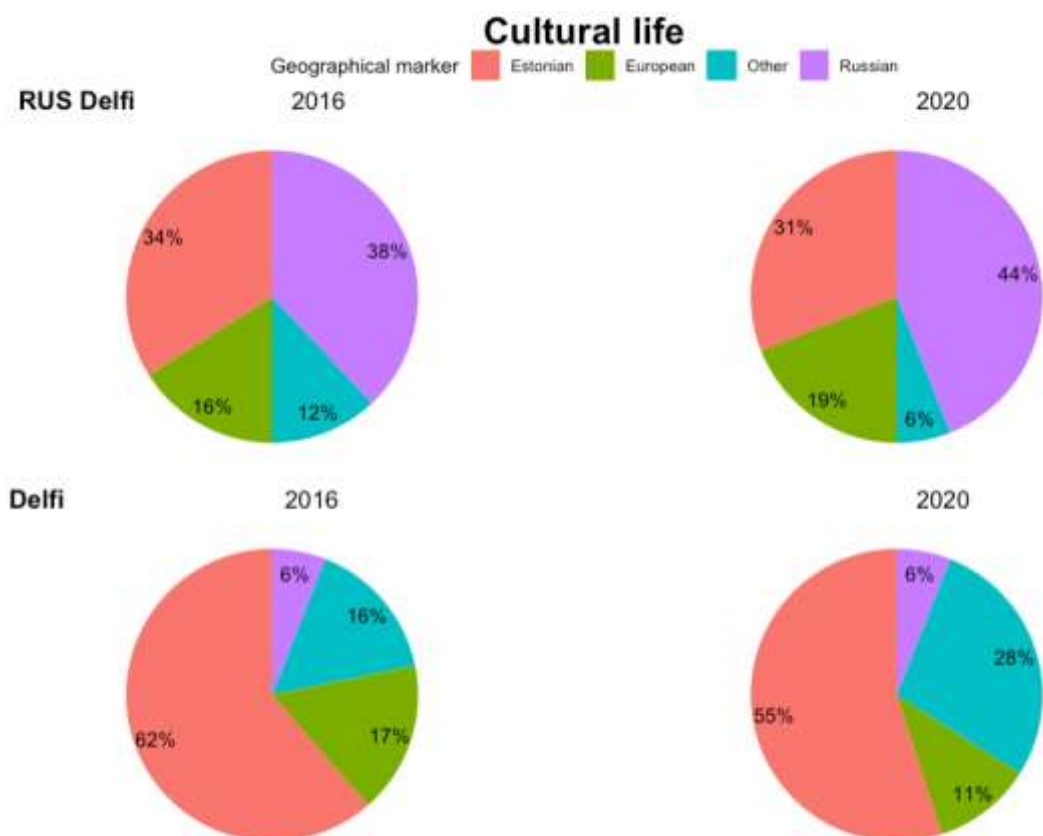


Figure 8. The distribution of the amount of content by geographical markers for the thematic group “Cultural life”

The chart shows that the distribution of the content is sharply different in Russian and Estonian versions of Delfi. The biggest share of news in this thematical group in Delfi RUS is about Russian development and it is increasing within time (38% in 2016 and 44% in 2020). On the other hand, in the Estonian version of Delfi, the news about Estonian development is published most frequently and the share of cultural news from Russia is significantly smaller (6% for both years). Also, it is possible to see that in Estonian Delfi there are much more published news from other world in comparison to Delfi RUS.

4.2.4. Thematic group: Tourism

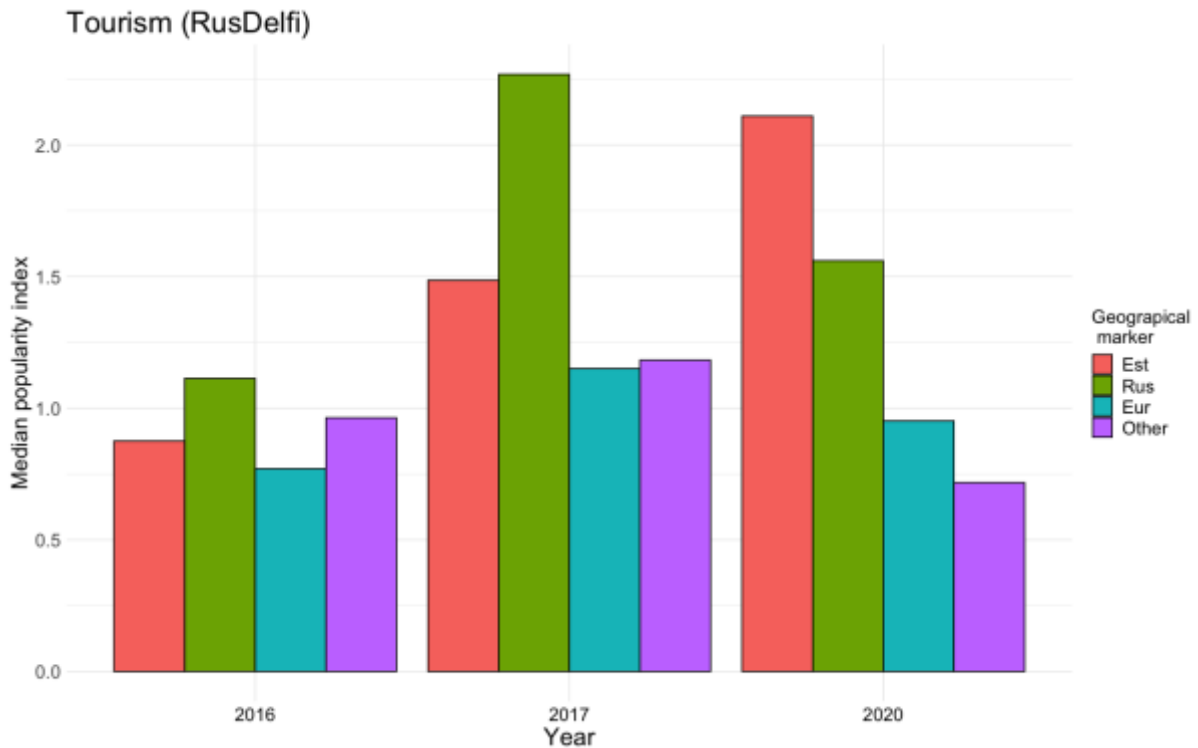


Figure 9. The median popularity of the geographical markers for the thematic group "Tourism"

The popularity of the "Tourism" thematic group had increased in 2017 and partly decreased in 2020. But the character of distribution had changed – in 2020 the tourism in Estonia became the most popular item, while it always used to be tourism in Russia. Index of popularity of tourism in Russia decreased 1.45 times in 2020. The popularity of European and other countries' geographical markers had decreased either. The reason is with a high probability connected with coronavirus and difficulty in international travel even within the EU. This situation contributes to the development of tourism within Estonia and motivates people to get to know more about the place they live. So, the popularity of tourism in Estonia increased 1.47 times in period 2017-2020.

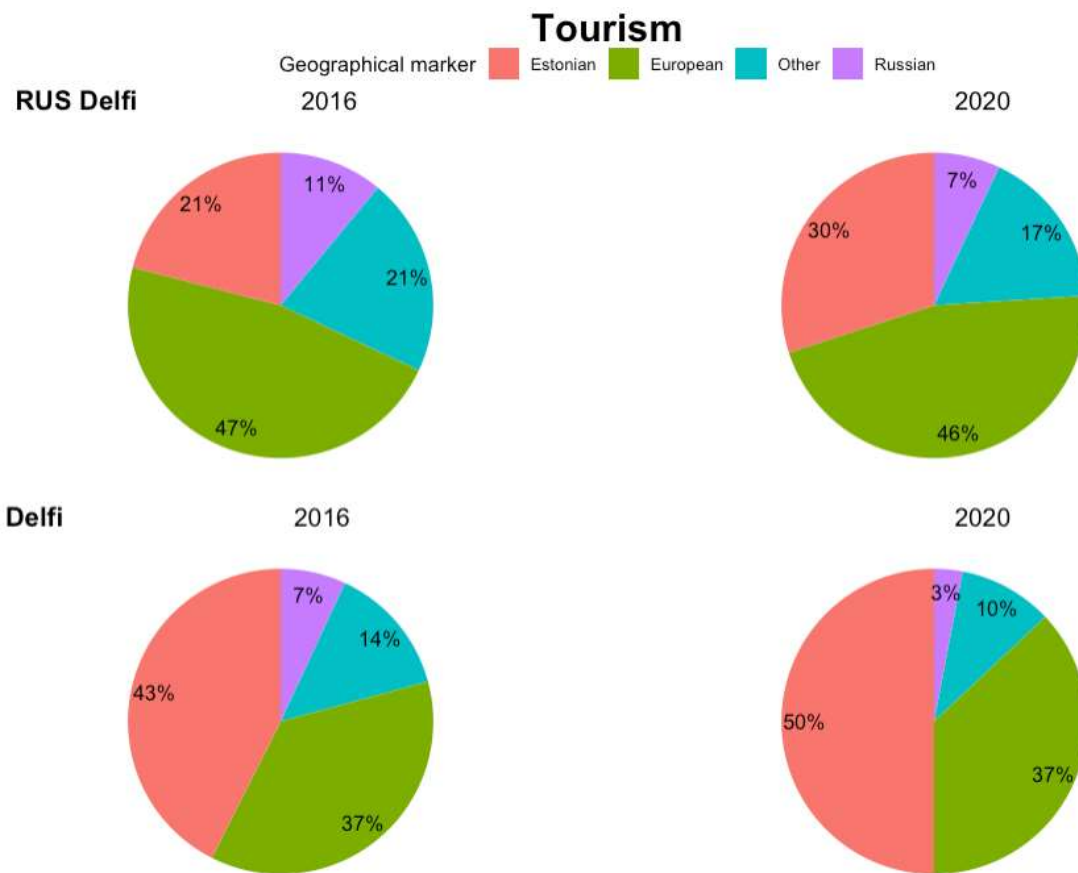


Figure 10. The distribution of the amount of content by geographical markers for the thematic group "Tourism"

The share of Estonian geographical marker visibly increased in the 2020 year in both Delfi EE and Delfi RUS. Moreover, the share of articles about Russia and other countries decreased. Such distribution confirms the claims that have been done earlier – the situation with coronavirus changed the interests of the audience (minorities – in particular) and "switched" them into the more national direction.

