



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

# **“The Country That Is Everything We Dream Of”**

Representations of Finland in Japanese Twitter

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**Abstract:**

In recent decades, the visibility of Finland has been increasing in Japan. It might even be almost impossible not to notice “Finland” in everyday life. -Products with Moomin characters, trendy Finnish style saunas, Finnish words used in brand or product names and Finnish themed facilities. But what kind of themes spring to mind when Finland is mentioned? What images are attached to Finland, or how is Finland talked about in everyday life? This study investigates what Japanese people post about Finland and what kind of representations of Finland appear on Japanese Twitter, as well as how the Japanese society is represented through these discussions.

For the data collection, the search word and command “フィンランド min\_faves: 1000” was used, in order to find tweets that included the Japanese word for Finland, フィンランド, and which had accumulated more than 1000 likes. The final data amounted to 364 tweets posted on Twitter between September 16th 2020 and November 7th 2022. The analysis was conducted in two separate phases; in the first phase, themes of the tweets which appeared in the data were identified by using qualitative content analysis (QCA), and in the second phase, representation analysis was conducted together with QCA in order to find out how Finland is represented on Japanese Twitter, and what kind of meanings are attached to Finland.

The analysis identified the following themes that often appear in the tweets about Finland: Nature, travel destination, history, national defence, brands, art, language, customs, education as social welfare, school, work-life balance, gender equality, and mindset. The representations of Finland found in the data were: The ideal model for Japan (a model for a fair society/ a model for a happier life), magical and consumable Finland, a small but brave and a strong country, and questioning “the dream country Finland”.

The analysis also found that the images of Finland are constructed to fit the narratives of Japanese people. “The dream country Finland” was created by Japanese people's fantasies and ideals and it was used to criticize some aspects of the Japanese society: the Japanese government, politics, social welfare, working style, national defence, among others.

## **Table of contents**

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1	Background	5
1.2	Research questions and the structure of this thesis	7
<b>2</b>	<b>Literature review</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1	History of “the Finland boom” in Japan	9
2.2	Previous studies on representations of Finland and “Finnishness” in Japan	10
2.3	Theoretical framework	13
2.3.1	Representation theory - the constructionist approach	14
2.3.2	Representation and power	14
2.3.3	Representation as “imaginary signification”	15
<b>3</b>	<b>Data and method</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1	Using data from Twitter	16
3.1.1	What is Twitter?	16
3.1.2	Twitter use in Japan	17
3.2	Data and data collection	18
3.3	Method for analysis	18
3.3.1	Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)	19
3.3.2	Representation Analysis	19
3.3.3	The analysis process	20
3.4	Ethical considerations	20
<b>4</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1	First phase: What do they talk about Finland?	22
4.2	Second phase: How is Finland represented?	23
4.2.1	The ideal model country for Japan	23
4.2.2	Magical and consumable Finland	32
4.2.3	A small but brave and a strong country	35
4.2.4	Questioning “the dream country Finland”	39
<b>5</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>42</b>
5.1	Representations of Finland	43
5.2	Representations of Japan	45

<b>6</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>46</b>
6.1	The limitations of the study	47
6.2	Suggestions for future research	48
	<b>References</b>	<b>49</b>

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

In recent decades, Finland's visibility has increased in Japan. Even in everyday life, it is not uncommon to find something related to Finland in grocery stores or on TV shows. Furthermore, Finnish words have been used for a variety of products and brand names. For example, the Family Mart (one of the biggest convenience store chains in Japan), sells an original cosmetic brand called "söpö" [sic] ("cute" in Finnish). Sopo cosmetics (n.d.) was created in 2019 and its products can be found in about 16,600 Family Mart stores all over Japan. On TV, Finnish and Nordic themed facilities are featured as places for families and couples to visit during the weekend, and the popular "Finnish style" saunas in Tokyo are shown on the news and other television programs. Nowadays, it is almost impossible not to notice references to Finland in Japan.

It is mostly agreed by researchers that "Finland boom", that is the Finnish cultural boom that started around the early 2000s, was initiated by the release of the PISA results in 2003 and the film "Kamome Diner (2006)" which takes place in Finland. (Iwatake, 2010; Takayama, 2010; Mitsui, 2012; Ipatti, 2019; Fuse, 2021). Since then, Finland and related topics, such as Finnish culture have increased in popularity among the general public. Previously, items and themes related to Finland were enjoyed by a smaller group of enthusiasts and seen as "trendy" (Lesikos& Villberg, 2009; Iwatake, 2010; Fuse, 2021). Since the "Finland boom," a significant number of non-academic books on, for instance, Finnish education, lifestyle and design have been published, resulting to a genre with a steady readership (Mitsui, 2012). Since Finland was ranked as the happiest country in the World Happiness Report in 2018, Finland has been the popular topic in mass media, such as on TV programs (Nippon Television Network Corporation, 2020; BS Asahi, 2020; World Happiness Report, 2023). The popularity of Finland as a tourist destination has also increased. According to Statistics Finland (n.d.), the average number of visitors between 2010 and 2019 has increased by 35,2%, compared to the corresponding numbers from 2000 to 2009. Brands with Finnish origin have increased their visibility in Japan as well. Marimekko opened its first store in Japan in 2006 and, as of 2023, has already 35 stores (Marimekko, 2023). Iittala/ Arabia has 26 stores, including the world's first

“Iittala cafe” in Omotesando, Tokyo, where they promise to provide a feel of an authentic Finnish café and a touch of real Nordic taste and lifestyle (Fiskars Japan Co., Ltd., n.d.a; Fiskars Japan Co., Ltd., n.d.b). Cafe Aalto, which is located in Helsinki, opened their second café in Kyoto in 2019. In the café, customers can experience Alvar Aalto’s world and the Finnish lifestyle with traditional Finnish food, Alvar Aalto’s furniture and tableware from Iittala (Cafe Aalto, n.d.). The Finnish company Robert’s Coffee also expanded to Japan in 2012, and currently has two locations (Robert’s Coffee Japan, 2019). Entertainment and events related to Finland have been growing as well. In 2018, a Nordic-themed entertainment complex called Metsä Village opened in Hanno, Saitama, followed by Moominvalley Park in 2019. Metsä Village is an entertainment complex next to a forest and a lake, where visitors can enjoy a Nordic-style atmosphere surrounded by nature. Its concept is “A place where you can discover the essence of spiritual richness through an experience in the forest and a lake where the Nordic time flows. Bring it back to your daily life (Metsä, n.d.).” There are Nordic-themed nature activities and a café as well as stores where visitors can purchase goods from Nordic brand including Marimekko, Iittala and Fazer (Kawakubo, 2019). The Saitama Moominvalley Park is the only theme park where visitors can meet characters from the Moomins all year round, since the original Moomin World in Naantali, Finland, is open only during summer and on special occasions (Kawakubo, 2019). Another recent trend related to Finland in Japan is sauna. For decades, sauna has been common in Japan, typically in public baths, but according to Google trends, sauna has been gaining more attention since 2019. One reason is said to be the TV drama “Sa-do (サ道, the way of sauna)” aired in 2019. It is based on the 2011 essay by Katsuki Tanaka. In the TV drama, Finland is introduced as the origin of sauna. After that, the number of Finnish style saunas has increased (Hasegawa, 2022).

I began to pay more attention to the recent expansion of the so called “Finland boom” due to spending a year as an exchange student in Finland during the academic year of 2016-2017. After returning to Finland for my university studies in 2019, I remained fascinated by the phenomenon. Because of my academic background, studying the image of Finland from the perspective of ordinary Japanese people seemed interesting to me. My original idea was to find out if Japanese people see connection to Finland by conducting interviews or using a questionnaire, but it seemed difficult

to do this without leading the participants to biased answers. Instead, I decided to examine existing data on social media and chose Twitter<sup>1</sup> as the specific platform. On social media, it is possible to hear the voice of ordinary people, even though social media contents and narratives might be controlled by individuals or organizations who have their own motivations and incentives (Bouvier & Rasmussen, 2022). Using social media data also enabled me to observe what and how people talk about Finland without limiting the scope by using questionnaires or interview questions.

## **1.2 Research questions and the structure of this thesis**

The main research question of this study is: How is Finland represented on Japanese Twitter?

This question is approached with the help of the following sub-questions:

What are the main themes that appear in discussions about Finland on Japanese Twitter?

How are representations of Finland on Japanese Twitter used to discuss the features of Japanese society?

The research questions are approached by examining tweets about Finland posted in Japanese between September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022. First, the themes of the tweets are identified by utilizing qualitative content analysis and after that the meanings attached to Finland in the tweets are examined by using qualitative content analysis and representation analysis.

In this study, my aim is to look at what is written about Finland on Japanese Twitter where ordinary people can generate and post their contents (Murthy, 2018; Bouvier & Rasmussen, 2022). Furthermore, I will examine how these ideas are presented. This study does not limit the selection of topics as long as the tweet talks about Finland and, therefore, it is also possible to find different kinds of meanings attached to Finland. Furthermore, the mirroring image of Japan can be discussed through the representations of Finland found in my data. I believe this study helps to understand

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<sup>1</sup> I will use the name Twitter throughout this thesis although the platform was renamed to X in July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, because of the following reasons: Firstly, the platform was called Twitter at the time of data collection. Secondly, in many of its functions X is different to what Twitter was when the data was collected.

what kinds of ideas about Finnishness and images of Finland are circulating in a media space that is close to an everyday life context.

