The Different Perceptions of Authenticity among Tourists

A Case of the Munich Hofbräuhaus

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"The more I read, the more I acquire, the more certain I am that I know nothing."

- Voltaire -

ABSTRACT

Authenticity is known as an essential driving factor for tourists' experiences. Researchers have provided a deep theoretical understanding of authenticity, distinguishing four established approaches: objective authenticity, constructed authenticity, postmodernism view on authenticity and existential authenticity. More recent research initiated examinations on the perceptions of authenticity. The aim of this master thesis is to explore different authenticity perceptions among tourists and provide comprehensive in-depth insights to the extent to which these authenticity perceptions differ. The Munich Hofbräuhaus tavern provides the ideal setting for the investigation as it represents Bavarian tradition and hosts visitors from all over the world. A qualitative netnographic approach enables a deeper understanding of an individual's subjective perceptions of the Hofbräuhaus experience. The study uncovers the occurrence of all established authenticity approaches among the tourists. It also unveils that a tourist might not embody purely one authenticity approach. Instead for some tourists, the rational approach (object-related) can be supplemented by the existential approach (true-self). These findings contribute to the development of a comprehensive understanding of tourist consumer behavior.

Key Words: Hofbräuhaus, tourist experience, objective authenticity, constructed authenticity, postmodernism, existential authenticity, netnography

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1.   INTRODUCTION

'Mia san mia.'

A typical Bavarian slang expression meaning 'We are who we are'. It is a self- expression of pride and self confidence amongst Bavarians about their culture and belonging. This Bavarian theme was used for example by the chairman of the for decades dominating conservative political Bavarian party (CSU) or the successful local soccer team FC Bayern Munich (Glaab & Weigl, 2013; Raabe, 2012). It attaches successful dominance and undiluted, authentic tradition. The general manager of the government owned enterprise Hofbräuhaus Michael Möller also refers in an interview to this proverb (Ribnitzky, 2014) when talking about tradition and economic success. His spokesman Stefan Hempl also emphasizes the tradition and denies that Hofbräuhaus is there to amuse foreign tourists and claims clearly "this is authentic Bavarian culture". The business model of this tourist attraction has been very successful for many years and is franchised over 13 times all over the globe (Leitner, 2020). Visitors across all ages and education levels from Germany and from all parts of the world meet here to enjoy Bavarian lifestyle and tradition (Altenbockum, 2008).

1.1.   Research Problematization

Tourism is established as a major global economic factor contributing 8.9 trillion US Dollars in 2019 to the world GDP, which presents 10.3% of it. The international tourism industry develops at a very high pace, experiencing a growth of 3.5% in 2019 and outpacing the growth of the world economy which experienced a growth of 2.5% (WTTC, n.d.). The strong development is fueled by rising prosperity, technological advances and low-cost holiday offers to a wider stratum of society (UNWTO, 2019). Nowadays, more than 330 million people work in the service of a modern globally operating industry with structures ensuring the satisfaction of the diversified needs of individuals and groups (WTTC, n.d.). The offerings range from pure leisure fun to cultural tours and the experience with recreational value.

The tourism industry shifted from a former service economy towards an experience economy (Pine II & Gilmore, 1998), meaning the industry shifted the focus to providing experiences to the tourists. As today's environment is constantly changing and determined by high competitiveness (Carù & Cova 2007; Pine II & Gilmore, 1998), businesses discovered authenticity and authentic experience as a marketing strategy with economic success (Bauer-

Krösbacher, 2019; Gilmore & Pine II, 2007). Due to the importance of this economy many scholars dedicated plenty of publications identifying essential driving factors for tourist traveling. As authentic experiences were identified as travel motivation for tourists, authenticity attained a great focus and became crucial to tourism research (Kim & Jamal, 2007; MacCannell, 1976). Since the 1960s several authors have joined the long-lasting discourse concerning authenticity within tourism research (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999). The debate and development of different notions of authenticity went on until Wang (1999) made a significant contribution by distinguishing between four different approaches, namely objective, constructive and existential authenticity, and the postmodernism view on authenticity (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019). Well-established tourism scholars involved in the debate of authenticity mainly focused on theoretical understandings, often supported by selected examples.

In this context, more recent empirical studies started to dedicate their focus onto the different perspectives of authenticity. For instance, three studies were found dealing solely with the perception of tangible objects such as tourism souvenirs. Two of them focus on the tourist's perspective based on indigenous souvenirs in South-Korea (Elomba & Yun, 2017) and Taiwan (Xie, Wu & Hsieh, 2012). The third study also took the perspective of the souvenir sellers into consideration in a study in Vietnam (Trinh, Ryan & Cave, 2014). Two further studies analyzed the perception of authenticity of a simulacrum of an original in a country different from its origin. Both investigated the perceived authenticity regarding themed retail environments. The study of Lego Muñoz & Wood (2009) researched if and how the geographical distance influences the perceived authenticity of a Mexican themed restaurant on the example of US citizens from the Northeast and Southwest. The study by Lego, Wood, McFee & Solomon (2002) reveals how visitors of Irish pubs in Georgia perceive the imitation of real Irish pubs as authentic. Additionally, two other studies investigated the tourist's perception of authenticity while participating in guided tours to autochthonous ethnic minorities. Xie & Wall (2002) conducted a study on visitors' perceptions of authenticity at purpose-built tourist cultural attractions in China and Yang & Wall (2009) investigated with emphasis on domestic tourists to another ethnic tourist attraction in China. Cultural events based on rituals of the past provided a foundation for two more studies investigating the level of perceived authenticity. Within this context, Chhabra, Healy & Sills (2003) explored how tourists and event organizers perceive authenticity towards certain events provided on the cultural festival of Scottish highland games in North Carolina. Another study related to cultural events explored the differences of the

perceived authenticity of local residents and tourists on the Christmas markets in Northern Italy (Brida, Disegna & Osti, 2012).

In most of these cases, the data were collected quantitatively in the form of surveys, even though the subjective perception per se is difficult to be captured and measured (Glesne, 2006) through numeric indicators (Flick, 2014; Silverman, 2013; Stein & Mankowski, 2004). Only a few authors investigated their research via a qualitative approach, whereby interviews were conducted to collect data. Interviews however might be constrained or even biased by the fact that the research environment is to some extent artificially constructed by the researcher (Kozinets, 2002; 2015). Furthermore, all these studies are either based on time-limited events, tangible products, tourist-built attractions, ethnic minorities or themed retail destinations as imitations of an original. They have in common that they examine the perception of authenticity, however they suffer from a dearth of deeper understanding to what extent these authenticity perceptions differ among the tourists.

1.2. Research Aim

For this reason, the aim of the thesis is to explore different authenticity perceptions of tourists throughout an experience and to understand to what extent these perceptions differ. In order to achieve a holistic as well as deep understanding and to reach the research aim, the following research question evolves:

**To what extent does the perceived authenticity throughout an experience
differ among tourists?**

From a theoretical perspective, this research is of interest as it contributes to the current literature streams on authenticity perception in the field of tourist consumer behavior. One of the most crucial purposes of consumer research in the tourism field is to understand tourist behavior, his desire and needs in order to shape the right offering. Within consumer behavior tourist's perceptions are considered as a vital key concept (Cohen, Prayag & Moital, 2014). As mentioned in the preceding section, literature focuses on a general theoretical understanding of authenticity within tourism and more recently some studies provide an empirical understanding of the perceptions of authenticity among tourists. This research contributes to the extant research streams on tourist authenticity perceptions by providing deeper insights on the understanding of authenticity perceptions and to which extent they differ.

In order to investigate the emphasized research issue, a qualitative netnographic research approach was applied. Qualitative methods enable a deeper understanding of an individual's diverse perceptions and therefore allows to draw trustworthy conclusions (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Particularly searching for and writing own online reviews has gained popularity in the tourism industry and tourists take advantage of this freely provided information (Xiang & Gretzel, 2009). Online consumer reviews written by tourists after their travel experience provide unadulterated insight into their subjective perception (Mkono, 2011). These written reviews represent a wide spectrum of tourists fueling a great data basis with current updates. The reviews are considered as naturalistic and unobtrusive as their insights have not been elicited by researchers in artificial research environments (Kozinets, 2002). Therefore, such reviews represent an optimal source for data collection.

The Hofbräuhaus serves as an ideal case study for this research purpose. It attracts a huge variety of different people all over the globe seeking to experience the authenticity of Hofbräuhaus taverns well-known historic culture (Altenbockum, 2008). The next section introduces the case of Munich Hofbräuhaus in more detail.

1.3. The Case of the Munich Hofbräuhaus Tavern

The tradition of the Hofbräuhaus is more than 400 years old (Ribnitzky, 2014). The Munich Hofbräuhaus became the first brewery in Bavaria owned and operated by the ruler Duke Wilhelm V of Bavaria. Its beer is subject to a long history. In 1852 Hofbräuhaus was sold to the Free State of Bavaria and is still under the supervision of the ministry of finance. The Munich Hofbräuhaus tavern at 'the Platzl' in Munich, as what it is known for today, was finally built in 1897 (Altenbockum, 2008). Today, the Hofbräuhaus is a global enterprise with a revenue of around 50 million Euro and an EBITDA of 11,3 million EUR (Bayerische Staatsregierung, 2019). The Hofbräuhaus am Platzl makes a significant contribution to the enterprise with roughly estimated 31 million Euro per anno (Leitner, 2020; Ribnitzky, 2014). [1] The Hofbräu brewery offers around 20 different beer variants (Altenbockum, 2008) and produces beer for domestic and international markets all over the world (Bayerische Staatsregierung, 2019). It even grants brewing licenses to other countries and gastronomies.

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[1] Even though no official numbers of the Munich Hofbräuhaus are published, the annual revenue can be roughly estimated to around 31 million Euro per anno. By multiplying the tapped beer per anno of 1.9 million liters (Ribnitzky, 2014) with an average price of 9 Euro per liter an annual beer revenue of approximately of 17.1 million Euro results. As beer represents 55% (Leitner, 2020) of the total revenue, 31 million Euro results, respectively.