4.2.5 Thematic group: Politics

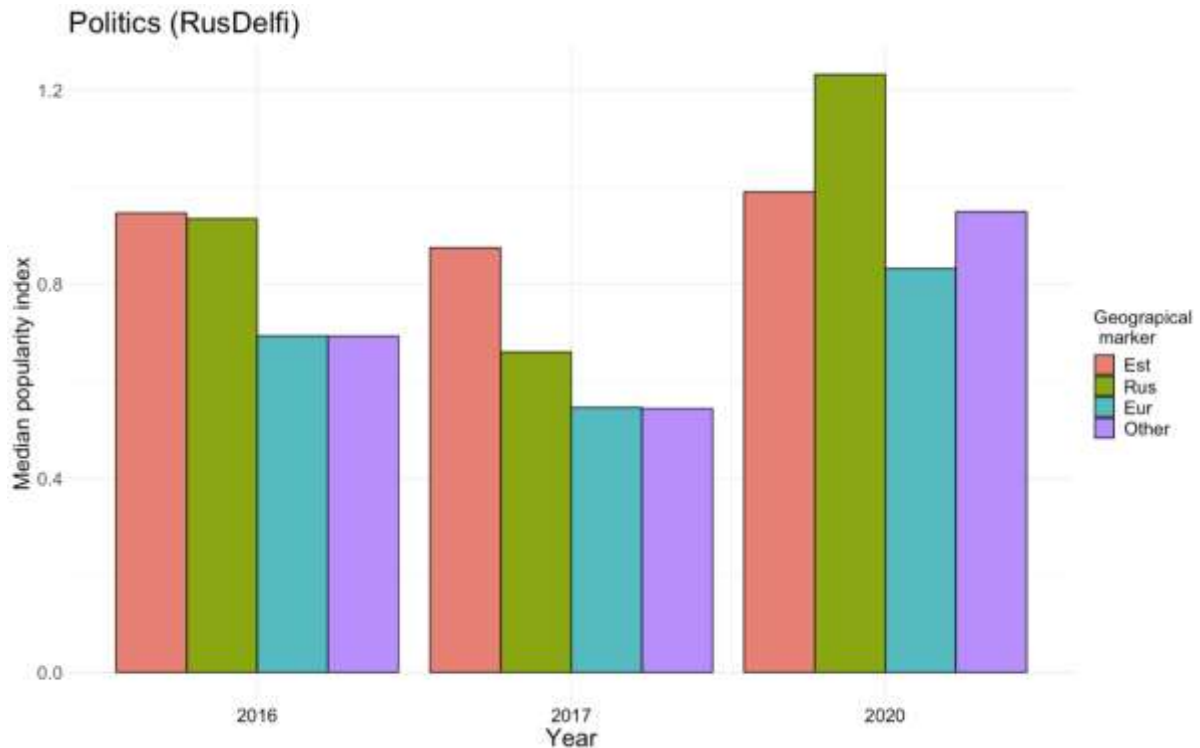


Figure 11. The median popularity of the geographical markers for the thematic group "Politics"

The median popularity of all geographical markers increased in 2020 in comparison to the previous years. The character of distribution was the same in 2016 and 2017 (taken into account that the general popularity of the thematic group decreased in that year). But the situation changed in 2020 year when the popularity of the news about Russia drastically increased (approximately 2 times in comparison to 2017) – that might be connected with the poisoning of the Russian oppositionist Alexey Navalny. A significant increase of the "Other world" marker (1.8 times) is possibly connected with the elections and protests in Belarus and elections of the president of the USA. All these events were widely covered by the press and resonated with the audience. Popularity of the news about Estonian political development is relatively stable and stays in the interval from 0.85 to 0.98. So, in 2020 Estonian news are 1.26 times less popular in comparison to Russian news about politics in Delfi Rus. But in 2017 the situation was opposite and news about Estonian development were approximately 1.4 times more popular than Russian's ones.

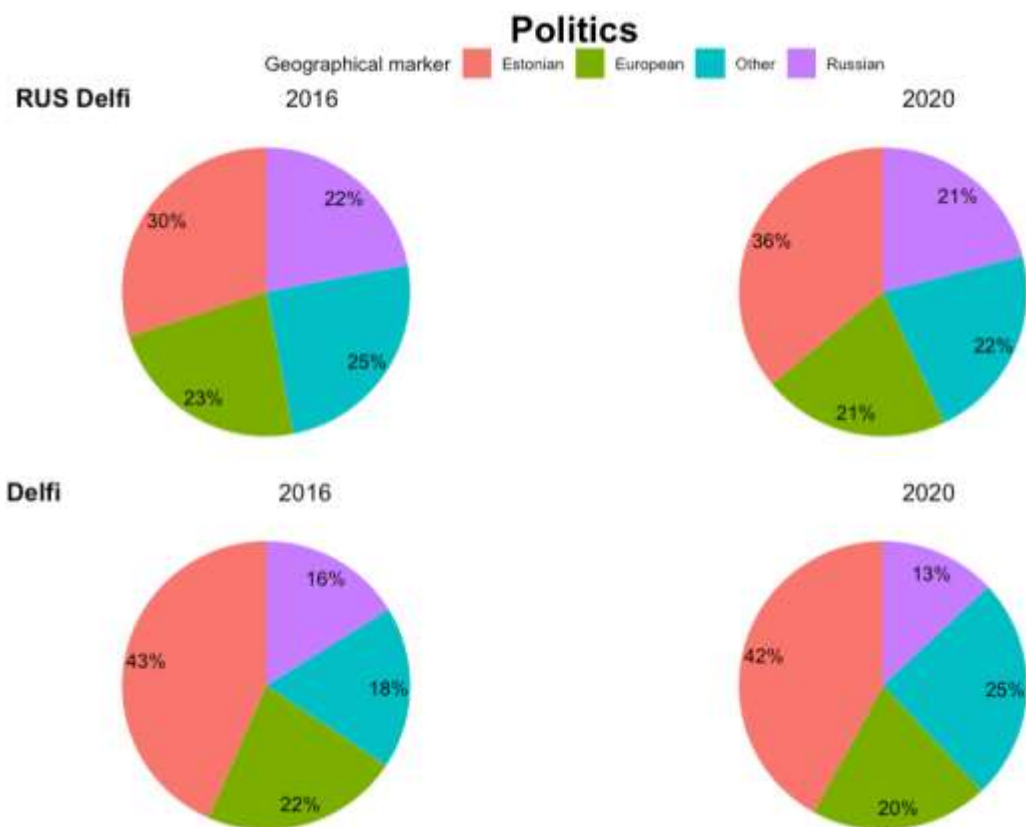


Figure 12. The distribution of the amount of content by geographical markers for the thematic group “Politics”

The general character of the distribution by years is the same for Delfi RUS and Delfi EE. Taking into account that the popularity of the Russian geographical marker had grown in 2020 in Delfi EE and the number of published news hadn't increased, the reason might be that the importance of the political articles had grown.

In comparison with Delfi EE, the content in Delfi RUS is slightly different – the share of news about Estonia is smaller, but the share of news about Russia is slightly bigger.