The structure of this thesis is the following: Chapter 2 is the literature review which introduces previous studies about Finland in Japanese context, especially about the construction of Finnishness in Japan. The chapter also includes the theoretical framework of this study, which is representation theory. Data and methodology are discussed in Chapter 3, which describes the data collection and analysis methods which are qualitative content analysis and representation analysis. It also introduces Twitter as a social media platform and its users in the Japanese context. In Chapter 4, the results of the analyses are presented and outlines the themes of the tweets and representations of Finland found in the data. Findings and their implications are discussed in Chapter 5 where comparisons of the findings with previous literature is also made. Finally, Chapter 6 summarises the findings and significance of the study while acknowledging its limitations.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 History of “the Finland boom” in Japan

Several literature sources agree that “Finland boom” began around 2003, when the word started to appear on Japanese media (Iwatake, 2010; Takayama, 2010; Mitsui, 2012; Ipatti, 2019; Fuse, 2021). Finland is in the centre of the “Nordic country boom” where Nordic countries enjoy a positive image consisting of simplicity, closeness to nature, the feeling of warmth as well as functionalism (Iwatake, 2010). The factors which contribute to the boom have been considered to include the news about achievements of Finnish pupils in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2003 (Takayama, 2010; Mitsui, 2012) and the 2006 release of the Japanese film “Kamome Shokudo (Kamome Diner)” (Iwatake, 2010).

The PISA results drew wide international attention to Finnish education and Japan was not an exception. Many books related to education in Finland including a series of translated textbooks used in Finnish schools, which sold more than 100,000 copies, have been published and some Japanese schools have adopted Finnish methods of teaching (Takayama, 2010). According to Takayama (2010), after the PISA results in 2003, the small and unknown Finland “suddenly became the symbol of hope for Japanese education reform (Takayama, 2010, p.52)”. Kamome Diner was the first Japanese film shot entirely in Finland. It was supported by MEK Finnish Tourist Board, Finnair and the Finnish Embassy in Japan (Fuse, 2021). The film was originally planned to be shown only in two theatres but, due to its popularity, it was released in one hundred theatres (Iwatake, 2010). According to Fuse (2021), the term “Finland boom” spread widely after the success of this film.

However, Ipatti (2019) claims the roots of the “boom” are deeper than the recent branding of Finland many have given the credit to. To study the historical background of the boom, Ipatti (2019) examined Finland’s diplomatic documents on image policy written during 1960s. The documents she studied were the diplomatic reports, annual overviews and press reports of Finland’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which were sent from Helsinki to the Finnish embassy in Tokyo. Ipatti (2019) argues that it is crucial to understand the historical background in order to understand the contemporary national representations of Finland. Her findings indicate that the

Finnish strategy for their image policy in the 1960s in Japan was not so successful in terms of foreign politics, because despite the MFA's attempt to promote Finland's neutrality during the Cold War, Japanese media described Finland negatively in political contexts. Instead, Finland succeeded in promoting a positive image of their culture, such as nature, classical music, architecture, design, social equality, urban living, as well as brands like Marimekko and Moomin. Ipatti (2019) points out that these themes actively and successfully promoted in the 1960s overlap with the ones that are central in the current "Finland boom". Even though both carried the same themes, the volumes of attention are very different. As Ipatti (2019) explains, the Finnish image policy in the 1960s might be the root of the current "Finland boom", but did not create a "boom" then.

## **2.2 Previous studies on representations of Finland and "Finnishness" in Japan**

Previously, Finnishness has been studied in the educational context and the cultural context, to name a few. Many of the previous studies on "Finnishness" in Japan began to appear around the same time as the "Finland boom" in Japan (Fuse, 2021). The research is most likely influenced by the "Finland boom", but is also part of the growing interest in Finland. According to Fuse (2021), Finnishness is widely accepted by Japanese consumers and has value as a commodity. Popular products and brands such as Marimekko, Arabia, Iittala, Artek and Moomin characters are all associated with Finnishness which is explained to be for example closeness to nature, a feeling of warmth, simplicity and the Finnish lifestyle. These products and brands are consumed together with these abstract concepts (Iwatake, 2010; Mitsui, 2012; Fuse, 2021). High quality education, social welfare system and social equality i.e. the image of a social democratic state, are associated with Finnishness in the popular discourse, such as non-academic books and journalists' articles (Takayama, 2010; Mitsui, 2012).

Leikos and Villberg (2009) explore how Japanese people consume design and how Japanese consumers construct and negotiate the meaning of Finnishness discursively when consuming Finnish design. The first theme of their study concerns the characteristics of Japanese consumers of design. Through an interview with experts, they identified four categories in which Japanese people consume design, which are; 1) appreciation for background information, 2) group-centrism, 3) insistence on high-

quality and 4) high brand awareness (Leikos & Villberg, 2009, p.44). The second theme of their study focuses on what kinds of meanings Japanese consumers attach to Finnish products by interviewing an expert group and two ordinary consumer groups. Their findings suggest that Japanese consumers have stereotypical and limited perceptions of Finland, and they usually cannot tell the difference between Finnish and Scandinavian design. The stereotypical images most often concern things such as clean nature, Moomin, Santa Clause, blueberries and Northern lights. Some interviewees found similarities in the simplicity and aesthetic ideals between Japan and Finland. Leikos and Villberg conclude that despite the limited knowledge, Finland is enjoying an overall positive image and Finnish design is highly valued.

Takayama (2010) examines discourses on the Japanese education reform and the ways in which Finnish education has been used as a discursive tool in the discussion on education between the Japanese conservatives and progressives. After the publishing of the PISA results in 2003, a “Finland boom” began also in Japanese education with the publishing of many articles and “how-to” books (Takayama, 2010). Takayama explains that through mass media, Japanese people began to project their hopes and dreams about Japanese education reform into Finnish education. At the same time, the image of Finland as a social-democratic country with high quality of life and social equality resonated with the discourse of the Japanese progressives. Takayama summarizes that both parties ignore critical studies about Finnish education and use Finland and Finnish education to represent their narratives as an “uncontested truth (Takayama, 2010, p.65)” and to “repackage their preferred, romanticized past for the application of the present and the future (Takayama, 2010, p.68)”. Thus, Finnishness is imagined and constructed to fit their narratives.

With regard to the cultural context, Iwatake (2010) studies the representation of the Other through the film “Kamome Diner” and its reviews online. Here, the concept of the Other refers to the boundary between “us” and “them” and this boundary is collectively imagined, produced and reproduced by the media (Fuse, 2021). The film tells the story of a 38-year-old Japanese woman Sachie, who has relocated to Finland to pursue her dream of opening her own restaurant. There, Sachie meets two other Japanese women and they eventually help her with her diner in Helsinki (Iwatake, 2010). Iwatake explains that in the film the image of Finland centres around a

relaxed, slow and simple life as well as nature, instead of technology, society and politics through the brands such as Iittala, Arabia and Marimekko which are very visible in the film, and these brands represent warmth, simplicity and closeness to nature. According to the reviews of the film she examined, some Japanese feel nostalgia and comfort from the film which are explained as “imagined nostalgia”. According to Iwatake (2010), these pre-industrial and pre-modern, “healing” images can be better understood as counter-Orientalism. The film is about “the transnational disjunction of imagined other (Iwatake, 2010, p.217)” where only the main characters (i.e. the Japanese women) influence their “other”(i.e. the Finns). She concludes that in this film, otherness, which is Finnishness and also Japaneseness, is imagined, constructed, represented and contested and the film becomes a “battleground over the meaning of otherness (Iwatake, 2010, p.217)”.

Mitsui (2012) analyses the reasons for the popularity of Moomin from a socio-historical perspective and she discusses how Finnishness is constructed in Japanese society through Moomin. She describes that the image of Moomin has a strong connection to the “good old” days, lifestyles, values and nature, and that image criticizes capitalism, materialism and consumerism. According to Mitsui, Moomin represents a nostalgic yearning for the imagined past, and is part of the imagination about the future. In her study, she mentions that for Japanese people, Moomin becomes a representation of Finnish society. Then, Finnish society is imagined with nostalgia by Japanese people as “Japan’s potentially attainable utopia or a parallel universe (Mitsui, 2012, p.17)”. She analyses that this utopian discourse on Finland is to be considered as a new discourse of Japaneseness, or *Nihonjinron*. In *Nihonjinron*, the unwillingness of Japanese people to be “internationalised” is explained by the uniqueness and incommensurability of Japanese culture. The recent growing interest in Finland as an alternative future for Japan, and as a unique nation with similarities to Japanese culture, suggests that “Japanese society can restore its wholesome self by emulating the Finns (Mitsui, 2012, p.17)”.

Another study in the cultural field also examines the influence of “Finland boom” on the the reception of Kaurismäki films which are Finnish in their origin. In her doctoral dissertation, Fuse (2021) explores the Othering of Finland through analysing the representation of Aki Kaurismäki’s films and how they are used to construct Finnishness and Japaneseness by examining film reviews in Japanese magazines

from 1990 to 2008. She divides the reviews into two temporal phases: 1) 1990 to 2003, when Finland was still an irreverent small nation and often described negatively, 2) 2004 to 2008, after “Finland boom”. She explains “Kaurismäki-ness” is typically described as smallness, ordinary people and silence in Japanese magazines. Her findings suggest that in the magazines before 2003, Kaurismäki-ness is abstracted from the Finnish context, but instead, is resonating with Japaneseness. After “Finland boom”, his films were reinterpreted and Kaurismäki-ness became a “symbolic signifier of Finland (Fuse, 2021, p.147)”. In other words before “Finland boom”, in Japanese magazines Kaurismäki-ness was associated with the Japanese context and seen “like us”. But after 2003, Kaurismäki-ness began to represent Finland and Finnish people became “like us”. Thus, the meaning of Kaurismäki-ness or Finnishness can be regarded as flexible and transforms depending on the context. Her other findings show that there are the reviews which associate Finland with nostalgia and interprets them as “imagined nostalgia” and “counter-Orientalism”. She concludes that “Finland is the reachable, attainable, convenient and flexible Other to Japan (Fuse, 2021, p.151)”, which can be translated and interpreted according to consumers’ desire.

