

# **Historic hotels as experiencescapes**

## **Tourists' co-creation of authentic travel experiences through their stay in a historic hotel**



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## Summary

This thesis aims to address the lack of scholarly attention with regard to the experiential nature of historic hotels by establishing how tourists co-create authentic travel experiences through their stay in this type of accommodation units. In-depth interviews were conducted with ten Croatian nationals of different age, educational and professional backgrounds which allowed for a thorough exploration of their personal opinions, beliefs, travel motives and preferences. Furthermore, this qualitative research technique provided an insight into how tourists' different personal characteristics influence the evaluation of their travel experiences in terms of authenticity. A holistic overview of the co-creation process of authentic experience would not be possible without taking into account the hotel management's perspective. Considering the time limitations of this study, their 'performance' of the hotel was studied through the content analysis of hotels' official websites in order to understand which role historic hotels play in the co-creation of their guests' authentic travel experiences.

The findings of this study revealed that this co-creation process in great part depends on the tourists themselves, with hotel's role increasing in importance relatively to its ability to capture its guests' attention. In other words, the more actively and intensely tourists were engaged with the hotel setting, the more value their stay in a historic hotel added to the authenticity of their experience. It is important to note that their individual personal backgrounds largely influenced what they noticed during their hotel stay and how they interpreted it. This knowledge is of great value to the existing body of literature on tourists' experiences and their views on authenticity, especially because it entails perspectives of non-Western travelers which have been insufficiently researched. Moreover, it will benefit tourism practitioners in designing better quality heritage management strategies.

# Introduction

## Historic hotels and the co-creation of an authentic travel experience

### 1. Purpose of the research

Authenticity has sparked a long scholarly debate ever since it was first introduced in tourism studies by sociologist Dean MacCannell in 1973.<sup>1</sup> Numerous diverging ideas have emerged about this concept over the years, keeping it in the spotlight of much of the tourism literature.<sup>2</sup> Tourism scholars Haywantee Ramkissoon and Muzaffer Uysal highlight the importance authenticity holds in tourism today. They claim that tourists increasingly seek for new and authentic experiences. According to them, authenticity enhances the quality of tourists' experiences; it adds value to it.<sup>3</sup> This is of special importance to tourism because it is an industry that sells experiences.<sup>4</sup> A recent study conducted by marketing scholars Praveen Sugathan and Kumar Rakesh Ranjan showed that modern tourists are no longer satisfied with being mere consumers. Instead, they express a growing interest to participate in the creation of products or services by applying resources such as time, effort, or ability.<sup>5</sup> In other words, they desire to co-create their authentic experiences.

However, in order to do so, Ramkissoon and Uysal assert that tourists require certain platforms.<sup>6</sup> Service management scholar Tom O'Dell refers to them as landscapes of experience or 'experiencescapes'. He describes them as spaces of pleasure, enjoyment and entertainment, as

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<sup>1</sup> Dallen J. Timothy. *Cultural Heritage and Tourism* (Channel View Publications, 2011), 103

<sup>2</sup> Dallen J. Timothy. *Cultural Heritage and Tourism* (Channel View Publications, 2011), 103; Wang, Ning. *Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience*. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1999): 349

<sup>3</sup> Ramkissoon, Haywantee and Uysal, Muzaffer. *Authenticity as a Value Co-creator of Tourism Experience* in Prebenesen, Nina K. Chen, Joseph. Uysal, Muzaffer. *Creating Experience Value in Tourism* (CAB International, 2nd edition, 2018): 99

<sup>4</sup> Campos, Ana Cláudia; Mendes, Júlio; Oom do Valle, Patrícia & Scott, Noel. *Co-creation of tourist experiences: a literature review*, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2018): 369

<sup>5</sup> Sugathan, Praveen. Rakesh Ranjan, Kumar. *Co-Creating the Tourism Experience*. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 100 (2019): 207-8

<sup>6</sup> Ramkissoon, Haywantee and Uysal, Muzaffer. *Authenticity as a Value Co-creator of Tourism Experience* in Prebenesen, Nina K. Chen, Joseph. Uysal, Muzaffer. *Creating Experience Value in Tourism* (CAB International, 2nd edition, 2018): 99

well as the meeting grounds in which diverse groups move about and interact with one another.<sup>7</sup> This concept has particular relevance to the tourism and hospitality industry since consumers are highly involved in the purchase and consumption of its products and services. Furthermore, these sectors often create effective experiential designs that greatly affect their clients' mood and behavior.<sup>8</sup> The co-creation of travelers' experiences in the tourism and hospitality industry, and more specifically within hotel units, has been extensively studied in recent years.<sup>9</sup> Urban geography scholar Jayne M. Rogerson has asserted that guests search for unique experiences that are completely different from traditional hotels.<sup>10</sup> Hence, various types of specialist accommodation have received a great deal of attention in academic literature. This especially refers to luxury and boutique hotels (Arifin, Albattat & Jamal, 2018; Lu, Berchoux, Marek & Chen, 2015; McIntosh & Siggs, 2005; Rogerson, 2010; Walls, Okumuz, Wang & Joon-Wuk Kwun, 2011)<sup>11</sup> which were recognized as providers of singular experiences in the hotel industry due to their unique design and personalized service.<sup>12</sup>

Marketing scholars Woojin Lee and Deepak Chhabra assert that historic hotels and different heritage lodging units also serve as great examples of guest experience differentiation as they provide heritage experiences and accommodation simultaneously.<sup>13</sup> However, their experiential aspect remains neglected by scholars.<sup>14</sup> Existing studies primarily focus on this type

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<sup>7</sup> O'Dell, Tom. *Blurring Borders and Testing Connections* in O'Dell, Tom and Billing, Peter. "Experiencescapes" in *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 16

<sup>8</sup> Walls, Andrew. Okumus, Fevzi. Wang, Youcheng (Raymond), and Wuk Kwun, David Joon. *Understanding the Consumer Experience: An Exploratory Study of Luxury Hotels*. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* (2011): 168

<sup>9</sup> Xie, Philip Feifan, and Shi, William Ling. *Authenticating a Heritage Hotel: Co-Creating a New Identity*. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2019): 67

<sup>10</sup> Rogerson, Jayne M. *The Boutique Hotel Industry in South Africa: Definition, Scope, and Organization*. *Urban Forum*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2010): 425

<sup>11</sup> Arifin, Aifa Syireen. Albattat, Ahmad, and Jamal, Salamiah. *Factors of Guest Experiential Value of Boutique Hotels in the City of Kuala Lumpur*. *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2018); Lu, Carol. Berchoux, Celine. Marek, Michael W., and Chen, Brendan. *Service quality and customer satisfaction: qualitative research implications for luxury hotels*. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*. Vol. 9 Issue 2 (2015); McIntosh, Alison J., and Siggs, Anna. *An Exploration of the Experiential Nature of Boutique Accommodation*. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2005); Rogerson, Jayne M. *The Boutique Hotel Industry in South Africa: Definition, Scope, and Organization*. *Urban Forum*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2010); Walls, Andrew. Okumus, Fevzi. Wang, Youcheng (Raymond), and Kwun, David JoonWuk. *Understanding the Consumer Experience: An Exploratory Study of Luxury Hotels*. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* (2011)

<sup>12</sup> Arifin, Aifa Syireen. Albattat, Ahmad, and Jamal, Salamiah. *Factors of Guest Experiential Value of Boutique Hotels in the City of Kuala Lumpur*. *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2018): 1

<sup>13</sup> Lee, Woojin, and Chhabra, Deepak. *Heritage hotels and historic lodging: perspectives on experiential marketing and sustainable culture*. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, Vol. 10, No 2 (2015): 106

<sup>14</sup> Arifin, Aifa Syireen. Albattat, Ahmad, and Jamal, Salamiah. *Factors of Guest Experiential Value of Boutique Hotels in the City of Kuala Lumpur*. *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2018): 1

of accommodation from an existential marketing and sustainable heritage perspective (Lee and Chhabra, 2015; Xie and Shi, 2019)<sup>15</sup> or they explore its different spatial components such as architecture or interior design (Cheung and Chan, 2012; Henderson, 2001a; Henderson, 2011b; Peleggi, 2005; Pongsermpol, 2018).<sup>16</sup> The scarcity of research in relation to the experiential dimension of historic lodging is quite surprising since D. Timothy and V. Teye assert that renovated or remodeled historic buildings are one of the most demanded types of tourism accommodation.<sup>17</sup>

Hence, this study aims to address the lack of scholarly attention with regard to the experiential nature of historic hotels. More specifically, it explores how tourists co-create authentic travel experiences through their stay in a historic hotel. On the one hand, this research focuses on how tourists perceive and evaluate the authenticity of their travel experiences. Heritage industry consultants Aylin Orbaşlı and Simon Woodward explain that the tourist's desire for authentic experience may be in conflict with the academic and conservation professionals understanding of 'authentic'. They explain that tourists often associate authenticity with place or location rather than the original material of a building which is generally perceived as the primary indicator of authenticity in the heritage conservation field.<sup>18</sup> Orbaşlı and Woodward also assert that tourism creates a demand for conservation of historic buildings,<sup>19</sup> which means that these two sectors are closely intertwined. In order to obtain a deeper insight into the dynamics of this relationship, it is of great importance to investigate how tourists co-create their authentic experiences by 'interacting' with heritage of historic hotels they stayed in.

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<sup>15</sup> Lee, Woojin, and Chhabra, Deepak. Heritage hotels and historic lodging: perspectives on experiential marketing and sustainable culture. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, Vol. 10, No 2 (2015); Xie, Philip Feifan, and Shi, William Ling. Authenticating a Heritage Hotel: Co-Creating a New Identity. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2019)

<sup>16</sup> Cheung, Esther, and Chan, Albert P.C. Revitalising Historic Buildings through Partnership Scheme: A case study of the Mei Ho House in Hong Kong. *Property Management*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2012); Henderson, John C. Conserving colonial heritage: Raffles Hotel in Singapore. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2001a); Henderson, John C. Hip Heritage: The Boutique Hotel Business in Singapore. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2011b); Peleggi, Maurizio. Consuming colonial nostalgia: The monumentalisation of historic hotels in urban South-East Asia. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (2005); Pongsermpol, Chotewit. Impacts of Adaptive Reuse of Heritage Buildings Converted to Small Hotels in Bangkok. *Asian Journal of Quality of Life*, Vol. 3, No. 13 (2018)

<sup>17</sup> Xie, Philip Feifan, and Shi, William Ling. Authenticating a Heritage Hotel: Co-Creating a New Identity. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2019): 67

<sup>18</sup> Orbaşlı, Aylin. Woodward, Simon. *Tourism and Heritage Conservation in The Sage Handbook of Tourism Studies*. Edited by Jamal, Tazim. Robinson, Mike. Sage Publications (2009): 327

<sup>19</sup> Orbaşlı, Aylin. Woodward, Simon. *Tourism and Heritage Conservation in The Sage Handbook of Tourism Studies*. Edited by Jamal, Tazim. Robinson, Mike. Sage Publications (2009): 323

Understanding which aspects of historic hotel setting tourists perceive as added value to the authenticity of their experience, and how they engage with them can also lead to a better understanding of the heritage commodification process. Namely, tourism scholars Dallen Timothy and Stephen Boyd assert that heritage attractions' managers often mediate and stage their products to various degrees in order to cater to tourists' expectations of what 'authentic' should look like, and ensure they obtain 'satisfactory' experiences in such a way.<sup>20</sup> In other words, this study can aid in understanding how tourism influences what is conserved and more importantly how it is conserved and interpreted.

On the other hand, this study also takes the hotel's management perspective into account. It aims to understand which role historic hotels, as they were thought about and 'created' by managers, play in the co-creation of their guests' authentic travel experiences. Considering the economic value of historic hotels,<sup>21</sup> this knowledge is of great use for hotel managers as it can help them to conceive of and design new ways of adding value to their offer. Furthermore, it enables marketing professionals to gain a new perspective on how to present the heritage of the hotel in their promotional activities to attract and retain the customers' attention while still respecting local cultural values. These practices will ultimately benefit tourists as they hold great potential to enhance the quality of their travel experiences.

## **2. Theoretical frameworks**

### *2.1 Co-creation of experience*

Sugathan and Ranjan assert that customer experiences occupy a pivotal role in contemporary tourism.<sup>22</sup> Tourism economy scholar, Serena Volo, emphasizes that tourist experiences are extremely complex phenomena made of two main facets: a phenomenological level, of which consumers are fully aware, and a cognitive level where the transformation and learning happen. More specifically, tourist experiences are composed of all the events that occur between

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<sup>20</sup> Orbaşlı, Aylin. Woodward, Simon. Tourism and Heritage Conservation in The Sage Handbook of Tourism Studies. Edited by Jamal, Tazim. Robinson, Mike. Sage Publications (2009): 327

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Sugathan, Praveen, and Rakesh Ranjan, Kumar. Co-Creating the Tourism Experience. Journal of Business Research, Vol. 100 (2019): 207



sensation (i.e., tourist sensing the environment through touch, taste, sight, sound, and smell) and perception (i.e., tourist's interpretation of the sensation), as well as memory (i.e. tourist's subsequent organization and recollection of such interpretations).<sup>23</sup>

Hospitality management scholars Andrew Walls, Fevzi Okumus, Youcheng Wang and David J. Wuk Kwun emphasize that it is important to understand the very formation of customer experiences. They assert that this knowledge is of great relevance for different tourism businesses as it assists them in 'designing' experiences in such a way as to achieve their customers' satisfaction and loyalty. Walls et al. claim that it is therefore important to consider internal and external responses to different dimensions of experience in order to understand the process of experience creation: consumer behavior and physical environment respectively. While Walls et al. point out that service providers can deliberately create distinct offerings to enhance their consumers' experiences, some of the factors remain out of their reach. The latter refers to consumers' cultural backgrounds, personality traits, emotions, fantasies and many other factors.<sup>24</sup> This suggests that experiences need to be analyzed from a multi-dimensional perspective in order to view them more holistically. A concept which proves to be of great value in this endeavor is that of co-creation. It allows for approaching the creation of authentic experiences as a result of interaction between historic hotel settings as they were thought out by the hotel management, and their guests.

Business scholars Coimbatore Krishnarao Prahalad and Venkatram Ramaswamy defined co-creation as a joint creation of value by the service provider and the customer.<sup>25</sup> In this specific research, this value refers to authenticity which will be discussed in more details in the following section. Marketing scholars Adrian F. Payne, Kaj Storbacka and Pennie Frow pointed out that traditionally, suppliers produced goods and services, and the customer's role was reduced to a mere purchase of those same products.<sup>26</sup> Today, however, according to tourism scholars Ana Cláudia Campos, Júlio Mendes, Patrícia Oom do Valle and Noel Scott, suppliers and customers

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<sup>23</sup> Volo, Serena. Conceptualizing Experience: A Tourist Based Approach, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, Vol. 18, Issue 2-3 (2009): 114, 119

<sup>24</sup> Walls, Andrew. Okumus, Fevzi. Wang, Youcheng (Raymond), and Wuk Kwun, David Joon. Understanding the Consumer Experience: An Exploratory Study of Luxury Hotels. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* (2011): 167

<sup>25</sup> Prahalad, Coimbatore Krishnarao, and Ramaswamy, Venkatram. Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*. Vol.18, No. 3 (2004): 8

<sup>26</sup> Payne, Adrian F. Storbacka, Kaj, and Frow, Pennie. Managing the co-creation of value. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 36 (2008): 84

are entering into a new form of relationship. They assert that contemporary tourists more actively participate in the consumer experience; they co-design, co-produce and consume it. Hence, analyzing their experiences through the concept of co-creation enables us to understand them on a deeper level as it takes tourists' individual characteristics into consideration as well.

## *2.2 Authenticity*

It is also important to examine the value which tourists and historic hotel's management aim to co-create, that is, the authenticity. Marketing scholars Tomaz Kolar and Vesna Zabkar assert that tourists' quest for authentic experiences is one of the key trends in tourism.<sup>27</sup> Given the importance authenticity represents for contemporary tourists, this concept has been used throughout the study to analyze tourists' experiences. Kolar and Zabkar emphasize the advantage of authenticity for understanding tourists' motivation and behavior,<sup>28</sup> which ultimately affect their actual experiences. However, this conceptual framework also entails certain drawbacks. Tourism sociology scholar Ning Wang brings attention to the ambiguity of this phenomenon due to its various interpretations that have emerged since it was first introduced in tourism studies.<sup>29</sup> Having this in mind, these various approaches to authenticity have been carefully examined below in order to select the ones adding the most value to this research.

Firstly, the authenticity construct can be differentiated according to two separate dimensions as suggested by Wang: that of tourist experiences (or authentic experiences) and that of toured objects. Since this research focuses on the former, it is important to understand different types of authenticity as applied to tourist experiences. Secondly, Wang explains three different interpretations: objective, constructive and existential authenticity. He defines objective authentic experiences as experiences of the authenticity of originals, whereas he conceptualizes constructive authentic experiences as a result of a social construction. In this specific case, Wang asserts that things appear authentic not because they are inherently authentic but because they are constructed as such in terms of points of view, beliefs, perspectives, or powers. Wang finally sees existential authentic experiences as moments when tourists themselves feel more authentic

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<sup>27</sup> Kolar, Tomaz and Zabkar, Vesna. A consumer-based model of authenticity: An oxymoron or the foundation of cultural heritage marketing? *Tourism Management* 31, (2010): 652

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Wang, Ning. Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1999):

and more freely self-expressed than in their everyday life. He claims that this is not the result of the authenticity of the toured objects, but simply because tourists had the opportunity to engage in non-ordinary activities.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the above-mentioned types of authentic experiences, researchers in the field of media, communication and culture, Britta Timm Knudsen and Anne Marit Waade introduced the concept of performative authenticity. They argue that authenticity is something that people can do and feel; it is performed.<sup>31</sup> Experience co-creation has been placed at the heart of this study, implying a more active engagement of both the consumer and the service provider in the process. Hence, I found that the theoretical frameworks of constructive and performative authenticity align with the concept of co-creation. In other words, the authenticity of tourists' experiences is regarded as co-constructed and co-performed by tourists and hotel management. This will be discussed in more details in the following sections.