4.2.6 Thematic group: Economics

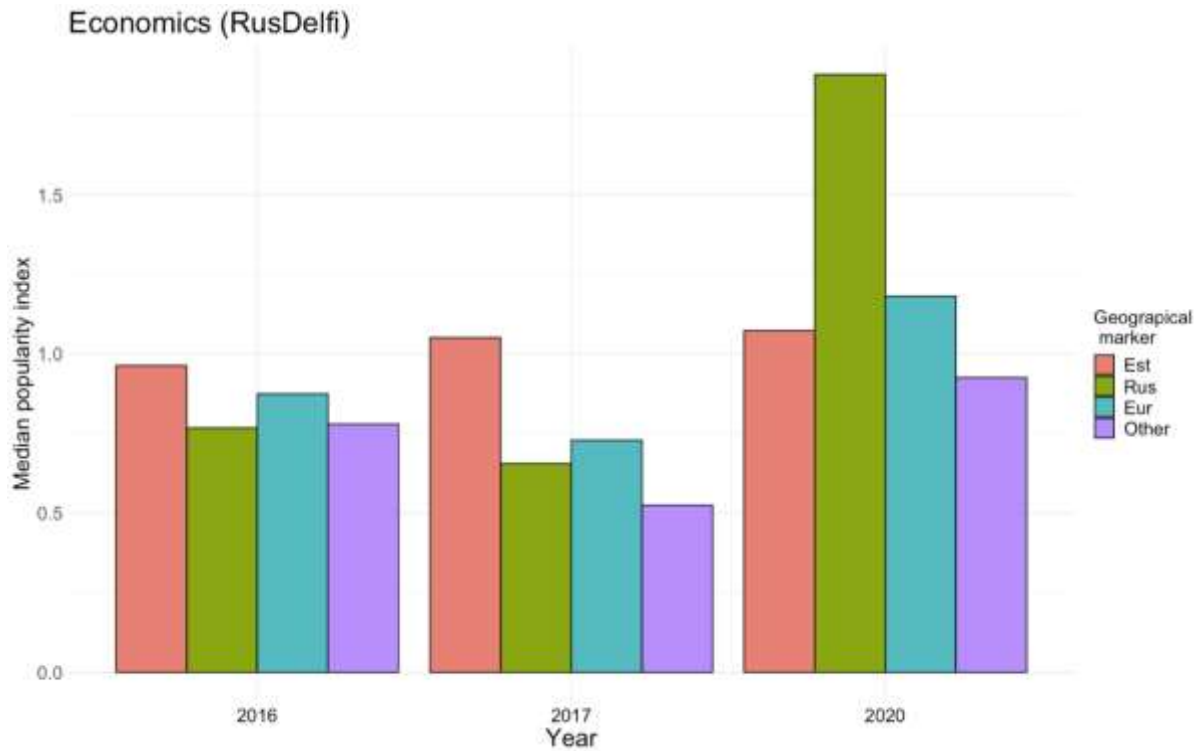


Figure 13. The median popularity of the geographical markers for the thematic group “Economics”

This graph shows the relatively same character of distribution in 2016 and 2017, but in 2020 the popularity of the Russian geographical marker grew visibly. The median popularity of economic news about Russian development increased 2.8 times in comparison to 2017. On the second place are news about the EU which are 1.6 times less popular. Index of popularity of news about Estonian development insignificantly increased in observed period from 0.96 in 2016 up to 1.05 in 2020.

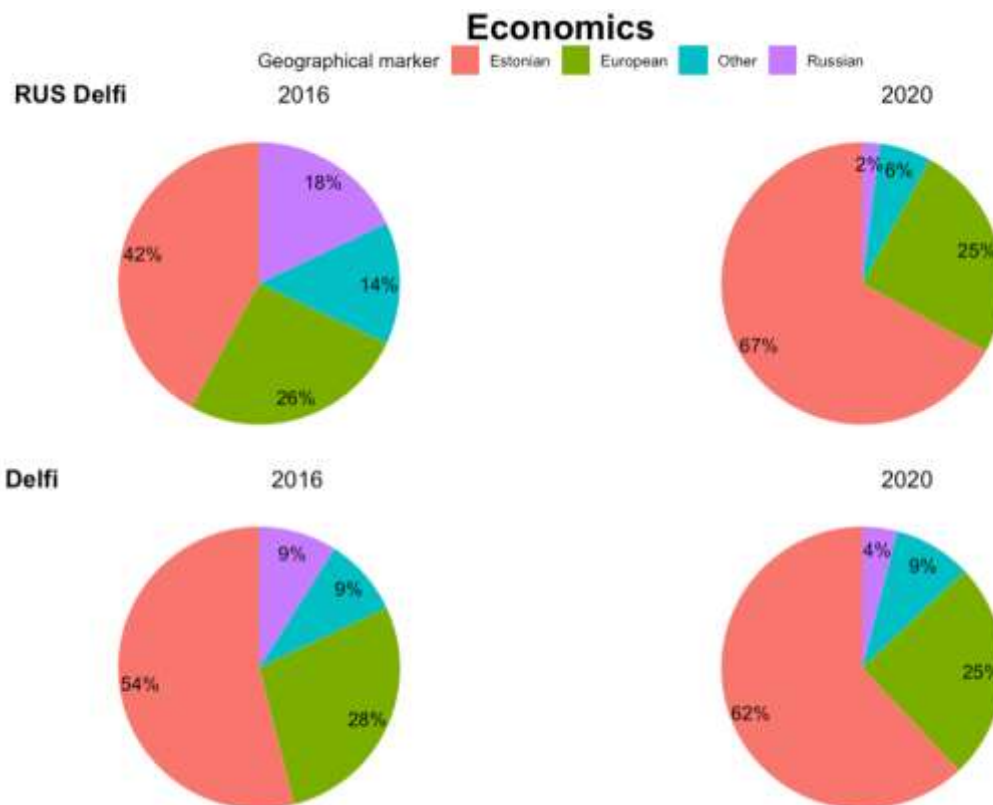


Figure 14. The distribution of the amount of content by geographical markers for the thematic group “Economics”

he situation with news about economics is the same with politics. The share of the content about Russian developments in Delfi RUS has not grown, but the popularity of this geographical marker increased, that it might be assumed, that the importance and quality of the news increased in this thematic group and geographical marker.

As for the balance between shares of the content types in Delfi EE and Delfi RUS, the amount of news about Estonian increased in Delfi RUS and Delfi EE. Moreover, the amount of news about Russia decreased in both versions on the news portal.

4.2.7 Thematic group: Sport

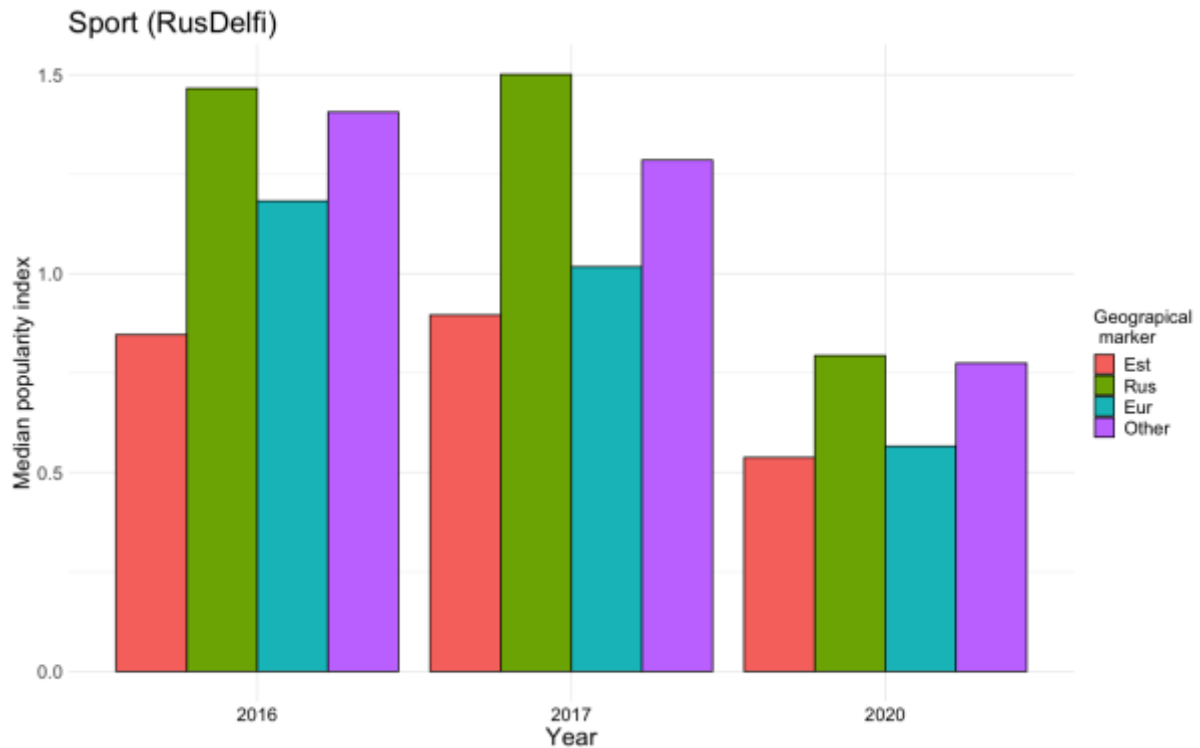


Figure 15. The median popularity of the geographical markers for the thematic group "Sport"

The graph shows the distribution of the popularity of the thematic group "Sport" by the geographical markers. The character of the distribution is the same for all years, but in 2020 the general popularity decreased drastically in comparison with the 2016 and 2017 years. Thus, the following statement can be made: the most popular geographical markers for Russian-speaking minorities remain the same – news about Russia and "other world", meaning countries, which are not a participant of the EU. The sports developments in Estonia and other European countries (meaning the countries of the EU) are the less interesting items for the concerned audience. Moreover, "gaps" between the markers tend to decrease, especially it is noticeable in the case of "European" and "Estonian" markers and "Russian" and "other countries" markers. This means that audience cares less about the geographical markers and

the interest in this thematic category have fallen in general - presumably due to the cancellation of many sporting events because of coronavirus.