This study joins the abovementioned previous research by further exploring the representations of Finland and the construction, negotiation and imagining of Finnishness in Japan.

### **2.3 Theoretical framework**

The work of representation is the production of meanings through language (Hall, 1997). Here, language is understood in an inclusive and broad way, including texts, images, descriptions, and frames. Through representations, we make sense of the world and understand how it works. There are two main approaches for representation theory: the reflectionist approach and the constructionist approach (Orgad, 2012). According to the reflectionist approach, objects, people, and events themselves are the meaning and representation works as a mirror (Hall, 1997). The reflectionist believes “true meaning” exist in the world and they can access “the truth” and “the real” through representation (Orgad, 2012). In the constructionist approach,

meanings are given by representation. Meaning does not pre-exist in the world but, instead, it is constructed by the system of representation (Hall, 1997). Hall (1997) explains how the system of representation works. In our head, we have “mental representations” which correlate with all kinds of objects, people, and events. Through “mental representations”, we interpret the world meaningfully. We also need a shared language to communicate thoughts and meanings with each other.

### 2.3.1 Representation theory - the constructionist approach

According to Hall (1997), theoretical traditions of semiotics and structuralism have contributed to the constructionist approach. In the semiotics approach, the differences between signs produce meaning. *Signs* are organized into language that refers to objects, people, and events. They are produced by the connection between two elements: *signifier* and *signified*. The signifier is a word, image or even object, and the signified are the mental concepts that associate with the signifier (Hall, 1997). The connection between the signifier and the signified is not always fixed, therefore, the same signifier (words or images) can be associated with different signified (mental concepts). In this context, to understand the wider and cultural level of meaning production, Barthes and Heath (1977) introduced the concept of *denotation* and *connotation* (Orgad, 2012). Denotation refers to the “simple, basic, descriptive level, where consensus is wide and most people would agree on the meaning (Hall, 1997, 39)”, while connotation is the level on which signs are interpreted in terms of wider realm of social ideology. It means the same object (= the same denotation) may be interpreted completely differently in a different context (= connotation).

Based on the constructionist approach, it is possible to examine representations of Finland on Japanese Twitter; what images Japanese people have of Finland, and how they produce and reproduce them on social media.

### 2.3.2 Representation and power

Representation has power, since there is no true meaning pre-existing in the world, nor is the work of representation to reflect “the truth” of it. As Orgad (2012) says “any particular representation is only meaningful within a specific cultural setting (Orgad, 2012, 56)”. In other words, the centre of the work of representation is the symbolic production of difference and the symbolic marking of boundaries. Meaning is often

constructed in relation to the opposite, such as “us” and “them”, “good” and “bad” (*binary opposition*). In addition, representations mark boundaries in reproducing certain frameworks and ways of understanding which only make sense for a specific group of people or a culture (Orgad, 2012). *Stereotyping* also works to maintain the symbolic order. Stereotyping reduces the traits of someone or something to simple, vivid, memorable and widely recognised characteristics. Stereotyping represents objects, people, and events in simple, exaugurated and fixed ways, reproducing and reinforcing power relations (Orgad, 2012).

In the current complex multi-channel media environment, there is still power to control “dominant” meanings. Nevertheless, Orgad (2012) suggests that multi-channel media “offers a dynamic context for an open and complex field of diverse and contesting representations (Orgad, 2012, p. 78)”, therefore, this study also hopes to find not only the “dominant” or “preferred” representations, but also the “contesting” and “marginalized” ones by examining Twitter.

### 2.3.3 Representation as “imaginary signification”

Orgad (2012) suggests that the power of media representation is “in producing symbolic resources that feed individual and collective imaginations (Orgad, 2012, 90)”. The connection between representation and imagination is not new, but according to Appadurai (1996), imagination came to have a newly significant role in the age of globalization because of two forces; mass migration and the rapid flow of images and narratives in media space (Orgad, 2012).

Orgad (2012) explains that the digital media is “nourishing” the imagination as well as helping it to re-enter people’s everyday lives. “Local imagining”, the concept developed by Appadurai (1996), echoes the process of people’s interpretation and sense-making of media narratives and images. Historically, local imagining used to be more invisible and silent, but now it takes place in media space, such as on Twitter. Therefore, this study can examine people’s everyday meaning making.

### 3 Data and method

#### 3.1 Using data from Twitter

For this study, Twitter was chosen as the platform from which the data was collected. Initially, both Twitter and Instagram were considered as the aim of this study was to examine how Finnishness or the image of Finland is discussed in everyday contexts by laypeople and both platforms could provide interesting data. After a preliminary research, only Twitter was chosen because of the following reasons: when using #フィンランド (hashtag Finland) as a search word on Instagram, the posts that appeared were often unrelated or only partially related to Finland, whereas on Twitter the term was usually used as such in the tweet text. On Instagram, it was also more difficult to limit the number of posts according to popularity or visibility. The preliminary research did indicate that the contents related to Finland were different on the two platforms. Posts related to travel and design did seem more prevalent on Instagram than on Twitter.

##### 3.1.1 What is Twitter?

“Twitter is what’s happening in the world and what people are talking about right now (Twitter Inc., 2022, p.6)”.

Twitter (currently named X) is one of the social media platforms where users can engage in real time self-expression and conversation globally (Twitter Inc., 2022). Twitter was founded in 2006 (Vanian, 2022), and in Twitter’s 2022 annual report (Twitter Inc., 2022), the company claimed an average daily active user count of 217 million during the three-month period ending in December 2021. On Twitter, users can create, consume, distribute, and discover content that they are interested in, using short text messages, images, videos, audio and other formats (Murthy, 2018; Twitter Inc., 2022). Murthy (2018) explains that Twitter as a platform “allows users to a public web-based asynchronous ‘conversation’ (Murthy, 2018)” using short messages. Twitter differs from other social media platform such as Facebook because tweets are fully public unless they are published on a private account (i.e. “protected”, with only approved “followers” having access to the tweets).

One of the important characteristics of Twitter is that it is a media where the boundary between the media producers and the media consumers is blurred, thus it is possible for ordinary people to play a key role in the “flow” of influence, such as producing content and spreading news (Murthy, 2018). On this platform, people can communicate, have their voice heard, and even increase other people’s awareness on certain topics and start movements (Murthy, 2018; Bouvier & Rasmussen, 2022).

Another interesting characteristic of Twitter is event-following. As Twitter’s tagline changed from “What are you doing?” to “What’s happening?” in 2009, more information sharing tweets started to appear (Weller, Bruns, Burgess, Mahrt & Puschmann, 2013). Users employ Twitter to follow trends, things happening around them and/or in the world, what they have seen in the news, as well as to share information, experiences and opinions and eventually move on to other interest-provoking topics.

### 3.1.2 Twitter use in Japan

Twitter is one of the most popular social media platforms in Japan. Japan has at least 51.8 million active user accounts which makes it the second largest Twitter country after the U.S. (Datareportal, 2023). According to the survey of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication in Japan (2021), around 46% of respondents answered that they use Twitter (67% of 13-19 years old, 78% of 20-29 years old) (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, 2022). Twitter gained more popularity during and after the Tohoku earthquake in 2011, when people realized that Twitter enabled quick access to emergency information (Valaskivi, et al., 2019; Takaya, 2017).

Unlike in most countries in the world, in Japan Twitter users often choose to be anonymous. According to a 2014 survey, 75 % of the users in Japan use Twitter anonymously, while in the U.S. only 35 % of users are anonymous, 45 % in France, 31 % in South Korea and 39 % in Singapore (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, 2015). Anonymity has been recognized as a part of Japanese culture in cyberspace, as Saito and Kimura (2008) conclude in their comparative study on the use of personal homepages. According to them, Japanese users see cyberspace as an anonymous place unrelated to the real social networks and often seek consolation

and advice on the Internet. More recently, the findings of Takaya (2017) on Twitter use among college students suggest many individuals use Twitter as “a tool for collecting information they want.” Close to half of the respondents answered that they have several accounts, which also explains the high number of anonymous accounts.

### **3.2 Data and data collection**

The data set for this study consisted of 399 tweets. These are tweets written in Japanese with content related to Finland. Replies or retweets were not included in the data, since the purpose was not to follow discussions.

The data was collected using the Twitter mobile application on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The used search word and command were “フィンランド min\_faves: 1000”, since the purpose was to find tweets that included the word フィンランド (Finland) and had accumulated more than 1000 likes. To choose the research data, the resulting 399 tweets were examined qualitatively until a saturation point was reached and the contents became repetitive. Tweets by news sites were excluded. This resulted into the final data of 364 tweets that were posted on Twitter between September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022. These tweets were saved with screen shots on a mobile phone. Unintentionally, most of the data consisted of tweets posted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic was declared on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020). Visa restrictions to Japan ended as late as October 11, 2022 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023).

### **3.3 Method for analysis**

The data was analysed in two phases: first, the topics and themes were analysed using qualitative content analysis (QCA) and in the second phase, representation analysis was conducted using QCA again.