### *2.3 Constructive authenticity*

Ethnographer Richard Handler claims that when people travel in search for an authentic cultural experience, what they are essentially looking for is something unspoiled, pristine, genuine, untouched and traditional.<sup>32</sup> But who gets to decide what is authentic and what is not? Does the curators' ability and expertise to identify authentic works or artifacts come across as a more powerful deciding factor than what media says about it? Handler argues that what is presumed to be authentic in any given context depends on the individual interpretation of everyone involved. Hence, how tourists perceive something in terms of its authenticity is equally important as what historians or journalists think about it.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, Wang highlights that in the field of tourism, constructive authenticity does not refer uniquely to tourists' perceptions. Instead, he

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<sup>30</sup> Wang, Ning. Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1999): 351

<sup>31</sup> Knudsen, Britta T., and Waade, Anne M. (Eds.) "Performative authenticity in tourism and spatial experience: Rethinking the relations between travel, place and emotion" in *Re-investing authenticity: Tourism, place and emotions*, Channel View Publications, Bristol (2010): 1

<sup>32</sup> McIntosh, Alison J. and Prentice, Richard C. Affirming Authenticity Consuming Cultural Heritage *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26, No. 3, (1999): 589-590

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

claims that it also encompasses the projection of tourism producers' preferences, beliefs, expectations, imagery and power onto toured objects and experiences.<sup>34</sup>

This approach is known as the constructivist approach. In the field of tourism studies it suggests the existence of various versions of authenticities regarding the same objects or experiences. In other words, authenticity or inauthenticity is a result of how one sees things. It is all about his or her individual perspectives and interpretations.<sup>35</sup> Hence, this concept is of great importance to this specific research as it enables me to simultaneously explore both the guests' and the hotel management's perception of authenticity and how they come about in the co-creation of an experience. Examining authenticity in the context of historic hotels from a variety of perspectives paints a more holistic picture of this type of accommodation. Understanding how different guests and hotel managers 'construe' historic hotel settings in terms of authenticity provides a more nuanced comprehension of authentic travel experiences both to tourism scholars and practitioners. However, anthropologist Yujie Zhu asserts that toured objects or experiences are not only authenticated by how tourists perceive them, but they are also 'performed' as authentic through embodied practice.<sup>36</sup>

## *2.4 Performative authenticity*

Human geography scholar Jacqueline Tivers describes today's society as a performative one. She asserts that immersive, interactive experiences of heritage have become far more valued than learning something new through cognition.<sup>37</sup> McIntosh describes these kinds of experiences where tourists get personally involved as authentic.<sup>38</sup> Similarly to this perspective, Knudsen and Waade offered a new definition of authenticity. They refuse the idea that authenticity simply represents objective qualities of places or objects. Instead, they claim that people do and perform these places and objects as authentic with their actions and behavior, as well as their emotional,

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<sup>34</sup> Wang, Ning. Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1999): 352

<sup>35</sup> Wang, Ning. Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1999): 352-355

<sup>36</sup> Zhu, Yujie. Performing Heritage: Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (2012): 1498

<sup>37</sup> Tivers, Jacqueline. Performing heritage: the use of live 'actors' in heritage presentations. *Leisure Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3-4 (2002): 199

<sup>38</sup> Kolar, Tomaz, and Zabkar, Vesna. A consumer-based model of authenticity: An oxymoron or the foundation of cultural heritage marketing? *Tourism Management* 31, (2010): 654

affective and sensuous relatedness to them.<sup>39</sup> In other words, people authenticate their physical environments with their corporeal and affective responses to them. This approach to authenticity is known as performative authenticity. Zhu asserts that this concept emphasizes the dynamic process of ‘becoming’ authentic through embodied practice. He explains that performative authenticity indicates an ongoing interaction between individual agency and the surrounding world. The body serves as a medium through which this interaction occurs. He concludes that this bodily practice becomes performative when it transforms from ‘doing’ to meaning-making.<sup>40</sup>

As this research primarily focuses on how tourists see historic hotels and engage with them, applying the concept of performative authenticity allows me to understand how tourists behave inside these hotels, and how these historic properties make them feel. Most importantly, it helps me to comprehend the relationship between their ‘performance’ of a specific historic hotel and the authenticity of their travel experience. That is, this concept enables me to get an insight to which extent their bodily and emotional relation to this place makes their holidays authentic. However, it would not be possible to understand the co-creation process of tourists’ authentic experiences without considering the hotel management’s performance of a historic hotel as well. It is important to note that the places tourists visit are also ‘packaged’ and advertised prior to their arrival and their interaction with the physical place. This implies that the meaning of these spaces has already been created by someone else other than the tourists, and that this considerably influences how they imagine that physical environment to be.<sup>41</sup> Applied to my research, this means that hotel management also ‘performs’ a hotel and ascribes certain meaning to it. For instance, hotel staff might wear local traditional costumes instead of a modern uniform. Similarly, food and drinks in a restaurant might be served in traditional tableware. On the other hand, hotel management might not even focus on the ‘authenticity’ of the service, but rather highlight the authentic architectural components of the hotel to attract their customers and offer them a unique experience. In any case, the theoretical framework of performative authenticity will enable me to get a better understanding of how hotel management’s

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<sup>39</sup> Knudsen, Britta T., and Waade, Anne M. (Eds.) “Performative authenticity in tourism and spatial experience: Rethinking the relations between travel, place and emotion” in *Re-investing authenticity: Tourism, place and emotions*, Channel View Publications, Bristol (2010): 12-13

<sup>40</sup> Zhu, Yujie. *Performing Heritage: Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism*. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (2012): 1500

<sup>41</sup> Chen, Jingfu, and Chen, Ningning. *Beyond the everyday? Rethinking place meanings in tourism*. *Tourism Geographies. An International Journal of Tourism Space, Place and Environment* (Vol. 19, No. 1, 2017): 10-11

performance of historic hotels facilitates the realization of their guests' authentic expectations and experiences, and influences their experiences even before they arrive.

Although historic hotels' meanings are filtered and constructed by hotel management, tourists are far away from being passive receivers of these images.<sup>42</sup> Once in a specific hotel, they have the opportunity either to accept or reject 'predescribed' meanings, enjoy themselves in different ways or engage in some kind of pleasure or entertainment. Therefore, the way hotel management 'performs' a hotel is inseparably linked to their guests' 'performance' of the same space. As these performances cannot be separated from the physical places where they are realized, the following section will be dedicated to the exploration of the concept of tourist spaces.

## *2.5 Tourist spaces*

Geographers Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt, Michael Haldrup, Jonas Larsen and sociologist John Urry claim that tourist places are actually produced spaces. According to them, these places are extremely dynamic as their 'creation' depends not just on their materiality, but also on the performances both by 'hosts' and 'guests'. They emphasize their complexity by describing them as hybrids of mind and matter, imagination and presence.<sup>43</sup> Applying this interpretation of tourist places to my research offers a very unique perspective on historic hotels. It suggests that these properties are much more than just a composition of different material elements frozen in a certain historical era. Instead, they are fluid and ever changing.<sup>44</sup>

Mimi Sheller and John Urry suggest that places are playful, as they are constantly being made and remade by the mobilities and performances of tourists who travel elsewhere fascinated by the differences in the materiality of the world.<sup>45</sup> Bærenholdt et al. assert that these mobilities are not just limited to the corporeal travel to a destination or bodily movements within a certain space. They also encompass imaginative mobilities, that is, the time tourists spend dreaming

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<sup>42</sup> Chen, Jingfu, and Chen, Ningning. Beyond the everyday? Rethinking place meanings in tourism. *Tourism Geographies. An International Journal of Tourism Space, Place and Environment* (Vol. 19, No. 1, 2017): 12

<sup>43</sup> Bærenholdt, Jørgen Ole. Haldrup, Michael. Larsen, Jonas, and Urry, John. *Performing Tourist Places* (Ashgate, 2004): 2, 10, 150

<sup>44</sup> Bærenholdt, Jørgen Ole. Haldrup, Michael. Larsen, Jonas, and Urry, John. *Performing Tourist Places* (Ashgate, 2004): 6

<sup>45</sup> Sheller, Mimi, and Urry, John. *Tourism Mobilities: Places To Play, Places In Play*. (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York, 2004): 1, 4

about a certain place before they physically visit it.<sup>46</sup> Looking at historic hotels through these lenses yields a more interesting and complex picture of these settings. Tourists ‘perform’ historic hotels and give meaning to them even before they stay there. They consult their websites or listen to experiences of their former guests. This stimulates their imagination and creates certain expectations. Once they get there, their ‘interaction’ with the actual physical space might induce a different ‘performance’.

French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, best known for introducing the concept of the production of space, argued that space needs to be understood in terms of the way in which it is perceived, conceived and lived. First of all, physical attributes of a certain place are produced through social activity.<sup>47</sup> According to Bærenholdt et al., most environments attractive to tourists have not been produced for that purpose.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, many historic hotels were not originally conceived as accommodation units. However, they are ‘produced’ as such by different agents who come in contact with that space: architects, designers, urban planners, hotel managers and staff, guests spending their holidays there, as well as many others, and this impacts the physical environment. Secondly, O’Dell further elaborates on Lefebvre’s argument by claiming that places can be planned, manipulated and designed in order to influence us in particular ways, and that this organization of physical environment generates experiences. But he also asserts that places are lived, appropriated and changed as a part of everyday life.<sup>49</sup> The same historic hotel setting can be ‘worked’ and ‘reworked’ again and again by different people who use it and perform it as they continuously alter its materiality, practicality, and meaning and thus co-create different experiences. In this sense, they can be considered as landscapes of experience – experiencescapes.<sup>50</sup> For instance, hotel management might decide to leave certain architectural elements of the hotel in their original form, seeing this as a great strategy to enhance the authenticity of their guests’ experiences. But their guests also have the power to decide whether to ‘consume’ these shabby ornaments of a historic hotel as a sign of its ‘authentic’ heritage or as

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<sup>46</sup> Bærenholdt, Jørgen Ole. Haldrup, Michael. Larsen, Jonas, and Urry, John. *Performing Tourist Places* (Ashgate, 2004): 2-3

<sup>47</sup> O’Dell, Tom, and Billing, Peter. “Experiencescapes: Blurring Borders and Testing Connections” in *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 18

<sup>48</sup> Bærenholdt, Jørgen Ole. Haldrup, Michael. Larsen, Jonas, and Urry, John. *Performing Tourist Places* (Ashgate, 2004): 11

<sup>49</sup> O’Dell, Tom, and Billing, Peter. “Experiencescapes: Blurring Borders and Testing Connections” in *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 15, 18

<sup>50</sup> O’Dell, Tom, and Billing, Peter. “Experiencescapes: Blurring Borders and Testing Connections” in *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 16

a poor attempt at its restoration. Tourist places are therefore constantly imbued with new meanings and should not be regarded as fixed locations.<sup>51</sup>

### *2.5.1 Historic hotels as specialist accommodation*

Apart from being considered as experiencescapes in this specific study, historic hotels are also recognized as agents in the co-creation of their guests' authentic travel experiences. In order to get a better insight into the role historic hotels play in this co-creation process, it is important to understand what they actually entail, and how do they fit in today's travelers' quest for authenticity.

A recent study conducted by tourism scholars Aifa Syireen Arifin, Ahmad Albattat and Salamiah Jamal has indicated that travelers have become increasingly adventurous, seeking not only new and unexplored destinations, but also unique and memorable experiences. Today's service industry is no exception to this rapidly growing trend.<sup>52</sup> Tourists search for accommodations that distinctly differ in both appearance and experience from traditional hotels.<sup>53</sup> Several tourism researchers including Liu, Wu, Morrison and Juo Ling, have pointed out that building unique hotel brands has become an imperative for numerous tourist destinations in order to keep up with such tourists' demands. These hotels focus predominately on personalized services, themed interior design, and special attention is often given to architectural features and local culture.<sup>54</sup> They are usually referred to as specialist accommodation.

Additionally, several other terms have been used to describe accommodation units that fall into the above mentioned category. Parahotel business (Schwaninger 1989), supplementary accommodation sector (Seekings, 1989), boutique accommodation and phrase accommodation alternatives are some of the better known ones.<sup>55</sup> However, tourism scholars and educators Philip Pearce and Gianna Moscardo, who introduced the first formal definition of specialist

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<sup>51</sup> O'Dell, Tom, and Billing, Peter. "Experiencescapes: Blurring Borders and Testing Connections" in *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 18

<sup>52</sup> Arifin, Aifa Syireen. Albattat, Ahmad, and Jamal, Salamiah. Factors of Guest Experiential Value of Boutique Hotels in the City of Kuala Lumpur. *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2018): 1

<sup>53</sup> Arifin, Aifa Syireen. Albattat, Ahmad, and Jamal, Salamiah. Factors of Guest Experiential Value of Boutique Hotels in the City of Kuala Lumpur. *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2018): 1

<sup>54</sup> Liu, Lu. Wu, Bihu. Morrison, Alastair M., and Juo Ling, Rosalind Sia. Why Dwell in a Hutongtel? Tourist Accommodation Preferences and Guest Segmentation for Beijing Hutongtels. *International Journal of Tourism Research* 17 (2015): 171

<sup>55</sup> Morrison, Alastair M. Pearce, Philip L. Moscardo, Gianna. Nadkarni, Nandini, and O'Leary, Joseph T. Specialist Accommodation: Definition, Markets Served, and Roles in Tourism Development. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1996): 19



accommodation, highlighted several advantages of this term in comparison with the other expressions. For instance, they claim that the term ‘parahotel’ overly focuses on the contrast between traditional hotels and other property types while the term ‘accommodation alternatives’ implies the existence of other major accommodation types in an area. Contrarily, Pearce and Moscardo describe the term ‘specialist’ as a generic, nonelitist, and integrating term.<sup>56</sup> It is therefore more suitable for this research study which encompasses guests’ experiences in several historic accommodation styles.

### *2.5.2 History and heritage of specialist accommodation units*

Pearce and Moscardo argued that specialist accommodation should provide some special opportunity or advantage to guests through location, choice of activities or features of the establishment.<sup>57</sup> The latter one is especially important for this study as it refers to a heritage or historic elements of the building.<sup>58</sup> However, the question remains which one of these two features better defines accommodation units represented in this specific study. The adjectives ‘historic’ and ‘heritage’ have been intermittently used in the academic literature to describe accommodation properties with the same or very similar characteristics. For instance, McIntosh and Siggs have employed the term *historic hotel* defining it as a specialist accommodation that uses a historic building or other historic aspects as the basis of the experience it provides.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, Lee and Chhabra used the term *heritage hotels* to describe accommodation properties that have a history and provide opportunities to experience the cultural past of the destination and lend a degree of intrigue.<sup>60</sup> Although they share many similarities, historic and heritage hotels cannot be considered as interchangeable terms.

The purpose of this study is to understand how tourists engage with, and ‘perform’ the heritage of hotels they stayed in to co-create their experience. It explores the meaning they

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<sup>56</sup> Morrison, Alastair M.; Pearce, Philip L.; Moscardo, Gianna; Nadkarni, Nandini and O’Leary, Joseph T. Specialist Accommodation: Definition, Markets Served, and Roles in Tourism Development. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1996): 19

<sup>57</sup> Morrison, Alastair M.; Pearce, Philip L.; Moscardo, Gianna; Nadkarni, Nandini and O’Leary, Joseph T. Specialist Accommodation: Definition, Markets Served, and Roles in Tourism Development. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1996): 19

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> McIntosh, Alison J., and Siggs, Anna. An Exploration of the Experiential Nature of Boutique Accommodation. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 44 (2005): 75

<sup>60</sup> Lee, Woojin, and Chhabra, Deepak. Heritage hotels and historic lodging: perspectives on experiential marketing and sustainable culture. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, Vol. 10, No 2 (2015): 105

ascribe to different objects and spaces within the hotel setting, and how this adds value to the authenticity of their travel experiences. In that sense, the term heritage hotel might seem like the most accurate definition of the accommodation studied in this specific research. However, the argument about the distinction between history and heritage provided by marketing scholar Bradford T. Hudson challenged this initial choice. He described history as a record of the past, while he referred to heritage as something inherited from a previous generation, or more broadly, ideas or cultural patterns derived from the past.<sup>61</sup> He pointed out that there is a relationship between history and heritage, but argued that the connection is not an indispensable one.<sup>62</sup> In other words, heritage often has less to do with the ‘actual’ history and more with memory. Heritage scholars Brian Graham, Gregory J. Ashworth and John E. Tunbridge assert that heritage is what contemporary society chooses to inherit and to pass on.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, definitions and understandings of heritage can vary significantly according to the social-political context it is interpreted in.<sup>64</sup>

What is more, because heritage is closely entangled with contemporary cultural values, it often represents different meanings for different people and different groups, as heritage industry consultants Aylin Orbaşlı and Simon Woodward explain.<sup>65</sup> In this sense, using the term heritage to classify a hotel could be quite ambiguous for selected interviewees. Orbaşlı and Woodward also drew attention to the broadness and lack of clear definition in regards to this term within the professional heritage and tourism field.<sup>66</sup> Hence, it would be rather ineffective to use the term ‘heritage hotel’ with interviewees who do not possess any expertise in this area.

Having this in mind, the term ‘historic hotel’ was deemed to be more appropriate for this study. Hudson argues that although history is as subjectively construed phenomenon as heritage, it has traditionally understood to be a factual endeavor. This seemingly paradoxical statement

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<sup>61</sup> Hudson, Bradford T. The Pricing Effects of Heritage at an Iconic Hotel. *Boston Hospitality Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2015)

<sup>62</sup> Hudson, Bradford T. The Pricing Effects of Heritage at an Iconic Hotel. *Boston Hospitality Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2015)

<sup>63</sup> Orbaşlı, Aylin. Woodward, Simon. *Tourism and Heritage Conservation in The Sage Handbook of Tourism Studies*. Edited by Jamal, Tazim. Robinson, Mike. Sage Publications (2009): 315

<sup>64</sup> Orbaşlı, Aylin. Woodward, Simon. *Tourism and Heritage Conservation in The Sage Handbook of Tourism Studies*. Edited by Jamal, Tazim. Robinson, Mike. Sage Publications (2009): 315

<sup>65</sup> Orbaşlı, Aylin. Woodward, Simon. *Tourism and Heritage Conservation in The Sage Handbook of Tourism Studies*. Edited by Jamal, Tazim. Robinson, Mike. Sage Publications (2009): 315

<sup>66</sup> Orbaşlı, Aylin. Woodward, Simon. *Tourism and Heritage Conservation in The Sage Handbook of Tourism Studies*. Edited by Jamal, Tazim. Robinson, Mike. Sage Publications (2009): 314

was well reflected throughout interviewees' responses. On the one hand, interviewees associated the term 'historic' with something concerned with facts. For instance, some participants qualified a hotel as historic if it previously hosted historical figures while others defined it as a property that has existed for a long time. On the other hand, each participant personally interpreted different features of a hotel as historic. Some mentioned dinnerware, furniture or interior design, while others pointed to the overall atmosphere as fundamental historical value of that specific property. In other words, the term 'historic hotel' ensured that participants do not wander in undesired directions while still allowing them to share their personal experience of the history.