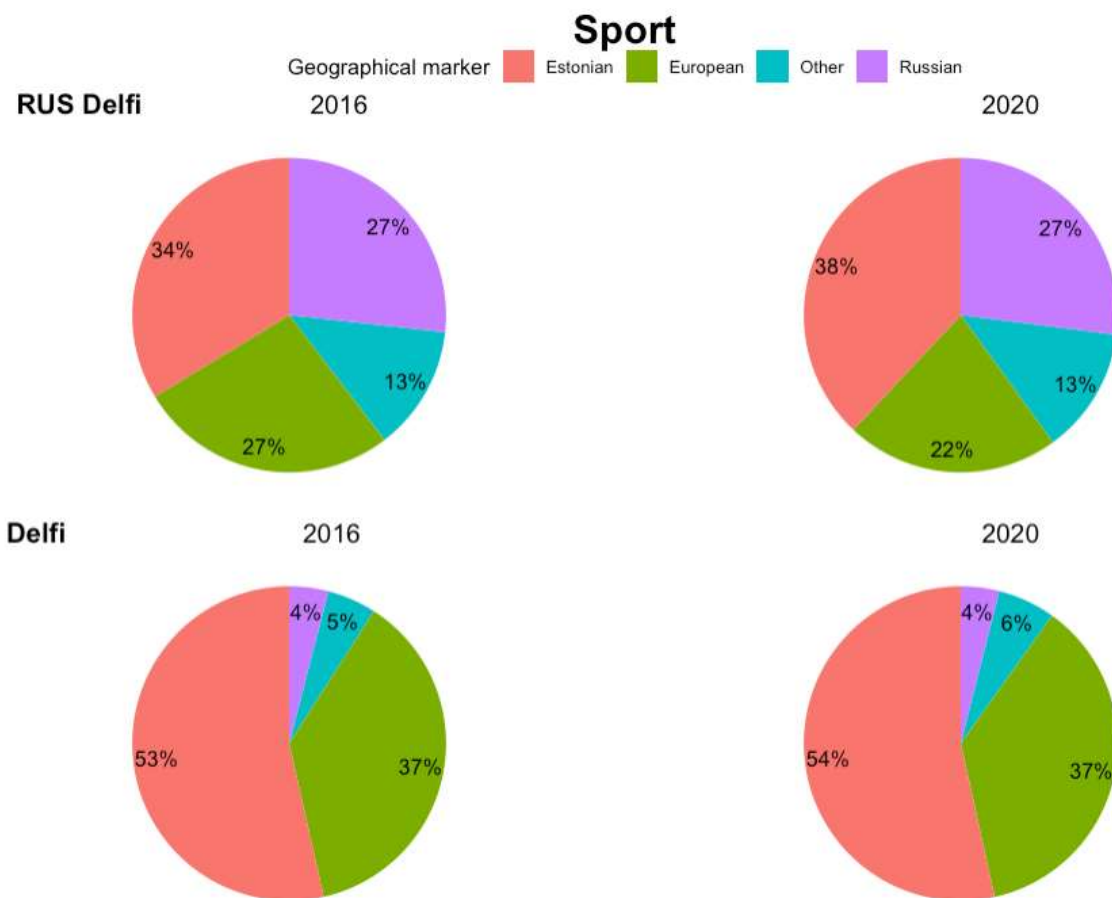


Figure 16. The distribution of the amount of content by geographical markers for the thematic group “Sport”

The character of the distribution in Delfi RUS and Delfi EE differ significantly – in the case of the Russian version of the news portal the share of news about Russia is bigger by 23 percent in both years, the content about other countries is also more frequent in Delfi RUS. The informational agenda of Estonian Delfi mainly consists of news about Estonia and the EU. This character of the distribution is relatively stable – the only exception is that the Estonian geographical marker in Delfi RUS increased by 4 percent in 2020, but at the same time the EU marker decreased on the same value.

4.2.8 Thematic group: Social life

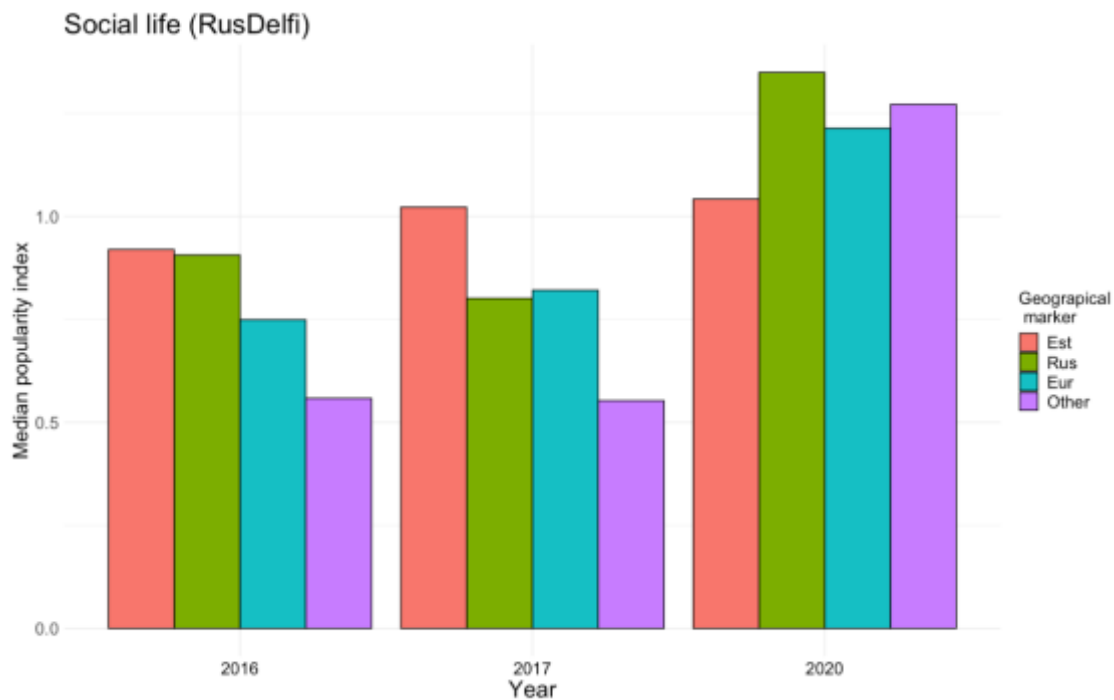


Figure 17. The median popularity of the geographical markers for the thematic group “Social life”

The interest in the Estonian news about the developments, connected with social life, remains the same and index of popularity is fluctuating between 0.9 and 1.02 in observed period. But the attraction of the Russian, European and other countries' agenda has grown. It means that the Estonian sector became less competitive in the fight for audience interest in this particular thematic group. So, in 2020 Estonian news are 1.3 times less popular than Russian news. But in 2017 the situation was opposite – Estonian news were 1.27 times more popular.

European and other countries' agenda have grown. It means that the Estonian sector became less competitive in the fight for audience interest in this particular thematic group.

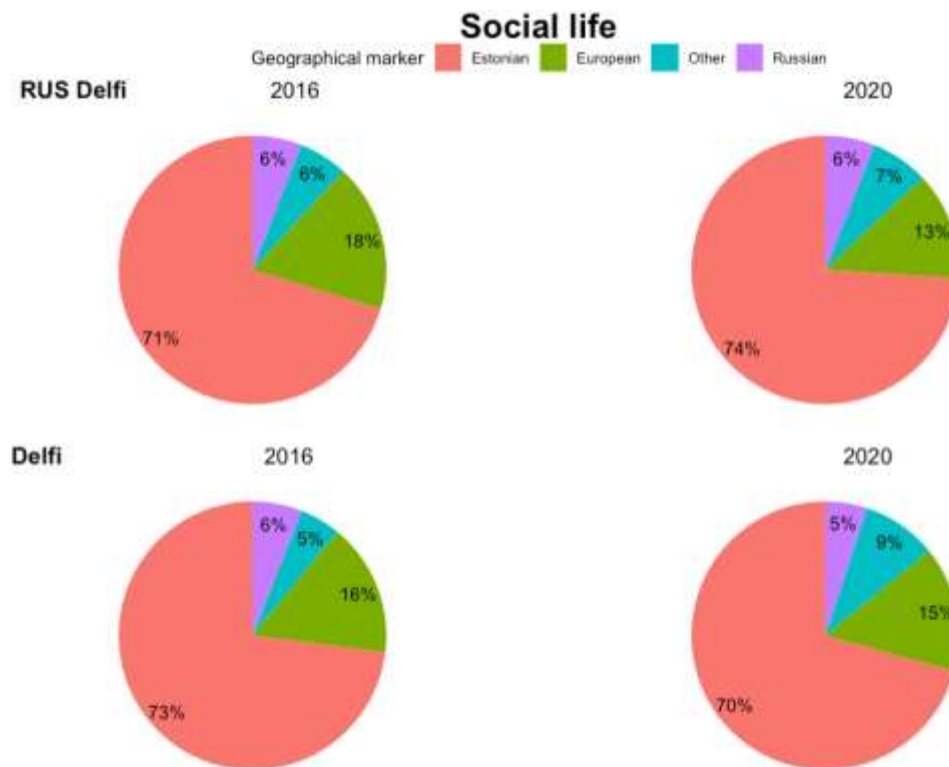


Figure 18. The distribution of the amount of content by geographical markers for the thematic group “Social life”

These pie charts demonstrate the relatively equal distribution of the content in the considered thematic group in Delfi EE and Delfi RUS. That means that more than 70 percent of the content had been devoted to the Estonian agenda in both Russian and Estonian versions of the news portal. Moreover, this share increased in Delfi RUS and decreased in Delfi EE, but these fluctuations are slight.