### 3.3.1 Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) is one of the methods used for analyzing data and interpreting its meaning. The data could be any qualitative materials, such as textual, verbal and visual data, and it can be already existing or collected data. QCA allows researchers to focus on the key aspects of data, which are specified by research questions, by classifying material using a coding frame (Schreier, 2012). A coding frame usually contains the dimensions (main categories), which decide the angle from where to look at the data. These dimensions are usually defined by research questions and can be tailored to fit the purpose of the study. Subcategories are the specifications of what is said about the dimensions (Schreier, 2012). QCA can also be combined with other qualitative methods (Schreier, 2012). QCA is a systematic and flexible method which allows context sensitive interpretation of material; thus, it is suitable for studying meaning making (Bouvier & Rasmussen, 2022). Bouvier and Rasmussen (2022) explain that this meaning making occurs everywhere in social media as people engage in the activity to make sense of the world. Therefore, this method is relevant for studying social media.

### 3.3.2 Representation Analysis

Representation analysis was used in the second phase of the analysis, together with QCA. Representation analysis is based on the theoretical framework of representation theory. According to Hall (1997), “representation can only be properly analysed in relation to the actual concrete forms which meaning assumes, in the concrete practices of signifying and interpreting (Hall, 1997, 9)”. In the constructionist approach, meanings are considered to be produced and constructed socially and culturally, so there are different ways of interpreting the world depending on the context (Hall, 1997). Therefore, in this study each tweet was examined in terms of what kind of meanings they produce about Finland and Japan. I looked for how and for which purpose the users adopt these meanings they produced and attached to Finland, for example, if they use it to support and strengthen their own claims or opinions, and if they use it to talk about Japan. At the same time, the power of representation was also examined, especially if they mark some kind of boundaries by representing Finland and Japan in certain ways.

### 3.3.3 The analysis process

After the collection of data, the screenshots of the tweets were moved from the mobile phone into the memory of my personal computer for analysis. The data was first thematized according to the topics of the tweet (dimension for QCA). Topics are more concrete whereas themes can be more abstract, for example, the topic of a tweet could be Iittala which would fall into, for example, the theme of culture. Themes were color coded and placed into files named by the themes (subcategories). The main themes were identified from the topics first, then some of the main themes were divided into sub-themes. The sub-themes would help to have a better insight into the matter being discussed on Twitter because some of the main themes are broad. During this process, tweets unrelated to Finland were removed from the data.

In the second phase, representation analysis was conducted, and the identified representations were categorized by using QCA. Each tweet was examined more closely in terms of how Finland is discussed based on the theoretical framework of this study, in order to find out what kinds of meanings are formed about the country of Finland and through these, what it tells us about the perceptions of Japan. This phase also uses QCA as a method for analysis, therefore subcategories of representations were also created as files on my computer in the process. When conducting QCA, the principle of exhaustiveness should be considered, therefore all tweets were categorised with no single tweet appearing twice under any category during the process of both phases.

## 3.4 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations particular to this study concern the positionality of the researcher as well as anonymity and the language of the data. There are specific ethical issues to consider when using data from social media platforms. This study should not be considered as a higher-risk study, since it does not focus on politically sensitive topics nor target people or groups which are vulnerable (Franzke, et. al., 2020). Even though it was not a realistic solution for this study to contact all the users of the tweets and notify or obtain consent, that should not be considered unethical since the data was publicly available, in other words, the tweets which have

been collected for this study were posted by the public accounts on Twitter. In Twitter's privacy policy, it is mentioned that tweets can be used for academic research, though users are often not aware of the publicity of their posts (Bouvier & Rasmussen, 2022). Therefore, even though they are publicly available, the acquired data should be de-identified, and, especially when presenting the data as an excerpt, the researcher should be careful so that it will not be re-identified (Franzke et al., 2020; Bouvier & Rasmussen, 2022). As I have translated the cited tweets from Japanese to English, re-identification cannot be easily done. Nonetheless, as it is explained in 3.1.2, tweets are often posted by anonymous accounts which makes it difficult to identify the users even from the original data. Moreover, this study is not interested in the identity of the users and their names are not used in this thesis.

The language of the data is Japanese, and this causes both advantages and disadvantages. Since I am a native Japanese speaker, there were no difficulties in choosing and analysing data, and there was no need for a translator. This is an advantage because I can understand the data well enough and there is less risk for misunderstandings. On the other hand, this thesis is written in English which means I must translate some of the data and for most readers the original data might not be easily accessible.

Another thing to consider is positionality. My positionality as an insider, a Japanese person who lives in Finland, can affect the interpretation. For example, I would notice false claims and exaggerated descriptions of Finland, Finnish society, or the Finnish system unlike a Japanese person with no experience in living in Finland. Therefore, when interpreting the data, I might be inclined to interpret the tweets from the point of view of a Japanese person who creates ideal models or images rather than stating facts about Finland. Keeping this in mind and by conducting the analysis carefully, I have tried to minimise the bias I might bring into analysing the data.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 First phase: What do they talk about Finland?

In the first phase of the analysis, the following themes were identified (Table 1). The main themes are topics related to the Russian invasion, nature, travel destination, culture, education, and society. Because the main themes are broad, sub-themes were identified under some of the main themes. The topics related to the Russian invasion are divided into sub-themes of history and national defence, culture is divided into brands, art, language and customs, education is divided into education as social welfare and school, and culture is divided into work-life balance, gender equality and mindset under the main theme of society. Sub-themes are intended to provide more detailed information on what kinds of themes appeared related to Finland.

In the Context of Ongoing War			Nature	Travel Destination	Culture					Education		Society				Other	Unrelated to Finland	Total
History	National Defence	Other			Brands	Art	Language	Customs	Other	Education-welfare	School	Work-Life Balance	Gender Equality	Mindset	Other			
20	29	15	24	28	20	8	6	18	17	14	12	8	24	12	16	36	57	364
64					69					26		60						

**Table 1.** Themes of the tweets

The results show that there are many tweets about Finnish society, especially gender equality. Topics which appeared under the theme of gender equality were often related to politics, such as concerning the government members and Sanna Marin who was the Prime Minister during the time. Education was also often talked about, both the school system and the education as a part of social welfare. Finnish education has been attracting attention as described in greater detail in Chapter 2, and the data indicates a continuous interest in education in Japan as well. Culture is also one of the themes which appeared in the data quite often. There are posts about Moomin, Iittala, Finnish language and words, sauna, heavy metal and so forth. Interestingly, the data also shows there is a lot of discussion about Finland in the context of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, Finnish history (especially during World War II), national defense (including policies), NATO, and the military. This also shows that Twitter is event-driven, but even so, the number of tweets in this theme seems to be significant.

Not including the tweets which are not related to Finland, there are total of 307 tweets. The results show that 271 tweets out of the 307 tweets fall into the six main themes and most of the tweets in the four main themes can be then categorized into eleven sub-themes. This might mean that Twitter users talk about Finland when it tends to be on certain topics, in other words, there might be some kind of rules regarding how and when Finland should be discussed on Japanese Twitter.

## 4.2 Second phase: How is Finland represented?

In the second phase of analysis, the tweets were categorized into the following four categories of representations of Finland: The ideal model for Japan (1. a model for a fair society, 2. a model for a happier life), magical and consumable Finland, small but brave and a strong country, and questioning “the dream country Finland”. In the tweets, Finland is represented in certain ways by the users who construct meanings about Finland, which could be interpreted according to the context by using representation analysis. The tweets which do not fall into any of the four categories nor form its own category were categorized under “Other”. To understand the meanings given to aspects of Finland and Finnish culture, fourteen subcategories of representation were formed.

The Ideal model for Japan						Magical and consumable Finland				Small but brave and a strong country			Questioning “the dream country Finland”	Others
A model for a fair society			A model for a happier life			Magical place you can visit	Finland through its brands and pop culture	A sense of affinity between the two cultures	Other	Finnish history which is like the current situation of Ukraine	Finnish national defence-Taking action to protect its own citizen	Other		
Great social welfare supporting its citizens	Gender equal politics and society	Mature country which does things right	A relaxed and better work-life balance	Mindset as a key to happiness	Ideal school and the role of the teacher									
24	22	14	6	13	12	53	26	25	5	19	31	15	14	28
60			31			109			65					

**Table 2.** Representations of Finland

In the following sub-chapters the findings of each category are explained with the help of examples from the data.

### 4.2.1 The ideal model country for Japan

In many tweets, Finland is seen as the ideal model for Japan to learn and follow. Finland is constructed as close to a perfect place where things are much better on a general level and people live a better life. This representation can be divided roughly

into two categories, because some tweets are portraying Finland as the country which has better systems, including social welfare, politics and society in general, while others talk more about the quality of life and the happiness of an individual. There are small differences between these two, especially when it comes to the representation of Japan. In general, Finland is presented as a model country in order to highlight the shortcomings of Japanese society. The tweets in the first subcategory criticize the Japanese government or the national system by showing the “amazing” aspects of the Finnish society and social welfare. In the second subcategory, the question is more about the way of life than the national system. The tweets give suggestions or tips to Japanese people on how they could live a happier life taking after the way of life in Finland where the working life is relaxed and everything that is problematic in Japan works better, allowing people to live a happier life.

#### *4.2.1.1 A model for a fair society*

One of the most significant representations of Finland in the data are Finland as a fair and mature country where better decisions are made for the people. In many tweets, Finland is mentioned as having a good social welfare system, and being a gender equal country, where individuals are provided with fair opportunities and treated equally. This representation of Finland is often accompanied with a perception of Japan by pointing out, either explicitly or implicitly, the lack of social welfare, gender equality, good political decisions or fairness in general, and suggesting that Japan can be a better country by learning from Finland. This representation is prominent when users are talking about social welfare, society and politics and other topics.