### **3. Methodology**

As this study primarily attempts to understand tourists' experiences from their own perspective, a qualitative research methodology was used throughout the research process. Psychologist Jonathan Smith describes qualitative approaches as generally concerned with exploring, understanding and describing the personal and social experiences of participants, and trying to capture the meanings particular phenomena holds for them. He further asserts that this method provides rich, detailed narrative reports of participants' perceptions, their understandings or accounts in relation to the topic in question.<sup>67</sup> In-depth conversational-style interviews were used as the main source of data collection as they allowed for deep, exhaustive descriptions and imaginative explorations of tourists' experiences in historic hotels. Recognizing tourists as the co-creators of their experience who actively participate in the construction of their holidays, it is very important to get a more profound insight into their behavior. Irving Seidman, a professor of qualitative research points out that interviewing offers the opportunity to put behavior in a certain context and provides access to understanding the meaning of the interviewees' actions.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, Walls et al. claim that due to the flexible, informal nature of the in-depth interviews, new and sometimes even surprising perspectives can emerge as a result of this conversation.<sup>69</sup> Economy scholars Larry Dwyer and Neelu Seetaram, as well as tourism

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<sup>67</sup> Smith, Jonathan A.. Qualitative methodology. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, vol. 9, no. 6, (1996): 417-421

<sup>68</sup> Seidman, Irving. *Interviewing as Qualitative Research. A Guide for Researches in Education and Social Sciences*. (Teachers College, Columbia University. New York and London. Second Edition, 1998): 4

<sup>69</sup> Walls, Andrew. Okumus, Fevzi. Wang, Youcheng (Raymond), and Wuk Kwun, David Joon. Understanding the Consumer Experience: An Exploratory Study of Luxury Hotels. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* (2011): 173

geography scholar Alison Gill, argue that interviews also enable researchers to account for body language and non-verbal forms of communication which are often missed in other forms of data collection.<sup>70</sup>

### *3.1 Designing and conducting interviews*

Tourism scholars Ana Cláudia Campos, Júlio Mendes, Patrícia Oom do Valle and Noel Scott conducted an extensive bibliographic search covering the research area of the co-creation of tourist experiences. The authors of this literature review identified two overall perspectives on co-creation: an organization/destination perspective and a tourist perspective.<sup>71</sup> In my research, the organization, that is, the historic hotel perspective was studied through the content analysis of its official website which will be explained in more detail in one of the following sections. The tourist perspective of co-creating an authentic experience was analyzed through in-depth interviews with ten Croatian nationals.

All interviews were conducted in form of a Skype video call with an exception of one participant who wanted to meet in person and gave her consent only for voice recording. Considering the geographical distance between selected interviewees and me, Skype video conversations seemed like the most pragmatic solution. Furthermore, Irving Seidman, a professor of qualitative research stresses the importance of simplifying the logistics of the interview process. He argues that every step taken to facilitate the communication with the participants allows the available energy to be focused on the interview itself rather than on transportation for instance.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, he points out that the place of the interview should be convenient to the participant, private, and if possible familiar to him or her in order to maximize the effectiveness of the process.<sup>73</sup> Participants who agreed to have Skype video call simply did so by accessing Skype application on their personal computer or mobile phone at their preferred location. As for

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<sup>70</sup> Dwyer, Larry. Gill, Alison, and Seetaram, Neelu. Handbook of Research Methods in Tourism. Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches (Elgar original reference; 2012): 370-1

<sup>71</sup> Campos, Ana Cláudia; Mendes, Júlio; Oom do Valle, Patrícia & Scott, Noel. Co-creation of tourist experiences: a literature review, Current Issues in Tourism, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2018): 370

<sup>72</sup> Seidman, Irving. Interviewing as Qualitative Research. A Guide for Researchers in Education and Social Sciences. (Teachers College, Columbia University. New York and London. Second Edition, 1998): 42-3

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

the personal meeting, the interview was conducted in participant's home according to her request.

Each participant was asked twenty questions (see appendix 1). Previous research on this subject has shown that tourists bring in various types of personal resources such as time, effort, money, and knowledge when participating in the co-creation of an experience.<sup>74</sup> Having this in mind, the questions focused on several topics which offered a better understanding of travelers' personal backgrounds. These included the interviewees' general travel behavior, the importance of accommodation and their accommodation choices when travelling, their experience in a specific historic hotel, influence of hotel advertisement on their stay and their own evaluation of their travel experience in terms of its authenticity. The first aim was to explore the linkage between travelers' personal habits, beliefs and values, and the authenticity of their experience. The second objective was to find out how both management's and participants' 'performance' of a historic hotel merge together in order to co-create an authentic experience. Additional sub-questions were posed in the course of conversation, and varied according to individual participants' responses. They allowed a more profound insight into interviewees' personal experiences and opinions.

Although I share the same mother tongue, namely Croatian, as the participants, they were offered a choice of being interviewed either in Croatian or English. This decision was based after careful examination of potential linguistic issues that may arise during primary data collection. Seidman argues that even though interviewing in participant's and interviewer's mother tongue allows them to share their thoughts more clearly and effortlessly, the complexity of translation that follows afterwards is inevitable.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, psychologist Lev Vygotsky points out the difficulty of finding the right word in English which would represent the full sense of the word the participants spoke in their native language.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, some sort of linguistic challenges were expected to be encountered either during the conversation itself or in the course of translation. Seidman concludes that with that awareness, both interviewer and participants should

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<sup>74</sup> Mathis, Elaine F. Kim, Hyelin (Lina). Uysal, Muzaffer. Sirgy, Joseph M, and Prebensen, Nina K. The effect of co-creation experience on outcome variable. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 57 (2016): 63

<sup>75</sup> Seidman, Irving. *Interviewing as Qualitative Research. A Guide for Researches in Education and Social Sciences*. (Teachers College, Columbia University. New York and London. Second Edition, 1998): 88

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

talk to each other in a language that most authentically reflects their thinking.<sup>77</sup> Only three participants expressed being comfortable having a conversation in English. Two of them have previously studied in English-taught university courses, while the third participant has been working in a predominantly English speaking environment for several years. The seven other interviewees opted to share their experiences in their native Croatian language.<sup>78</sup>

### *3.2 Selection of participants*

Several researchers (Dexter, Hyman et al., Mishler) have pointed out that interviewing is not only a research methodology but also a sort of a social relationship.<sup>79</sup> Seidman asserts that this interviewing relationship is affected by several components of social identities that participants and interviewers bring to the interview. Apart from previously mentioned linguistic aspect these include other issues as well, such as race, ethnicity, class or gender.<sup>80</sup> Professors of Education, Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman claim that focusing solely on either similarities or differences in social identities between participants and the interviewer does not contribute to thoughtful qualitative research. They stress the fact that this is a very complex issue, and should not therefore be approached in such a one-dimensional way.<sup>81</sup>

I have taken the same position in this study by selecting interviewees of different class, gender, occupation and education, but same racial-ethnic background. I believe that the latter is especially important for this specific study. Seidman argues that researchers and participants of different racial and ethnic heritage face difficulties in establishing a productive communication.<sup>82</sup> Since an in-depth understanding of traveler's experience is the main objective of this research, good communication was essential for successful completion of this study. Having this in mind,

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<sup>77</sup> Seidman, Irving. *Interviewing as Qualitative Research. A Guide for Researches in Education and Social Sciences.* (Teachers College, Columbia University. New York and London. Second Edition, 1998): 88

<sup>78</sup> No major differences were noticed between interviews conducted in English and Croatian. Occasionally, participants who responded in English had difficulties in finding the right term when they were describing certain architectural or interior design elements. However, they clearly and effortlessly expressed their emotions, and described their travel experiences.

<sup>79</sup> Seidman, Irving. *Interviewing as Qualitative Research. A Guide for Researches in Education and Social Sciences.* (Teachers College, Columbia University. New York and London. Second Edition, 1998): 79

<sup>80</sup> Seidman, Irving. *Interviewing as Qualitative Research. A Guide for Researches in Education and Social Sciences.* (Teachers College, Columbia University. New York and London. Second Edition, 1998): 83

<sup>81</sup> Marshall, Catherine, and Rossman, Gretchen B. *Designing Qualitative Research.* (Sage Publications, Inc. Fifth Edition, 2011): 158

<sup>82</sup> Seidman, Irving. *Interviewing as Qualitative Research. A Guide for Researches in Education and Social Sciences.* (Teachers College, Columbia University. New York and London. Second Edition, 1998): 83

any impediments to thorough exploration, description, and analysis of the meaning of their lived experience<sup>83</sup> tried to be minimized by selecting participants who share my Croatian ethnical background. Moreover, analyzing the authentic experience co-creation from a point of view of Croatian nationals will add another perspective to the existing body of knowledge. Although Croatia represents a very small tourist market, with a population of four million residents,<sup>84</sup> it is a part of a considerably larger group of Eastern European countries.<sup>85</sup> Sociologist Erik Cohen draws attention to the scarcity of research in relation to the motivations and desires of the growing number of non-Western tourists, with existing research primarily focusing on wealthy Middle-Eastern and Asian travelers. He assumes that they did not share the Westerners' travelling habits in the past, and that nowadays they are not necessarily seeking to experience authenticity in their travels.<sup>86</sup> This research will therefore provide an insight into the importance of authenticity for non-Western tourists' travelling motivations, as well as how engaged they are in co-creating this value in their travel experiences.

Several other aspects have also been taken into account, such as participants' age, education and occupation (see Figure 1), as well as their personal travelling habits and motives, interest in history, and number of historic hotels they stayed in. Greater variation in terms of participants' profiles enabled me to get a more nuanced overview of how different individuals co-design, co-create and consume their authentic travel experiences. It enabled us to understand whether people with different personal profiles co-create authenticity differently? Is age an important factor in tourists' perception of authenticity? Or perhaps, their profession and education more strongly influence how they 'construe' and 'perform' authenticity in their travel experience.

Considering the time limitations of this study, all interviewees were chosen from my personal circle of friends and acquaintances. They agreed to be addressed only by their first name for the purpose of this research. Knowing them personally allowed me to more efficiently select as diverse group of participants as possible. Marshall and Rossman also point out that interviewing participants with the same or similar social identities risks the researcher assuming

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<sup>83</sup> Marshall, Catherine, and Rossman, Gretchen B. *Designing Qualitative Research*. (Sage Publications, Inc. Fifth Edition, 2011): 19

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/croatia-population/>

<sup>85</sup> Banaszekiewicz, Magdalena. Graburn, Nelson & Owsianowska, Sabina. *Tourism in (Post)socialist Eastern Europe*. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2017): 110

<sup>86</sup> Cohen, Erik. *The Changing Faces of Contemporary Tourism*. *Journal of the American Chemical Society*, Vol. 45 (2008): 331

too much tacit knowledge.<sup>87</sup> However, Kristina Niedderer, an expert in design research, asserts that tacit knowledge is very important for the research process as well as in evaluating and communicating research outcomes.<sup>88</sup> Michael Polanyi, who expounded upon the concept of tacit knowledge, claimed that people always know more than they can tell.<sup>89</sup> Assuming tacit knowledge helped me at certain occasions to ask the ‘right’ probing questions which encouraged participants to share additional important information about their experiences. This approach generated more nuanced and interesting answers, and hence, analysis findings, and to which many individuals outside the sample might have a chance to connect to in some way. Seidman refers to this phenomenon as sufficiency, and argues that it is one of the criteria when deciding how many participants are enough for a specific study.<sup>90</sup>

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Tin	23	BA Hospitality Management	Human Resource Assistant
Lucija	24	MSc Geography and Education	Student
Denis	26	BA Law	Student
Aida	29	MA Public Relations	Public Relations Assistant in Tourism Board
Martina	29	MSc Tourism	Hotel Receptionist
Antonio	35	Secondary education	Transportation Business Owner
Anita	58	BSc Business Administration	Housewife
Mare	58	BSc Economics	Credit Card Service Specialist
Tamara	59	BSc Marketing	Retail Manager
Franica	59	BA Preschool Education	Preschool Teacher

Figure 1: Participants’ profiles according to their age, highest attained level of education and current occupation

<sup>87</sup> Marshall, Catherine; Rossman, Gretchen B. *Designing Qualitative Research*. (Sage Publications, Inc. Fifth Edition, 2011): 158

<sup>88</sup> Mareis, Claudia. The Epistemology of the Unspoken: On the Concept of Tacit Knowledge in Contemporary Design Research. *Design Issues*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2012): 62

<sup>89</sup> Mareis, Claudia. The Epistemology of the Unspoken: On the Concept of Tacit Knowledge in Contemporary Design Research. *Design Issues*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2012): 64

<sup>90</sup> Seidman, Irving. *Interviewing as Qualitative Research. A Guide for Researchers in Education and Social Sciences*. (Teachers College, Columbia University. New York and London. Second Edition, 1998): 47



### *3.3 Content analysis*

In order to get a more profound understanding of the role historic hotels play in shaping authentic tourists' experiences, a qualitative content analysis of their official websites was utilized as well. Computer science scholars Inhwa Kim and Jasna Kuljis argue that this method examines the artefact (i.e. text, images) of communication itself and not the individual directly. This proved to be of great advantage for this study as it allowed me to investigate the narrative of historic hotels without direct interaction with their management, thus obtaining a less biased outcome.<sup>91</sup> Experts in qualitative research, Marilyn Domas White and Emily Marsh assert that in the qualitative type of content analysis, the researcher approaches the text by reading through the data and scrutinizing it closely in order to identify concepts and patterns.<sup>92</sup> In this particular study, the available content will be studied by trying to establish if there is a pattern in how tourists estimate their holidays as authentic while staying in historic hotels. For instance, does the heritage of a hotel play the vital role in this assessment criterion, or guests find that being served authentic dishes and interacting with local staff is a greater deciding factor in them perceiving their holidays as authentic? Furthermore, White and Marsh suggest that some unforeseen patterns and concepts may emerge, but which may prove to be important aspects to consider nevertheless.<sup>93</sup>

Official websites of the hotels where participants spent their holidays were analyzed in depth. Special attention was given to the way management advertised the hotel and how they perceived authenticity; did they consider it as something that could be performed, for instance staff greeting guests in a local language, or as an inherent part of the hotel's tangible heritage? McIntosh and Siggs also added that these accommodation establishments can be considered as places facilitating feelings, emotions, imagination, knowledge, satisfaction, and beneficial experiences.<sup>94</sup> However, the way historic hotels are presented to their 'audience' greatly contributes to the kind of experience their guests will have. Analysis of hotels' website therefore

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<sup>91</sup> Kim, Inhwa, and Kuljis, Jasna. Applying Content Analysis to Web-based Content. *Journal of Computing and Information Technology*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (2010): 370

<sup>92</sup> White, Marilyn Domas, and Marsh, Emily E. Content Analysis: A Flexible Methodology. *Library Trends*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (2006): 34

<sup>93</sup> White, Marilyn Domas, and Marsh, Emily E. Content Analysis: A Flexible Methodology. *Library Trends*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (2006): 34

<sup>94</sup> McIntosh, Alison J., and Siggs, Anna. An Exploration of the Experiential Nature of Boutique Accommodation. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 44 (2005): 75

provided an understanding of how management's vision of the hotel influenced their guests' overall stay in these properties. Findings of this study also exposed similarities and differences between management's perception of an authentic holiday and their guests' opinion about it.

### *3.4 Research findings*

Findings of conducted interviews are grouped according to four dimensions of co-creation experience which primarily reflect the tourist's perspective. They were identified by Campos et al. after intensive and repeated reading of the papers covering this specific topic, and they include: tourist's contribution to some aspect, phase or the overall tourism experience, tourist's active participation in on-site experience activities, tourist's engagement in on-site experience and tourist's interaction with others during on-site experience.<sup>95</sup> In addition to that, I have also introduced another dimension, namely, the role of hotel management's 'performance' in tourist's experience, in order be more inclusive of the historic hotel's perspective as well. Exploring the co-creation experience process through these dimensions also allowed to simultaneously examine how both hotel management and tourists 'performed' and 'construed' authenticity. Due to the complex nature of travelers' experiences, these dimensions are often overlapping as it is sometimes difficult to delve into one aspect of the co-creation experience without touching upon the other one.

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<sup>95</sup> Campos, Ana Cláudia; Mendes, Júlio; Oom do Valle, Patrícia & Scott, Noel. Co-creation of tourist experiences: a literature review, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2018): 370

# Chapter 1

## The influence of tourists' personal beliefs and motives on their experience

Serena Volo, tourism economy scholar, asserts that the same tourist activity can create different experiences in people.<sup>96</sup> This perspective puts the emphasis on tourists as the co-creators of their experience. In other words, it is not the tourist activity per se which causes people to experience it differently; instead, it is how tourists themselves perceive this activity which creates different individual experiences. Tourism scholars Nina K. Prebensen, Eunju Woo and Muzzo Uysal assert that travelers own very important personal (cultural, intellectual and physical) resources that add value to their consumer experience.<sup>97</sup> This perspective is closely linked to the concept of constructive authenticity in tourism. McIntosh and Prentice pointed out that what is presumed to be authentic greatly depends on the consumers themselves.<sup>98</sup> Hence, exploring participants' personal beliefs, expectations, preferences, stereotyped images, as well as consciousness<sup>99</sup> enabled me to understand how travelers co-create their authentic travel experiences through their stay in a historic hotel. Several aspects have been taken into the account: primary motives for travelling, importance of authentic experiences when travelling, participants' personal definition of authenticity, individual perception of accommodation and personal interest in history and historic hotels.

### 1.1 Participants' primary motives for travelling

Analysis of conducted interviews revealed that the primary motive for travelling had a considerable influence in the co-creation process of authentic travelers' experiences.

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<sup>96</sup> Volo, Serena. Conceptualizing Experience: A Tourist Based Approach, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, Vol. 18, Issue 2-3 (2009): 115

<sup>97</sup> Campos, Ana Cláudia; Mendes, Júlio; Oom do Valle, Patrícia & Scott, Noel. Co-creation of tourist experiences: a literature review, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2018): 387

<sup>98</sup> McIntosh, Alison J., and Prentice, Richard C.. Affirming Authenticity Consuming Cultural Heritage. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26, No. 3, (1999): 590

<sup>99</sup> Wang, Ning. Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1999): 355

Participants' varied personal backgrounds allowed me to get a more profound insight into subtle differences that affected the authenticity of their stay in a historic hotel. For instance, two interviewees stayed in a historic accommodation while on a business trip. Tamara (59) travelled to The Hague in order to attend Herbalife Nutrition<sup>100</sup> seminars as she worked for the company at the time. She was lodged in Hotel Des Indes The Hague located at the historical Lange Voorhout in the city centre of The Hague. Although both the property and its location were advertised as historically significant,<sup>101</sup> Tamara did not perceive it as an important factor for the authenticity of her stay. She explained this in the following words:

“(...) we did not spend enough time there. We spent only two or three days in that hotel, and were running around to attend all of the seminars so I did not truly experience Netherlands through that hotel. I perceived the hotel as a beautifully designed place, very luxurious, but for me, that same hotel could have been in Paris or Sweden.”<sup>102</sup>

As illustrated above, Tamara's busy work schedule distracted her from more active participation in co-creating an authentic experience through that hotel. She acknowledged the esthetical beauty and the value of the property but she also commented that the short amount of time she spent there, adversely affected the authenticity of her experience.