Gastronomy models are franchised abroad with the most famous representative in the desert in Las Vegas (Leitner, 2020). The Hofbräuhaus at the Platzl is open 365 days and welcomes around 1.3 Mio guests with an estimated consumption of 1 - 1.5-liter beer per person (Ribnitzky, 2014; Altenbockum, 2008). [2]

Figure 1: The Munich Hofbräuhaus Tavern (BonV, n.d.)

The tavern is divided into three floors and offers about 3500 seats. The most popular floor is the taproom called 'Schwemme', representing the ultimate traditional beer hall, as in the past it housed the brewer equipment (Leitner, 2020). It contains traditional iron chandeliers and rustic seating furniture in the form of long brown old tables, some even over 100 years old, like the ones of the regulars. They witness a long tradition with their countless carved initials, provers, names and symbols recalling new friends and old loves from versifiers and distant travelers. The staff consists of about 185 employees coming from more than 30 countries. All of them wear 'Tracht', the very traditional garment to express Bavarian identity (Altenbockum, 2008). Regulars consider this place as a second home and even deposit and lock their very own beer stein in an extra cupboard. These beer steins are exposed and regarded as a genuine treasure (Ribnitzky, 2014). The beer locker for the beer steins are only available to members of a veritable dynasty of regulars because a famous name or deep pockets alone do not impress the

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[2] The Hofbräuhaus at the Platzl is open 365 days and welcomes about 3,600 guests a day resulting in 1.3 Mio guests per year (Altenbockum, 2008). As approximately 1.9 Mio liters of beer are tapped each year (Ribnitzky, 2014) an implicit estimation results in a consumption of about 1 - 1,5 liter of beer per visitor.

proprietor (Altenbockum, 2008). Commonly, the atmosphere of the tavern is described with Bavarian 'Gemütlichkeit' (Altenbockum, 2008). Gemütlichkeit is a term used to describe an easy and unforced atmosphere and joyful spirit within a situation. People feel socially accepted, by the means of familiarity and brotherhood, and experience a feeling of well-being, warmth and friendliness (Dudenredaktion, n.d). It is understood as an "'take it easy and let the world pass on by' attitude" of Bavarians (Oxford University Press, n.d.).

Due to its long tradition and history as well as the worldwide presence, the Hofbräuhaus became globally famous (Ribnitzky, 2014). It is known as a place to experience the original Bavarian lifestyle and tradition, a place where strangers become friends, enjoying Bavarian food and massive beers complemented by a traditional Bavarian brass band (Altenbockum, 2008). Given these circumstances the Hofbräuhaus sets an ideal setting of exploring the tourists' experiences and to what extent their perception of authenticity differs.

1.4. Structure of the Thesis

To reach the research aim of this study, the thesis consists of seven chapters. First, the thesis starts with an introduction to the research problematization and the resulting research objective emphasizing the concrete research question. The second chapter provides a literature review to illuminate some fundamental terms and concepts as a solid basis for the investigated research topic. The chapter starts with a short informative general understanding of tourist experience, followed by outlining the relevant theory of authenticity within the tourism experience. This illumination results in a conceptual framework presented in chapter three and serves as a foundation for the empirical research process. Chapter four presents the research methodology of the investigation, comprising the philosophy, the approach, the netnography as a method as well as the research process. Thereupon, chapter five presents the findings of the conducted research in the light of the conceptual framework. Subsequently, in chapter six these findings are discussed. Eventually, chapter seven completes the thesis by outlining limitations the thesis is subject to, followed by further research propositions.

It needs to be noted that throughout the whole thesis, the tourist is always indicated as 'he'. Nevertheless, the broader sense of 'the tourist' contains males, females and diverse.

2.   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter serves as the theoretical foundation for the issue being researched. The chapter's structure emerged from a synthesis of diligently reviewed literature streams and the previous emphasized research question. In the beginning the tourism experience and experience economy will be introduced and its link to authenticity will be pointed out. Subsequently, a comprehensive literature review is expounded on authenticity within the tourism experience.

2.1.   Experiences

The following section provides a general perspective on experiences and its link to authenticity. Diverse research streams considered consumers as logical thinkers making objective decisions within the consumption process to rationally solve problems. However, over time researchers started to recognize the consumption process as a social exchange that is complemented with experiences consisting of feelings and fantasies. This implicated an emotional relationship between consumers and consumed objects and enhanced the theory that a highly subjective consumption process is complemented with emotional experiences (Carù & Cova, 2007; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook, Chestnut, Oliva & Greenleaf, 1984). In general, an experience can be described as a mental phenomenon that occurs in one's mind and does not solve material or intellectual problems. It is triggered by external stimuli that affect one or more senses and eventually elaborates by people's individual mental awareness they have acquired through previous experiences or even by mental needs and strategies they are still aiming to fulfill (Sundbo & Sørensen, 2013). It needs to be stressed that the experience can not only be created through tangible products, but also by provided services, locations, events or platforms (Carù & Cova, 2007). In today's fast changing and highly competitive environment, businesses need to add distinctive values to their products and services to succeed such as elements that can provoke and enhance great experiences (Carù & Cova, 2007; Pine II & Gilmore, 1998).

As a consequence of this understanding, experiences became a key feature in the area of consumer behavior and emphasizes the shift from the former service economies to the so-called experience economy (Pine II & Gilmore, 1998). Introduced by Pine II & Gilmore (1998), the experience economy focuses on business activities to sell experiences in addition to services and thereby fulfill people's unquestionable desire for experiences. Thereby, the experience economy is not simply represented as more creative or cultural than the former one, however,

it reveals ways on how the consumption could be experiential and how the consumers and producer react to those experiential elements (Sundbo & Sørensen, 2013).

This shift from service economy to experience economy is also omnipresent in the tourism industry, as it aims to provide experience to the tourists. This shift challenges the former understanding of tourist decisions and consumer behavior of tourists, in particular the way of understanding how tourists experience and sense places (Ek, Larsen, Hornskov & Mansfeldt, 2008). Whereas in the past tourists were considered as passive observers, they are now seen in an active role as participants, creating their own experiences (Ek et al., 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Several decades ago, in the 1970s, MacCannell (1973; 1976) introduced authenticity as a concept in the tourism research field. Ever since, it has become a paramount topic within tourism behavior studies, particularly in regard to tourist motivations and experience (Jia, 2009). According to MacCannell (1976), "touristic consciousness is motivated by its desire for authentic experience" (1976, p.101; Kim & Jamal, 2007, p.182). This means, tourists travel in search for an authentic experience, as they perceive the modern society they live in as inauthentic (Kim & Jamal, 2007). Since then, a great number of researchers explored the concept of authenticity with regards to tourist experiences, emphasizing that tourists do not only strive for experience in general, but for an authentic experience in specific. The perception of a tourist on how real and authentic the offered product or service is influencing the tourist's behavior (Yeoman, Brass & McMahon-Beattie, 2007).

Whether those created experiences can be defined as authentic is another complex topic and vigorously discussed among researchers. As highlighted by Sundbo & Sørensen (2013, p.3): "Authenticity can be of many kinds and mean different things to different people who in different situations may have different preference levels for authenticity".

2.2. The Concept of Authenticity

Within the following section, the concept of authenticity will be diligently examined. As a first step, the general understanding of the term will be provided. Further on, the meaning of authenticity will be introduced in the context of the tourism experience.

2.2.1. A General Understanding of Authenticity

First of all, it needs to be emphasized that authenticity as a concept or even as a term is highly ambiguous and, thus, a distinct definition of authenticity can be hardly found in research

literature. Concepts of authenticity vary significantly within various fields of research. Psychology for instance is talking about the true self when it comes to the term of authenticity meaning to live in accordance with one's own beliefs and values (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis & Joseph, 2008). In the sense of information technology a digital object is determined as authentic if it remains incorrupt, represents a real world scene even if it underwent some modifications and "indeed what it claims to be or what it is claimed to be" (IGI Global, n.d.). Looking for a definition for authenticity by dictionary search also leads to several and varying definitions only to name a few: "worthy of acceptance or belief as <u>conforming</u> to or based on fact"; "conforming to an original so as to reproduce essential features; made or done the same way as an original; not false or <u>imitation</u> therefore real; true to one's own personality, spirit, or character and absolute" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Over the past decades, there is a long-lasting and still ongoing debate of the definition of authenticity between tourism researchers (Kim & Jamal, 2007). Defining the term within tourism studies turned out to be as challenging as the approach of defining authenticity within other study fields, if not even more complicated. The different perspectives, values and understandings of authenticity regarding toured objects and activities make it even more difficult to obtain a uniformly accepted definition (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Cohen (1988) justifies these inhomogeneous attempts to grasp the term by stating that authenticity was uncritically adopted from philosophy studies.

2.2.2. Authenticity within the Tourism Experience

The emerging mass tourism within the fifties and sixties led the tourism scholars Boorstin and MacCannell to introduce authenticity to the tourism studies, concerned with its meaning (Cohen, 1988; Uriely, 1997; Wang, 1999). Several researchers followed the attempt to devote their studies to the subject of authenticity, thus various different classifications of authenticity were developed and extended. Classifying the notions of authenticity in tourism remained challenging, particularly as some researchers' opinions seem to resemble and others converge. Therefore, Wang´s (1999) classification of authenticity into objectivism, constructivism, postmodernism and existentialism was an important contribution to the discourse of authenticity within tourism (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019) and is mostly referred to in literature.

Objectivism and constructivism are both concerned with the authenticity of objects (Wang, 1999; Wang & Alasuutari, 2017). While objective authenticity is determined by the genuineness of originals through scientific knowledge of experts and professionals and thus, accepted by the

tourist as given (Boorstin, 1961; MacCannell, 1987), constructed authenticity refers to a socially built interpretation of visible things and therefore the tourist is involved in determining the authenticity, which hence is negotiable (Cohen, 1988; Wang 1999). The postmodernism view rejects the authenticity of the object entirely, as through technology nowadays true (authentic) or false (inauthentic) are nearly impossible to differentiate (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019; Wang, 1999). Instead of searching for authenticity, postmodernists aim for enjoyment during their experience (Cohen, 1995; Yang & Wall, 2009). Eventually, the term existential authenticity was introduced, whereby authenticity is perceived through social interaction with others (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986) and through the tourists himself as an internal state of being true to oneself (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999).