#### *Great social welfare supporting its citizens*

In many tweets, the users see Finland as a country where fair opportunities for education are provided.

A large part of the tweets mentions the free higher education (university) available in Finland. Some tweets react to the news of the extension of compulsory education in Finland, but those also emphasize that all levels of education are free in Finland. Notably, at the same time many of the tweets in this theme draw comparisons to Japanese education and social welfare and/or make suggestions about the Japanese system.

*Who bears the cost for the university education differs a lot depending on the countries. In Finland, the government covers 96.2% of the cost and the student or the parents only have to pay for 3.8%. Average cost ratio of the counties listed is about 7 (the government) :3. The country which uses less money on education than America does is we, Japan. It is like telling children they must start working quickly except for the rich boys and girls. (a picture of the graph) (Sep. 2, 2022)*

In this tweet, Finland is represented as a country that has a government which invests in education, as opposed to Japan where the opportunity for higher education is not provided equally for all children.

*It seems like Finland, where education is free until the master's degree, decided to extend the compulsory education and school food and materials will be also available for free until 18 years of age. Some people say, "it is natural since the tax is so high" but there are many things to learn for Japan, where people tend to think "it is their own fault if they became poor because of having children". There is no future for these countries which do not take care of children. (May. 2, 2022)*

In this tweet, the image of Finland as a country that takes care of children and has a future is apparent, in contrast to Japan.

Oodi, which is a new public library in Helsinki, is mentioned in several tweets as one of the symbols of good social welfare and design, and a place where citizens can spend time and use different facilities and tools such as 3D printers for free of charge.

*Please take a look, just a glance would be fine, at the central library in the happiest country in the world, Finland, I wish I was born in this rich country... (pictures of Oodi) (Feb. 9, 2022)*

The user uses characterization "rich country (豊か<sup>な</sup>国)" which does not only mean wealthy, but also rich in many aspects and a more complex way, and can possibly be interpreted to a "mature society and fulfilled people".

Sanna Marin also seems to be a symbol of an equal society. Several tweets, like the example below, are about her and her life story, and they imply that the Finnish social welfare and gender equality allowed her to become Prime Minister.

*NHK interview of Prime Minister Marin who is on a visit to Japan. I had to sigh because of the huge differences between Finnish politics and Japanese ones.*

*She was raised by her mother and her same-sex partner, started a part-time job to support her family at 15 years of age and became Prime Minister at the age of 34. Including herself, all the chairpersons of the parties which form the cabinet are women. They aim to build a society where every child can wish to become anything and can live safely and happily. (May. 12, 2022)*

Overall, the data in this category shows that Japanese users talk about the Finnish education system as a part of a good social welfare system, and many of them believe that it provides equal opportunities and respects individuals whereas in Japan, these are not accomplished, or the situation might even be completely opposite. Japan should be learning from the examples set by Finland.

#### *Gender equal society*

Many of the tweets in this category are about Finnish politics and cabinet members, which consists of several young female politicians, including the Prime Minister-at-the-time, Sanna Marin. Some of the tweets are clearly influenced by the formation of a new cabinet in 2019, and some are reacting to the news of PM Marin “partying”. These tweets are often highlighting Finland’s gender equality in politics, nonetheless the age of politicians is often mentioned as well.

*By the way, there is almost like no discrimination at all against women in Finland compared to Japan, because there a female in her 30s could get chosen for PM, so I got surprised when she got criticised for what she did in her private life. (Aug. 29, 2022)*

In this tweet, the user uses the expression of “almost like no discrimination at all” which shows that gender equality and Finland are strongly connected.

*So now Suga-cabinet is topical because the members are grandpas, average age of over 70, but let's take a look at the members of the Finnish cabinet. 'PM is a 34-year-old female', '12 out of 19 are female' (pictures of Japanese cabinet and Finnish one) (Sep. 16, 2020)*

This tweet emphasizes the differences between the Japanese cabinet members and the Finnish members. It makes fun of Japanese politicians all being “grandpas” and a society which only allows older and/or male politicians to become a member of the cabinet, whereas in Finland there are many young and/or female politicians in the cabinet and that the society makes it possible. Here there is also a clear and perhaps stark contrast between Japanese politicians and Finnish politicians – old and mostly male versus young and mostly female.

Gender equality in Finland is not only talked about from a political perspective. A few tweets point out that it is common in Finland to get obstetric analgesia for labour, while it is rare in Japan.

*In Finland, it is common to use obstetric analgesia for labour, and it was used 93% of the time in 2019. It is free. It started to become common in the 80s. In Japan, only 6% of the labour gets obstetric analgesia and it is very expensive. (...) Nothing is going to change if the politics of Japan Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists is occupied by full of old men. Japan, where analgesia is not used and only a breathing technique is the main way, is like Finland in the 60s. (Apr. 5, 2022)*

In this tweet, Finland is portrayed as a country where women's pain is not ignored and is taken seriously. The user also claims that the Japanese situation in terms of gender equality is 60 years behind of Finland.

From the perspective of gender equality, Finland is seen as a country which is ahead of Japan. Politics is discussed more often since the Finnish cabinet and Sanna Marin were topical at the time and the differences between Japanese and Finnish politicians are very clear, which makes it easy to draw a comparison between them on Twitter. In many tweets, there seems to be an idea that in Finnish society women are treated

more equally and respectfully and, consequently young women can be successful in politics, even to the point that they can become Prime Ministers.

#### *Mature country which does things right*

The tweets in this category talk about different topics, but all of them refer to them in a way that “what Finland is doing must be better/right”, because the users think Finland is “a mature country” which is capable of better things.

One tweet is about the high voter turnout of the Finnish parliamentary election in 2019, and the user believes that that is what led to the formation of the cabinet at that time, which in their opinion is a much “better” cabinet than the Japanese one.

A couple of tweets discuss the covid-19 restrictions and/or policies. The point is to show how Finland handles the situation much better than Japan. In their tweets, Finland’s approach is used to convince people that what Japan is doing wrong, because Finland is taking a different approach, which must be the “better” and “correct” way.

#### *4.2.1.2 A Model for a happier life*

Finland is often talked about from the perspective of “the happiest country in the world”. The tweets in this category promote to people that the Finnish way of doing things, such as work-life, mindset or school systems and rules are the key to happiness and a better life.

#### *Relaxed and better work-life balance*

Finland as a country is connected to having a good work-life balance. On Twitter, topics appear related to discussions on good work-life balance which means shorter and flexible working hours, longer holidays, and a more relaxed and less stressful working environment. Some of these tweets also suggest that these are things that could be learned from Finland, in order to live a happier life.

*My Taiwanese friend who did his summer internship in Finland told me that it was “chill”. Went to work and the first words were “Well, let’s go get some coffee”. Beside the lunch time there were like three coffee breaks per day and*

*there was a barista working for the company and the coffee was free. And everyone goes home at 4 o'clock. He said that he had asked his colleagues, "how many hours was I supposed to work anyway?". He also said that he could no longer work in Taiwan. After hearing this story, especially when I know how it is in Japan, I really wonder how the Finnish economy works. Well during the summer, the society is also on holiday, so I guess it is different from normal time. (Aug. 24, 2022)*

In this tweet, the user tells the story about a Finnish workplace experience the user heard from his/her friend. The user expresses the Finnish work environment as being laid-back, mentioning coffee breaks and short working hours. However the user adds that summertime can be seen as an exception in Finland as many people have long summer holidays. It is difficult for him/her to believe that the Finnish society and economy are doing fine with this relaxed working style because the user is used to the Japanese working environment. Tweets in this category show how overworking has become normalised in Japan and how there is an alternative way to work and a better work-life balance, such as the one in Finland.

#### *Mindset as a key to the happiness*

The mindset and customs of Finnish people are talked about as one of the things Japanese people could learn from Finland to live a happier life. Mindset is often brought up in connection to Finland being "the happiest country in the world" by Japanese Twitter users and the mindset that people have is shown as a key to a better life.

*I was an exchange student in the University of Helsinki in Finland when I was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of university, most of the students there were older than me, and students in their 30s were not uncommon. Everyone can come to study in university whenever they want to. I will turn 32 next month. This reminds me of them who I thought of as old men and what a fulfilling life they had. (June. 22, 2021)*

The user expresses that the older Finnish students he/she met had a "fulfilling life", because they can choose to study at any point in their life, which is not common at all

in Japan. Finland is also described as a country where it is socially acceptable for individuals to do what they want for their career, including re-educating themselves, which the user thought leads to a “fulfilling life”.

*The happiest country, Finland. Good social security or shorter working hours are often highlighted, but there are other reasons for happiness. They say going to sauna, reading books, enjoying a meal with friends and looking at the lake while drinking coffee make them happy. After all, lowering the “standard value” of happiness is the best way to become happy, I guess. (May. 7, 2021)*

In this tweet, the user mentions things which do not sound so special as things that make Finnish people happy. The user tries to convey that Finnish people have different values than Japanese people, and that is the reason for the difference in happiness.

The tweets in this category are trying to point out that the mindsets and customs that you can find in Finland are the qualities which are missing in Japan and that they are the key to happiness.