On the other hand, Aida (29) also travelled for work but had a completely different experience. Aida has been employed in the tourist board for several years as a public relations assistant. During one of her business trips, she stayed in The Midland Hotel in Manchester city centre describing her experience as “absolutely more authentic”.<sup>103</sup> She further explained that “the historical and cultural heritage of Manchester is architecturally very close to the hotel she stayed in” and that “the hotel definitely ‘introduced’ her to the city itself”.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, Aida

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<sup>100</sup> Herbalife Nutrition is a global nutrition company. Source: <https://company.herbalife.com/>

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.hoteldesindesthehague.com/>

<sup>102</sup> Tamara, 59. Skype interview. 18 March 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: znate što, ne bih baš to mogla toliko reći jer nismo bili dosta dana, bili smo samo dva tri dana i tako, trčali smo na seminare ... tako da nisam Nizozemsku doživjela preko njega. Ja sam to doživjela kao neko prekrasno mjesto, sve uređeno, luksuzno, luksuzno i za mene je možda mogao taj isti takav hotel biti, ne znam i u Parizu i u Švedskoj, ( ... )

<sup>103</sup> Aida, 29. Skype interview. 15 March 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: pa sigurno da je bio autentičniji (...)

<sup>104</sup> Aida, 29. Skype interview. 15 March 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: zaista Manchester... povijest i nekako njihovo kulturno naslijeđe je dosta i arhitekturom i gradnjom je vrlo slično hotelu u kojem sam odsjela (...). (...) tako da onaj definitivno je pridonijela približavanju samog grada, (...)

took time to explore in more details the property and its history while there. Upon her arrival to the hotel, Aida was impressed to find out that Rolls Royce<sup>105</sup> was founded in that very place. She was even surprised that such an interesting fact was not mentioned in the hotel's online narrative.

Although the motive behind Tamara's and Aida's trip was essentially the same, it influenced their experiences in a completely different manner. Both of them travelled for business purposes and stayed in luxurious historic accommodations in the centre of visited destinations. However, analyzing these two cases more closely it could be observed that Aida's professional background in tourism influenced the way she perceived the hotel. She drew attention to the heritage, history and culture as factors adding value to the authenticity of her stay. Considering that she is professionally engaged in the promotion of her home town's heritage, it was evident that her personal cultural and intellectual resources played an important role in the co-creation of her authentic experience. On the other hand, Tamara had different professional interests at the time, namely, advertising nutritional supplements, and which did not relate to the hotel setting in any specific regard. Time also played an important role in this case. Namely, Tamara shared that she stayed in that hotel a couple of years ago; explaining that she probably had different priorities during her travels back then.

## **1.2 Participants' personal definition of authenticity and importance of having an authentic experience when travelling**

Apart from their primary motives, the interviewees were also inquired about their personal view on authentic experiences. Eight out of ten participants highlighted the importance of having an authentic experience when travelling somewhere. Five of them said that this is actually an extremely significant aspect of their trip, while one person shared that authenticity is especially important when it comes to food and culture. In contrast, one participant said that he does not particularly care about experiencing something authentic. Another interviewee shared that this is usually important, but not always. The latter two were also quite reluctant to evaluate their stay

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<sup>105</sup> Producer of luxury motor cars. Source: <https://www.rolls-roycemotorcars.com/en-GB/house-of-rolls-royce/the-history-of-rolls-royce.html>

in a historic hotel as authentic. This seems to suggest that the authenticity of one's stay in historic accommodation is primarily affected by his or her effort and interest in creating such an experience.

For instance, Tin (23) recently earned his Bachelor's degree in Hospitality Management and currently works as a Human Resource assistant. He shared that he usually loves to travel with his friends in order "to have fun and gain some authentic experience".<sup>106</sup> On one occasion they booked a room in the Masarykova Koley hotel in Prague which was initially conceived as a student college in 1925.<sup>107</sup> He evaluated his stay in the hotel as authentic "because we were looking for a hotel where we could get fun and where we could be casual and that's what we got".<sup>108</sup> Although Tin did not explicitly focus on the historic aspect of the hotel in his comments, it could be observed that the history of this establishment still contributed to the authenticity of his experience. According to him, it was the property's original purpose of a student college that facilitated the co-creation of convivial atmosphere. He described that the interior of the building was conceived in such a way as to "bring people together".<sup>109</sup> But Tin also made use of the hotel setting to meet other guests, and thus co-produced this space in such a way as to realize his personal interests. McIntosh and Prentice asserted that tourists aid in the production of their own experiences through the personal characteristics and agendas they bring with them to an encounter.<sup>110</sup> Tin's case clearly shows that he put in his time and effort to find an accommodation which would reflect his personal interests. Both his educational and professional backgrounds demonstrate his interest in the human factor, and this was reflected in his pursuit of fun social experiences within the hotel.

Another interesting case proves the same. Tamara (59) was the only interviewee who mentioned an authentic experience as a priority during her travels, but did not manage to realize it through her stay in a historic hotel. She associated authenticity with different traditions, customs and festivities, especially in the countryside. In that sense, the Hotel Des Indes she stayed in while on a business trip in The Hague did not embody her personal definition of authenticity. Although Tamara generally finds it important to have an authentic experience, she

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<sup>106</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview. 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>107</sup> [https://www.suz.cvut.cz/files/tiskova\\_zprava\\_mk\\_w.pdf](https://www.suz.cvut.cz/files/tiskova_zprava_mk_w.pdf) (translated from Czech by using Google.translate)

<sup>108</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview. 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>109</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview. 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>110</sup> McIntosh, Alison J. and Siggs, Anna. An Exploration of the Experiential Nature of Boutique Accommodation. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 44 (2005): 74

failed to actively participate in its co-creation since her personal interests at the time did not coincide with the historic hotel setting.

Furthermore, participants were asked to define what authenticity represents to them and to give an example to illustrate. Interviews showed that there was no consensus about the meaning of authenticity, but that this is rather something that each interviewee perceives and experiences in a different way. Wang asserts that authenticity or inauthenticity is a result of how one sees things and his or her perspectives and interpretations.<sup>111</sup> Six participants described their stay in a historic hotel as authentic, and this experience closely reflected their personal definition of authenticity. One participant's experience only partly reflected his description of authenticity, but he evaluated his stay as authentic nevertheless. Namely, Antonio (35) owns a transportation company and travels once a year "to explore other countries and cultures".<sup>112</sup> When asked to define authenticity in his own words, he explained that he sees it as:

"Something local, somewhere where local residents go, in other words, something that was not built exclusively for touristic purposes. It is really about their local way of life... something that is traditional and inherent to the country I'm travelling in."<sup>113</sup>

He also shared a personal authentic experience from one of his previous travels:

"When visiting Cambodia we stayed in a traditional accommodation and sailed on a traditional boat together with the locals, (...). Also, when people who lived there showed us something that is a little bit off the beaten path during our visit to a village in the jungle, (...), we saw how local residents who are not so frequently in touch with the tourists truly live, that is, their traditional

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<sup>111</sup> Wang, Ning. Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1999): 355

<sup>112</sup> Antonio, 35. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: volim (...) i upoznati nove zemlje i kulturu (...)

<sup>113</sup> Antonio, 35. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: nešto domaće i nešto gdje je domaće i lokalno stanovništvo, znaci nešto što nije baš napravljeno isključivo u turističke svrhe, nego baš... domaći način i stil života, eto, tako bi rekao, znači, nešto što je baš tradicionalno i domaće i eto... iz te zemlje u koju putujem, eto to

way of life, life that is still not affected by tourism. Yes, this is what I remember the most.”<sup>114</sup>

In comparison, when asked did he have an authentic experience in Amsterdam Wiechmann Hotel, he replied:

“Well, I think I have (...) because I have visited other parts of the city which are new and modern in comparison to this old part of the city. I think I have experienced the real way of life... referring to the history especially, how people used to live in this city before... I think this made a far greater difference than if I had stayed in some new, modern neighborhood and hotel.”<sup>115</sup>

At first, Antonio identifies authenticity as something local and unspoiled by tourist masses. Then he describes his stay in the Amsterdam Wiechmann Hotel as added value to the authenticity of his travel experience, although it diverges in many ways from his initial definition of authenticity. Namely, this property is located in the historical center of Amsterdam,<sup>116</sup> a city which hosts millions of tourists every year.<sup>117</sup> It is hardly a destination that could be described as off the beaten track. However, delving deeper into his examples of authentic experiences, it could be observed that they also have a common trait, and that is the traditional way of life of the local residents. It was just that Antonio engaged differently with this aspect of the local culture in different tourist destinations.

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<sup>114</sup>Antonio, 35. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: pa eto... eee to onaj, evo s putovanja u Kambodžu smo bili u njihovom domaćem smještaju i bili smo na njihovom lokalnom brodu, vozili smo se s lokalnim stanovništvom na brodu, (...). I kad su ljudi koji su otamo pokazu onaj, eee, pokazu nešto sto je malo van turističkih staza i prilikom posjete selu, evo jednom, kroz džunglu, (...)... vidjeli smo baš kako živi znači domaće stanovništvo koje, koje nije u doticaju s turizmom i to je tradicionalni način života i znači, način života koji još nije taknut turizmom, onaj... koji nije taknut turizmom, eto tako, to mi je baš ostalo u sjećanju, onaj eee najboljem, eto kako bi rekao

<sup>115</sup>Antonio, 35. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text in Croatian: pa ja smatram da jesam jer ipak... putovao sam u drugim... posjetio sam i druge dijelove grada koji su novi i modernii u usporedbi s ovim koji je bio u starom dijelu grada, mislim da sam doživio pravi način života, pogotovo u... referirajući se na povijest... kako se prije živjelo u tom gradu... mislim da mi je to činilo dosta veliku razliku, nego da sam bio negdje u nekom novom, modernom dijelu grada i hotelu.

<sup>116</sup> <https://www.hotelwiechmann.nl/en/>

<sup>117</sup> <https://www.nbtc.nl/en/home/article/inbound-tourism-en.htm>



Tourism scholar Senyao Sang argues that tourist definitions of authentic experiences differ in varying social contexts.<sup>118</sup> What had made Antonio's stay in Cambodia authentic was his immersion in their traditional way of life which was still actively practiced in the present. He still considered this aspect of the host culture as added value to the authenticity of his experience in Amsterdam; however he perceived it as something that could be lived only through history. It could be observed from his comments that he considered the very historical location of the hotel as something that brought him closer to the traditional Dutch lifestyle. Hotel's historic architecture also seemed to play a great part in this because Antonio always referred to it as "traditional Dutch style"<sup>119</sup> throughout the conversation. He even highlighted it as one of the most important reasons for choosing this hotel over other accommodation. This clearly shows that while in Amsterdam, Antonio identified history with tradition, more specifically, it became a medium that helped him experience an aspect of local culture he considered to be its most authentic one.

Another one of the interviewees also stated that her experience did not entirely match her perception of authenticity. However, unlike Antonio she also did not consider her stay as authentic. Quite surprisingly, two participants hesitated to evaluate their stays as authentic although these experiences mirrored their personal views on authenticity. One such example is Martina's (29) stay in Hilton Molino Stucky Hotel in Venice, Italy. Hotel's online narrative explains that before becoming a hotel, this property served as a flourishing mill founded by Swiss-Venetian businessman Giovanni Stucky in the late 19th century. However, labor strifes started to occur very often and they even cost Stucky his life. Together with war conflicts, the business closed its doors in 1955. It was only years later that the restoration of the mill began in order to transform it into a hotel.<sup>120</sup> When asked to define authenticity in her own words, Martina described it as "something historical, something from the roots and something that has a story behind it".<sup>121</sup> If we compare her personal idea of authenticity to the characteristics of this specific hotel, it can be observed that they are quite similar. However, Martina's evaluation of

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<sup>118</sup> Sang, Senyao. A study on tourists' perceived authenticity in Gala Village, Nyingchi Prefecture. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* (2018): 1

<sup>119</sup> Antonio, 35. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text in Croatian: (...), znači to je nešto unikatno, (...)

<sup>120</sup> <https://www3.hilton.com/en/hotels/italy/hilton-molino-stucky-venice>;  
<https://www.historichotelsworldwide.com/hotels-resorts/hilton-molino-stucky-venice/history.php>

<sup>121</sup> Martina, 29. Skype interview. 19 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

her travel experience indicated that the hotel played only a minor role in the co-creation of an authentic experience in comparison with the other factors. She explained that:

“(…) Venice is a city that is completely different from all the rest of other cities because it's on water so this kind of experience, going with the boat there, having the transportation to the center itself (...) and the building itself also where we stayed, it's unique, it's something really unique, that was like a small part of this.”<sup>122</sup>

In comparison, Martina's description of a previous travel experience showed that she considered it authentic because she attended a traditional dance class in Italy that was originally invented there and was still practiced by the locals. Similarly, referring to her experience in Venice, she explained that having the shuttle boat service from the hotel to the center was something “really important”.<sup>123</sup> It was actually the traditional mode of transportation offered by the hotel that had a slightly more influence on her final remark.

Urry asserts that tourists are moving from passively gazing at built heritage and landscapes to wanting to participate in, and engage with, the destination.<sup>124</sup> Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi claims that this active participation and complete immersion in the situation that tourists are experiencing lead to best experiences.<sup>125</sup> Although Martina found the hotel unique, her stay in the property added little value to her travel experience. Instead, it was her active engagement with Venice via the shuttle boat that had made her travel experience more authentic. Although this service was provided by the hotel, it could be observed from the conversation that Martina did not consider it as an integrate part of her hotel experience. Furthermore, her comments revealed that she perceived the shuttle boat service to be of greater experiential quality than her stay in a historic hotel. Tourism scholars Hung-Che Wu and Tao Li define experiential quality as perceived judgment about the excellence or superiority of the

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<sup>122</sup> Martina, 29. Skype interview. 19 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>123</sup> Martina, 29. Skype interview. 19 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>124</sup> Kanagasapathy, G. Understanding the flow experiences of heritage tourists. Doctorate Thesis (Doctorate). Bournemouth University (2017): 3

<sup>125</sup> Kanagasapathy, G. Understanding the flow experiences of heritage tourists. Doctorate Thesis (Doctorate). Bournemouth University (2017): 3

tourist experience.<sup>126</sup> It could be noticed that in this specific case, Martina's perceived excellence of her boat experience also had a considerable impact on how she evaluated the authenticity of her travel experience. This case demonstrates that the co-creation of an authentic experience does not only depend on the mere 'interaction' with a certain physical environment, but also on the depth of that experiential engagement.<sup>127</sup> Although Martina 'co-produced' different experiences through her engagement with the hotel setting, they were not as memorable and special as the boat ride in her opinion.

### **1.3 Individual perception of accommodation**

Since one of the purposes of this study is to establish which role historic hotels play in the co-creation of their guests' authentic travel experiences, participants were asked to share their views on accommodation in general. When asked about the importance of accommodation, one participant stated that this is extremely important to her when she travels somewhere, and one stated that it is quite important. On the other hand, eight participants replied that this is an important aspect of their holiday, but they would not place it on top of their priorities when travelling. Each interviewee also shared how they think of a hotel in general. The analysis of their answers showed that their opinion about hotels in general is not a very influential factor in the co-creation of their authentic experience. Some participants have referred to accommodation as a rather meaningless aspect of their travel in general, but demonstrated quite the opposite when asked to talk about their experience in a specific hotel.

Curiously, participants who travel the most provided quite indifferent answers when explaining what a hotel means to them. For instance, Aida (29) who travels around ten times per year described a hotel as "a place solely meant for resting".<sup>128</sup> Denis (26) who is on road six to seven times a year struggled to answer what he thinks of this type of accommodation. He looked puzzled, and then answered that "well, it is exactly that, an accommodation, (...) let's say a bit

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<sup>126</sup> Wu, Hung-Che, and Li, Tao. A Study of Experiential Quality, Perceived Value, Heritage Image, Experiential Satisfaction, and Behavioral Intentions for Heritage Tourists. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* Vol. 41, No. 8 (2014): 907

<sup>127</sup> Ooi, Can-Seng. A Theory of Tourism Experiences in Bærenholdt, Jørgen Ole. Haldrup, Michael. Larsen, Jonas, and Urry, John. *Performing Tourist Places* (Ashgate, 2004): 53

<sup>128</sup> Aida, 29. Skype interview. 15 March 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...),to mi je isključivo mjesto za nekakvo odmaranje.

better accommodation”.<sup>129</sup> Anita (58) leaves her hometown twice or three times a year. She shared that she sees a hotel as “a place to spend the night”.<sup>130</sup> However, Aida’s and Anita’s view on hotels in general did not negatively influence their actual experience. They both asserted that respective historic hotels they stayed in still greatly contributed to the co-creation of their authentic experiences. In comparison, Denis undermined the importance of the accommodation in this process.

On the other hand, Martina (29) who usually travels once a year described a hotel as a place where “it’s really important to feel comfortable, to have another home away from home”.<sup>131</sup> Although Hilton Molino Stucky historic hotel lived up to this description, she concluded that the hotel did not play a great part in co-creating an authentic experience for her. In contrast, Tin (23) also thinks of a hotel as a “one small part of the home”<sup>132</sup> but “definitely”<sup>133</sup> agrees that a historic hotel he stayed in contributed to the authenticity of his experience.

Seven interviewees shared that they mostly stay in hotels when travelling while two indicated they stay both in hotels and in other types of accommodation. Only one participant indicated that he very rarely books a room in a hotel. Two interviewees who use different types of accommodation in addition to hotels were a bit reluctant to evaluate their stay in a historic hotel as authentic. However, no further indication was provided in their comments that this was somehow related to them perceiving alternative accommodation units as more authentic. It was rather due to the fact that they evaluated some other experiences as more authentic, such as an unusual flight for instance, and not their stay in the historic hotel. Denis (26) who stayed in the Green House Hotel in Tyumen, Russia, explained it in the following words:

“Well, I can say, not focusing on the hotel now, I can share my overall impression and say that the entire holiday was more authentic. First of all, the town itself, it is on the north, Tyumen is in Siberia. So that was more authentic in the first place, the climate is completely different and very peculiar, culture as well. The temperature is constantly around -20 degrees. And then when we had a connecting flight, we took a plane in Moscow which could fit only

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<sup>129</sup> Denis, 26. Skype interview. 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: pa eto točno tako, smještaj (...) ajmo reći malo bolji smještaj (...)