2.2.2.1. Objective Authenticity

The term authenticity was museum-linked when it got introduced and extended to tourism studies in the sixties (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). The approach of objective authenticity was coined on the beliefs of modernists, believing there is only one objective truth (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Yang & Wall, 2009). Tourist objects are perceived visually, and its authenticity is determined and legally validated among absolute (Chhabra et al., 2003) and objective standards (Boorstin, 1961; MacCannell, 1973; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006), by scientific experts and authorities (Bruner, 1994). By the means of objectivism an object is defined as authentic if it appears or claims to be of originality, entailing traditional production or performance (Trilling, 1972). Or if it is unaltered, genuine (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006) and bears witness about itself (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019). Moreover, toured objects can be understood within a quite big range from artifacts and dresses over activities and rituals to life processes (Lau, 2010; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Objective authenticity is concerned with the quest for originals (Kim, & Jamal, 2007; Wang, 1999). Boorstin (1962) and MacCannell (1973) were the earliest scholars concerned about the role of authenticity within tourism, by taking into account the physical settings on the tourist destination. Both support the modern dualistic concept of authentic versus inauthentic, while their views regarding the modern tourist´s quest for authenticity diverge (Uriely, 2005).

Boorstin (1961) strongly criticizes the increasing mass tourism, by claiming to result in a set of superficial activities commodifying cultures and thus, generating solely standardized and homogenized tourist experiences (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019; Wang, 1999). As a result, the author introduces the so-called 'pseudo-events'. Accordingly, touristic man-made events,

indicated as 'pseudo-events', are defined as contrived, (pre)packaged, unspontaneous, superficial and inauthentic. Nevertheless, pseudo-events appear to be authentic to tourists, despite the fact that they are completely staged and even displayed without the use of originals (Boorstin, 1964). Boorstin (1961; 1964) believes however, that the modern tourist is quite satisfied with the pseudo-events which are replacing the original (Chhabra, 2010). As pseudo-events are accordingly indicated as inauthentic since they are replacing the original, Boorstin's understanding of authenticity relies on objective authenticity (Wang, 1999). He (Boorstin, 1961; 1964) believes that (mass) tourists are in a so-called 'tourist-bubble', in other words the tourist's inauthentic comfort zone, protecting them from perceiving too much authenticity of other cultures, keeping it close to their provincial expectations (Wang, 1999).

MacCannell (1973; 1976) justifies the strong increase of mass tourism by the tourist's amplified quest for authenticity. This quest is based on the desire to escape the shallowness and dissatisfaction in his own life. Experiencing authenticity is a motivation to travel to other places which are considered to be more authentic (Bruner, 1991; Chhabra, 2010; MacCannell, 1976) and unaltered by modern society (Cohen, 1988). Sightseeing is perceived as a kind of ritual respect to society and MacCannell (1973) even goes a step further and claims that travelling can be set equal with religious pilgrimage for the modern man (Wang, 1999). In other words, tourism functions like religion (Lau, 2010). MacCannell´s (1973) hypothesis about the modern tourist striving for authenticity is in contradiction to Boorstin´s (1961) conception of the modern tourist, who wants to remain in his tourist-bubble, satisfied with contrived events. However, he shares Boorstin´s (1961) opinion that tourists are not capable of experiencing authenticity, even if they strive for it (MacCannell, 1973; 1976). Everything tourists experience is deliberately staged by the tourism industry and local people; therefore, it is inauthentic (Kim, & Jamal, 2007; MacCannell, 1973).

MacCannell bases his work of staged authenticity on the front-back study by Erving Goffman in 1959, whereby the front region represents the inauthentic area, tourists try "to overcome, or to get behind" and the back region in comparison is the authentic area "that motivates touristic consciousness" (MacCannell, 1973, p. 596). MacCannell (1973) extended the dichotomy to a continuum of six stages, from the inauthentic front to the authentic back and the middle stages are more intertwined. The closer they are to the back region, the more authentic, and the closer they are to the front region, the more inauthentic (Germann-Molz, 2003). The front region is the meeting point of tourists and locals, creating a sense of authenticity, nevertheless, considered to be false, since it represents a "little lie" (MacCannell, 1973, p.591). Locals offer

their culture and tradition to tourists as a package (Chhabra et al., 2003), as an altered version of the true nature of the culture, according to this, what the tourists see as authentic here is either a superficial appearance or simulation of an authentic back region (MacCannell, 1973). The back region accessible to tourists, is still altered to some extent for tourists. The existing authentic back region triggers the tourist's desire for authenticity, nevertheless tourists will never be able to experience it, as it remains hidden (MacCannell, 1973). Tourism marketers discovered that set back stages are truly a goldmine, as tourists are willing to pay more money in the belief that they will be allowed a look behind the scenes. However, false back stages might be even more inauthentic and could even lead to a falsified impression of the host culture (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Even if tourists are assured to have experienced authenticity, it is still staged, and fake authenticity is still valued as inauthentic (Wang, 1999). MacCannell is classified as an objectivist, since his understanding of authenticity lies in the originality of toured objects (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999).

Cohen (1988; 2007) criticizes the fact that objects are solely accepted as authentic as long as they are made with traditional materials by locals. This would imply that all recent products traded through the world market and with the help of modern technology are labelled as inauthentic. Societies and cultures are in a process of constant change; thus traditions, cultural objects and events adapt to and change by the times (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019; Wang, 1999). Therefore, the understanding of authenticity cannot be referred to a single original anymore (Cohen, 2007; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). What experts still define as origin, original or real may vary and be thus based at their own discretion or in other words authenticity will be constructed by the views of the individual (Cohen, 2007), which leads to the next approach of authenticity, the constructivism.

2.2.2.2. Constructed Authenticity

Many researchers disagreed (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Uriely, 2005) with the static idea of one true objective reality to determine authenticity (Bruner, 1994; Cohen, 1988; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006) as this is hardly grasping the complexity of it (Wang, 1999). Cohen (1988) refers back to philosophy as the origin of authenticity and points out that "it is a socially constructed concept […] therefore, not given, but 'negotiable' "(p.374). As the term already indicates, authenticity from a constructivist point of view is constructed by every individual according to their own beliefs, perspectives (Cohen, 1988; Wang, 1999), perceptions and values (Elomba & Yun, 2018) but can also be influenced by images through mass media (Xie & Wall, 2002; Yang

& Wall, 2009) and word of mouth (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019). Other than objectivism, constructivism allows the tourist to be involved in the process to verify an object as authentic together with other third parties as scientific experts and local people (Cohen, 1988; Uriely, 2005). As one and the same object might lead to multiple different understandings due to different perspectives assumed by different observers, there are no numerical limitations of the authentic meaning of an object. It should be taken into consideration that people might construct different understandings, depending on the situation and physical settings surrounding the tourist (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999).

Cohen (1979), opposingly to MacCannell's (1973) theory of one type of tourist seeking one absolute authenticity (Chhabra, 2010), argues that tourists are not equally concerned or triggered by the quest for authenticity. He identifies and distinguishes in his early work five different modes of touristic experiences, namely recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental and existential. Cohen (1979) clearly segregates the tourist experiences, among different desires and attitudes of tourists beginning with the tourist as a simple traveler enjoying the tour as solely recreation up to the tourist as a modern pilgrim with the quest for finding a "new center of his own cosmos" (p.22). The different types of tourists clearly mark the diverse degrees of the tourists' quest and desire for an authentic tourist experience. Redfoot's (1984) typology from first-order tourist to fourth-order tourist is in line with Cohen's (1979), supporting the idea that tourists pursue different types of authenticity. Hence, different types of tourists have different needs, expectations and perspectives (Chhabra et al., 2003; Cohen, 1988) on authenticity.

Cohen (1988) brings the term 'emergent authenticity' into the discussion of authenticity, as a critique to MacCannell´s (1973) staged authenticity. Emergent authenticity describes a process, where once artificial attractions, perceived as tourist traps, get incorporated into local society and culture and are even determined by scientific experts as authentic attractions (Cohen, 1988; 2004; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Thus, authenticity is negotiable, since beliefs, interpretations and perceptions (can) change over time (Cohen, 1988). Opposingly, MacCannell (2011) critically examines the positive view on cultural commodification, whereby he claims that tourists in search of authenticity only get to see the commodified back region and in addition to that the commodified back region is still staged and therefore false. As response to MacCannell (2011) claiming that everything commodified is inauthentic, Cohen (1988) states that commodification contributes to the maintenance of cultures and the demand of tourists for

cultural authenticity "frequently facilitate the preservation of a cultural tradition which would otherwise perish" (p.382).

Disneyland serves as an example of constructed authenticity (Reisinger and Steiner, 2006). The theme park Disneyland, is not based on any origin, originals or tradition, but rather on fantasy and pure imagination (Reisinger and Steiner, 2006) and was later on adapted to American culture, and hence perceived as authentic (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019; Cohen, 2007). Even though Disneyland has no historical relation to any former cultures it is still perceived as authentic by visitors. The concept of theme parks such as Disneyland resembles Boorstin's (1961; 1964) idea of objective authenticity insofar as Disneyland is nothing else than a pseudo-event as the theme park is built without the use of any originals. Furthermore, historical theme park visitors perceived the parks as authentic, despite the fact that all settings were staged and reconstructed with resemblances of the historical originals (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). As Bruner (1991) puts it, tourists are quite willing to accept a good fake, in other words a good reproduction, as long as it is convincing enough or labelled by brochures as authentic. Authenticity of tourist settings is dependent on the value the observer places on it (Moscardo & Pearce, 1999). In the eyes of constructivists, tourists are still having the quest to experience authenticity, even though not necessarily through originals (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986), but rather something representing – something symbolic (Wang, 1999). Objects of art get commodified as soon as they become open to export markets and mass production. Tourist souvenirs are products made specifically for the external world and become authentic in its own understanding (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Souvenirs are tangible products, nevertheless they carry an intangible element with them (Elomba & Yun, 2018) as tourists are willing to perceive these products as authentic, since they are symbols of authenticity (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006).