#### *Ideal school and the role of teachers*

These tweets typically talk about things such as rules and events in Finnish schools. The teacher’s role in school and in society is also an important topic in these tweets. Some tweets specifically mention the differences regarding the job of a teacher in Finland in contrast to Japan. The differences include examples of there being less strict rules, fewer tests, less homework, fewer events in Finnish schools and even the teaching style and classrooms are less conventional. They also claim that teachers in Finland are more respected in society, and that they can focus on teaching because other work, such as after school clubs or cleaning the classroom which are usually a part of the teachers’ job in Japan, is carried out by other staff members. This is why the teachers in Finland can leave the workplace after reasonable amount of working hours and have longer holidays, which is not the case in Japan. There is a common understanding among Japanese people about the issues of strict school rules and overworking of teachers in Japan on a general level, thus the differences are

highlighted. Some of the tweets point out that these differences arise from the different approaches of Finland and Japan regarding how the school system and the teachers should be.

*I know there are pros and cons but, in Finland, there is no sports festival. No entrance ceremony, no graduation ceremony, no opening and closing ceremony of the school term. The amount of lectures is about half of that of Japan, and there is almost no homework. There are no such things as entrance exams, achievement tests, crammed schools or adjusted standard deviation score. There is no school rule related to how they should dress or what kind of hair style should they have. Free education from elementary school to university. Considering my son has been refusing to attend school and has ASD, this is like my dream of school came true. (Oct. 16, 2022)*

In this tweet, the differences between Finnish and Japanese schools are emphasized and while the user acknowledges that “there are pros and cons”, he/she sees the Finnish school as him/her “dream of school”. The user idealizes the Finnish school system and presents Finland as a country where people have different views and values about school environments.

*In Finland, teachers are respected as “professionals in educating children”, so they are given the time they need to focus on teaching and raising the pupils so that most of their hours go into these two things as much as possible. There are fewer events, contacting parents is done online and cleaning and school food is other staff members’ responsibility. Why doesn’t Japan introduce this Nordic education system? (Oct. 1, 2022)*

This tweet shows the role of teachers in Finland as an ideal model for Japan to follow and learn from, as it clearly mentions what Japan should introduce into their school system. Through these representations of Finland, the tweets criticize the Japanese school system and point out that it should be changed.

#### 4.2.2 Magical and consumable Finland

Finland is also seen as something consumable. Finland is represented this way when people talk about culture, customs, nature and familiar brands. These topics are also used in relation to tourism. At the same time, Finland is regarded as a country which is far away, unique, and magical, but somehow it does exist and, furthermore, induces feelings of closeness and familiarity. Finland is associated with positive and warm feelings, and there is also a sense of affinity. These properties make Finland consumable. Finland is a cute and fairytale-like place for Japanese people to visit and something they can consume by purchasing Iittala glassware or products with Moomin characters or by visiting a Finnish style sauna on the weekend.

*A magical place that you can visit*

In the tweets of this category, Finland is imagined as a beautiful, magical, and sometimes even an unreal place, like in a fairy tale. It is a place with Northern lights, beautiful nature, and also modern cities. At the same time, Finland is represented as a place which actually exists, and a place Japanese people could and even should visit.

Most of the tweets in this category include picture and there is generally less text used, in comparison to the tweets in the other themes. The pictures include scenery such as winter landscapes (mostly in Lapland), Northern lights, Moominworld, lakes and forests in summer, cherry blossom trees in Roihuvuori as well as landscapes of the cities including architecture, shops, and other things.

*Photo of a scenery as if it was from a different world which was shot in Finland. In Lapland, where the temperature can go as low as -40 °C, the trees freeze in weird shapes and create a sense of alienness in this beautiful scenery. Photo taken by the Italian photographer Niccolò Bonfadini. (Feb. 1, 2021)*

In this tweet, Finnish scenery is described “as if it was from a different world” which emphasizes the unreal and magical image of Finland.

*The reason I like winter now is because I fell in love with the beauty of the clear sky in Finland. (Jan. 10, 2021)*

The user says he/she “fell in love” with the clear sky in Finland in this tweet. The tweet suggests that, somehow, the Finnish sky is not the same as the Japanese one, but more beautiful and impressive.

*21<sup>st</sup> day of my exchange life in Finland.*

*A house in pastel color, pink morning glow, colorful lunch, living in Nordic countries makes my heart sparkle. (photos) (Jan. 27, 2022)*

This tweet represents Finland as some kind of a fairytale-like place, where just living there makes the person’s “heart sparkle”.

*Finland through its brands and pop culture*

Some tweets which focus on brands and pop culture are known and popular in Japan. Some of these include Moomin and its creator Tove Jansson, Iittala, Santa Claus and heavy metal. Finland is seen as the origin of familiar brands, characters, and culture.

*I have visited there. It was a space where I am healed by glassware with beautiful colors and shapes, and I could feel the history. It was so great! I would love to go to Finland someday-!! #iittala-exhibition #iittala @shop\_iittala (photos) (Nov. 6, 2022)*

The Iittala brand is recognized by many Japanese people and associated with Finland. The user in this tweet says he/she began to wish to visit Finland after he/she had seen an Iittala exhibition in Japan.

*Hey... listen... this is... not Finland... but Saitama... This is actually “Tove Jansson Akebono Children’s Forrest Park” in Hanno, Saitama... This looks exactly like Moomin Valley doesn’t it...? That’s right, the valley where those who look like mozzarella cheese live... And I have one more thing to say...Hanno (飯能) is not read like “meshinou”, but “hannou”... (photos) (Nov. 8, 2020)*

The Moomin brand is very well known in Japan and the characters are familiar to many people. In this tweet, Finland is seen through the Moomin brand, and the user

explains that the place where the picture was taken looks like where the Moomin characters live, but it actually exists in Japan thanks to this attraction.

*This day four years ago was the day I strongly thought I want to go to Finland. (May, 28. 2021)*

This tweet is accompanied with pictures from the Japanese TV show where a Finnish person talks about school classes. In the pictures, it is shown that a Finnish person says that heavy metal is also included in the music classes. Here, the user says to have learnt that in Finland they teach heavy metal in school, which made him/her want to visit Finland.

*A sense of affinity between the two cultures*

Finnish culture is mentioned as something interesting or attractive to Japanese people, or even as something quite similar to Japanese culture. Sauna, or Finnish style sauna (löyly, ロウリュ), appears in the data several times, particularly in the context of introducing new facilities or hotels in Japan which have a “Finnish style sauna”, since saunas have become more popular and started trending in recent years.

*Revitalizing glamping “Nolla Noguri” is amazing... It is a glamping facility opened in April, where people can enjoy Finnish style outdoor sauna and Nordic style BBQ. In the tent sauna, you can try out löyly with an aroma which you could choose from 8 different aromas. It only takes 2 hours from the city center of Tokyo, so I want to go there and get revitalized in the pool and fresh air bath... (May. 30, 2021)*

In this tweet the user describes a new glamping facility (luxury camping) which focuses on the Nordic theme and, especially, the Finnish style sauna is described in detail. Sauna, or the style of sauna which is currently very popular especially among young people, is strongly connected to Finland. But, at the same time, sauna has been a familiar concept to Japanese people for quite some time already.

*Name of a place in Finland is too much like a scream of Japanese people. (photo from google map of Äänekoski) (Dec. 6, 2021)*

This tweet talks about the similarities between the Japanese and Finnish language. Although these languages belong to different language families and use different alphabets, and therefore do not intuitively seem similar at all, some Finnish words sound familiar to Japanese people as the one mentioned in this tweet. Äänekoski is a place name in Finland, but when it is pronounced, it sounds almost the same as the sentence “oh, I love cats” in Japanese.

*By the way, do you know there is a mushroom called “brain mushroom” which is really delicious when you boil it and then eat it. But 1. If you eat it raw, you will die. 2. If you suck the air from the boiling water when boiling the mushroom, you will die, too. 3. If you don’t consider well about ventilation, your neighbors will die, too. Dangerous mushrooms like this exist and in Finland people boil and eat them even though some people get sick or even die every year. (June. 25, 2022)*

This tweet mentions that some people in Finland eat brain mushrooms (*korvasieni* “ear mushroom”, in Finnish) despite them being poisonous and needing proper preparation to make them edible. This tweet implies that there is a similarity with Japanese food culture, for example, eating fugu (pufferfish).

The data in this category mention different kinds of customs or cultures, but they are usually discussed along with a hint of positive emotions which make Finnish people appear interesting and Finland into a country where Japanese people would want to go. Additionally, these tweets sometimes point out similarities between Finland and Japan, and this makes it seem like Finnish culture is something that is familiar to Japanese people.

#### 4.2.3 A small but brave and a strong country

When Japanese Twitter users talk about the ongoing Russian attack on Ukraine, Finland is often presented in a specific way – as a small but brave and a strong country which is currently relevant. Although the representation of Finland is generally the same, Japanese users talk about Finland in the context of the ongoing

Russian invasion from two perspectives: Finnish history and Finnish national defences including the military.

The events in the Finnish history are sometimes shown as relevant or similar to the current situation in Ukraine, which highlights the similarities of both countries, both being small but brave and protecting their own territories, thus emphasizing the “evilness” of Russia. This has an effect of making the binary distinction between the “bad Russia” and the “good Ukraine” even clearer. At the same time, these tweets also teach people the importance of supporting a small and brave country, in this case Ukraine, by reminding them of what has happened in Finland.

Meanwhile, when the topic is about Finnish national defence, there is often a comparison with Japan. In this context, Finland becomes a model for Japan again, but of a totally different kind to the one in Chapter 4.2.1., i.e. “the ideal model for Japan”. Some tweets even mention the similarity between Finland and Japan in relation to Russia. Through this representation of Finland, the tweets attempt to criticize the attitude of the Japanese national defence towards Russia and its invasion. This representation of Finland -which is “a small but brave country which takes action to protect its citizens”, reflect the idea of how Japan should be.