<sup>130</sup> Anita, 58. Skype interview, 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: hotel kao prenočište jedno

<sup>131</sup> Martina, 29. Skype interview. 19 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>132</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview. 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>133</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview. 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

around twenty people, and that plane was dropping and shaking, I can really say I was so frightened (...)"<sup>134</sup>

"(...) I can say it was special because of that, but also because there was that historic hotel, so different, and I know that some historical figures stayed there. (...). So I can say when I sum it all up, that it was an authentic holiday because of the hotel and the journey itself and because of everything really."<sup>135</sup>

It is obvious that Denis did not consider his stay in the historic hotel as the most authentic aspect of his journey. Instead, his attention was turned to external circumstances such as the abrupt climate change and an unpleasant flight. Can-Seng Ooi asserts that experiences may diverge from what is planned because of different types of distractions.<sup>136</sup> Ooi indicated that one of the approaches to studying and understanding tourism experiences focuses on different types of mental states that people experience. These states may be described as special, meaningful, out-of-the-ordinary or very emotionally intense.<sup>137</sup> Closely looking at all the factors that added to the authenticity of Denis' experience, it can be observed that he considered the climate change and the flight as far more intense and unusual in comparison to his hotel experience.

As for the most important factors when choosing an accommodation, the majority of participants agreed that location and cleanliness are extremely important. Three participants also shared that the food offered in the accommodation unit should be tasty and of good quality. Only one person stated that the uniqueness of the property might be an important factor when deciding which accommodation to book. However, the location of the hotel was the sole factor that was highlighted as important for an authentic experience, and this was mentioned by three interviewees only.

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<sup>134</sup> Denis, 26. Skype interview. 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: pa mogu reći, evo nije baš sad da se fokusiram na hotel, mogu ispričati ovako sveukupno, po meni je put bio autentičniji, sve je drugačije, prvo zbog toga, zbog mjesta, znači to je gore, Tyumen to je u Sibiru, znači to mi je prvo autentično, tamo je drugačija klima i po svemu je posebno, kultura drugačija kultura drugačije je sve to, -20 non stop temperatura, onda kad smo... presjedali smo, onda smo iz Moskve sjeli u neki mali avion gdje nas samo 20 može sjesti i taj avion je propadao, tresao se, ono mogu reći baš da sam umro od straha (...)

<sup>135</sup> Denis, 26. Skype interview. 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: mogu reći da je po tome posebno, a i po tome sto je to opet kao neki povijesni hotel i drugačije i znam da su tu odsjedale neke njihove povijesne ličnosti (...), pa mogu reći da mi je sve to kada skupa zbrojim da jest autentično putovanje i zbog hotela i zbog puta i zbog svega stvarno, eto.

<sup>136</sup> Ooi, Can-Seng. A Theory of Tourism Experiences in Bærenholdt, Jørgen Ole. Haldrup, Michael. Larsen, Jonas, and Urry, John. *Performing Tourist Places* (Ashgate, 2004): 64

<sup>137</sup> Ooi, Can-Seng. A Theory of Tourism Experiences in Tom O'Dell & Peter Billing. "Experiencescapes" in *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 53

This further demonstrates that participants' personal views on accommodation are of little influence in the co-creation of their authentic experiences in comparison to previously discussed travelling motives for instance. The findings of this study truly emphasized the fact that authenticity is a product of a multitude of personal and social influences.<sup>138</sup> Hence, participants' evaluation of the authenticity of their travel experience does not rest solely on one particular influence, but needs to be analyzed as a more complex phenomenon.

## **1.4 Personal interest in history and historic hotels**

Participants were also asked if they had any particular interest in history and historic hotels. Ten out of ten participants replied positively to this question. However, several participants pointed out that they have not had the opportunity to stay in historic accommodation as many times as they wanted to. For instance, Mare (58) mentioned that she is fascinated with historic hotels but they are very often inaccessible due to her financial situation. However, she shared that she visited many of those properties as an outside guest, and asked on several occasions to see the rooms so she could truly 'feel' that place. This seems to suggest that seeing the public places of the hotel was not enough for Mare to fully experience the history of a certain hotel. Franica (59) also mentioned financial matter as an impediment to staying in more historical accommodation properties. In comparison, Denis (26) who mainly travels with his judo club complained that he does not have so much time to explore the history in its different forms since he is mostly focused on his sports classes and contests. He further explained that he hopes to have more free time and money to visit sites of historical importance and stay in more historic hotels.

Most of the participants perceived historic hotels as an accommodation requiring a very substantial amount of money. Checking the average prices of the specific historic properties they stayed in, it was observed that this was often not the case. In fact, most of them were approximately in the same price range as modern hotels of the same category in that destination. However, many interviewees associated this type of hotels with increased value due to various reasons. Several marketing scholars, A. Parsu Parasuraman, Valarie Zeithaml and Leonard

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<sup>138</sup> Mkono, Muchazondida. A netnographic examination of constructive authenticity in Victoria Falls tourist (restaurant) experiences. *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 31 (2012): 388

Berry, asserted that value is defined by customers, and that this concept of consumers' perceived value is very subjective and personal.<sup>139</sup> It is therefore important to explore how travelers perceive the value of historic hotels in order to understand how they project this idea onto this type of accommodation to co-create their authentic experience.

For instance, Antonio (35) commented:

“I am willing to pay more, because it is a historical hotel after all, and I am sure that such buildings also require higher maintenance costs, so I got an impression that you get more for your money there than you would in some modern, impersonal building.”<sup>140</sup>

He perceived this hotel as more valuable not only because of its historical significance, but also because he found that this type of accommodation has a certain “personality”. Similarly, Tin (23) shared that he greatly appreciates historic hotels because “they usually have the soul”<sup>141</sup> and they provide “an authentic experience because they are there for a long time”.<sup>142</sup> It can be observed in Tin's case that he identifies history with authenticity and a more unique character. On the other hand, Tamara (59) saw historic accommodation as a true example of national heritage:

“I wish that those hotels (...), it would be logical for me, that the local people maintain the possession of these properties. It is part of these people, their tradition, culture and lifestyle; they were living there for centuries... don't you think? This is who they are; it is their heritage (...).”<sup>143</sup>

Although all participants perceived historic accommodation as more valuable in various regards, this did not always prove to be an important factor when they were assessing the authenticity of their travel experiences.

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<sup>139</sup> Ali, Faizan. Omar, Rosmini, and Amin, Muslim. An Examination of the Relationships between Physical Environment, Perceived Value, Image and Behavioural Intentions: A SEM approach towards Malaysian resort hotels. *Journal of Hotel and Tourism Management* Vol. 27, No. 2 (2013): 12

<sup>140</sup> Antonio, 35. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text in Croatian: (...) bio bi spreman platiti malo više, pošto je hotel ipak povijesni i sigurno takve zgrade zahtijevaju malo veće troškove održavanja, tako da sam dobio dojam da se tu više dobiva za svoj novac nego u nekom modernom, bezličnom zdanju

<sup>141</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview. 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>142</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview. 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>143</sup> Tamara, 59. Skype interview. 18 March 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: I htjela bih uvijek da, (...), za mene bi bilo logično da ostaju u rukama ljudi koji tu žive. (...)... to je dio ljudi, tradicije, kulture, života, stoljeća koji su se tu.. koji su samo tu živjeli, je li? To su oni, to je njihovo nasljedstvo, (...)

A similar trend could be observed with interviewees' personal definitions of historic hotels which will be explored in more detail in the following paragraphs. They were asked to list the characteristics they think a hotel should have in order to be classified as a historic one. Website analysis of hotels where participants stayed revealed that these properties in most part matched their guests' personal ideas of this type of accommodation. For some interviewees this proved to be a very influential factor in the co-creation of their authentic experience. For instance, Anita (58) defined a historic hotel as a property which tells a story about the place in which it is located; "a hotel where she can immediately feel the destination she is in."<sup>144</sup> Although she stayed in several historic accommodations, she chose to talk about Inat Kuca in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina as the most impressive one she stayed in. Anita even referred to this property as an example of her personal definition of a historic hotel. As the story on the website of the hotel goes, the building the hotel is housed in was once located across the river of the place it is in now. There it was tore down on the authority of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which ruled over Bosnia during the nineteenth century. Government officials wanted to demolish the Inat Kuca (Spite House in English) in order to build a Town Hall in that very place, but the owner of the building was so outraged that he would not accept any proposal from the government. This led to him ending up in prison, where he finally gave in but demanded that they relocate the house brick by brick to the opposite side of the river. The property still carries the name Spite House and serves as a symbol of Bosnian spite and revolt against foreign rule.<sup>145</sup> Anita stayed in this property before it was turned into a restaurant, and she was so fascinated with the story this place tells about Sarajevo and its people that she still remembers it in detail. She shared that even the very name of the hotel was so intriguing to her that she felt compelled to book a room there. At the end of the interview, Anita agreed that staying in this property added to the authenticity of her stay "because she instantaneously experienced the city in that hotel".<sup>146</sup> This example shows that Anita's personal belief about historic hotels strongly influenced how she assessed the authenticity of her travel experience.

Another example would be Aida (29) who defines a hotel as a historic one primarily according to its exterior. She pointed out that it is also important that its architectural features

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<sup>144</sup> Anita, 58. Skype interview, 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...) da cim udjem u taj hotel, da nesto osjetim o tom gradu.

<sup>145</sup> <https://inatkuca.ba/reservation/>

<sup>146</sup> Anita, 58. Skype interview, 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...) jer sam odmah u tom hotelu doživjela taj grad, (...)



correspond to the destination itself and the surroundings of the hotel. When explaining why her stay in the Midland Manchester Hotel contributed to the authenticity of her travel experience, she basically focused on those same characteristics. She pointed out that the hotel was aesthetically very similar to the cultural and historical built heritage of Manchester, and “that it definitely contributed to bringing Manchester closer to her.”<sup>147</sup> It is clear that in this specific case, Aida in great part evaluated the authenticity of her experience based on her personal opinions.

However, staying in a historic hotel that embodied travelers’ personal beliefs about such properties as in the examples above, was considered as adding less value to the authenticity of participants’ experiences in comparison to some other factors. Instead, they found some other aspects of the historic accommodation, such as its location, as being more influential in this co-creation process. Mare (58) defined a historic hotel as a historical building that was repurposed to serve as a hotel, but it was not excessively modified. The website of the Franciscan Monastery Hotel she stayed in on the island of Badija in Croatia claims that this property was originally built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Its restoration was carried out from 2005 until 2011 under the supervision of Conservation Department of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia. During this time, accommodation was included as an integrate part of this religious complex.<sup>148</sup> Although this property matched her personal description of a historic hotel, she mentioned other factors which were more significant in the co-creation of her authentic travel experience. She primarily stressed the location of the hotel on an uninhabited island amidst the beautiful nature. O’Dell argued that tourists are not always looking for pulse, intensity, and the hottest nightlife. Instead, they can be in search of a different type of experience: peace and quiet.<sup>149</sup> As the purpose of Mare’s trip was to attend spiritual seminars and reflect upon herself and her life, she indeed sought tranquility. Although hotel’s location greatly facilitated such atmosphere, it was also the way Mare ‘interacted’ with that place that contributed to the co-production of a peaceful hotel setting, thus co-creating an authentic experience for her.

Another example is Franica (59) who spent a couple of nights in Hotel Kampa – Old Armoury in Prague. When asked what according to her defines a hotel as a historic one, she explained:

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<sup>147</sup> Aida, 29. Skype interview. 15 March 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...), tako da onaj definitivno je pridonijela približavanju samog grada, (...)

<sup>148</sup> <https://www.badija.hr/index.php/samostan/obnova-samostana>

<sup>149</sup> O’Dell, Tom. *Experiencescapes: Blurring Borders and Testing Connections* in O’Dell, Tom, and Billing, Peter. *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 30

“Well, furniture, and that something was going on there, something like... some kind of treaties and agreements were signed there, some historical figures were hosted there, some important people, (...).”<sup>150</sup>

She mentioned the furniture as the foremost attribute of a historic hotel. Similarly, this was well reflected in Hotel Kampa’s official website which referred to this aspect of the hotel as a highlight of its rich history.<sup>151</sup> However, Franica mentioned a completely different reason why her stay in this hotel added to the overall authenticity of her holiday in Prague:

“(…) It was like I was in the very historical center, (...). If I had stayed somewhere outside of Prague or in some modern hotel, well, that wouldn’t be... like this, everything was somehow in that same spirit.”<sup>152</sup>

Although Hotel Kampa corresponded to Franica’s stereotypical image of a historic hotel, she also found that its location added to the authenticity of her travel experience. The proximity of the historical centre proved to be an important factor that had made her stay there more authentic. She also listed the hotel’s location as one of the primary factors for booking this hotel in the first place. According to Franica, the opportunity to enjoy the history of Prague’s old centre only a few steps away from her hotel was one of its greatest advantages. She explained that being lodged in a modern part of the destination “is just not the point; but if you’re in the historical centre, you’re already part of the history”.<sup>153</sup> Her comments show that she actually recognized the location of the hotel as its most prominent historical feature, which was an important factor in her authentic experience.

When asked about her personal interest in historic hotels, Franica agreed that this is something she finds very intriguing indeed. But she quickly veered away from the subject and started describing a seventeenth century apartment she used to live in while she was working for a renowned Croatian family in London. She pointed out that the entire property was furnished

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<sup>150</sup> Franica, 59. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian: pa dobro, namještaj, i da se nešto događalo tu, nešto se, stvarali kao neki... dogovori i pregovori, povijesne ličnosti koje su odsjele tu, koje... bile su važne, (...)

<sup>151</sup> <https://www.hotelkampa.cz/en/hotel-kampa-stara-zbrojnice/hotel/rooms>

<sup>152</sup> Franica, 59. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...) kao da sam baš u staroj jezgri, sve je bilo u redu. Da sam odsjela sad negdje van, van Praga i tako neki moderniji hotel, pa onda to... ovako mi je sve nekako bilo u sklopu svega toga

<sup>153</sup> Franica, 59. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...) to već nije to, a čim ste vi u jednoj staroj jezgri, vi ste vec u povijesti.

with original pieces from that historical period, and that none of the historic hotels she can now afford to book can really compare to that. Ooi asserts that travelers search for the expected when consuming a certain tourism product. He claims that tourists' expectations, preconceptions, and preferences affect what they notice and how they interpret the product. According to him, it can be a true challenge to get tourists to pay attention to things that they have imagined wrongly.<sup>154</sup> Franica's expectation that it is very unlikely for her to stay in a historic hotel that could match the property in London greatly affected her actual experience in Hotel Kampa. It could be observed that her preconceived idea about the sort of furniture she might encounter there distracted her from drawing more attention to this aspect of the hotel during her actual experience. Ooi also asserts that the physical environment and conditions surrounding the product may detract tourist's attention from the promoted tourism product.<sup>155</sup> Hotel Kampa's furniture pieces might as well have been very impressive and historically valuable. However the hotel's vicinity to the Prague's historical centre shifted Franica's attention away from something she usually finds very interesting.

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<sup>154</sup> Ooi, Can-Seng. A Theory of Tourism Experiences in Bærenholdt, Jørgen Ole. Haldrup, Michael. Larsen, Jonas, and Urry, John. *Performing Tourist Places* (Ashgate, 2004): 63-4

<sup>155</sup> Ooi, Can-Seng. A Theory of Tourism Experiences in Bærenholdt, Jørgen Ole. Haldrup, Michael. Larsen, Jonas, and Urry, John. *Performing Tourist Places* (Ashgate, 2004): 61

## Chapter 2

# Practical and emotional engagement with the hotel as space

### 2.1 Active participation in on-site experience activities

Apart from the participants' personal beliefs, preferences, stereotyped images and motives, their active participation in different activities within the hotel setting also influenced the co-creation of an (in)authentic experience. Michael Morgan, a researcher in the field of services management, argues that tourist experience is created by the interaction between the activities and places provided by the destination and the internal motivations and meanings brought by the visitors.<sup>156</sup> In other words, this dimension of experience co-creation looks at how participants, hotel management, staff, and other guests 'construed' and 'performed' the hotel. Tourism scholar Giovanna Bertella indicates that this active participation can be mental, physical or emotional engagement.<sup>157</sup> The examples below illustrate that these different aspects of tourist's engagement are usually very closely interrelated.

For instance, Mare (58) stayed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Franciscan Monastery located on the island of Badija in Croatia. She explained that the purpose of her travel was to attend spiritual exercises that were held in the Monastery. When asked what impressed her most about the hotel, she primarily focused on its intangible components. She shared that she was fascinated by:

"The way people always wanted to retreat into the solitude, devote time only for them, find themselves, and that was so since forever; that island exists from 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century, that is, the monastery... so the people, their withdrawal, their quest for self-discovery..."<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Morgan, Michael. 'We're not the barmy army!': Reflections on the sports tourist experience. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 9 (2007): 363

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Mare, 58. Skype interview. 19 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: kako su ljudi oduvijek željeli, bježali u osamu, posvećeni sebi, tražili sebe, znači, to je oduvijek, taj otočić postoji od 13 ili 14 stoljeća, samostan na njemu, znači ljudi, bijeg, traženja

This example shows how Mare's assessment of the authenticity of her stay was closely related to the religious nature of her visit. She had co-created an authentic experience by physically participating in the spiritual exercises and by contemplating about the story behind the property and the spiritual growth of its visitors.

Denis (26) had a different experience. He is currently pursuing his Master's degree in Law, but he passionately trains judo in his free time and travels six to seven times a year to attend different competitions. One such championship was organized in Tyumen, Russia, where he stayed in the Green House Hotel together with the other participants. They received a warm welcome from the hotel staff who also introduced them to the history of that property. Denis took some time to recall if something impressed him during his stay there which was not mentioned in this welcome speech, but failed to remember anything in particular. He explained that he was actually rather "focused on the competition"<sup>159</sup> and spent most of his time watching games and cheering for his team members. He also shared that he spent a great deal of time socializing with other participants during meal times, as the hotel was exclusively reserved for them. Although he actively participated in different on-site experiences, it was clear that his personal motives deviated in a certain way from the intended purpose of the hotel. In other words, Denis overlooked what the hotel had to offer because his attention was focused elsewhere.<sup>160</sup>

Both Mare and Denis engaged in different activities within historic hotels. However, historic hotel's attributes contributed to the authenticity of Mare's experience, while Denis did not quite perceive it that way. They appropriated and performed those places according to their specific interests.<sup>161</sup> However, Ooi argues that experiences are multifaceted. According to him, they do not only arise from tourists' activities and the social meanings embedded in them, but also from the physical environment itself.<sup>162</sup> The monastery-hotel enhanced the way Mare experienced spiritual seminars held there, while a historic hotel in Denis' case did not serve him in experiencing the judo contest in a considerably more authentic way.