Thereby, although the share of articles about Estonia had grown in the Russian sector and the general popularity of this thematic group increased, news about Estonia became less interesting for the minorities in 2020. That might be connected with increasing the quality of the foreign content and started cooperation between Delfi EE and such media like BBC and DW.

4.3 The analysis of the headlines in Delfi RUS and Delfi EE

In this section, the analysis of the headlines in Delfi RUS and Delfi EE has been made to define the popularity of the famous people from the spheres of politics and culture within the Russian-speaking minorities and Estonian society. The results support the conclusions which have been

done in the previous sections and illustrate that "media worlds" of Russian speaking minorities and representatives of the other Estonian society are significantly different (the concept of the "media realities" have been described by Eco (2015), Luhmann (2004/1995), and Luckmann (1966)). The bar plots below show the median popularity index and the number of mentions of each of the names of famous persons in Delfi EE and Delfi RUS.

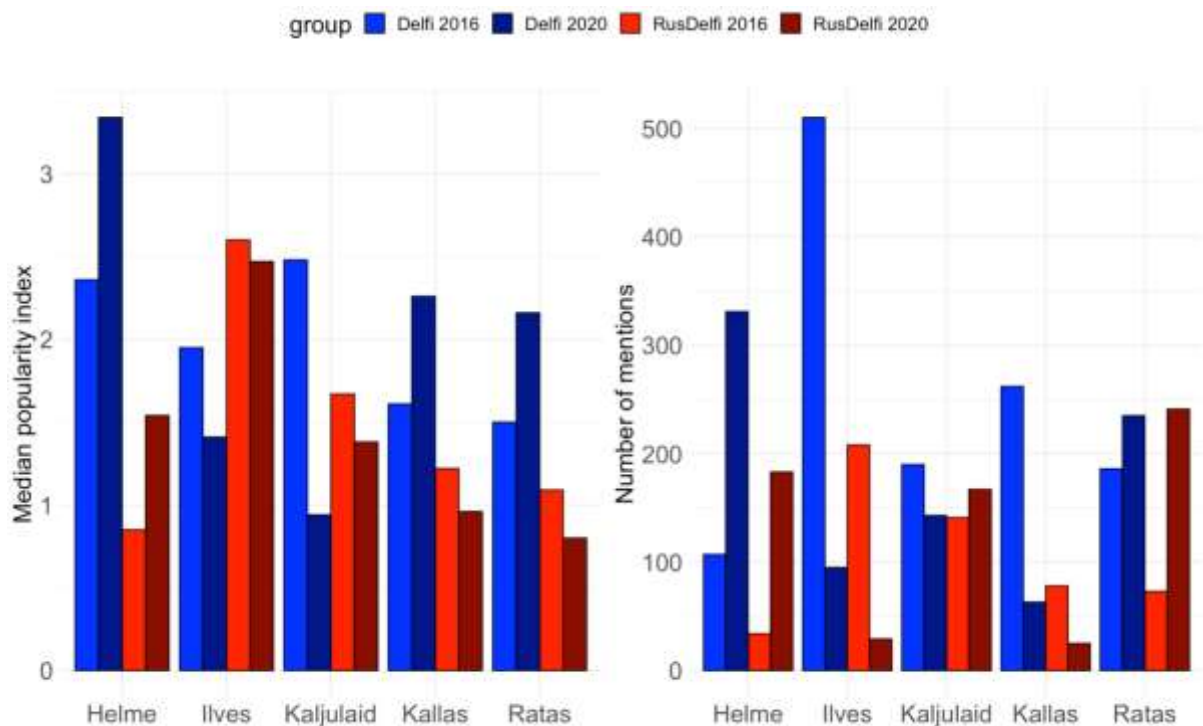


Figure 19. The median popularity index of Estonian politicians and number of mentions in Delfi EEi and Delfi RUS

In general, the popularity of Estonian politics is higher among Estonians and the number of mentions is in most cases higher within Estonians either. In Delfi RUS the most popular Estonian politician is Toomas Hendrik Ilves in 2016. Also, he had the biggest number of mentions in comparison to other Estonian politicians (208 mentions) in Russian version of Delfi in that year. In 2020 the number of his mentions drastically decreased (29 mentions). But despite on that he is still the most popular politician in 2020 in Delfi RUS. The case of Ilves is an exception, that can be explained by the phenomenon, which have been described earlier – the number of mentions in Estonian version of Delfi is significantly higher than in Russian version of Delfi, that means that journalists from the Russian version selected the most popular articles and translate them into Russian – such approach led to a situation where only popular

news about Ilves appeared in Russian Delfi. That is why the index of popularity is higher in RusDelfi in this case.

The most popular Estonian politician in Delfi EE in 2016 was Kersti Kaljulaid but in 2020 her popularity index significantly decreased (from 2.5 to 0.95). One more popular politician in 2016 is Martin Helme. His median popularity index in that year was 2.4 in Estonian version of Delfi. But on the other hand, he was the most unpopular in Delfi Rus (popularity index was 0.85). In 2020 the popularity of articles about Helme significantly increased both in Estonian and Russian versions of Delfi (popularity index is 3.3 and 1.5 respectively).

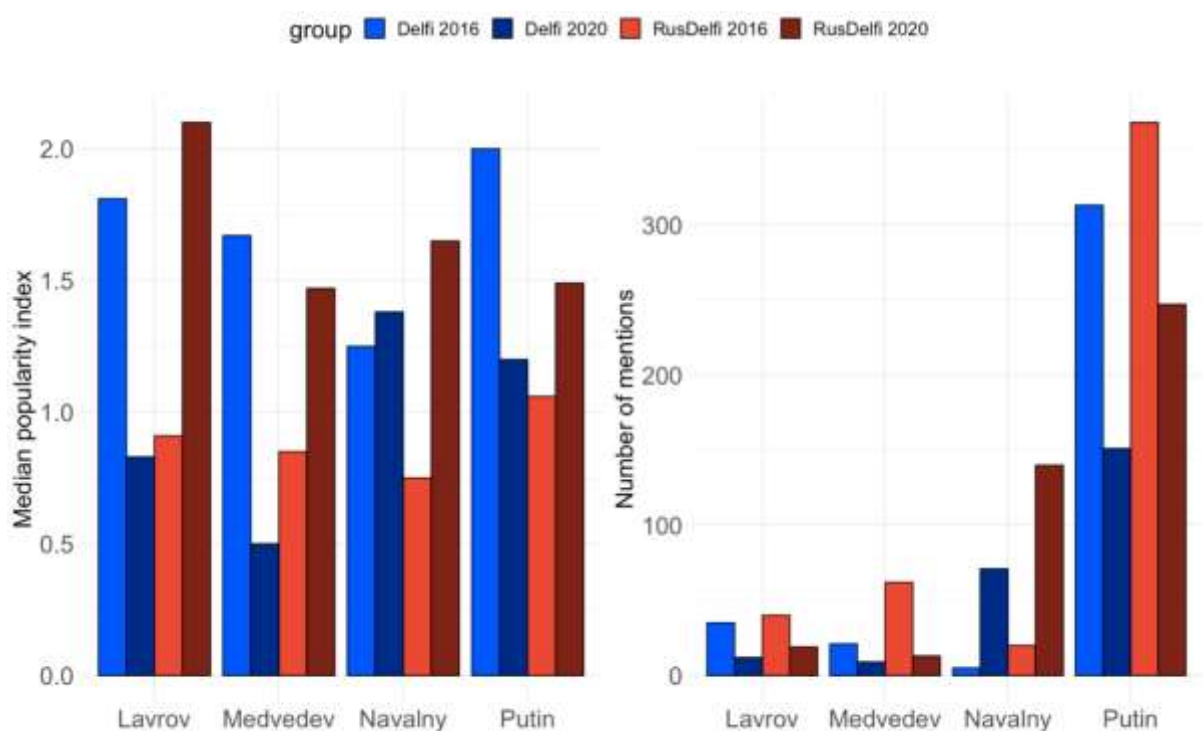


Figure 20. The median popularity index of Russian politicians and number of mentions in Delfi EE and Delfi RUS

The graph shows the diametrically opposite situation – the popularity of the Russian politicians was even bigger among the audience of the Estonian version of Delfi, especially in the 2016 year. But judging by the number of mentions, Delfi RUS writes about them more frequently, that is why the effect which had been described earlier takes place – Estonians publish only the news which were extremely popular in Delfi RUS, that is why the median popularity of such «selected» news is higher. But even though, the popularity of Russian politicians among Estonians is bigger than the popularity of Estonian politicians among Russian-speaking minorities.