Bruner (1994) as devoted constructivist, identifies four different meanings of authenticity. First, authenticity as an authentic reproduction, which looks credible and convincing in the eyes of the spectator. Second, authenticity as a historically accurate reproduction, a devoutly accepted replication, due to consideration and inclusion of all aspects of its nature. Both are merely imitations and reproductions of the original, not the original itself, however accepted as one. Bauer-Krösbacher (2019) claims that historically accurate reproductions are necessary, if the original must be protected or if it simply does not exist anymore. Bruner's third understanding of authenticity by the means of originals, stands in complete opposition to fakes, whereas no reproduction can ever be defined authentic (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019; Bruner, 1994). Fourth, authenticity determined, certified and legally validated by the power of experts or authorities,

as 1972 proposed by Trilling (Bruner, 1994). Nevertheless, the fact that scientists and professionals are also just people with their own views, confirms that even their judgements on authenticity are socially constructed (Cohen, 2007). Bruner (1994) further discusses the definition of the 'original', claiming that cultures are always undergoing a process and everyone entering societies, enters it somewhere in the middle of it. A one true and absolute origin to which the absolute authentic can be traced back to does not exist, since societies and cultures are in a process of constant change (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019; Wang, 1999). Bruner (1994) emphasizes the fact that every new interpretation or expression of cultural heritage may be an imitation of his own, but nevertheless every copy in turn is an original in its own right to the extent that it adapts to the times. This leads to the conclusion that all originals are basically reproductions and that there is no one original all reproductions are based on (Bruner, 1991). Thus, Wang (1999) describes traditions as a culture's own understanding of history, as they are constructed and developed within a social process.

The approach of constructivism diverges from objective authenticity and claims authenticity to be a socially constructed and influenced interpretation (Cohen, 1988; Wang, 1999; Xie & Wall, 2002). Thus, authenticity reaches an undefined range of different understandings as it lies in the eyes of the beholder due to the holder's own beliefs and perspectives (Bruner, 1994). Nevertheless, representatives of constructivism do agree upon the fact that cultures are undergoing the process of commodification, whereas new authenticity emerges (Cohen, 1988; 2007). Whereas constructivists are not willing yet to give up on object related authenticity, postmodernists dismiss the authenticity of objects (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999).

2.2.2.3. Postmodernism View on Authenticity

Postmodern tourists accept the fact that their experience will be somehow contrived and inauthentic (Cohen, 1995), thus they are less concerned whether something is authentic or inauthentic, real or false unlike objectivists and constructivists (Cohen, 1988; Moscardo & Pearce, 1999; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999). Reisinger & Steiner (2006) and Bauer-Krösbacher (2019) argue that these days it does not take much to transform the inauthentic into the authentic and vice versa due to modern tools and advanced technology. Since the strict distinction of the original and the copy blurs, postmodernists deconstruct them completely (Baudrillard, 1983; Bauer- Krösbacher, 2019; Ritzer & Liska, 1997; Yang & Wall, 2009). Thus, postmodern culture is based on simulations and hyperreality, created by copies of originals without originals (Baudrillard, 1983; Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019), imaginations and illusions

(Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Yang & Wall, 2009). For instance, Disneyland and Disney World are often referred to as hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1983; Ritzer & Liska, 1997; Wang, 1999) as they "were created from fantasy and imagination" (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006, p.72), hence without originals. If there are no originals, there can be no boundaries between real and fake (Jia, 2009).

Further on, postmodernists argue that experiencing authenticity is not the tourist's priority (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Instead, it is of highest importance to have an enjoyable and valuable experience (Cohen, 1988; 1995; Jia, 2009; Moscardo & Pearce, 1999; Wang, 1999; Xie & Wall, 2002). Ritzer & Liska (1997) even go a step further, claiming postmodern tourists, unlike MacCannell´s (1973) modern tourists, actually seek for inauthenticity (Chhabra et al., 2003; Cohen, 1988; Jia, 2009), since they enjoy the Western standards of comfort and easiness. Postmodern tourists are well aware of the fact that commodification is accompanied by changes but are willing to accept the altered version of the host community as authentic (Cohen, 1988; 1995; 2007). Moreover, postmodernists show understanding that communities are a very fragile construct and that commodified versions and staged scenes, replacing the original, are there to protect the communities and their cultures from mass tourism and thus, destruction (Cohen, 1995; 2004; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Yang & Wall, 2009).

Cohen (2007) and Wang (1999) problematize the rising globalization as it gets increasingly more and more difficult to preserve the authenticity of the original and thus, reasonable to abolish objective authenticity. Reisinger & Steiner (2006) believe that objective authenticity should be discarded entirely in relation to everything real or genuine, due to very much divergent and contradictory perspectives. Nevertheless, deconstructing the term of authenticity led some postmodernists to take a different approach (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999) whereby they take distance from object related authenticity and move towards authenticity of the tourist's' self (Lau, 2010; Wang & Alasuutari, 2017).

2.2.2.4. Existential Authenticity

The idea of authenticity as a state of Being has been around for several decades in tourism studies (Wang, 1999). Two decades earlier than Wang (1999) Cohen (1979) already came up with the idea of an existential tourist experience, claiming the tourist is able to find the "new center of his cosmos" with religious pilgrims seeking for their spiritual center (p.22). As such, the idea remained relatively undeveloped, thus, Wang (1999) eventually proposes a third approach of authenticity, called 'existential authenticity', meaning authenticity can be

experienced through the tourist himself. Tourists are able to find and realize themselves through travels as experiencing being 'true to oneself' (Reisinger and Steiner, 2006).

Existential authenticity, other than objectivism and constructivism, does not necessarily refer to toured objects, but to authenticity experienced through participating non-ordinary tourist activities (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019; Jia, 2009; Kim & Jamal, 2007; Uriely, 2005; Wang, 1999). In this case and - if at all - do toured objects solely serve as aid for tourists, as well as activities, to seek for their authentic selves (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019; Wang, 1999). People are triggered to experience existential authenticity, to feel more authentic and freer than within the constraints of their everyday life (Jia, 2009; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang 1999), which resembles MacCannell's (1973) concept of modern tourists searching for authenticity on travels to escape the shallowness in their everyday life. This feeling is considered to be a real, authentic feeling, whereas authentic feelings characterize existential authenticity (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Wang, 1999). Wang (1999) furthermore, divides the concept of existential authenticity into intra-personal authenticity, containing bodily feelings and self-making, and inter-personal authenticity, embodying family ties and touristic communitas.

Intra-personal authenticity takes place, when the tourist is able to feel free and real, without their everyday tensions (Lin & Liu, 2019; Wang, 1999). Bodily feelings and emotions (Kim & Jamal, 2007) are non-rational factors and can be released when the tourist participates in fun and non-ordinary tourist activities outside his everyday social constraints (Lin & Liu, 2019). The tourist is then able to feel unrestrained, free, relaxed and is in a playful mood, able to restore his authentic self without being controlled by the order of his daily life (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Wang, 1999). At the same time, intra-personal authenticity embodies self-making, also referred to as self-identity, where travelling is seen as adventure and challenge to the tourist (Lin & Liu, 2019, Wang, 1999). The excitement stands in contrast to the monotonous daily routines and roles at work, in which the individuals are not able to pursue self-realization (Wang, 1999). Tourists aim to engage in self-making (Lin & Liu, 2019), distant from normal social contexts (Kim & Jamal, 2007). Through travel challenges and adventures tourists are able to "compensate [...] the boredom and lack of authenticity felt in ordinary life" (Wang, 1999, p. 363). Furthermore, tourists also aim for inter-personal authenticity as tourists seek authenticity between themselves, besides within themselves (Wang, 1999). The authors Moscardo & Pearce (1986) claim that authenticity can also be realized through relationships taking place within the tourist experience. Family ties suggests that tourism is an opportunity for families to tighten their family bonds, while experiencing a real and intensely and intimate authentic relationship

between the family members (Lin & Liu, 2019; Wang, 1999). Other than regular relationships, being built within the normative and social constraints (Kim & Jamal, 2007), tourist communitas refer to a temporary social group, where "structures fall apart" (Wang, 1999, p.364), whereby the social hierarchy and status disappear and "tourists can ease themselves" (ibid, p. 365). The communication within this social group is free and authentic, as no hierarchy or status is determining the tourists (Wang, 1999). People are accepted and considered as equal within the communitas (Kim & Jamal, 2007).

Reisinger & Steiner (2006) endorse and support strongly Wang´s (1999) idea of existential authenticity, however, propose a slightly different approach. While objectivists grant this competence to experts the constructivists assume that the tourist is finally making this decision. The rating process per se refers back to ancient times. In his line of thought, Heidegger (1977) draws on Plato and his theory about 'eidos', a term describing the ideal form. An eidos, later on called also as essence, idea, builds a perfect image. For the rationalist it could be a gift of god or a result of thinking, for objectivists it is provided by experts and for constructivists it could be socially constructed. Any object sensed by human beings creates an image, which is compared to the ideal prototype, the eidos. The closer the sensed image resembles the ideal idea, the archetype, the truer and more authentic the image is rated. Heidegger argues that people are living in a world of pictures and the authenticity rating of tourists depends more on the picture and its conformance than the actual sensed image. The existentialists give up on this rating process. The basic assumption is that the sensed image is authentic, and the appearance of the phenomenon is appreciated by the individual. It is regarded as a gift of being and humans should learn from it, work and use it. Being open to what is means being ready to engage with possibilities to emerge from the sensed picture. In order to become more concrete for tourists: Many tourists perceive a positive feeling, even regard it as authentic when they experience travelling off beaten tracks, getting lost, and participating in ordinary dramas of crisis. In essence they deal with the situation as it is sensed and are open to deal with the context instead of rating the authenticity and bemoaning missing things (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006).

The proposed idea by Reisinger & Steiner (2006), based on Plato, inspired the following conceptual framework, grasping the process of authenticity perception, including all four previously discussed approaches.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PERCEPTION OF AUTHENTICITY

The decision was made to approach the research with a conceptual framework, as research should be driven by a valid theory, otherwise the research could be deficient (Peshkin, 1993). This framework is indicated as a conceptual framework since it is the researcher´s own constructed framework and not widely accepted. It is a proposal to guide through the research process, to aid analyzing and discussing the collected data to eventually answer the research question in an adequate manner (Dickson, Emad & Adu Agyem, 2018). The conceptual framework further enables to narrow and simplify theories used for this study (Luse, Mennecke & Townsend, 2012). The following section will conceptualize the theoretical approaches used for this thesis.