#### *Finnish history in the context of the current situation of Ukraine*

There are many tweets which mainly talk about the Finnish history, such as the winter war and the situation of Finland during the cold war, in relation to the current situation of Ukraine. The users point out the similarities between the past and the present by bringing up lessons from Finnish history that are currently relevant. For example, the users point out the similarities between Finland during World War II and Ukraine today. Both of them are represented as smaller countries fighting the bigger neighbor (the Soviet Union or Russia). In addition to mentioning the similarities, they also remind people of what has happened to Finland before, and that the world should support Ukraine as Finland should have been supported back then. There are also tweets about how bravely Finnish people fought against the Soviet Union during WWII, including specific stories of fighting and references to important figures such as Mannerheim who was the Finnish field marshal and later became the President. “Finlandization” was also mentioned and explained as an important concept to understand the situation in Ukraine and Europe. Nonetheless,

when the Japanese users talk about these topics mentioned above, Finland is represented as a small but brave country which fought fiercely against the Soviet Union like Ukraine is now fighting Russia.

*The reason why Finland could establish “Finlandization” was because Finland fought back thoroughly and fought fierce fights to the death against the Soviet Union and didn’t lose, and not because Finland wanted to, or if Finland didn’t fightback well, it would have been annexed. This is why you shouldn’t just casually talk about Finlandization. #ShinsoNews (Feb. 23, 2022)*

The user refers to a television news broadcast that had discussed Finlandization. The tweet is an attempt to explain the background of Finlandization.

*Though the entire world is buzzing about Russia being so bossy and violent against Ukraine. I cannot help but think about the greatness of Finland which, even though as a result it had no choice but to cede Karelia, fought very well and bravely against the Soviet Union led by Stalin, who is so much stronger and more violent compared to the current Russia. (Jan. 25, 2022)*

Similarly to the previous excerpt, Finland and its history are mentioned here as relevant in the context of the current Russian invasion of Ukraine. Finland is represented as a “great” country which fought against the “stronger and violent” Stalin’s Soviet Union.

*Finnish national defence -Taking action to protect its own citizens*

In the discussions on the Finnish national defence and defence policy, Finland is portrayed as a country which acts to protect its citizens and is ready to fight. Here, Finland is paralleled with Ukraine but contrasted with Japan, which is represented as reluctant to defend its territory. The similarities of Finland and Japan are also mentioned, for example both are neighbouring countries of Russia, both lost territory to Russia during WWII (Karelia, Northern Territories). By pointing out these similarities, the users communicate that Japan should be taking some kind of action in order to be prepared for emergencies.

The most significant topic in this category is NATO and the application process of Finland. Some of the users contrast the inaction of Japan with the historical significance of Finland joining NATO, as well as the action taken by Finland to protect its own citizens.

*Finnish Prime Minister, the 34-year-old Sanna Marin. She stated, “everything about the security environment has changed” and plans are to submit the application for NATO membership within this month. The next generation has made a decision on their own responsibility. In Japan, it seems like the middle and old aged generations, who are bad at looking straight into the reality, are influencing politics and public opinion too much with their rigid thinking in many fields. (May. 7, 2022)*

This is one of the tweets which compares the actions taken by Finland to Japan, in terms of national defence. In this tweet, the user views the actions Finland is taking, which is the plan by the leadership of a younger generation to apply for a NATO membership, as something positive, while criticizing the way political decisions are made in Japan and its lack of action. Finland is seen as a strong nation with strong people who are ready to take action to protect themselves. And there is also a clear message that Japan should be taking some kind of action in terms of national defence and should try to be better prepared if something happens.

*I’m seriously about to cry. “Customs of Finland, which is the happiest country in the world, are deep. “Fighting with salvaged weapons and ammunition”, “Motti (encirclement) tactics”, “getting food from an enemy country”, “restoring antique weapons”, “immediate peace when possible”, “cannot fight with only weapons and courage”. I tweet this because I wanted you to know that surrender (kohuku) is close at hand. (photos from the movie “The Unknown Soldier”) (Sep. 16, 2022)*

In addition to the NATO application process, Finland is also talked about as a militarily capable country on Japanese Twitter in general. For example, in this tweet the user is influenced by the other tweets about Finland as the happiest nation which is explained in Chapter 4.2.1., but presents a different image of Finland by stating military strategies or techniques as “customs” that the Finnish army has used. The

user copies the last sentence from the other tweet which says “happiness (幸福 kohuku) is close at hand” and changed it to “surrender (降伏 kohuku)”. The user tries to express a different image of Finland, one that is about a brave and smart military country.

*In a hotel in Finland*

*Me “where is room 301?”*

*A hotel worker “I will show you”*

...

*A hotel worker “To begin with, here is the nuclear shelter”*

*Me “Nuclear shelter” (photo) (Dec. 10, 2020)*

The user expresses astonishment of the fact that there is a nuclear shelter in a random hotel in Finland. In the context of Japan where nuclear shelters are rare, Finland is portrayed as a country that takes national security more seriously.

#### 4.2.4 Questioning “the dream country Finland”

There are several tweets in my data which question the stereotypical images of Finland.

One of the arguments opposing the image of Finland as the ideal model country that was described in Chapter 4.2.1.

*I used to be a liberal as well, but I didn't have enough faith to install the ideology of ignoring the facts, for example, Finland has a lower birthrate than Japan, there are 500,000 homeless people in America which is much more than Japan and the usage of drugs is also so common and keep shouting “in Western countries!”. (May. 7, 2022)*

This tweet is questioning people who continue to idealize the Western societies, even when they have obvious and even worse problems than Japan. In addition to questioning the idealisation of Finland, this tweet points out the low birth rate of Finland. They argue that better social welfare or better politics cannot solve the issue

of the declining birth rate. Some even say that the people who idealize the Nordic welfare model, or Finland, should “wake up from the dream”.

*For some reason, a certain amount of Japanese people believe “an earthly paradise” exists somewhere, and some of them think that Nordic countries like Finland and Sweden are that paradise. Some others, although they are the minority, even believe “everything Japan has lost” can be found in Muslim countries. Based on my personal experiences, there are pros and cons in every country and such a thing as a paradise doesn’t exist. (Sep. 15, 2022)*

This tweet also questions the idealization of Finland, especially related to the image of Finland as the happiest country in the world.

*In the gender-equal and developed country of Finland, 1 out of 10 teachers are attacked by students and surprisingly 40% of the children are born outside of marriage. The divorce rate is 50%, unemployment rate is 8.6%, unemployment rate among the young (15-24 y) is 22.4%, 4<sup>th</sup> in gun ownership rate in the world, homicide incident rate is 5 times that of Japan. Let’s laugh at the call for gender equality by this kind of a falling-apart-country. (Feb. 6, 2021)*

Another argument, as seen in the tweet above, is that Finland is actually neither a safe nor a good country by displaying crime and other statistics, which are meant as a counter argument against the happy, fair and gender equal image of Finland.

*This is the idealized image of Finland, but it doesn’t usually work like that in reality. There are people who take one-month long holidays, but it is paid leave so it is not so easy to get one, right?  
Renting a cottage alongside a lake for a week will cost a lot, so it is not like everyone does that. People just go to a cheap campsite or visit their relatives’ place on weekends at best. (Aug. 14, 2022)*

Some of the tweets in this category are tweeted by one user who mentions or implies in his/her tweets that he/she lives in Finland. The user attempts to “correct” the information of several trending tweets about Finland by stating that Finland is not

such a good country as some Japanese people think, and remind them about negative aspects of Finland.

Although the tweets in this category challenge the stereotypical image of “the dream country Finland”, at the same time they reproduce the representation of Finland as such.

## 5 Discussion

As mentioned in the literature review, previous research has shown that Finnishness has been constructed, negotiated, and imagined in Japan in various ways. In this study, the focus has been on the representations of Finland on Japanese Twitter. The analysis describes the meanings attached to Finland and Finnishness as they are imagined on this particular social media space.

Furthermore, perhaps the most interesting findings of this study are the different kinds of representations of Finland produced on Twitter, even though it is important to remember that Twitter contents can be heavily influenced by current events around the world. As Orgad (2012) mentions, by examining Twitter, my study could show diverse and contesting representations of Finland, and not only the more “dominant” representations. For example, it could be argued that the representations shown in Chapter 4.2.3. “A small but brave and a strong country” and Chapter 4.2.4. “Questioning ‘the dream country Finland’ ” are the contesting representations. It might have been difficult to find these representations elsewhere than social media, since social media offers the opportunity to hear the voice of ordinary people, unlike “top-down” mainstream news media (Bouvier & Rasmussen, 2022).

This study has found that when people talk about Finland on Twitter, the way they do so often marks boundaries. The meaning about Finland is constructed in relation to its opposite in some representations. This binary opposition can be seen especially in the results of Chapter 4.2.1. “The ideal model for Japan”, as well as “Finnish national defence - Taking action to protect its own citizen” in Chapter 4.2.3. For example, in “a model for a fair society (Chapter 4.2.1.1.)”, Japan was portrayed as an unfair and immature society and Finland its opposite. This is especially clear when discussing politics with pictures of the cabinet members, which highlights the binary opposition of old versus young politicians and mostly men in contrast to mostly women politicians. In “a model for a happier life (Chapter 4.2.1.2.)”, the Twitter users see Finnish people as those who live happy and relaxed lives, while Japanese people live busy and unhappy lives. When people talk about the Russian invasion and the actions taken by Finland, as shown in Chapter 4.2.3., Finland is seen as a strong country which takes the necessary actions to protect itself and its citizens, but Japan is seen as an indecisive country which does not act.