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<sup>159</sup> Denis, 26. Skype interview. 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...) fokusiran sam bio na natjecanje (...)

<sup>160</sup> Ooi, Can-Seng. A Theory of Tourism Experiences in Bærenholdt, Jørgen Ole. Haldrup, Michael. Larsen, Jonas, and Urry, John. *Performing Tourist Places* (Ashgate, 2004): 63

<sup>161</sup> O'Dell, Tom. *Experiencescapes: Blurring Borders and Testing Connections* in O'Dell, Tom, and Billing, Peter. *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 18

<sup>162</sup> Ooi, Can-Seng. A Theory of Tourism Experiences in Bærenholdt, Jørgen Ole. Haldrup, Michael. Larsen, Jonas, and Urry, John. *Performing Tourist Places* (Ashgate, 2004): 51

## **2.2 Engagement in on-site experience**

Tom O'Dell thus describes experiences as highly subjective and personal phenomena, located entirely in the minds of individuals.<sup>163</sup> This particular dimension of the experience co-creation conceptualizes tourism experiences as psychological events and processes, such as expectation, perception, and memory, and which are connected to different stages of overall tourism experience.<sup>164</sup> Participants were therefore asked to describe aspects of the hotel they personally found the most impressive, and to recall how they felt and how they behaved during their stay in a historic hotel. These insights provided a better understanding of how tourists chose to perform historic hotels they stayed in. Campos et al. assert that in this sense, the tourism experience may be 'co-creative' or 'non-co-creative' depending on the role (active vs. passive) of the tourist in the type of the chosen tourism experience.<sup>165</sup> It was observed that participants who more 'actively performed' historic hotels were also more successful in co-creating an authentic experience.

### *2.2.1 Participants' behaviour within the historic hotel*

For instance, when asked whether she behaved any differently in a historic hotel compared to a modern one, Aida (29) shared the following:

“(...) when I'm in this kind of hotel, I immediately sit up straight, my manners are impeccable. But when I'm in a modern hotel, I am much more casual (...).”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> O'Dell, Tom. *Experiencescapes: Blurring Borders and Testing Connections* in O'Dell, Tom, and Billing, Peter. *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 15

<sup>164</sup> Campos, Ana Cláudia. Mendes, Júlio. Oom do Valle, Patrícia, and Scott, Noel. Co-creation of tourist experiences: a literature review, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2018): 391

<sup>165</sup> O'Dell, Tom. *Experiencescapes: Blurring Borders and Testing Connections* in O'Dell, Tom, and Billing, Peter. *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 15

<sup>166</sup> Campos, Ana Cláudia. Mendes, Júlio. Oom do Valle, Patrícia, and Scott, Noel. Co-creation of tourist experiences: a literature review, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2018): 391

<sup>166</sup> Aida, 29. Skype interview. 15 March 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...) a kada sam u ovom hotelu onda se odmah ispravim odmah sve bude tip top i tako, ali kad sam u modernijem hotelu, onda se nekako osjećam malo opuštenije (...)

The example above clearly shows that Aida's behavioral response to the hotel setting is closely linked to her mental perception of that specific place. In comparison, Denis (26) who stayed in a similar category of a hotel like Aida, namely a four star property, found my question quite amusing and replied that he "always behaves the same" and that he does not "change his behavior according to the hotel".<sup>167</sup> Morgan claims that experiences are highly subjective phenomena as each tourist is engaged in an individual emotional journey full of personal, social and cultural meanings.<sup>168</sup> Although lodged in hotels of similar levels of luxury, Aida and Denis interacted with it in completely different ways. Aida deemed important to adjust her bodily movements to the hotel environment, while Denis found it funny even as a potential idea. Being professionally engaged in the promotion of her hometown's heritage, Aida perceived the hotel to be of the same value and engaged with it in a more respectful way. Denis, who is currently a law student, viewed the hotel he stayed in merely as an accommodation unit. Aida ultimately agreed that her stay in a historic hotel added to the authenticity of her travel experience, while Denis was hesitating in this regard.

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihaly explained that self-awareness, and extreme concentration, for instance, have been found to be associated with subjectively meaningful experiences both at work and during leisure.<sup>169</sup> Something similar was observed in Franica's (59) and Tamara's (59) case. Franica explained that she instantly behaved "classier; because when you're in a modern hotel, it's so ordinary, so you behave like every other day".<sup>170</sup> The mere fact that she was in a historic hotel was seen as something important by Franica and influenced her to behave differently. When she was explaining it, it could be observed that she felt sort of nostalgic. Her emotional response to this experience seemed to suggest that this was something meaningful to her. Furthermore, she enthusiastically agreed that her stay in this historic hotel contributed to the authenticity of her travel experience. On the other hand, Tamara said that she does not think she behaved any differently than she usually does. Not being quite able to recall her own behavior within the hotel shows that she was clearly not very self-aware during her stay

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<sup>167</sup> Denis, 26. Skype interview. 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...) vazda se isto ponašam (...) ne mijenjam po hotelima ponašanje (...).

<sup>168</sup> Morgan, Michael. 'We're not the barmy army!': Reflections on the sports tourist experience. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 9 (2007): 361

<sup>169</sup> Campos, Ana Cláudia. Mendes, Júlio. Oom do Valle, Patrícia, and Scott, Noel. Co-creation of tourist experiences: a literature review, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2018): 390

<sup>170</sup> Franica, 59. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: otmjenije (...), a ono gdje je moderno, onda vam je ono, kao da si svaki dan.

there. However, she remembered other guests quite well. She described them as members of the upper social class, which according to her did not reflect the entire Dutch society, and consequently interfered with the evaluation of her experience as authentic. Tamara's case additionally accentuates the role of the self in the creation of a meaningful experience. As Tamara's attention shifted from her own experience to the experience of other guests in the hotel, she did not manage to create moments meaningful to herself and which could contribute to the authenticity of her overall experience like in Franica's example.

### *2.2.2 Historic hotel setting facilitating feelings*

Apart from different behavioral responses, historic hotels also evoked certain feelings from their guests. It was observed that the participants' emotional responses to the hotel were closely related to the aspects they were most impressed with in this property. The analysis of interviews showed that the historic hotels' attributes which participants perceived as most influential in the co-creation process of their authentic experience could not be separately regarded as tangible or intangible. It was rather a successful fusion of the both, and this was reflected in all of the participants' answers.

Lucija (24) stressed that she was impressed with how the overall atmosphere of the Belmond Hotel Monasterio complemented its architectural components. This five-star hotel's website indicates that the establishment is situated within the walls of an ancient monastery in Cusco, Peru, and Lucija explained that everything in this property reflected its original religious purpose; the furniture, service, food; "you really feel like you've gone back in time, (...) it was very authentic".<sup>171</sup> Even the church choir songs were played throughout the hotel, so she felt like she was in an actual monastery. She discussed her hotel experience with her mother and they both agreed feeling as if they were experiencing some part of Umberto Eco's 'Name of the Rose':

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<sup>171</sup> Lucija, 24. Skype interview, 22 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English



“(...) you just feel very different and at some point I even felt kind of scared that someone might come in and someone might attack me because I’m some kind of historic person; it gives a completely new idea of a hotel stay.”<sup>172</sup>

Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai asserted that different spaces have the potential to evoke one’s imagination. These spaces can inspire people to imagine alternative lives and livelihoods that those presented to them in their immediate local settings. He further points out that this might lead to the creation of ‘imagined worlds’ which generate social practices with real consequences.<sup>173</sup> The entire setting of Belmond Hotel Monasterio stimulated Lucija’s imagination to the point where she got so intensely engaged with the hotel’s space, and co-produced a fantasy in which she felt like someone from a different period in time. She explained that her stay in this hotel truly added to the authenticity of her travel experience because “it’s an old building and it kind of gives you a feeling of how it looked when they turned from Inca culture to the Christian culture.”<sup>174</sup> It is interesting that she chose to use the word ‘feeling’ several times to describe her hotel experience. This shows that her imagination of a certain period in the history of Peru was so vivid that she had the impression like she truly lived it. Knudsen and Waade claim that the explicitly mediated character of places, in this case an ancient monastic aesthetic of the hotel, increases the feeling of authenticity within the tourist and traveler,<sup>175</sup> and this was certainly true for Lucija as discussed above.

Knudsen and Waade also argue that emotions and places are closely interrelated, and that it is the tourist’s affective response to these places which determines the authenticity of their experience.<sup>176</sup> This was observed in Anita’s (58) case who shared that her stay in Inat Kuća (Spite House) hotel added to the authenticity of her travel experience because she experienced the host culture directly through that property. This establishment is described on the Inat Kuća’s website as a beautiful example of Ottoman architecture. Ottoman Empire once ruled the country

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<sup>172</sup> Lucija, 24. Skype interview, 22 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>173</sup> O’Dell, Tom. *Experiencescapes: Blurring Borders and Testing Connections* in O’Dell, Tom, and Billing, Peter. *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 17

<sup>174</sup> Lucija, 24. Skype interview, 22 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>175</sup> Knudsen, Britta T., and Waade, Anne M. (Eds.) “Performative authenticity in tourism and spatial experience: Rethinking the relations between travel, place and emotion” in *Re-investing authenticity: Tourism, place and emotions*, Channel View Publications, Bristol (2010): 6

<sup>176</sup> Knudsen, Britta T., and Waade, Anne M. (Eds.) “Performative authenticity in tourism and spatial experience: Rethinking the relations between travel, place and emotion” in *Re-investing authenticity: Tourism, place and emotions*, Channel View Publications, Bristol (2010): 6, 13

and its cultural influence is still present in various aspects of Bosnian society.<sup>177</sup> According to Anita, the interior and the overall ambiance of Inat Kuća facilitated her feeling of relaxation which was considered as an inextricable part of Ottoman culture, and subsequently the Bosnian one.<sup>178</sup> She explained that the entire place invited her to unwind; traditional soothing music, low seating sofas and large windows which served her the outside world on a platter. But she also co-produced this space as such by her emotional and corporeal engagement with the hotel setting: “I was sitting down so freely, it was like you’re somewhere in the nature”.<sup>179</sup>

What she also found very impressive was the way coffee was served in ibrik, a small metal pot traditionally used to prepare coffee in Bosnia.<sup>180</sup> This was something completely new for her as she explained that “drinking coffee with a sugar cube, that’s something I’ve experienced only here”.<sup>181</sup> Urry asserted that tourists experience a place by noticing things that are different from their daily life.<sup>182</sup> Anita co-created an authentic experience by focusing on the tangible and intangible elements of Bosnian culture that differed from hers, and evoked feelings of relaxation and enjoyment.

Martina (29) related to the hotel she stayed in on another emotional level. She booked a room in the Hilton Molino Stucky Venice hotel while she was working for the Hilton chain of the hotels. Apart from enjoying staff discounts, she also followed the recommendation of a friend working in the sales department of that hotel, and who suggested her to make a reservation there. When asked to describe the most impressive aspects of the hotel, she mostly focused on its employees: “the staff is the one thing that pops up, it's really something that makes the entire stay memorable, makes it like the best one”.<sup>183</sup> Martina has been working in the hotel industry for several years now, and this has made quite an impact on how she perceived the hotel. She also shared that the very first thing that comes to her mind when she thinks of this specific hotel:

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<sup>177</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sarajevo>

<sup>178</sup> Karaba, Eminegul, and Ger, Guliz. Early Modern Ottoman Coffeehouse Culture and the Formation of the Consumer Subject. *Journal of Consumer Research*. Vol. 37, No. 5 (2011): 737

<sup>179</sup> Anita, 58. Skype interview, 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: Jer nekako sam slobodnije sjedila, (...) znači kao da si u nekoj prirodi pa sjedneš

<sup>180</sup> <http://www.tourtosarajevo.com/bosanska-kafa--neizostavan-dio-tradicije>

<sup>181</sup> Anita, 58. Skype interview, 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...), kafu piti s kockom šećera, to samo sam doživjela tu.

<sup>182</sup> Ooi, Can-Seng. A Theory of Tourism Experiences in Bærenholdt, Jørgen Ole. Haldrup, Michael. Larsen, Jonas, and Urry, John. *Performing Tourist Places* (Ashgate, 2004): 54

<sup>183</sup> Martina, 29. Skype interview. 19 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

“(...) is the “Nutella station” hahaha that they have in the hotel (...). It's the only hotel in Hilton chain that has a “Nutella station” inside and I would say also like the rooftop bar (...), it is really something amazing overlooking the entire Venice, like the whole, you are having the whole experience in those couple of minutes, it is really something special.”<sup>184</sup>

Reading through Martina's comments, it becomes apparent that she viewed the hotel through the “professional hospitality lenses” as she used to work in the industry herself. “Nutella station” was mentioned several times as something quite special and that other hotels within the company she worked for did not have. She even mentioned during the interview that:

“This would be like my fifth year in hospitality and in hotels... so when you are working in those kinds of industries, and you see... a lot of experiences, people, and everything, then I believe you have a different view of the situation and of the accommodation itself. It would be like, I can notice like the smallest details, things like that because it is like a professional thing that you cannot erase, (...)”<sup>185</sup>

It could be observed that Martina's hotel experience as a guest was infused with her experience and role as an employee, which influenced her ‘performance’ and the way authenticity came to be shaped. She agreed that the hotel itself only slightly added to the authenticity of her travel experience. Instead, she considered the boat ride from the hotel to the centre of Venice as something much more authentic. Physically moving away from the hotel, she could finally leave her role of a Hilton employee and enjoy Venice as a tourist. Knudsen and Waade assert that performative authenticity is dependent on proximity and between-ness.<sup>186</sup> It is clear that in Martina's case, it was not the hotel, but the traditional boat service that brought her, both physically and emotionally closer to the destination.

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<sup>184</sup> Martina, 29. Skype interview. 19 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>185</sup> Martina, 29. Skype interview. 19 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>186</sup> Knudsen, Britta T., and Waade, Anne M. (Eds.) “Performative authenticity in tourism and spatial experience: Rethinking the relations between travel, place and emotion” in *Re-investing authenticity: Tourism, place and emotions*, Channel View Publications, Bristol (2010): 13

## Chapter 3

### Interaction with others during on-site experience

Several scholars (Binkhorst and Den Dekker; Tan, Kung and Luh. qtd. in Campos et al.) asserted that the co-creation of experiences is not only a matter of experience activities, and ‘outer interactions’ with the experience environment. Instead, they also encompass interpersonal interactions between individuals in different contexts.<sup>187</sup> These include staff, friends and relatives, other tourists, locals and different suppliers in the experience space.<sup>188</sup> Furthermore, marketing scholar Morris B. Holbrook argued that interactions are the very source of experiences.<sup>189</sup> Constructivism defines authenticity as a projection of tourists’ own beliefs, expectations, preferences, stereotyped images, and consciousness onto toured objects.<sup>190</sup> It was therefore important to explore which significance interviewees attribute to social interactions during their travels in general, before studying it in a context of a historic hotel setting. All interviewees described social interactions as an important aspect of their travels. They either referred to them in their personal definition of authenticity, or as one of their primary motives for travelling as it will be seen in the following examples.

#### **3.1 Importance of social interactions in tourist’s experience**

For instance, Lucija (24) mentioned her encounter with Maori, the indigenous residents of New Zealand, as an example of an authentic travel experience. Lucija shared that she received a very warm welcome from them:

“They're gonna sing to you, they're gonna bring you gifts and it's still a very authentic experience, it's not an act, (...), we came there not as tourists, we

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<sup>187</sup> Campos, Ana Cláudia. Mendes, Júlio. Oom do Valle, Patrícia, and Scott, Noel. Co-creation of tourist experiences: a literature review, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2018): 389

<sup>188</sup> Campos, Ana Cláudia. Mendes, Júlio. Oom do Valle, Patrícia, and Scott, Noel. Co-creation of tourist experiences: a literature review, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2018): 388

<sup>189</sup> Minkiewicz, J., Evans, J., & Bridson, K. How do consumers co-create their experiences? An exploration in the heritage sector. *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 30, No. 12 (2013): 8

<sup>190</sup> Wang, Ning. Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1999): 355

came there as friends and they welcomed us in a very authentic way, so that's what I'm looking for in my travels.”<sup>191</sup>

As seen in the comment above, interaction with the locals lies at the very core of an authentic experience in Lucija's eyes. However, the emphasis should be also placed on the way they interacted with her. What had made the whole experience truly authentic for her was that they approached her as a part of the community, and not as a tourist. Something similar was observed in Tin's (23) comments when asked to define authenticity in his own words. He explained that “authentic means when you feel the destination from the inside”,<sup>192</sup> in other words, when you “feel it from the point of view of citizens of that destination”.<sup>193</sup> When asked to illustrate an authentic experience from one of his previous travels, he described an occasion when he met a local “young as him”<sup>194</sup> in the city centre. Tin inquired about the best places to go out in the city, and the youngster advised him about the best clubs there. This encounter gave Tin an opportunity to “have fun like a local” by frequenting places they go to. Furthermore, it was observed that apart from being local, the age of the person he interacted with was also an important factor for Tin. Researches of interpersonal relationships, Catherine A. Surra and Carl A. Ridley argued that interactions should be perceived in terms of the degree of an individual's relationship or closeness.<sup>195</sup> Campos et al. further explained that the degree of closeness influences the behavioral, affective, and cognitive dimensions of interactions.<sup>196</sup> Although Tin had just met that local resident, he felt more inclined to interact with him since they were approximately the same age. This spontaneous encounter with his peer in the visited destination considerably contributed to the authenticity of his experience there.

Furthermore, five participants mentioned social interaction as one of their primary motives for travelling. For example, Anita (58) travels “firstly to explore something new, and secondly to socialize”.<sup>197</sup> Mare (58) mentioned socializing, getting to know different cultures,

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<sup>191</sup> Lucija, 24. Skype interview, 22 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>192</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview, 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>193</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview, 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>194</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview, 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>195</sup> Surra, Catherine A. and Ridley, Carl A. Multiple Perspectives on Interaction: Participants, Peers, and Observers in Studying Interpersonal Interaction. Edited by Montgomery, Barbara M., and Duck, Steve (The Guildford Press, New York, 1991): 36

<sup>196</sup> Campos, Ana Cláudia. Mendes, Júlio. Oom do Valle, Patrícia, and Scott, Noel. Co-creation of tourist experiences: a literature review, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2018): 389

<sup>197</sup> Anita, 58. Skype interview, 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: da nešto novo upoznam, to je pod prvo, a onda i druženje.

interesting people, traditions and food as primary goals when travelling. Similarly, Denis (26) shared that when he is not travelling to attend sports competitions, he primarily travels to relax with his friends and have fun, as well as to see something new. These interviewees' comments show that they actively seek social interactions during their travels.