The previously outlined theoretical foundation in chapter 2 provides the very basis for the following conceptual framework for the perception of authenticity. Together with the methodology of chapter 4, this model is an integral part of the assignment of tourists to the four theoretically determined main typologies within the analysis. The conceptual framework presented in figure 2 visualizes the process flow of how authenticity is perceived by a tourist. The perception process illustrates the main steps in assessing authenticity in two different ways.

The upper part of figure 2, marked in blue, shows the perception path of object related authenticity by rationalists, according to the approaches of objectivism and constructivism. The lower part, marked in orange, represents the perception path of self-authenticity of the existentialist based on the approach of existentialism. The dashed line representing the tourist holistically, is a finding of the analysis and will be picked up again in the discussion.
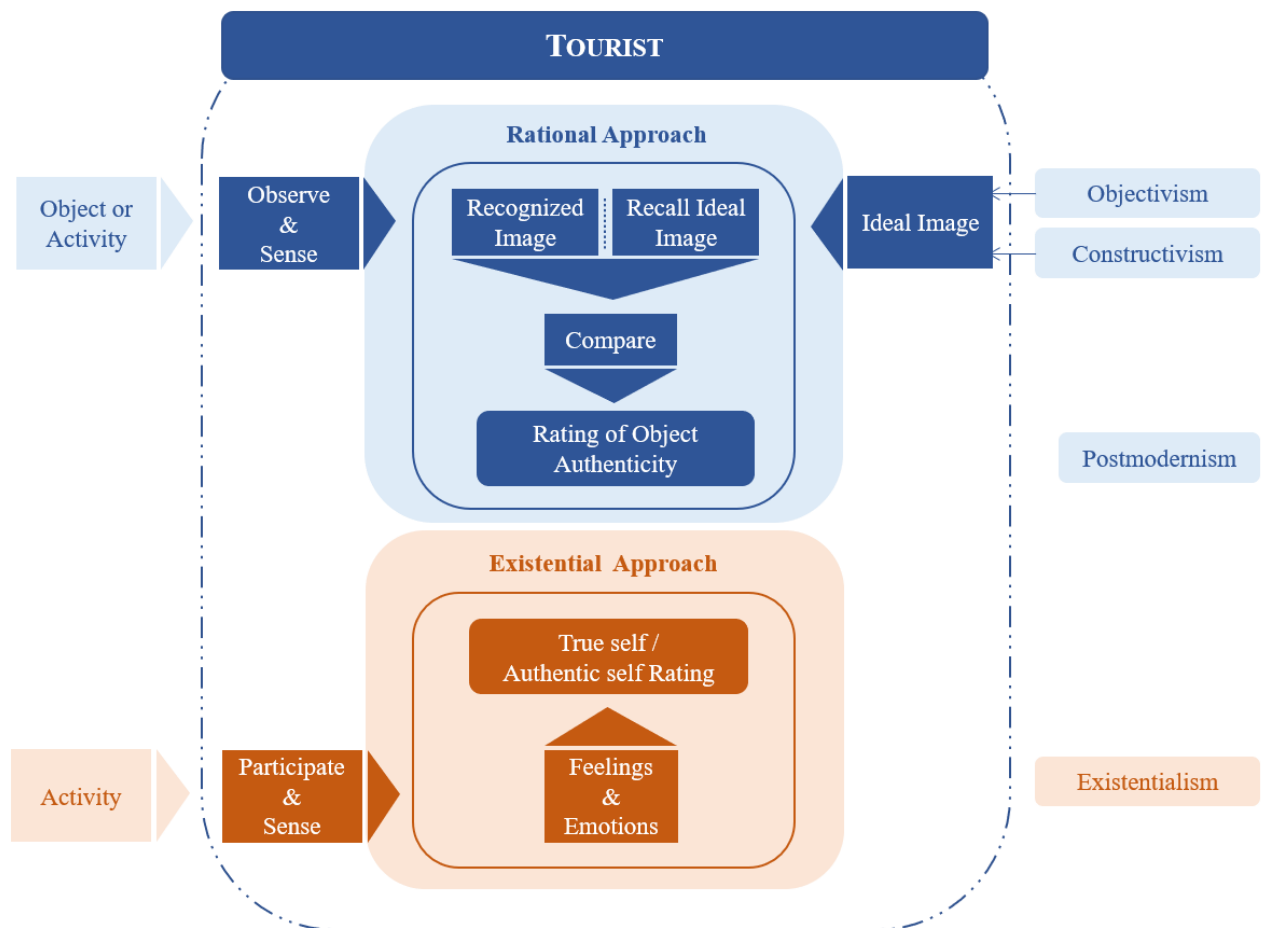
Figure 2: The Perception Process of Authenticity (by the author, 2020)

3.1. Rational Approach

The perception of object related authenticity is based to a certain extent on the theory of forms according to Plato (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). An individual observes an object or an activity and perceives it via his senses (for example in a form of a souvenir, an artefact but also an event). The senses present their stimuli to the mind of the individual which recognizes and creates an image. While creating this image the individuum is recalling an ideal image from its own memory. In Plato's theory of forms the ideal image is called "eidos" (Reisinger & Steiner, p.74). The ideal image stored in the memory can be created in two different ways and allows to differentiate if the tourist perceived authenticity according to an objectivist or constructivist point of view.

The ideal image according to the objectivism approach is created as follows. Scientific scholars and experts evaluate the originality of the object upfront, according to scientific knowledge (Trilling, 1972; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006) based among objective criteria (Yang & Wall, 2009)

such as historical validity (Boorstin, 1961; MacCannell, 1973). Thus, the ideal image of an authentic object is accepted as given fact by the tourist. According to the constructivist approach, the tourist is part of shaping his ideal image. The ideal image is constructed by every individual according to socially built interpretations, his own beliefs and perspectives as well as interaction with his social environment (Bruner, 1994; Cohen, 1988: Wang, 1999). In particular it should be noted that the ideal image of an authentic object according to constructivists, does not necessarily need to contain authenticity by the means of originality and genuineness (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019; Cohen 1988; 2007).

The ideal image serves as yardstick for the tourist to compare the recognized object with. The tourist compares the recognized image, perceived through his senses, with his ideal image. The traditional rationalist predominant in our society finally rates truth or authenticity by how closely the recognized image resembles an ideal image (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Thus, the perceived authenticity of objects is dependent on the ideal image tourists have in mind, determined objectively or constructed subjectively.

In comparison, the postmodernist is less concerned with authenticity (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). He rejects the differentiation (Wang, 1999) and deconstructs the boundaries of true (authentic) or false (inauthentic) (Yang & Wall, 2009) as they become blurred in modern societies (Baudrillard, 1983; Bauer- Krösbacher, 2019; Ritzer & Liska, 1997; Yang & Wall, 2009). In figure 2, the process will stop right after sensing the object and will not be compared, since it is not further valued in terms of authenticity. The tourist clearly prioritizes the enjoyment of leisure time (Cohen, 1995; Yang & Wall, 2009) and does not further deal with evaluating object-related authenticity.

3.2. Existential Approach

The tourist himself is participating and hence getting involved in a non-ordinary activity and receives stimuli through his senses (Jia, 2009). Unlike the rational approach, there is no comparison with an ideal image, but the tourist evaluates his own emotions and feelings he experiences (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Wang, 1999). They determine if the tourist is able to experience authenticity through himself (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999). Hence, authenticity is perceived through the tourist´s emotions and feelings.

As depicted in figure 2, authenticity can be perceived differently by tourists and is thus, a highly subjective phenomenon. The next chapter provides the methodological foundation for an adequate empirical investigation of the research aim.

4. METHODOLOGY

To ensure a comprehensive empirical investigation, a proper research methodology needs to be chosen carefully. The objective of this chapter is to ensure a coherent comprehension of the applied research process which is crucial to ensure relevant findings. The structure of the chapter is based on an adapted version of the 'research onion' by Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019). It consists of five layers which are illustrated in figure 3 below.
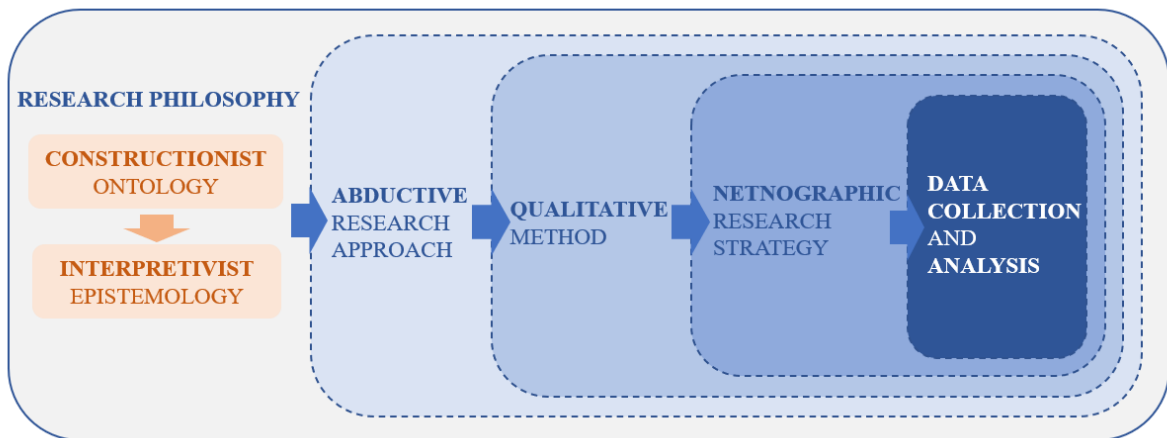
Figure 3: Methodological Procedure (Saunders et al., 2019, p.130)

The methodology starts with the philosophical perspectives and assumptions shaping the research, followed by the reasoning for the chosen research approach as well as the research method and strategy. The method requires a thorough description as a netnographic study design is used, which is a relatively new methodology and not as commonly used as other more traditional methods, yet. Moreover, the researcher's reflexivity upon his own position as a researcher within the research and all ethical considerations regarding the research will be taken into account. Subsequently, the data collection is explained in a comprehensible way, focusing on how and why the data was chosen and collected. Eventually, the data analysis procedure provides insight and understanding on how it was performed.