The most frequently mentioned Russian politician in Delfi RUS and Delfi EE in 2016 as well as in 2020 is Vladimir Putin. But the data shows that the number of mentions of Putin decreased 1.5 times in Russian Delfi and 2.1 times in Estonian Delfi in 2020.

In Estonian version of Delfi the median popularity index of all Russian politicians decreased in 2020. The exaptation is Alexey Navalny. His popularity index slightly increased from 1.25 to 1.38. So, he became the most popular Russian politician in Estonian version of Delfi in 2020. The number of mentions of Navalny and his popularity also increased in Russian Delfi.

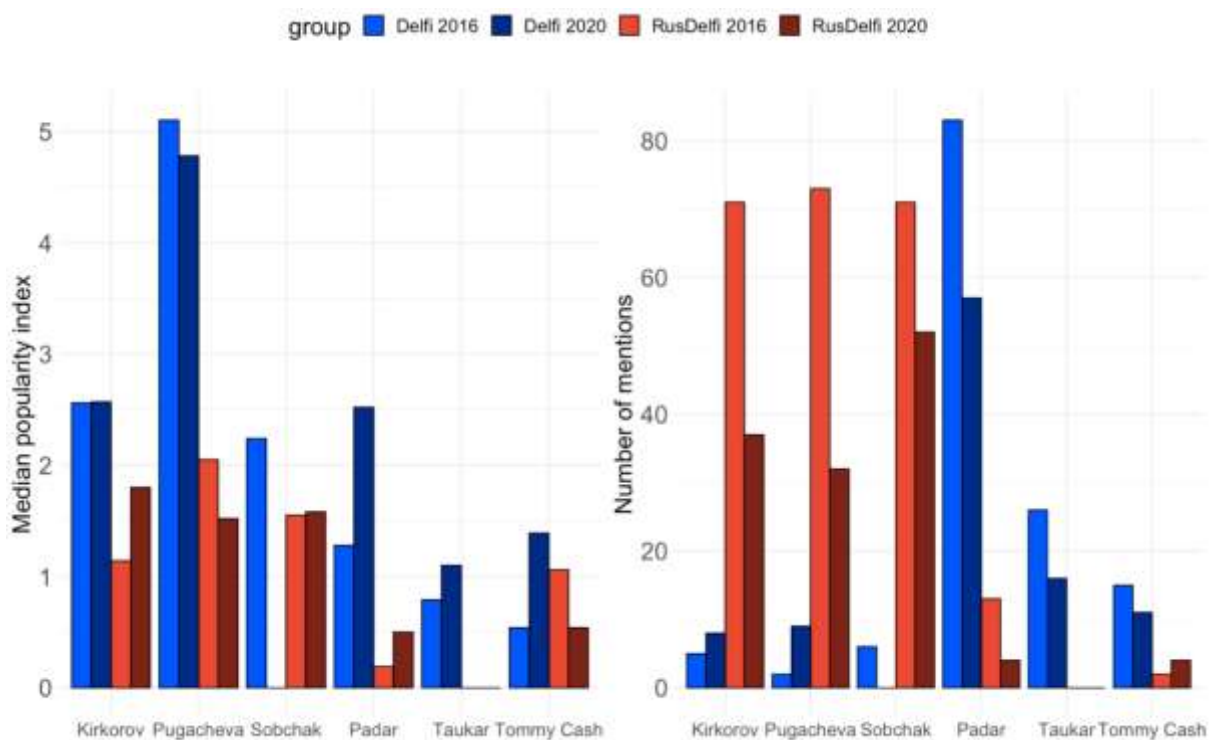


Figure 21. The median popularity index of Estonian and Russian cultural figures and number of mentions in Delfi EE and Delfi RUS. The popularity of the Philipp Kirkorov, Alla Pugacheva, Ksenia Sobchak, Tanel Padar, Karl-Eric Taukar, Tommy Cash are presented

This graph illustrates the popularity of Russian and Estonian cultural figures. The sampling was done according to the published list of the most significant cultural figures in Estonia and the most frequently used surnames in headlines in Delfi EE and Delfi RUS.

As it is visible from the bar plots, Russian speakers are not interested in Estonian cultural figures and their life. But as for the Russian cultural figures, Estonians do know them and, in some cases, these figures are more popular within Estonians, than within Russians. This

situation might be caused by the fact that some of these figures are familiar to Estonians from the USSR period. This trend also proves the claim, which was made by Cheskin – the sphere of culture is complicated in terms of integration (Cheskin, 2015).

4.4 Content analysis

The word cloud shows the most popular semantic components of the most popular articles in 2017 and 2020 years in Delfi RUS. The presented narratives were mentioned several times in the texts (there were 50 most popular articles concerned) and reflect the world, which had been "created" by the media for the audience. Since these articles are the most popular ones, it means, that people read them till the end (the more time people spend on the page of the article, the longer this article is staying on the main page and the more popular it becomes).

Table 5. The meaning of the main codes

<i>Everyday hazards</i>	The information about the possible danger which contains in the ordinary things.
<i>Exclusivity</i>	The highlighting of the exclusivity of the information about someone or something.
<i>Interactivity</i>	The possibility to have any kind of practical use or ability to interact with the content – to click at the link, for example.
<i>Representative of Russian speaking minority</i>	The central figure of the article is representative of the Russian speaking minorities
<i>Connection between sport and world of crime</i>	That was mentioned several times during the description of the Estonian world of crime.
<i>Desire of autonomy</i>	Statements or hints, that the time without people around is valuable.
<i>Unnatural combination</i>	Describing of the situation which seems for the ordinary person to be strange and unnatural, combination of the things which usually incongruous (for example, smoking children).
<i>Useful information</i>	The life hacks and household tricks that make life easier are meant.

Most of the Delfi RUS audience's interests are based on basic human needs and instincts (the possible explanation was given by Uses and gratification theory by Katz and Blumler, 1974). The fear of death was defined as one of the central instincts by many scholars (Freyd, Jung). Moreover, Heidegger mentioned in his "Being and Time" (Heidegger, Heidegger, Robinson, 1962), that awareness of death is a constant source of tension and existential anxiety in the body. The mentioning of the death in the case of the Delfi RUS in 2016 is highly frequent – this topic is triggering due to its ontological meaning. In everyday life, people try to forget about the inevitability of the end, and the mentioning of someone's death reminds them about their own "endness" and the tension and existential anxiety that appear at this moment.

But the mentions of death have different characters – some of them are logical and expected as far as it is possible. But others not only remind of the death but shows that it might be unexpected, almost everything can cause danger, which would mean that the state of safe is an illusion. The popularity of the mystic, religious and inexplicability of some phenomena is

related to fear of the unknown and – indirectly – with a fear of death (because the things, which we can not control or understand can be potentially dangerous).

Another semantic component, which is frequent among the popular articles is describing the luxurious lifestyle, which implies enjoying life's blessings, describing the most expensive and luxurious places, services, goods. Exclusivity of something – another motive, which is not only in the case of the luxurious lifestyle describing but for all other semantic components. The exclusivity of the object, which is mentioned in the selected articles, is a frequent feature, which is connected with a sense of personal exclusivity ("I have unique knowledge") and with a sense of completeness of the knowledge ("I know about the extreme degree of manifestation of the phenomenon, which means I know everything about it").

There are some other semantic categories, which connected with the need to feel like a part of the society – it includes the knowledge of people's personal life (mainly refers to the lives of famous people, since subconsciously people want to be involved in this community); the definition of external "other" is also part of this category of needs. There are examples of mentioning Estonians as completely different people, using the stereotypical image of a "slow" nation. It was used in the context of humour and while the description of the strong emotions of the person, who had just been in a state of shock.

The desire to learn more about the interesting places for tourism is another strong semantic component that applies not only to travel around the world but also to travel within Estonia. Such need to explore the world around might be used for integration purposes. The development of the tourism sector in Estonia, its popularization among the Russian speakers, and making this group one of the target ones will help to better familiarize minorities with the history and culture of the society live in.

Another important finding was detected during the analysis of the texts which were published in 2016 year and is related to the topics of criminal thematic/crime. Such narratives as justification and romanticization of criminal figures and their life and just interest in the way the criminal world is functioning are visible. Several times the connection of criminal figures and sport, politics, and the social sphere was described in articles, in such cases, the context was rather positive than negative. Moreover, almost all mentioned criminal figures who lived in Estonia had Russian surnames. Only one Estonian was mentioned, but it was highlighted that his nationality is an exception and normally all serious criminals are Russian. Such

narrative is important in the understanding of the popularity. Russian-speaking audience is extremely interested in representatives of Russian-speaking minorities who are living in Estonia. As it was mentioned in the theoretical part, Russian speakers in Estonia are not sharing the identity with the Russians who are living in Russia. In this sense, they are different people with different experiences and different needs. They do have many features in common (more, than Estonians and Russian speaking minorities do), that is why news about Russia and Russians are popular in Delfi RUS, but the most popular type of content is news about Russians, who is living in Estonia and became popular or just famous – this tendency was described by Fleras (Fleras, 2006). This is one of the reasons why the audience is interested in the developments of the world of crime in Estonia – the leaders of this world which were mentioned in the articles were Russians.