### **3.2 Added value of social interactions to the authenticity of tourist's experience**

As for the hotel experiences, both verbal and non-verbal interaction<sup>198</sup> with staff, other guests or friends, was described as adding value to their overall experience. Anita (58) experienced something similar while staying in Inat Kuća in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sarajevo used to be a part of the Ottoman Empire, and it retained a strong Muslim character until the present day.<sup>199</sup> The website of Inat Kuća (Spite House) advertises it only as a restaurant today with Ottoman heritage strongly present in its architecture and interior design.<sup>200</sup> Anita remembers staff and their uniform as some of the most impressive aspects of her stay at this property while it still offered accommodation. She mentioned "they were dressed just like in the Ottoman times".<sup>201</sup> She found them so special that she felt like she came to some far, far away place and not into a neighboring country. At the end of the interview she agreed that staying in this property contributed to the authenticity of her experience because she "immediately experienced the city through that hotel".<sup>202</sup> This hotel was close to the historical centre dating from the Ottoman Empire, and it was observed from Anita's comments that the property, and especially the staff, reflected the history of the city for her. Anita's case shows how an interaction which was primarily based on observation, rather than verbal communication, can aid in the co-creation of an authentic experience. Cohen presented a five mode experience typology based on different styles of consumption. Among them are a tourist's search for aesthetic

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<sup>198</sup> Campos, Ana Cláudia. Mendes, Júlio. Oom do Valle, Patrícia, and Scott, Noel. Co-creation of tourist experiences: a literature review, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2018): 389

<sup>199</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sarajevo>

<sup>200</sup> <https://inatkuca.ba/reservation/>

<sup>201</sup> Anita, 58. Skype interview, 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...)su bili obučeni kao u doba Osmanlija

<sup>202</sup> Anita, 58. Skype interview, 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...) odmah sam u tom hotelu doživjela taj grad.

meaning and the quest for alternative lifestyles.<sup>203</sup> This was well reflected in both Anita's personal definition of authenticity as well as in her illustration of an authentic experience. She described authenticity as something:

“particular only for that place, with a certain history, and that it looks beautiful; it is intriguing in the sense that it makes me wonder who built it, when, and how, back then when there was no technology as we know it today.”<sup>204</sup>

Furthermore, she mentioned her trip to Sarajevo as an example of an authentic experience. She found it fascinating that something so close to her home town can be so distinctive in terms of architecture and food, like a “completely different world”.<sup>205</sup> Her comments help us understand how her stay in Inat Kuća facilitated the co-creation of an authentic experience. She obviously associated authenticity with peculiar aesthetics. Staying in a hotel that matched that in several aspects truly added to the authenticity of her experience.

Denis (26) also described hotel service and the staff uniform as impressive alongside with the architecture of the establishment. What fascinated him the most was the fact that the staff “was dressed differently, it was not like in every other hotel”.<sup>206</sup> They wore some sort of traditional costume, reminding Denis of what he called “baboushkas”.<sup>207</sup> The primary motive of his travel was the judo competition, and he stayed in this hotel together with other team members of the Croatian representation. When asked to describe a social experience he had within that historic hotel, Denis mentioned that he would gather with the other participants for breakfast or lunch. However, this was not recounted in much detail. Quite surprisingly, he mostly commented on the interaction with the hotel staff during his stay there. Ooi points out how shifting of attention shapes one's experiences.<sup>208</sup> Denis obviously found the staff more interesting than the

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<sup>203</sup> Ooi, Can-Seng. A Theory of Tourism Experiences in O'Dell, Tom, and Billing, Peter. “Experiencescapes” in *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 54

<sup>204</sup> Anita, 58. Skype interview, 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: to znači da je svojstveno samo za to područje, da ima neka povijest, da lijepo izgleda; da se zamislim tko je gradio, kad je gradio i kako se gradilo onda kada nije bilo tehnike.

<sup>205</sup> Anita, 58. Skype interview, 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...) a jedan sasvim drugi svijet, (...)

<sup>206</sup> Denis, 26. Skype interview. 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...), bile su obučene drugačije, nije kao u svakom hotelu.

<sup>207</sup> 1. a headscarf tied under the chin, worn by Russian peasant women or 2. (in Russia) an old woman. Source: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/babushka>

<sup>208</sup> Ooi, Can-Seng. A Theory of Tourism Experiences in O'Dell, Tom, and Billing, Peter. “Experiencescapes” in *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 53

fellow members of his representation during meal times. The staff used to greet them every day at the entrance to the dining hall, and he illustrated one such occasion in the following words:

“So they would bow nicely, using gestures to invite us inside, it was very pleasant indeed (...). I really like that they had those, “babushkas” as I like to call them, those ladies that were dressed like that, I don’t know how would I call the men, I don’t know the name of the costume they were dressed in... so they would come very frequently to ask us if everything was alright, and so, yeah... it was such a nice service indeed.”<sup>209</sup>

It is obvious from his comments that he was truly impressed with the attentiveness of the staff, as well as the way they carried themselves. However, it was the traditional costume that caught his attention in particular and that he mentioned on several occasions during the interview. He even used a special term, namely baboushka, to refer to the female employees during our conversation. Urry argues that visual is one of the most important aspects of tourism experiences. He asserts that visual sights have the power to engage tourists’ attention and shape their experience.<sup>210</sup> This was certainly what Denis experienced while interacting with the staff, focusing mostly on the way they were dressed.

Although he found the service and the staff as some of the most impressive and unique aspects of the hotel, this was not reflected in his final remark. Instead, he referred to the story that was conveyed to him by the staff themselves when he arrived to the hotel. Namely, he mentioned historical figures that stayed there and the historical uniqueness of the property. This comment was even more surprising as Denis admitted he does not remember this story behind the hotel in its entirety but that “it must be something important since many Russians come to stay there only because of that”.<sup>211</sup> Although employees were not explicitly mentioned in the evaluation of his travel experience, it could be observed that the interaction he had with them still strongly influenced his final remark. Denis assessed the authenticity of his experience

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<sup>209</sup> Denis, 26. Skype interview. 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: Ono lijepo bi se poklonile, pružile ruku, bas onako ugodno (...). Stvarno mi se sviđa što su imali opet te, babuške ih ja nazivam, te žene što su bile obučene, ne znam kako bih muške nazvao, kako su bili obučeni, ne znam ime... i oni bi nas dolazili cijelo vrijeme priupitati kao je li sve u redu, kako je i to me eto tako onako... baš lijepa usluga je bila eto

<sup>210</sup> Ooi, Can-Seng. A Theory of Tourism Experiences in Tom O’Dell & Peter Billing. “Experiencescapes” in Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 57

<sup>211</sup> Denis, 26. Skype interview. 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: neki njihovi Rusi idu samo da radi toga dođu tu, kao da bi odsjeli tu, (...) ali sigurno ima neku vrijednost kada ljudi dolaze samo radi toga



according to their narrative rather than through the observation of his actual stay in this property. Even though he did not remember it in detail, he found that this story served as a criterion for the most authentic aspects of this hotel.

Antonio (35) had quite a different experience. When asked to describe one social experience within the Amsterdam Weichmann hotel he remembers the most, Antonio mentioned an occasion when he was having breakfast there. He felt the place was “homely”<sup>212</sup> and had a “family atmosphere”<sup>213</sup> for several reasons. Antonio referred to the food, the service and the entire physical setting as “traditional”.<sup>214</sup> However, he especially pointed out the importance of the staff as he found that they had a much more personal approach to guests than in the modern hotels. Antonio reported that the waiter personally got to know almost every guest who was there for a longer period of time. According to him, this was enhanced by the very space they served breakfast in, and which was not spacious at all. He perceived this spatial confining as facilitating a closer relationship between staff and the guests. Antonio’s case shows that one’s perception of the physical context in which an interaction happens is also very important. When describing the property he also remarked that it “had not undergone some interventions that made it too modern and turned it into something that it’s actually not.”<sup>215</sup> This was quite surprising, especially considering that he read the hotel’s official website carefully. The website clearly states that one part of the hotel was originally a coal storage facility.<sup>216</sup> However, the main message hotel management tried to convey in their online narrative was that this place was a part of the family.<sup>217</sup> This is the impression Antonio also got while staying in Weichmann hotel as he explained that he felt like he was living there. The hotel is managed by the third generation that founded the hotel, and which is decorated with their private collections.<sup>218</sup> So, when Antonio commented that the place did not lose its original spirit, he actually referred to the family atmosphere hotel still managed to keep. His comments show that he did not really perceive that

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<sup>212</sup> Antonio, 35. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...) baš se osjećao jedan domaćinski ugođaj (...)

<sup>213</sup> Antonio, 35. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...), obiteljska je atmosfera više, (...)

<sup>214</sup> Antonio, 35. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: doručak je tradicionalni bio (...)

<sup>215</sup> Antonio, 35. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...), znaci nisu rađene nikakve intervencije da bi se to sad nesto moderniziralo previše i napravilo nešto što nije (...)

<sup>216</sup> <https://www.hotelwiechmann.nl/en/our-story/>

<sup>217</sup> <https://www.hotelwiechmann.nl/en/our-story/>

<sup>218</sup> <https://www.hotelwiechmann.nl/en/our-story/>

hotel as an accommodation unit, but rather as a home, and the employees' friendly attitude contributed to that. When asked whether he was particularly satisfied or disappointed with something in the hotel, one of the things he especially highlighted was that he really liked that the employees were locals. He also added in his final comment that he had an authentic experience because he believes that he "experienced the real way of life".<sup>219</sup> Staff's personal background and their "performance" of the hotel as a private household really brought the Dutch lifestyle closer to Antonio.

Something similar was observed in Tin's (23) case. Although he actively sought fun during his travel, it is important to indicate that the Masarykova Koley hotel played an important role in co-creating such an experience. Formerly a student college<sup>220</sup>, this hotel managed to maintain its original spirit according to Tin's comments. He described the property as facilitating interaction with other guests in multiple ways:

"Well, I had like a feeling that it was built for the young students, it was oriented to that, I mean there was a big lobby with lots of tables where students could gather, there was a library in that hotel, it was unusual for that, and also the restaurant was also like a big place and looked like a canteen, (...)." <sup>221</sup>

Tin found that the hotel's main purpose was to bring people together. He explained that his stay "felt like fun, because there were no older people".<sup>222</sup> Surprisingly, the analysis of hotel's website did not reveal that this hotel was in any way particularly oriented to the youth. Hotel's website mostly focused on the promotion of congress and other formal meeting services.<sup>223</sup> However, Tin's comments indicate that he perceived it quite differently. He even highlighted that he felt "freer and more casual".<sup>224</sup> He further described that the staff was dressed like "normal student campus people"<sup>225</sup>, and did not wear any sort of uniform, such as suit or ties which seemed to bring the history of the hotel closer to Tin. Namely, the hotel's official website

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<sup>219</sup> Antonio, 35. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...), mislim da sam doživio pravi način života, (...)

<sup>220</sup> [https://www.suz.cvut.cz/files/tiskova\\_zprava\\_mk\\_w.pdf](https://www.suz.cvut.cz/files/tiskova_zprava_mk_w.pdf) (translated from Czech by using Google.translate)

<sup>221</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview. 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>222</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview. 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>223</sup> <https://www.masarykovakolej.cz/en/>

<sup>224</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview. 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>225</sup> Tin, 23. Skype interview. 20 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

indicated that this property initially served as a dormitory for students,<sup>226</sup> and staff's casualness really enhanced the original purpose of the property. It could be observed that Tin associated this part of the hotel's history with fun, and casual interactions with the staff and guests of the similar age profile further enhanced that impression.

Mare's (58) experience with other guests and the staff in the Franciscan monastery hotel matched with her personal notion of the entire place as well. This property is located on a small uninhabited island of Badija in the south of Croatia.<sup>227</sup> Mare perceived that hotel to be different and more unique than the other hotels she stayed in. She explained that she remembers it because of its "simplicity, a special feeling of warm-heartedness and its spirit of those bygone times".<sup>228</sup> Attending a spiritual seminar together with thirty other participants, she described one of the evenings they spent together as a memorable experience. Each participant had to randomly pick a paper with someone's name and present a small gift to that person. She referred to this gathering as "an evening full of laughter, friendliness, enjoyment".<sup>229</sup> It is clear that Mare co-created an authentic experience together with other guests because they "performed" the hotel in the same spirit as her. The exchange of simple presents within the walls of this hotel led them to identify this place with generosity, kindness, and closeness, and to authenticate it through their emotional, affective and sensuous relatedness to it.<sup>230</sup>

Social interactions played a crucial role in the co-creation of an authentic experience for most participants. However, it was observed that these interactions can also diminish the experience of authenticity to a certain extent as it will be shown in Tamara's (59) example. She shared that she frequented many "jet setters"<sup>231</sup> in a five star luxurious Hotel Des Indes The Hague.<sup>232</sup> She admitted that staying in the same hotel like them was quite flattering indeed. However, she did not agree that staying in that historic hotel helped her co-create a more authentic experience. She perceived the Netherlands as a prosperous country; however, she

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<sup>226</sup> <https://www.masarykovakolej.cz/en/>

<sup>227</sup> <http://www.badija.hr/index.php/samostan>

<sup>228</sup> Mare, 58. Skype interview. 19 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: po njegovoj jednostavnosti, (...) osjećala se jedna posebna toplina, jedan duh tog vremena koji je davno prošao (...)

<sup>229</sup> Mare, 58. Skype interview. 19 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...) večer smijeha, druženja, opuštanja (...)

<sup>230</sup> Knudsen, Britta T., and Waade, Anne M. (Eds.) "Performative authenticity in tourism and spatial experience: Rethinking the relations between travel, place and emotion" in *Re-investing authenticity: Tourism, place and emotions*, Channel View Publications, Bristol (2010): 12-13

<sup>231</sup> Tamara, 59. Skype interview. 18 March 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: jet set

<sup>232</sup> <https://www.hoteldesindesthehague.com/>

found that the hotel was on a much higher level than the everyday reality Dutch people live. She explained that the hotel did not really reflect the destination itself in that sense. This example shows that social interactions which do not conform to travelers' personal perceptions and beliefs about visited destination also do not add value to the authenticity of tourist's experience.

## Chapter 4

### Hotel management and the co-creation of authentic experiences

Mathis et al. recognize tourists and settings as equal agents in the co-creation of value in tourism experience.<sup>233</sup> Previous sections focused primarily on the role of tourists in the ‘construction’ and ‘performance’ of authentic experiences related to historic hotel settings. Since it was not feasible to personally visit the historic hotels that the participants stayed in (see Figure 2), their official websites were analyzed in depth in order to obtain a better understanding of the role they played in this co-creation process. Marketing scholars Payne, Storbacka and Frow place the emphasis on the fact that the supplier and the customer are inextricably linked in the co-creation process. They assert that the very co-creation of an experience is based on how they interact with each other.<sup>234</sup> Hence, website analysis of the historic hotels could not be analyzed without taking into the consideration how their former guests’ related to the advertised story. This section explores the hotel management’s perspective of the factors that they consider as added value to the tourists’ experience. It then explores whether tourists perceived them the same way, and most importantly whether these components contributed to the co-creation of their authentic travel experience. In some cases, hotel management’s narrative greatly affected their guests’ view on authenticity. It was generally observed that hotel management’s and participant’s views of authenticity either coincided, or they somewhat or considerably diverged as it will be discussed in the examples below. Overall, this did not seem to considerably influence participants’ evaluation of their travel experiences in terms of authenticity. Knudsen and Waade assert that everything that the tourists experience, what they see, touch, hear, smell and taste, may be performed and produced as real and authentic.<sup>235</sup> While hotel management decides how different hotel’s aspects are going to be presented to their guests, this study revealed that the

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<sup>233</sup> Mathis, Elaine F.; Kim, Hyelin (Lina); Uysal, Muzaffer; Sirgy, Joseph M.; Prebensen, Nina K. The effect of co-creation experience on outcome variable. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 57 (2016): 63

<sup>234</sup> Mathis, Elaine F.; Kim, Hyelin (Lina); Uysal, Muzaffer; Sirgy, Joseph M.; Prebensen, Nina K. The effect of co-creation experience on outcome variable. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 57 (2016): 63

<sup>235</sup> Knudsen, Britta T., and Waade, Anne M. (Eds.) “Performative authenticity in tourism and spatial experience: Rethinking the relations between travel, place and emotion” in *Re-investing authenticity: Tourism, place and emotions*, Channel View Publications, Bristol (2010): 14

guests are those who ultimately choose which of these aspects they will ‘perform’ and how will they interpret them.

Name	Hotel	Destination
Tin	Masarykova Kolej 3*	Prague, Czech Republic
Lucija	Belmond Hotel Monasterio 5*	Cusco, Peru
Denis	Green House Hotel 4*	Tyumen, Russia
Aida	Midland Hotel 4*	Manchester, UK
Martina	Hilton Molino Stucky Venice Hotel 5*	Venice, Italy
Antonio	Amsterdam Weichmann Hotel 2*	Amsterdam, Netherlands
Anita	Inat Kuca (Spite House)*	Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Mare	Franciscan Monastery Badija	Island of Badija, Croatia
Tamara	Hotel Des Indes The Hague 5*	The Hague, Netherlands
Franica	Hotel Kampa – Old Armoury 4*	Prague, Czech Republic

\* currently a restaurant

Figure 2: List of historic hotels interviewees stayed in, their star rating and their location

## **4.1 Hotel management’s narrative affects guest’s perception of authenticity**

It was observed that the management’s narrative of the respective hotels Denis (26) and Anita (58) booked greatly influenced what they considered as authentic. The management of Inat Kuća (Spite House) where Anita stayed emphasized the historical value of the property through an anecdote behind its name. Their online narrative explains that the owner of the house demanded it to be moved to the other side of the river brick by brick out of spite after he found out the

government's plans to demolish it. This seemed to make a great impact on Anita who recounted the story in detail and asserted:

“But that truly happened, this story was not invented! It is real because there is an inscription above the entrance door of that house: ‘I was on the other side, but moved here out of spite.’”<sup>236</sup>

As she recounts it, it becomes clear that as Anita experienced the property, she referred back to the way the management of the hotel had framed the property's authenticity.