4.1. Research Philosophy

According to the first layer of the research onion of figure 3, the research philosophy must be clarified. Research philosophy displays a vital role when conducting a study, as it refers to beliefs as well as assumptions about profound knowledge development. Carrying out a study towards a research problem, leads to new knowledge. Thus, the philosophical perspectives of the researcher determine, shape and underpin every step of his further research (Saunders et al., 2019), including the selection of a research approach. Hence, the two perspectives ontology and epistemology are clarified in the following.

Considering the aim of the thesis, the ontological perspective, reflecting on how we come to know things as nature of reality (Saunders et al., 2019), is approached by the constructionism view. The doctrine of constructionism indicates that reality is influenced and socially constructed from perceptions and experiences of the social actors within a certain context (Bryman, 2016; Flick, 2014). Within the context of this thesis the social actors are the tourists with their own individual perception of authenticity and can be rated hence as a socially constructed ontology. Thereupon, the epistemological position, referring to what should be regarded as acceptable and valid knowledge and how we get to know things we argue to know (Saunders et al., 2019), follows an interpretivism approach (Bryman, 2016). Interpretivism aims to understand human behavior and social actions (Bryman, 2016) and takes into account that individuals differ from physical phenomena as they each create very own subjective meanings (Saunders et al., 2019). Existing differences among people and objects are respected and considered, which means that subjectivity and individual perceptions of reality matter (Bryman, 2016; Flick, 2014). Interpretivism is the very basis for the empirical investigation of this study as it intends to understand the individual perceptions of tourists. The tourist's own narratives along with the researcher´s interpretation is taken into consideration (Saunders et al., 2019) for assigning the type of perceived authenticity.

4.2. Research Approach

In line with the described philosophical underpinnings and the formulation of the question the research approach is determined. This determination is represented as the second layer of the research onion in figure 3. Given the nature of the research objective, neither a purely inductive nor a purely deductive but the abductive approach was identified as a suitable research approach (Saunders et al., 2019). In a broader sense it is similar to 'grounded theory' of induction,

however, unlike the inductive approach it allows a flexible back and forth between theory and data. More importantly, it grounds social phenomena from a participant's perspective (Bryman, 2016; Saunders et al., 2019). Within the scope of the research is concerned with theory building. It needs to be stressed that the focus is more towards 'theory development' and less on 'theory generation' (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p.559). The process, with its associated back and forth, enhances a rich cross-fertilization among the previously outlined established literature and the successively derived research results. The new insights emerging from the research allow us to understand the phenomenon under research and how it is perceived by the participants (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). This approach emphasizes that the aim of study is not to test a particular phenomenon but aims to achieve an in-depth understanding of the issue under study.

4.3. Research Method and Strategy

In the following section, the research approach as well as the research strategy are outlined in more detail. They represent two further layers of the research onion in figure 3.

4.3.1. A Qualitative Approach

This thesis conducts a study on the Munich Hofbräuhaus tavern, investigating the divergent perceptions of authenticity by different tourists within their experience. Consequently, a qualitative research design emerged as a suitable approach to this study, as authenticity can have different meanings to different tourists and is hence, individually perceived. Qualitative research enables to explore the subjectivity of human experiences and gain an in-depth understanding of the many different subjective realities and perspectives of individuals of different societies or ethnic groups (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Flick, 2014; Silverman, 2013). As perceptions of social phenomena are highly subjective and thus, socially constructed, they are difficult to be quantitatively measured (Glesne, 2006). Therefore, many researchers such as Silverman (2013) and Stein & Makowskis (2004) suggest qualitative research as a suitable approach to achieve an in-depth understanding of a topic. Data collection is performed in form of narratives containing the tourist's experiences and subjective perceptions of authenticity with interpretive components, in contrary to objective quantitative figures (Silverman, 2013).

4.3.2. Netnography

To understand the different perceptions of tourists, online consumer reviews (OCR) (Filieri, 2016) appeared as a highly suitable data source in today's virtually advanced society and

concomitant computer-mediated communities. OCR are written content and narratives by tourists (Baka, 2015; Munar, 2011) and can be considered as an online expansion of the classic word-of-mouth (WOM) (Kusumasondjaja, Shanka & Marchegiani, 2012). By their narratives within their online accounts tourists are reconstructing, portraying and describing their experiences in social contexts (Baka, 2015; Kusumasondjaja et al., 2012; Munar, 2011). Netnography analyzes these written narrations to understand consumer behavior (Kozinets, 2002) and with that their perception of the experience as a key concept of consumer behavior (Cohen, et al., 2014). Within this study in particular, the perception of authenticity is under investigation by analyzing the narrations about the experience. Online communities with OCR are nowadays well established in the tourism sector. Apart from serving as a platform for tourists to obtain information about destinations and events (Munar, 2011), it is also used for exchanging as well as sharing experiences (Baka, 2015; Kusumasondjaja et al., 2012). This user-generated content (UGC) enables consumers to freely share their experiences and opinions online in narrative, visualized or audio-visual forms, without any commercial or profit-making intentions (Munar & Jacobsen, 2013). Several researchers have already scented the online world as a fertile and rich content, recognizing how valuable online social interactions are (Hine, 2008). Kozinets (2002) designates people leaving content online as 'informants', which will be adapted to this thesis.

Netnography as a qualitative research methodology opens up the possibility to adapt the techniques of ethnography to online cultures and communities, and enables research into social behavior online (Kozinets, 1999; 2002; 2015; 2020). A shift from ethnography to netnography was required as the communication characteristics of netnography differs to ethnography: "they occur through computer mediation, they are publicly available, they are generated in written text form, and the identities of conversants are much more difficult to discern" (Kozinets, 2002, p.64). Like ethnography, netnography is characterized by its flexibility and adaptability to different cultural groups, interests as well as the skills of the individual researcher (Kozinets, 2002), but is independent of physical presence (Hine, 2008). However, unlike ethnography, netnography is less time consuming as no 'ethnographic-year' is required to familiarize with the investigated culture, less obtrusive and more naturalistic than other methods as for instance personal interviews since the data is provided contextual and voluntarily in an environment not artificially constructed by the researcher (Kozinets, 2002; 2015).

Among researchers, the difference between netnography and classic qualitative content analysis is controversially discussed. For instance, Langer & Beckman (2005) state that it is legitimate to question why netnography is marked as 'quasi- ethnography' (p.193), even though netnography is about textual discourse. Therefore, Langer & Beckman (2005) simply indicate netnography as a content analysis technique. However, Kozinets (2007) argues that netnography should not be tied to other methods but should rather be seen and treated as a separate method. He further highlights that there is indeed a difference between netnography and common content analysis, in terms of data analysis and visualization as well as word recognition, because netnography focuses on the context of online data (Kozinets, 2016). Within this study, however, netnography is considered a separate method and Kozinets' (2020) suggested procedure to conduct proper netnographic research is used as guidance. It needs to be underlined that methods provide assistance during the research but are not strict rules to be necessarily followed. But even if a researcher does not strictly follow one particular method, he still has several tasks to perform (Flick, 2014), as presented within the subsequent section.

4.4. Research Process

The research process, which includes the data collection and analysis, presents the final layer of the research onion of figure 3. The process of the empirical investigation of the issue being researched follows the guideline suggested by Kozinets (2002) to ensure trustworthy research. The following sections will outline the different increments of the guideline in greater detail. These increments are illustrated in figure 4. The collected data will be presented, analyzed and discussed in chapter 5 and 6.
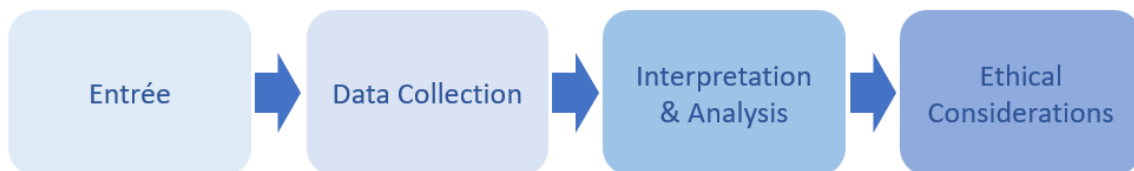

Figure 4: Research Process (Kozinets, 2002)

4.4.1. Entrée

As an initial step to prepare an efficient conduction of the netnography the online forum to investigate must be chosen carefully. This initial step is referred to as the 'entrée' in figure 4.

Kozinets (2020, pp.226-229) suggests that when choosing the online community it should meet the following criteria: (1) "Relevance": Provided data should be directly relevant to the issue under study and to answer the research question; (2) "Activity": Recency and regularity of the information flow among the informants; (3) "Interactivity": Conversational interactions among the informants; (4) "Diversity": Different informants with different perspectives; (5) "Richness": The data contains detailed descriptions and emotions and thus reveals human cultural identities.

Considering these suggestions and the Munich Hofbräuhaus tavern as chosen context to perform the research, TripAdvisor was selected as an adequate source. TripAdvisor is the largest social network travel platform for travelers leaving user generated reviews for other travelers (Miguéns, Baggio, & Costa, 2008; Mkono, 2011; O'Connor, 2010) and considered to be a trusted intermediary (Jeacle & Carter, 2011). It yields a sufficient amount of about 30.000 (TripAdvisor, 2020) reviews on the Munich Hofbräuhaus experience from recently written in 2020 back to approximately 2004. The website covers a great period of time and with a regular information flow of very different tourists. The reviews provide detailed and rich descriptions of the tourists' subjective experiences. Such platforms enable tourists to freely share their experience online in narratives. This free way of sharing and the fact that the reviews are not solely written for the company's marketing purpose (Munar & Jacobsen, 2013) indicates that the narrations are a reconstruction of the experience and thus, represent the consumers true opinion on how they perceived a certain experience (Baka, 2015; Kusumasondjaja et al., 2012; Munar, 2011). TripAdvisor as an online community presents a social context, however, it is not an online forum to discuss certain topics, therefore the interaction among members is relatively low.

4.4.2. Data Collection

Once the online community to investigate was chosen, the second step of Kozinets' (2002) guideline, illustrated in figure 4, comprises the data collection.