Such conclusion confirms the fact that according to the content analysis of the most popular articles in 2020 there were significantly fewer mentions of the world of crime, but the mentions of the representatives of the Russian speaking community were relatively the same (16 times out of 50 articles in the 2016 year and 14 times in the 2020 year).



Figure 22. The word cloud of the semantic components of the most popular articles at Delfi RUS in 2020

In 2020 the accents changed, and the most popular narrative contains the health concern. In 2020 also the category “changes in the routine of public life” have emerged – it is connected with the fact that the governance several times announced the restrictions due to the coronavirus.

Regarding the identity thematic, in both years the features of Estonian and Russian national identification had been mentioned, but in the 2016 year, the negative attitude to Estonians was slightly mentioned. In 2020 such cases were not detected among the 50 most popular articles.

5. Conclusions

There are many ways to approach and study the phenomena of integration of ethnic minorities. In the case of this thesis, the phenomena of integration is studied from the perspective of media and (news) media consumption. Based on the theories elaborated in the thesis, the media consumption can be considered as one of the indicators of being involved into the society – the characteristics of media consumption is one of the ways to analyse the interest of different audiences – in this case, Russian-speaking minority and Estonian-speaking population - in the social, political, economic, and cultural life of the society.

The two main research questions that framed and formed the basis for this research are the following: 1) what are the features of the media consumption among the Estonians and Russian-speaking ethnic minorities in Estonia; and 2) if and how can media consumption reflect the (differences in the) integration of ethnic minorities in Estonia. To answer these questions, this thesis applied a quantitative method for the analysis: the statistical data about the consumption of (news) media from the Estonian media holding “Ekspress media” (Delfi, both Russian-language version and Estonian-language version) has been analysed.

The hypotheses of the thesis are the following: H1) there are more news in Delfi RUS about the Russian (Federation) developments (including social, political, and cultural life sphere) and there is more news in Delfi EE about the Estonian developments; H2) Russian-speaking news consumers are more interested in content about Russian developments and less interested in reading news about Estonian developments.

All in all, both of these hypotheses were confirmed. Nevertheless, the Russian speaking audience became more interested in consuming the content about developments in Estonia in 2020 (in comparison with 2016), presumably related to the COVID19 situation.

The theoretical basis of this thesis consists of two parts: the theories about the mechanism of the media consumption – the main authors are Katz and Blumler (1974), Hall (1980), Eco (2015), Luhmann (2004/1995), and Luckmann (1966); and the theories about the connection between the media consumption and integration – the main authors are Peeters and d'Haenens (2005), Chen (2014), Hassane (2015), Cheskin (2015), Bonfadelli, Bucher, Riga (2007), Elias & Lemish, 2008.

The major conclusions from the research are the following. Russian-speaking minorities are interested in the content which is directly connected with their wellbeing and their feeling of safety – the basic needs of people, which confirms the theory that people consume media to satisfy their needs (Katz, Blumler, 1974). This content is directly connected with the place they live – Estonia. This interest was explicit in all concerned years, but in 2020 the popularity of the content which gives information about public health had been extremely increased due to coronavirus. This fact is also confirmed by the content analysis of the most popular articles for 2020 on Delfi RUS.

There is also a different distribution of news in Russian and Estonian versions of Delfi by geographical markers. That means that Estonian version of Delfi pays more attention firstly - at Estonian developments, secondarily – at the developments within the EU. The percent of news from other countries including Russia is small. As for the Russian version of Delfi, its journalists pay relatively equal attention to the developments in Russia and Estonia, the percent of news about EU in Delfi RUS is slightly smaller. In general, that means, that Russian-speaking minorities who read Delfi RUS do live in a different "media world" (concept, described by Eco (2015), Luhmann (2004/1995), Luckmann (1966)) in comparison with the readers of Estonian Delfi. In this case, a small inaccuracy is added by people who for some reason read both the Russian and Estonian versions of Delfi. But in general, it is not the case, since the most important or popular news are translating from one language to another, that is why there is no need for people to read both versions to stay up to date.

It is shown in content analysis, that the audience of Delfi RUS is interested in narratives, which contain information about the danger to health and life – such as information about the COVID-19, its spreading, symptoms and ways to avoid infection; or messages about cases of crime nearby – all these types of content about Estonia are popular. Russian-speaking minorities are also interested in tourism and information about places to visit in Estonia. This trend should be taken into account when developing programs for the integration of the minorities – the greater emphasis on developing national tourism and its orientation towards minorities will help them feel more involved in Estonian culture. The ability of media to affect people's is limited (Limited effects theory by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, Gaudet, 1994), but still visible (McGuire, 1986), that is why the correct media strategy is able to support some interests of people (those which would contribute integration) and do not encourage other interests - those which would strengthen the ethnic identification (Elias & Lemish, 2008).

The sphere of culture is more ambiguous regarding the integration. Russian-speaking minorities demonstrate a strong interest in Russian show-business, cultural events, and the life of famous people, and this situation has not changed during the period from 2016 to 2020 years. But another tendency suggests a solution – Russian-speaking minorities are interested in information about Russians, who live in Estonia and became famous. Thus, the concentration of the Russian speaking minorities among the public persons of Estonia in different spheres including show-business will change the situation. Russian speaking community does not have the identity of the Russian Federation, but the Russian-speaking identity (Cheskin, 2015). That is why the accent should be made on the developments within the community and "incorporating" the relatively famous representatives into the wider Estonian context. This approach is also applicable for "Social life" thematic group – articles about Russian-speaking minorities would attract the attention of the community and make it more interested in the news about the developments in Estonia.

In general, the situation with COVID-19, its spread, and the closed borders as a consequence, changed the interests of the Russian-speaking audience of Delfi RUS. People became more interested in content about Estonia and local developments in these circumstances, it is visible from the graphs which show the popularity of news in "Tourism" and "Health" thematic groups. Such a situation should be taken into account and the content in these spheres must be of high quality to keep the audience interested even after the pandemic is over. That is important particularly in the case of tourism since the interest in health will naturally decline since the most triggering content disappears. But in case, the quality of the content about the tourism in Estonia increased during the pandemic, part of the audience acquired due to the closure of borders will remain.

The publishing of the bigger amount of content in the certain thematic group or geographical marker is not necessarily leading to the growth of the interest among the considered audience in that thematic group or geographical marker. This can be explained by the fact, that people consume the content according to their own needs (Katz, Blumler, 1974; Fish, 1976) and the abundance of content on a certain topic has no significant effect on audiences' interest in this topic. But by encouraging certain interests (for example, interest in tourism within Estonia) and emphasizing certain topics, which are popular within minorities, but belong to the Estonian context, it is possible to make the "media realities" (the concept has been described by Eco,

2015; Luhmann, 2004/1995; Luckmann, 1966) of Estonians and Russian speaking minorities closer.

In general, the character of media consumption by Russian speaking minorities is different from the Estonian society – representatives of the Russian speaking minorities consume more content about the developments in Russia than representatives of the Estonian society. That might be connected with the propaganda of the Russian Federation (Vihalemm, Juzefovičs, 2020) and as a consequence – the “pro-European” way of looking at things might be unattractive to the certain percent of the representatives of the Russian speaking minorities, since it does not “resonate” with their own view of life (Tsfati, Cohen, 2012).

The results also showed that interest to the Estonian politics have not increased from the 2016 to 2020 years. Moreover, the popularity of key Estonian political figures in general is lower among Russian speaking minorities. One of the possible explanations is that the level of political participation of the Russian speaking minorities remains low: this claim can be argued to be supported also by Kristina Kallas, who indicates that “the representation of Russian-speaking community in national elected bodies is still far below their share among citizenry” (Kallas, 2008) and that the problem of obtaining political rights by ethnic minorities in Estonia is still relevant. The low interest of the Russian speaking audience of Estonian politics confirms this conclusion and indicates that the share of the Russian speaking minorities in national elected bodies and the share of the Russian speaking minorities within the society should be relatively equal (or the “gap” between these shares should be minimalized).

The thesis used only the time period of four years, thus, the more comprehensive picture can be reached by analysing the wider period – that might be the aim of the future research.

In general, the process of integration of the Russian Speaking minorities in Estonia have the positive results (comparing the results from 2016 and 2020 years), nevertheless, this process is still going on and the most significant positive changes happened with high probability due to the COVID-19.