Similarly, Denis (26) referred to the story Green House Hotel's employees told him during the welcome speech as a credible source on what the most authentic aspects of the hotel are. Although he could not remember the details of their story, he shared that the way staff presented the hotel certainly changed his perception of the hotel, making it look more valuable. Both interviewees agreed that their stay in a historic hotel added to the authenticity of their travel experience. Denis hesitated in that regard at first, but then referred to the hotel management's narrative to explain which hotel's aspects contributed to his authentic experience together with other experiences he lived during his trip to Russia.

The following example shows how management's 'performance' of Belmond Monasterio Hotel in Cusco, Peru, influenced Lucija's (24) idea of how the former monastery, as they advertised it, should look like. The management primarily portrayed the hotel as a landscape of experience; a space of pleasure, enjoyment and entertainment.<sup>237</sup> The following sentence from its website's homepage illustrates it very well:

“Dine by candlelight among the cloisters; explore interiors rich with art and antiques; uncover the secrets of Peru's national drink with a pisco lesson.”<sup>238</sup>

The way in which the management has interwoven the Peruvian heritage into their narrative discloses what kind of experiences they aim to co-create for their guests. Another quote from their online story “we'll help you uncover the true spirit of Peru”<sup>239</sup> highlights the role of

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<sup>236</sup> Anita, 58. Skype interview, 25 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: A to je i stvarni događaj, znači to je, nije izmišljeno! To je stvarni događaj jer na ulazu u tu kucu stoji natpis: 'bila sam na onoj strani, ali pređoh vamo iz inata'.

<sup>237</sup> O'Dell, Tom. *Experiencescapes: Blurring Borders and Testing Connections* in O'Dell, Tom, and Billing, Peter. *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2010): 16

<sup>238</sup> <https://www.belmond.com/hotels/south-america/peru/cusco/belmond-hotel-monasterio/>

<sup>239</sup> <https://www.belmond.com/hotels/south-america/peru/cusco/belmond-hotel-monasterio/activities>

Belmond Monasterio as facilitating the exploration of Peruvian history and culture. This is precisely what Lucija referred to while explaining why this ancient monastery contributed to the authenticity of her travel experience:

“Since we are talking about Peru that has the Inca culture...this wasn't Inca culture but it still felt authentic because at some point they did turn Christian and they had people coming there, making them Christian. So, it's an old building and it kind of gives you a feeling of how it looked when they turned from Inca culture to the Christian culture.”<sup>240</sup>

Apart from having the opportunity to experience a specific period from Peruvian history throughout that hotel, Lucija also mentioned another experience as adding value to her stay there. When asked whether she behaved any differently in that hotel, she mentioned that she was more open-minded to the food. Lucija admitted that she would have never dared to try alpaca meat elsewhere, but since the hotel so strongly reflected the local culture, and even grew its own food, she decided to take a chance. She explained that she truly felt like a local since she drank the Peruvian wine and ate their local food together with her other family members. Religious paintings and hard wooden furniture in the restaurant made her feel like she was eating in an actual monastery in the 1700s. Knudsen and Waade refer to this internal perception of the body at play, at risk, invested or intensified as an expression of performative authenticity. They further explain that the affected body, whether the stimuli are of a more emotional kind or a directly physical kind, appears to have three characteristics: it is open to the world, it experiences an increase in vitality, and it is immediately contagious inviting to imitation.<sup>241</sup> It can be observed that Lucija truly co-performed an authentic experience together with the hotel's setting. The management brought the elements of traditional Peruvian culture through the interior design of the hotel, menu offer, selected artworks, and even the choice of music. Lucija shared that some sort of church choir singing echoed through the hallways, and could also be enjoyed in the very restaurant. The management of Belmond Monasterio found it important to engage all of their

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<sup>240</sup> Lucija, 24. Skype interview, 22 Feb 2019. Original conversation in English

<sup>241</sup> Knudsen, Britta T., and Waade, Anne M. (Eds.) “Performative authenticity in tourism and spatial experience: Rethinking the relations between travel, place and emotion” in *Re-investing authenticity: Tourism, place and emotions*, Channel View Publications, Bristol (2010): 16



guests' senses, and according to Lucija, this immensely added to the authenticity of her stay in the hotel, as well as of her overall travel experience.

Another example when hotel management's narrative affected the guest's view on authenticity could be observed through Antonio's (35) stay at Weichmann Hotel in Amsterdam. The management tried to bring in the local culture by sharing their personal connection with the property. This hotel is now managed by the third generation of Weichmann family who bought this property in the 1940s.<sup>242</sup> The current hotel director, the grandson of late Johann Heinrich Wiechmann, recounted the history of this property and his family through a personal letter posted online. Although he emphasized the authenticity of the building, as well as its historical location, what he really tried to convey through the website was the family atmosphere of the hotel. He addressed the readers as his own personal guests, inviting them to this hotel as if it was his private home. The emphasis was placed on the feeling one can experience during the stay in this hotel. This truly resonated with Antonio who highlighted that he had an impression like he was living there, and described it as a "very impressive experience".<sup>243</sup> His comments mostly revolved around the cozy, family atmosphere that could be felt throughout hotel, from the interaction with the staff to the traditional interior design. Knudsen and Waade introduced the idea of empathetic understanding of the other through the body as a form of performative authenticity. They assert that tourism and experiential designs that offer the possibility to live, enact, or re-enact the experience and living conditions of others are offering the possibility to understand the other through the body.<sup>244</sup> According to Antonio, Weichmann hotel provided him with an opportunity to experience an authentic Dutch way of life. This was the product of the hotel's atmosphere, its employees, the history of the place and its interior as reflected in Antonio's comments as well as on the hotel's website. In this specific case, both the hotel's management and Antonio shared the same perspective on what authenticity entails.

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<sup>242</sup> <https://www.hotelwiechmann.nl/en/our-story/>

<sup>243</sup> Antonio, 35. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: (...), to je baš jedno iskustvo, onako, jako upečatljivo.

<sup>244</sup> Knudsen, Britta T., and Waade, Anne M. (Eds.) "Performative authenticity in tourism and spatial experience: Rethinking the relations between travel, place and emotion" in *Re-investing authenticity: Tourism, place and emotions*, Channel View Publications, Bristol (2010): 14-15

## **4.2 Hotel management's and guest's views on authenticity somewhat diverge**

It was also observed that, at certain occasions, participants' perceptions of authenticity were still influenced by the hotel's management narrative, but to a lesser degree than in the previous examples. For instance, the website of the Franciscan Monastery on the island of Badija where Mare (58) stayed included very extensive descriptions about the history of the property. The monastery hotel even published the pictures and detailed information about the entire refurbishment process of the complex. In 2005, the Franciscan Province from Herzegovina took up a 99 year lease on the entire island.<sup>245</sup> They particularly highlighted the religious aspect of the establishment offering multiple seminars and spiritual exercises for their guests. The property was primarily portrayed as a monastery and national heritage, and accommodation was mentioned as an extra advantage for the potential visitors. They also briefly described the monastery's surroundings as a great place where guests could enjoy different sport activities. Overall, the accent was on the historical significance of the property, spirituality and simplicity both in the visual as well as in the written content of their website. Mare who stayed there in order to attend one of their seminars, shared that she perceived the hotel as more valuable based on their website story. She explained that it was "because of the very fact that it is something historical, and yet, situated on an island".<sup>246</sup> Saying this in sort of amazement, it was clear that it surpassed her expectations. Apart from the monastery's rich history, Mare also referred to its location several times as adding value to the authenticity of her experience, although the management of the monastery only briefly touched upon this subject on the website. It can therefore be concluded that Mare engaged with the hotel's narrative by selecting, and emphasizing its different aspects which resonated with her personal interests. This case demonstrated what the co-creation truly represents in this context; hotel management and guests complementing each other in the process of creating an authentic experience.

One very interesting case is the role Masarykova Kolej Hotel in Prague played in the co-creation of Tin's (23) authentic experience. The official website of the hotel primarily

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<sup>245</sup> <http://www.kumstvo.ba/hr/badija>

<sup>246</sup> Mare, 58. Skype interview. 19 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: pa samim tim što je (...) povijesan, a na otočiću.

highlighted its central location and history, as well as different congress services they have in offer. Apart from mentioning the adjacent campus of the Czech Technical University in Prague,<sup>247</sup> nothing specifically indicated that this hotel was intended for younger customers. Interestingly, Tin perceived it exactly as such, and as a great place to have fun. He shared that the hotel manager indeed did not provide much information about the “fun” aspect of the hotel. He further explained that “well what I read, I expected it to be made for the young because we were young”. This clearly shows that the management’s “performance” of the hotel did not have a considerable influence of Tin’s perception of that same place. He created an image of the hotel solely on his personal opinion. Marketing scholars Seyhmus Baloglu and David Brinberg defined image as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of a place or destination.<sup>248</sup> Apart from his personal travelling motives, Tin was also well acquainted with the history of the hotel which used to be a student campus. Hence, he associated this aspect of the hotel with youth and fun, neglecting the other features of the property such as conference halls and formal events that are frequently held there. He engaged only with several areas of the hotel such as the spacious lobby, library and the restaurant that looked like a student canteen. All of these places ‘confirmed’ his image of the hotel as a place conceived for students. His selectivity indicates how strong his intention to have fun there was. Tin ‘performed’ only those spaces which he believed could contribute to the co-creation of an authentic experience which, in his opinion, equaled to fun.

### **4.3 Hotel management’s and guest’s views on authenticity**

#### **considerably diverge**

Something similar was observed in Tamara’s (59) case who stayed in Hotel Des Indes The Hague in the Netherlands. Tamara had formed a certain image of the country, and which proved to be much more influential in the evaluation of the authenticity of her experience than the one hotel tried to convey. She imagined Dutch as rather well-off people; however, upon her arrival in

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<sup>247</sup> <https://www.masarykovakolej.cz/en/>

<sup>248</sup> Ali, Faizan. Omar, Rosmini, and Amin, Muslim. An Examination of the Relationships between Physical Environment, Perceived Value, Image and Behavioural Intentions: A SEM approach towards Malaysian resort hotels. *Journal of Hotel and Tourism Management*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (2013): 12

the hotel, she found that the management over-highlighted the luxurious aspect of the setting. According to her, the hotel completely failed to reflect the uniqueness of the local culture and the ‘real’ life of the Dutch people. Hotel’s official website truly placed an accent on the glamour, describing the stay in this property as royal. Considering that the Dutch King Willem-Alexander has chosen one of The Hague’s palaces as its official residence, and that the city boasts royal routes, coaches and stables,<sup>249</sup> the hotel actually depicts The Hague’s essence quite well. Even the hotel’s culinary offer is referred to as a feast, further enhancing management’s aspiration of co-creating an experience worthy of a king or a queen. Tamara shared that the hotel management’s promise of luxury was delivered upon, but this was not what she was seeking for. She wanted to experience the ‘authentic’ Dutch lifestyle, which according to her was not as lavish as the hotel management portrayed it to be. This disparity in views explains why there was no successful co-creation of authenticity in this case.

Diverging views do not necessarily exclude an experience of authenticity. Contrary to Tamara, who did not evaluate her stay as authentic, Aida (29) did qualify her experience of the Midland Manchester hotel as authentic despite diverging views of authenticity. However, it is important to note that Aida’s and hotel management’s outlooks on authenticity also did not contradict each other. When asked whether something particularly intrigued her about Midland hotel, and which was not included on its website, Aida mentioned that she was impressed to find out that Rolls Royce<sup>250</sup> was founded in that very place. Aida shared that she was very surprised that such an interesting fact was not mentioned online, and was instead only written next to the entrance of the hotel. Analysis of management’s online narrative revealed that they focused on an entirely different historical dimension of the hotel. Namely, they highlighted that the hotel was originally intended to serve rail travelers from London when it first opened in 1903;<sup>251</sup> something that Aida did not mention during the interview. Apart from hotel’s historical value, the management also focused on the sumptuousness of the property. Luxurious rooms, celebrities they previously hosted, award winning food and drink, and spa facilities were placed at the forefront of their online story. Aida did not highlight any of these aspects of Midland Hotel as adding considerably more value to the authenticity of her stay, but she also did not express that

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<sup>249</sup> <https://denhaag.com/en/travel-trade/royal-city>

<sup>250</sup> Producer of luxury motor cars. Source: <https://www.rolls-roycemotorcars.com/en-GB/house-of-rolls-royce/the-history-of-rolls-royce.html>

<sup>251</sup> [https://www.themidlandhotel.co.uk/about\\_us](https://www.themidlandhotel.co.uk/about_us)

they diminished her experience of authenticity. She found some other details to be more impressive such as the historical photographs of Manchester in her room or the staff wearing white gloves to open the entrance door for the guests. However, one aspect of the hotel which both Aida and hotel's management highlighted as added value to the guest's experience was the service. It can therefore be concluded that some degree of compatibility between the hotel's portrayal of itself as authentic, and the guest's perception of this representation is essential for successful co-creation of an authentic experience.

Tourism geography scholars, Sarah Q. Cutler and Barbara A. Carmichael (qtd. in Campos et al.) assert that experiencescapes integrate several different dimensions. These include physical aspects of the environment, social actors, participants, organizational dynamics and features of service delivery, which influence the way tourist lives the experience.<sup>252</sup> I would argue that this is essentially true, but this statement is also somewhat incomplete. As seen in the examples above, some of these dimensions were very influential, while others were quite insignificant in the co-creation of tourists' authentic experiences. It is therefore important to conclude that it is not only the multiple facets of tourist experience that need to be analyzed, but also their intensity and scope of their influence within the co-creation process.

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<sup>252</sup> Campos, Ana Cláudia. Mendes, Júlio. Oom do Valle, Patrícia, and Scott, Noel. Co-creation of tourist experiences: a literature review, *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 21, Issue 4 (2018): 391

## Conclusion

When asked to explain what ‘authentic’ means to her, Franica (59) enthusiastically exclaimed: “that is something that **I** have experienced as such, it is all about how I have experienced something”,<sup>253</sup> as if that was the most glaring thing in the world. Franica’s comment perfectly summarizes the key findings of this study which sought to understand how tourists co-create authentic travel experience through their stay in a historic hotel. Namely, the results of this research truly emphasize that the co-creation of such experiences greatly depends on tourists themselves. In-depth interviews with ten Croatian nationals who previously stayed in a historic hotel revealed that their age, education, and occupation played a significant role in how they co-created and assessed their authentic travel experiences. Apart from participants’ personal backgrounds, it was also observed that their individual interests and motives greatly affected what they noticed during their travels and how they interpreted it in terms of authenticity. In comparison, participants’ personal opinions and beliefs offered a deeper insight into their individual co-creation process only if they were analyzed in relation to a specific experience. When investigated separately, their personal views provided an incomplete story, especially in regards to accommodation and authenticity. It is interesting to note that different age groups had different perceptions of authenticity, which could prove as an inspiration for future research. Namely, Croatians in their late fifties primarily associated authenticity with something different from their culture, while younger participants referred to off-the-beaten-path experiences as authentic. When it comes to accommodation, they generally did not consider it to be an extremely significant aspect of their travels. However, when describing their experience in a particular historic hotel they stayed in, participants’ outlooks on authenticity and the importance of accommodation often diverged from their general statements on those subjects. The majority of participants agreed that their stay in a historic hotel was a valuable element of their travel experience and that it contributed to its authenticity regardless if it embodied their personal idea of authenticity or not.

This leads us to another important conclusion that was drawn from this research. Namely, the role of historic hotels in the co-creation of their guests’ authentic travel experiences varied

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<sup>253</sup> Franica, 59. Skype interview. 23 Feb 2019. My translation from Croatian. Original text: meni to postoji kao ono što sam **ja** doživjela, kako sam ja to doživjela (...)

depending on the intensity of tourists' corporeal and affective engagement with the hotel setting. In other words, participants who more actively 'performed' and 'construed' the specific historic hotel they stayed in, were also more successful in co-creating an authentic experience. Management's role in the 'production' of hotel space was also extremely important in this co-creation process. It was observed that their 'performance' of the hotel affected guests' emotional state and/or behavior during their stay there. All interviewees agreed that this was the result of an effective fusion of both hotels' tangible and intangible elements. However, some of them were more influenced by a particular aspect of this 'performance', such as the service, the narrative or hotel's different aesthetical components, especially if the participant perceived them as peculiar. Distinctiveness and intensity of interviewees' stay in a historic hotel proved to be of great influence in how they assessed the authenticity of their holiday. The more successful hotel management was at capturing their guests' attention, the greater the hotel's perceived contribution was to the authenticity of their travel experience. In contrast, when the guests' focus shifted from the hotel setting as a result of various distractions, the importance of the hotel for their authentic experience significantly decreased. These distractions primarily entailed experiences lived outside of the hotel, and which participants perceived as being more emotionally or physically intense than their stay in the hotel.

Considering the time limitations of this study, the tourists' and hotel management's perspectives could not be explored equally. The latter was investigated through hotels' official websites that do not necessarily provide an exhaustive overview of how management 'perform' and 'construe' the authenticity of historic accommodation units. Investigating hotel managers' opinions and practices on a more personal and thorough level could yield a deeper insight into the role historic hotels play in the authentic experience co-creation process, and is strongly recommended in the future research. Another limitation of this study is the small sample size.

Interviews with ten Croatian nationals generated valuable data for the understanding of how participants' diverse demographic characteristics influence their individual co-creation processes. However, a larger-scale investigation is suggested in order to establish whether there is a certain pattern in how tourists of similar or same demographic profiles perceive authenticity or this is something that is intertwined with multiple other factors and is therefore different for each individual. Another important factor that needs to be taken into consideration is that Croatia

was one of the six constituent republics of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia<sup>254</sup> from 1946 to 1992<sup>255</sup> and that this could be one of the reasons why participants born in the 1960s view authenticity so distinctly from younger interviewees. This might also be just a matter of a generation gap without any specific political and historical implications. Considering that Croatia shares the same post-socialist identity with multiple other Eastern European countries,<sup>256</sup> this would be a good avenue for further research benefiting a large number of tourism scholars and practitioners. This research has proved that authenticity is generally a very important component of Croatians' travel experiences, and that they actively seek to co-create it. With an increasing number of non-Western travelers, and a great amount of literature written about the perspectives of Western tourists,<sup>257</sup> it is of considerable value to further investigate the travel motivations and desires of the former group of individuals.

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<sup>254</sup> Banaszkiewicz, Magdalena. Graburn, Nelson & Owsianowska, Sabina. Tourism in (Post)socialist Eastern Europe. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2017): 110

<sup>255</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/place/Yugoslavia-former-federated-nation-1929-2003>

<sup>256</sup> Banaszkiewicz, Magdalena. Graburn, Nelson & Owsianowska, Sabina. Tourism in (Post)socialist Eastern Europe. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2017): 110

<sup>257</sup> Cohen, Erik. The Changing Faces of Contemporary Tourism. *Journal of the American Chemical Society*, Vol. 45 (2008): 331



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