4.4.2.1. The Role of the Researcher

Preliminarily, it needs to be stressed that the role of the researcher represents a crucial part in the qualitative research processes, as the researcher´s reflexivity plays a significant role (Bryman, 2016). Apart from the subjectivity of the informants the subjectivity of the researcher becomes part of the research process (Flick, 2014) and the researcher becomes an active sense-

maker (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Kozinets, 2002). The reflections of the researcher regarding the impression and feelings of the informants, in this case the tourists, 'become data in their own right, forming part of the interpretation' (Flick, 2014, p.17). For netnography this applies as well.

For this study, online content in the form of online consumer reviews was chosen and thereby the researcher did not engage with the informants directly (Kozinets, 2002). Thus, data was collected and maintained with the researcher as a non-participant and complete observer (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019; May, 2011). Research conducted while being a complete observer is indicated as covert research (Bell et al., 2019; May, 2011), thus the informants were not in the explicit knowledge of being researched. Collecting data as a complete observer brings advantage insofar that the content of the informants remains naturalistic and avoids any level of reactivity, by not influencing them (May, 2011). Being well aware of the fact that ethical risks might occur when conducting covert research (Bell et al., 2019; Bryman, 2016; May, 2011), special attention was given to possible ethical problems during this research. The ethical considerations the study entails all along the whole research process are outlined in section 4.4.4 later on.

4.4.2.2.   Data Selection Process

According to Kozinets (2015), there are primarily three crucial types of collected data. First, the archival data which the researcher scoops directly from the social media communities. Second, elicited data which, unlike archival data is co-created by the researcher as he is involved and interacts with the community members, for instance by simply participating in conversations or by even initiating discussions. As delineated in the previous section, the researcher takes a purely observational position and, therefore, no co-created data was collected. Third, the field notes data. In reflective field notes the researcher inscribes his own observations as well as emotions during the investigation of the reviews under research to develop deeper insights (Kozinets, 2002).

The data collection of the archival data including the selection process of the research is illustrated in figure 5. For the selection process a focus on the research question is vital, as the findings of the collected data eventually answer it. The credibility of the online reviews is essential to the research and therefore requires diligent attention. TripAdvisor was selected in the entrée section as a valid source of data collection.
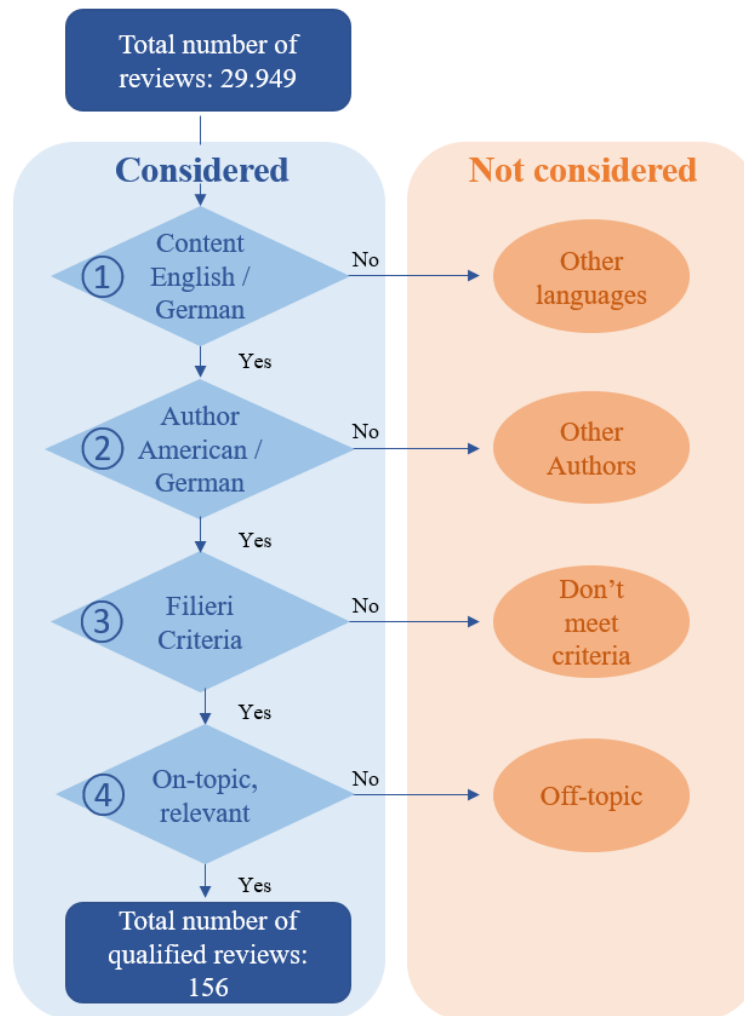
Figure 5: Review Selection Process for TripAdvisor (by the author, 2020)

In advance to classify and select the reviews, a 'ground tour' was taken considering all approximately 30.000 reviews to gain a first rough overview (Kozinets, 2020, p.226; Kozinets, 2002, p.64). The actual data collection then started with a careful selection process of the reviews according to figure 5.

As TripAdvisor is an international website for tourists from all over the world several different languages appear. To keep an international scope, German and English reviews were pre-classified in the first step, as the researcher is fluent in both languages. In the second selection step the German speaking reviews were narrowed down to be written by Germans and the English reviews were limited to US-Americans authors. This selection allows a cultural comparison of two very different countries. On the one side, Germany was chosen as the Hofbräuhaus is located in Munich, and thus, local tourists can be investigated. On the other side, the United States were chosen as non-local but international tourists, as they are one of

the most frequent tourists in Germany (Muenchen Travel, 2020). As a third step, the remaining postings were checked for the four criteria by Filieri (2016) to ensure trustworthiness: (1) "Content and writing style" (Filieri, 2016, p.52): Single-line feedback with superlatives remained unconsidered. For considerations the content of reviews requires a higher level of detail and strong descriptiveness (Kozinets, 2002); (2) "Valence and review extremity" (Filieri, 2016, p.53): Reviews being extremely positive or negative were excluded, as they are often believed to be manipulated (Filieri, 2016). Preference was given to feedback that illuminated the tourist experience from several sides; (3) "Source of communication" (Filieri, 2016, p.54): The reviews were mostly anonymous and the informants do not reveal much information about themselves, therefore this criteria was not applicable; (4) "Recognizable pattern in reviews" (Filieri, 2016, p.55): Repeating reviews (Filieri, 2016) would have been deleted, as it may have been copied or emotionally posted several times by the same person. However, no such reviews were identified. In the fourth and last step, only reviews with relevance to the issue under research were considered for analysis and interpretation. Reviews that were judged by the researcher to not contribute to the research were not further pursued (Kozinets, 2002).

Furthermore it needs to be emphasized that the collected data for this study only manifests in textual forms, meaning all visuals such as photos or videos are not subject to the analysis (Kozinets, 2015) as in this case they do not provide substantial content for the research question. The pictures only show food or the tourists themself but are not expressive in terms of authenticity.

The careful selection process of the relevant reviews is similar to the purposive sampling of common qualitative research methods, such as ethnography (Kozinets, 2002). In terms of sample size, the saturation is the only criteria. A successive data collection process is used as long as new insights emerge from further reviews (Bryman, 2016). The data collection started with the most recent reviews from March 2020. Saturation was achieved approximately with the last reviews from October 2019, covering a timeframe of roughly half a year. Within qualitative research, new insights might evolve even from a small number of reviews if the reviews are fruitful and interpreted with depth by the researcher (Kozinets, 2002).

After the selection process 156 qualified reviews remained, 56 for Germany and 100 for the United States and were subject to data interpretation and data analysis.

4.4.3. Data Analysis & Interpretation

4.4.3.1. Analysis & Interpretation

The data analysis and interpretation are the third increment of Kozinets' (2002) guideline, shown in figure 4. The analytical approach follows a coding process and the hermeneutic interpretation of the informant's narrations in their accounts to understand their perception of authenticity.

To ensure trustworthy results the analysis and interpretation must follow conventional procedures (Kozinets, 2002). The collected data of netnography can be seen as naturally and unobtrusive occurred data (Kozinets, 2002). Eventually the researcher is involved as a co-creator as he not only analyzes the data, but also interprets them. As the analysis and interpretation commences, the researcher observes the textual discourse of the reviews and contextualizes them. For this process, no computer program specialized on data analysis was used, as such programs are considered to be limited in linguistic translation and associating meanings to the reviews (Kozinets, 2015). Instead, the reviews were collected and collated in Microsoft Word. A rich and diligent analysis and interpretation was performed to the best knowledge of the researcher.

The data collection process as well as the analysis and interpretation are interdependent. For the investigation of the collected data, first categories emerged due to the abductive research approach upfront in the context of the conceptual framework (Kozinets, 2020), namely objectivism, constructivism, postmodernism, and existentialism. The narrations within the informants' accounts were then subject to coding. The codes break down the data to discover meanings within the reviews. Codes unfolded whilst the data analysis and data interpretation throughout the data collection process. The codes are presented by words or phrases that summarize and capture the meaning of the reviews (Kozinets, 2020). The collected data with its codes were compared. Differences as well as similarities were deduced and analyzed (Kozinets, 2002). Simultaneously the interpretation of the reviews was performed for a holistic understanding and to enable a thought-out coding. The fruitful interpretation was based on representative reviews and benefited from the research being creative, intuitive, subjective and open minded (Kozinets, 2002; 2010). The interpretation of the informants' narrations in the form of textual data depended on a hermeneutic approach. The hermeneutic approach can be seen as an interpretation to create a deeper understanding by not only understanding what words mean, but how they were meant by the informants and thereby aims to answer questions

(Kozinets, 2020). The focus of the hermeneutic interpretation procedure within this study is on theming. It is described by Kozinets (2020, p.364) as "an interpretative operation that seeks to conceptualize a focal phenomenon as an integrated hole". It demonstrates an interrelation to the coding within the analysis process as it helps identifying thematic pattern codes.