6. Appendix 1

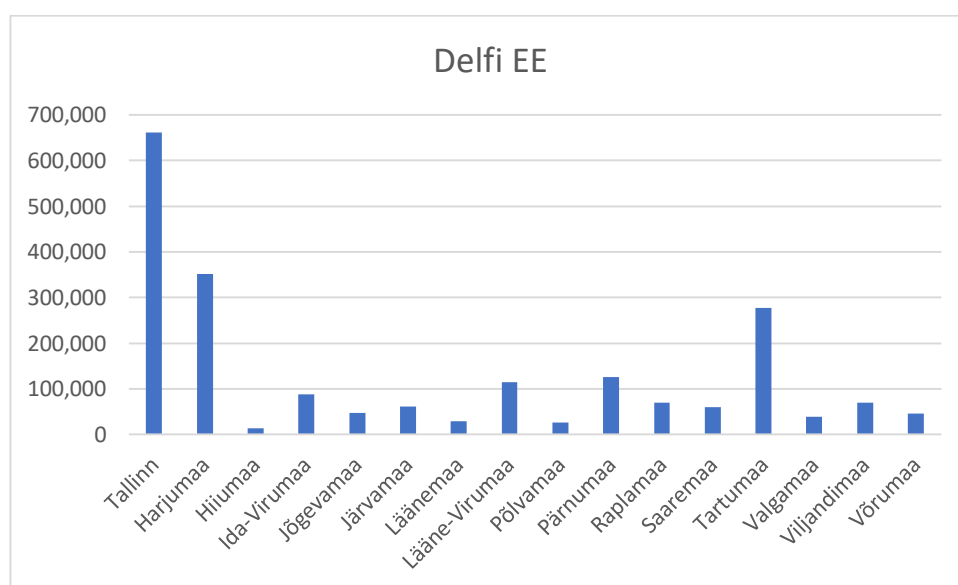


Figure 23. The distribution of the Delfi EE users in 2020 by regions

As it is presented in the graph, the biggest news consumers for the Delfi EE are Tallinn, Harjumaa, and Tartumaa – the regions with the biggest concentration of the population. The total sum of the unique users for the 2020 year is 2 084 637 (this number reflects the sum of the unique users in each of the thematic channels, which belong to Delfi EE). In the presented graph the data from the primary channels, which had been earlier selected were used.

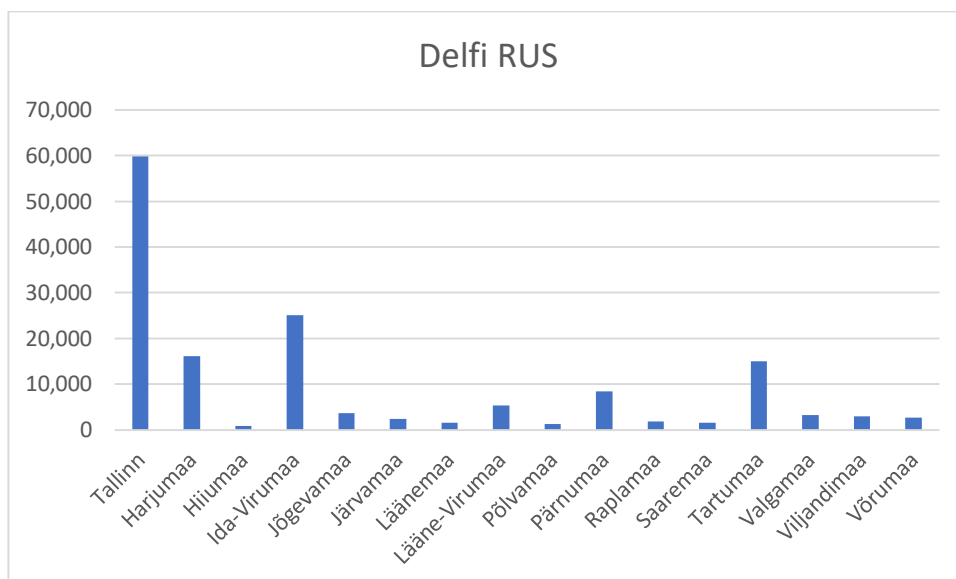


Figure 24. The distribution of the Delfi RUS users in 2020 by regions

As it is presented in the graph, the biggest news consumers for the Delfi RUS are Tallinn, Ida-Virumaa and Tartumaa – the regions with the biggest concentration of the ethnic minorities. The total sum of the unique users for the 2020 year is 151 464. In the presented graph only the data for one primary channel is represented, that is why the real numbers might be bigger. It is also obvious, that both graphs show the similar trend, with one exception: there are more users from the Ida-Virumaa on the Russian version of the portal than on the Estonian one in percentage terms.

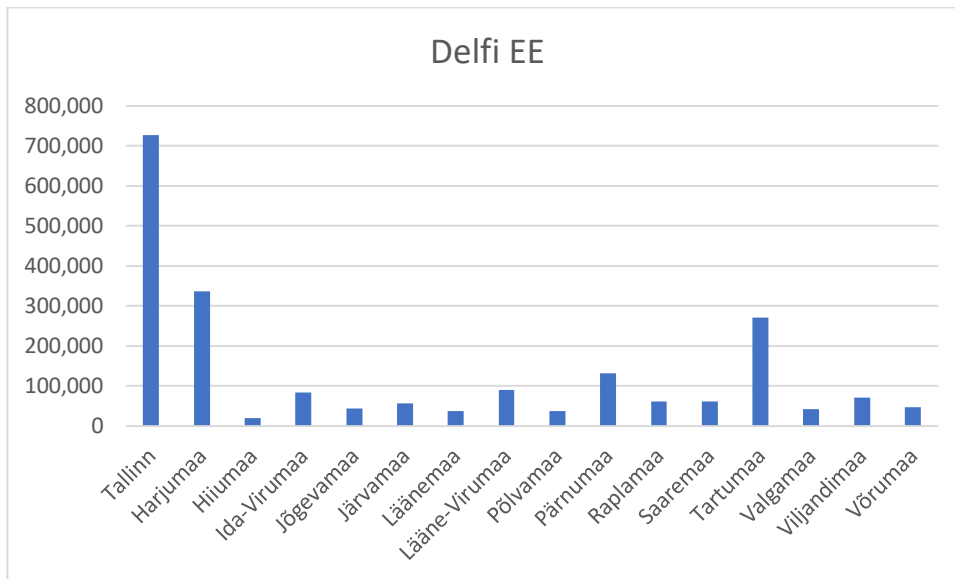


Figure 25. The distribution of the Delfi EE users in 2016 by regions

As presented in the picture the trend of distribution of the unique users by regions is the same as for the 2020 year. The total sum of the unique users (only the traffic from the personal computers is available) for the 2017 year is 2 111 510.

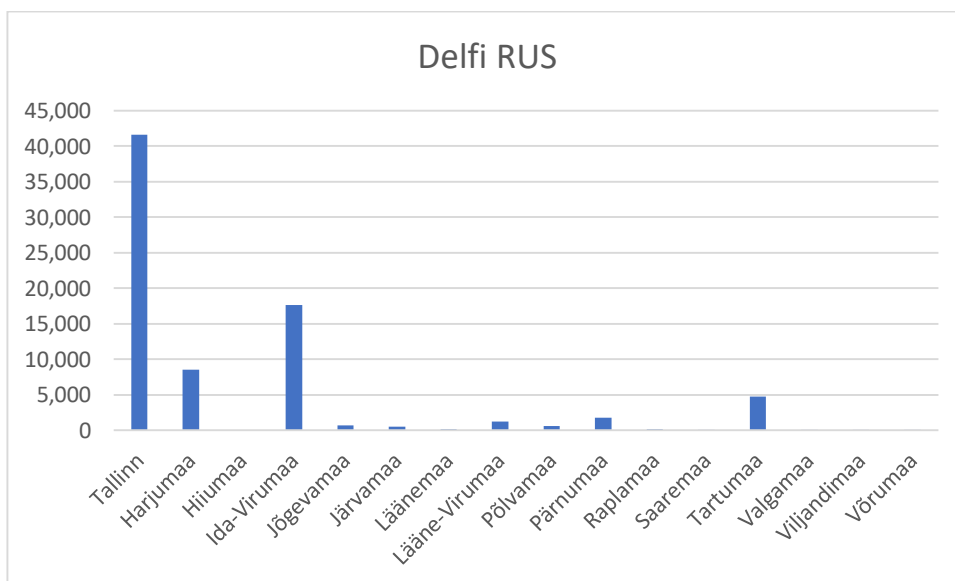


Figure 26. The distribution of the Delfi RUS users in 2016 by regions

As presented in the picture the trend of distribution of the unique users by regions is the same as for the 2020 year. The total sum of the unique users for the 2017 year (only the traffic from the personal computers is available) is 78 167. But this number is also might be bigger due to the lack of information about some other primary channels.

7. Appendix 2

Table 7. Distribution of articles by thematical groups and years in Russian version of Delfi and Estonian version Delfi

Topic	Segment	2016	2017	2020
tourism	Delfi RUS	1566	1621	1856
	Delfi EE	1918	1120	887
sport	Delfi RUS	2274	1891	1748
	Delfi EE	15183	15578	13454
social life	Delfi RUS	3226	3421	3668
	Delfi EE	4912	4563	3696
science	Delfi RUS	126	196	372
	Delfi EE	3658	3346	2641
politics	Delfi RUS	4527	4108	2448
	Delfi EE	4942	4195	2648
health	Delfi RUS	1006	998	2419
	Delfi EE	1756	1439	2512
family	Delfi RUS	1211	1073	1695
	Delfi EE	4491	5440	3491
entertainment	Delfi RUS	2148	1494	2783
	Delfi EE	8159	6991	4637
economics	RUS Delfi	3307	3441	2885
	Delfi	7687	7018	6519
cultural life	RUS Delfi	4822	3621	4191
	Delfi	6262	5738	4865
crime	RUS Delfi	3642	3419	2975
	Delfi	5055	4317	2360

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