Stereotyping was also present throughout the results. It may be partly due to the limitation of the characters on Twitter posts, but in most of the tweets only one or a few aspects of Finland are mentioned, which are depicted and represented in simple, exaugurated and fixed ways.

## 5.1 Representations of Finland

There are similarities between the findings of this study and those described in the pre-existing studies discussed earlier. Takayama (2010) concludes his study by stating that Finnishness is imagined as an “uncontested truth” and in the ways that that fits the narratives of the conservatives and the progressives in discussions related to education. The results of this study also suggest that Finland is represented similarly on Twitter. In Chapter 4.2.1. “The ideal model for Japan”, Finnishness is imagined to be consistent with the narratives of the progressives. In “A model for a fair society” in Chapter 4.2.1., Finland was represented as a better society which included topics such as gender equality, social welfare, education policy, and as the ideal model from which Japanese society and politicians should learn. As Takayama (2010) explains, images of Finland and other Nordic countries, such as social democratic, high quality of life and social equality, resonate with the Japanese progressives. These images have been circulating in mass media and social media as well. On the other hand, in “Small but brave and a strong country (Chapter 4.2.3.)”, with regard to the ongoing Russian invasion, Finland was represented in ways that align with more conservative narratives. Finland was represented as a strong military country, bravely protecting its citizens. Here, Finland is idealized, at the same time that Japan is seen as incompetent and uninterested in its defense. This image fits well with the views of the Japanese conservatives on Japanese national defence. These representations on Twitter, both shown in “The ideal model for Japan (Chapter 4.2.1.)” and “A small but brave and a strong country (Chapter 4.2.3.)”, may also be constructed based on the fantasies and dreams in which Japanese people project an alternative Japanese society, or national defence policies, onto Finland. By doing so, they construct their narratives as “uncontested truth” as done in the discussions regarding the Japanese education reform.

The findings show similarities to other literature as well. “A model for a happier life” in Chapter 4.2.1. describes how Finland is represented as “the happiest nation in the world”, where people live relaxed lives and have a good work-life balance. This image of Finland is very close to what Mitsui (2010) describes as one of the ways the Moomin is perceived in Japanese society. According to her, the Moomins are associated with critiques on capitalism because of the topics of some of the Moomin stories and the messages sent by the author. For example, there is a Moomin story about the theme “money cannot buy happiness”. Mitsui (2010) explains that this anti-capitalist image of the Moomin also evokes the feeling of “nostalgia”. This nostalgia means mourning over the traditional way of life which has been lost and destroyed in the name of civilization. In “A model for a happier life” in Chapter 4.2.1., many of the tweets presented a simpler and slower life in Finland which leads to happiness. Here, Finland is idealized as a place where people do not need to work so hard or until late hours nor have the need to spend substantial amounts of money or do something special to be happy. This is very similar to the Moomin story with the theme “money cannot buy happiness”. Finland is presented as magical and unique (Chapter 4.2.2.) which bears resemblance to the Finland in the film *Kamome Diner* (Iwatake 2010). Iwatake (2010) points out that the film focuses on a relaxed life in Finland and on Finnish nature. She mentions that Finland is often portrayed in terms of cuteness, which can be observed in the film as well. According to Iwatake, Finland is shown as a pre-industrial and peaceful place with healing qualities. Although the findings of this study do not particularly support the idea of Finland as a pre-industrial ideal society, Finland is nevertheless represented in the data as a magical country in a way that relates to Iwatake’s (2010) analysis of Finland as a cute healing place.

These findings suggest that, on Japanese Twitter, Finnishness continues to be represented, imagined, produced and circulated in ways that align with the literature discussed in this thesis. Meanings of Finland are constructed in relation to its opposites, in this case mostly Japan, and stereotypical, simple and fixed images of Finland are exaggerated.

## 5.2 Representations of Japan

One of the sub-questions this research addressed was to determine how representations of Finland are used to discuss the Japanese society on Japanese Twitter. Oftentimes, Finland and Japan are represented as binary opposites. Japan is cast as “bad” and Finland as “good”. Although the binary opposition was mostly about Japan versus Finland, in the tweets questioning Finland’s status as a dream country (4.2.4) the opposition was between the imagined, positive model Finland and an “actual Finland” as perceived by the users.

When Finland is contrasted with Japan, the tweets often criticize Japan and use Finland to point out what should be changed in the Japanese society. At times, this is achieved through false or untrue claims. This indicates that the ideal model of Finland is, first and foremost, a representation intended to criticize Japan. The topics of this types of tweets are usually problems of generally well-recognized issues of the Japanese society. For example, Japan has ranked 125<sup>th</sup> in the Global Gender Gap Report 2023 (World Economic Forum, 2023) and the work-life balance is a big issue, especially the long working hours which sometimes end up causing *karoshi* (overwork death). National defence is a more recent topic since it is influenced by the Russian invasion in Ukraine, but it has been discussed previously. For instance, since WWII, Article 9 of the Japanese constitution does not allow Japan to have its own military. Therefore, whether Japan should reform the constitution and have its own army or not, has been constantly discussed in politics and in public, especially because of the constant military presence of the US as well as China with its significant military power. The Russian invasion has played its part in re-activating the discussion, in other words, representations of Finland as a small country with a strong military force are constructed to be utilized in the discussions concerning Japanese military politics.

## 6 Conclusion

This study has provided a deeper insight into how Finland is represented on Japanese Twitter and what kinds of images and meanings they attach to Finland and for which purpose. By examining social media, this study managed to gather and analyse the ideas of Japanese Twitter users and examine whenever they talk about Finland, without limiting the context. In these discussions, Finland was not just the name of a country in Europe, but it was “a dream country” that can be shown as the ideal model and used to criticize Japan.

The main aim of this research has been to examine the representations of Finland on Japanese Twitter. I have also addressed the following questions:

What are the main themes that appear in discussions about Finland on Japanese Twitter?

How are representations of Finland on Japanese Twitter used to discuss features of Japanese society?

The analysis extracted the following themes in the Japanese Twitter data of this study: Nature, travel destination, history, national defence, brands, art, language, customs, education as social welfare, school, work-life balance, gender equality, and mindset.

The analysis found four main categories of representations of Finland:

- The ideal model for Japan (A model for a fair society/ A model for a happier life)
- Magical and consumable Finland
- A small but brave and a strong country
- Questioning “the dream country Finland”.

These representations align with findings of previous research on representations of Finland and Finnishness in Japan.

In some categories Finland is represented as a binary opposite of Japan and used to discuss Japan and Japanese society. In other words, Japanese Twitter users construct Finland as an ideal model in order to criticize Japan and for Japan to follow. Finland

is also associated with warm and magical feelings and a sense of affinity, as well as something consumable through exciting brands and design. This study also found that representations of Finland on the Japanese Twitter are mostly positive. There are, however, users who question the positive and stereotypical images of Finland as the ideal model for Japan and highlight the negative aspects of the society, in order to correct what they see as an unrealistic idealisation of Finland. At the same time, they end up contributing to the idea of Finland as the ideal model by attempting to reverse the image.

### **6.1 The limitations of the study**

The study is limited by some of the characteristics of Twitter as a social medium. As explained in Chapter 3.1., tweets are often influenced by current events around the world. This could be observed in the large number of tweets related to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns can also have had an effect on, for instance, the number and quality of tweets related to tourism and travel. Another limitation related to the characteristics of Twitter is the prevalence of user anonymity on Japanese Twitter. Although this study is not interested in the identity of the user, said anonymity could affect the results. For example, it is difficult to know if the users had other intentions than posting their opinions or views about Finland, such as trying to go viral and get as many as likes, or are even getting paid to promote something. Moreover, it is possible that there is no actual individual behind the account, in other words, it could be controlled by companies or could be even a bot. This is not very common, but it can nevertheless happen, which could affect my findings since the aim of this study is to examine ordinary Japanese people's views.

In addition to the limitations related to Twitter, this study has limitations related to interpretative analysis being dependent on the context and experiences of the researcher, and thus could be biased. Efforts were made to minimize the bias by recognizing the researcher's own position in relation to the data and by conducting the analysis carefully. As it is mentioned in Chapter 3, I probably have different insights into Finland than Japanese people in general because I live in Finland. This possibly has an impact on analysis.

The findings of this study could be utilized in contexts outside of academia. They could be used for planning Finland's nation branding in Japan or designing the branding of Finnish companies and products to Japanese customers.

## **6.2 Suggestions for future research**

This study has also provided insights into possible future research. For example, future studies could examine other social media platforms, such as Instagram, because the characteristics and contents of each social media platform differ from each other. As my preliminary research shows, Instagram had different tendencies for certain topics – there seemed to be more content on travelling, art and design. Therefore, it might be possible to find new, or different kinds of representations of Finland.

It would also be beneficial to further investigate the history of how Finland has been perceived in Japan, or by Japanese people. This can help us understand how Japanese people have been imagining Finland and Finnishness in greater detail and to know if these images have been changing or if they have stayed rather similar. Especially, the representation related to the war, as shown in Chapter 4.2.3. of this study, can be understood as a not-so-dominant representation of Finland. However, if we look at the history, it might be possible to find similar representations of Finland in the past.

Since this study has examined the representations of Finland on Japanese Twitter, that further raises the question of how Japan is represented on Finnish Twitter or other social media platforms. This study has shown that the majority of the tweets in the data focuses on certain themes, which means people talk about similar topics when talking about Finland. Therefore, it would also be interesting to study what Finnish people think about Japan and how Japan is represented.

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