After the informants' narrations were subject to analytical coding and hermeneutic interpretation, the identified pattern codes were clustered according to their themes into new evolved categories or mapped according to the conceptual framework in the upfront defined categories, which represents a categorization of perceived authenticity by the means of objectivism, constructivism, postmodernism and existentialism approaches. For the categorization of informants and their perception into objectivism and constructivism, authenticity must directly or implicitly be recognizable in the text through interpretation. Typical words in the narrations were interpreted as indications for authenticity, for instance 'true' or 'traditional'. As explained in the conceptual framework, for this purpose the ideal image needs to be determined. Depending on whether the ideal image is determined by scholars or socially constructed, the informant's perceived authenticity is then categorized into objectivism or constructivism. For instance, the code 'background knowledge' emerged throughout the analysis which is categorized into objectivism as the informants compare their experience to an ideal image created by scholars. Another code that evolved was 'Oktoberfest' which was mapped into the category of constructivism, as the informants compare their experience to an ideal image that was socially constructed, either by their own former experience or by narratives of others. For the category of existentialism, the analysis of the text focused on the combination of authenticity with the personal involvement and interaction with the environment. One of the codes identified within this category is for instance 'making friends', here the tourist was involved and experienced an interaction with others. The postmodernist in comparison does not seek for authenticity and focuses mainly on relaxation and leisure. Hence the interpretation of the reviews is based on absence of authenticity combined with a significant personal fun factor. A code for this category was for instance 'great experience' where the informant emphasized that the experience was worth it. The table in appendix A illustrates and summarizes the identified codes and categories with the respective representative exemplification of informant narrations.

All the reviews were contextualized at any point, meaning the reviews were always considered as a whole and affiliated to the social context of the certain online community under research (Kozinets, 2015). Throughout the analysis as well as the interpretation, the theory summarized

in the conceptual framework has a significant influence as it provided a preliminary foundation for analysis and interpretation (Kozinets, 2020). Due to the abductive reasoning, the researcher goes back and forth between data and theory (Bryman, 2016; Saunders et al., 2019). Along with collecting and analyzing the archival data, the field notes were collected in the same documents as the archival data was coded. They consist of the researcher's very own reflexive observational notes enhancing the analysis as well as the interpretation of the archival data (Kozinets, 2002).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the data is evaluated in terms of certain criteria and the limitations of the netnography are reflected within the next section.

4.4.3.2. Data Evaluation & Limitations

In general, the quality of studies is assessed by certain criteria. Therefore, to ensure a high trustworthiness of the findings, these criteria should be fulfilled at the best possible. The criteria for quantitative research are often seen as inappropriate or even inapplicable for qualitative research and separate criteria were implemented for qualitative research (Bryman 2016, Bell et al., 2019). Kozinets further introduced separate and specific criteria to assess the quality of netnographic studies in particular: "Coherence, Rigour, Literacy, Groundedness, Innovation, Resonance, Verisimilitude, Reflexivity, Praxis and Intermix" (Kozinets, 2010, p. 173).

First, coherence as a criterion is concerned with an interpretation without internal contradictions, offering a unified interpretation to ensure persuasiveness of the results (Kozinets, 2010). As this study only researches one website with its one set of reviews it represents a coherent whole. It enables the researcher to examine the data in more depth. Second, rigour represents the criterion on whether the researcher understands netnography as a research methodology and whether he is able to apply it (Kozinets, 2010). In advance of choosing a research method, the author carefully researched the netnography as a method with all the included steps and standards suggested by Kozinets to apply them diligently. Third, literacy emphasizes to what degree past literature as well as research approaches were reviewed beforehand (Kozinets, 2010). Several research streams were reviewed critically in terms of authenticity perceptions throughout tourism experiences. Fourth, groundedness is a criterion that measures the extent to which the findings of the study are supported by sufficient data and whether the connection of theory and data is presented distinctively (Kozinets, 2010). Within this study the findings and theoretical implications are based upon insights from reviews,

meaning every implication is supported by a representative review example. Fifth, innovation stands for the endeavor of extending the existing literature with new insights and understandings, no matter if minor or major (Kozinets, 2010). The issue under investigation of this thesis strives for a so far neglected understanding of the authenticity perception of tourists. Sixth, the criterion of resonance describes the researcher's ability to understand the informants true meaning of their communication instead of referring to stereotypes (Kozinets, 2010). The criteria were met by analyzing and interpreting the reviews in an emphatic way and taking field notes throughout the process. Seventh, verisimilitude concerns the quality of the textual discourse and reviews. It evaluates how well the reviews represent reality and conveys beliefs in a persuasive way to the readers (Kozinets, 2010). This study represents tourist reviews as truthful and accurate as possible by providing review examples to the reader. Eighth, reflexivity as a criterion acknowledges the role of the researcher, in particular that the researcher plays a significant role in terms of subjectively interpreting and analyzing the collected data. The subjective interpretation within this study was emphasized throughout the process. The researcher always kept an open mind regarding alternative interpretations (Kozinets, 2010). Ninth, Praxis is a criterium that pursues to inspire others to perform netnography (Kozinets, 2010). This research greatly reveals how fruitful netnographic studies are emerging from natural information provided by informants (Kozinets, 2002). Tenth, intermix as last criterion emphasizes the interconnections of online and offline interactions of community members in contemporary everyday life. This interconnection needs to be considered if relevant to the research. Therefore, researchers often combine netnography with ethnography (Kozinets, 2010). However, as in the scope of this research only online reviews posted on webpages were observed, offline interactions were not taken into account and would have been fairly impossible.

Even with a diligent data evaluation, netnography as a research approach entails certain constraints. With regards to identifiers and demographics, such as gender or age, the information on the informants is not sufficient (Kozinets, 2002). Apart from being anonymous, the participants are not physically visible to the researcher, which means that no body gestures and countenance, as well as the tone exists. Therefore, the researcher needs to rely even more on great interpretive skills for an in-depth understanding of the online reviews (Kozinets, 2002). Furthermore, it needs to be mentioned that people leaving content online, are likely to have stronger opinions, especially when posting anonymously, than those who do not post online (Kozinets, 2020). These factors result in a limitation of the generalizability of the research to

phenomena beyond this study's context (Kozinets, 2002). More precise delineations on limitations of the study in general are outlined in the end of the thesis.

4.4.4.   Ethical Considerations

With regards to the research process of Kozinets (2002) the ethical considerations are crucial and present another increment of his guideline, illustrated in figure 4. Since the process of data collection is likely to happen quite unnoticed and unobtrusive, it requires correct ethical performance with for instance adequate information regarding social media user rights, platform policies, permissions from moderators, anonymization and data security (Kozinets, 2020). As Murthy (2008) brings up, conducting covert research online without asking for permissions, can be a serious ethical problem, especially since the informants might not be aware that they are included in research (Kozinets, 2002). On the other side, Kozinets (2002) also highlights the unobtrusive nature of covert research to make the data so valuable and real. Nevertheless, netnographic research attaches importance to a clean and ethically correct approach.

Within this study, the researcher addresses the four components of ethical research, introduced by Kozinets (2002). First, an important ethical challenge concerns the type of website, with a distinction being made between private and public websites. A private page requires a registration and is protected with a password for its log on, whereas a public site does neither require a registration, nor a password protected log on and is accessible through any web browser. Since the reviews have been taken from a public page, no further special ethical considerations are necessary. According to the European Union's data protection regulations, data collected from public websites for research purposes may be allowed (Kozinets, 2020). Due to the fact that the online reviews are accessible through any web browser and publicly available to everyone without requirements of registration or login, they are accessible on public web sites. Therefore, it was determined not to inform the contributors. Informants writing reviews online are considered to be aware that their content is publicly accessible (Kozinets, 2002). No member check was performed, since informants are not part of a specific community, nor do they require any membership (Langer & Beckman, 2005). For this reason, the researcher also did not reveal himself to the informants (second ethical component), nor did the researcher consult the informants for feedback on the fact of being researched (third ethical component). As the research topic is not of sensitive matters and reviews are voluntarily shared on public webpages, thus it is assumed that the omission of consent does not do any harm to the

informants in an ethical way. Fourth, the researcher ensures anonymity as well as confidentiality of the informants insofar, that their names are censored and replaced with pseudonyms. The pseudonyms were chosen according to common German (Vorname.com, n.d.) and American names (Social Security Agency, 2019).

5.   ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In the course of the analysis the informants' perceptions of authenticity are under investigation. For this purpose, the analysis is structured based upon the conceptual framework of chapter 3 and its four central concepts of authenticity, namely objectivism, constructivism, postmodernism, and existentialism. These concepts represent the different typologies of how authenticity is perceived by the informants according to literature. As mentioned above, the reviews are analyzed, interpreted, and categorized through codes into these four central authenticity concepts. The selection of short episodes of the reviews serve as representative exemplification and underpin the argumentation for the derived key findings. Within the analysis all guests of the Hofbräuhaus are regarded as tourists - local tourists if they are from Germany or international tourists if they are from the USA. This is based on the fact that the tavern is a spot for everyone to visit, whether they origin from Munich or not.

5.1.   Objectivism

The tourist´s ideal image, by the means of objectivism, is based on the originality of an object, evaluated by scientific experts (Trilling, 1972; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006) among measurable entities (Yang & Wall, 2009). An object is perceived as authentic if the recalled ideal picture matches with the observed and sensed object (see chapter 3, figure 2). Staged authenticity consists of a back front stage continuum, whereas the back region entails originals and the front region is solely displaying them (MacCannell, 1973; Chhabra et al., 2003).

5.1.1.   German Reviews

The analysis of the German reviews revealed that informants indirectly talk about a front and backstage, by the means of MacCannell´s thesis of staged authenticity (1973).

"The tourist is offered here everything what is 'original' or at least gives the impression." - (Karla, 2020) [3]

In the German original version of this citation, the Bavarian word 'zünftig' appears, however, there is no clear translation into the English language possible. 'Zünftig' is an old-fashioned term referring to old traditional professions in the past and is therefore often used as an adjective, referring to tradition or origin. In this context 'zünftig' was translated into 'original' as Karla mentions that the HB (Hofbräuhaus) tavern offers the tourists by all means the true Bavarian culture. However, in the second part of the sentence she elaborates that what is offered as original is solely giving the impression to do so. According to Karla, visitors might believe to experience the true unaltered Bavarian culture, which is merely a staged package which appears to be authentic. Karla´s ideal image of authenticity obtains the presence of originals does not correspond with the staged originals thus, she perceives the HB tavern as inauthentic. To Karla´s understanding the HB tavern is a front stage, displaying elements of a backstage.

Staged authenticity continues to occur further within various reviews, from different perspectives, regarding the presence of locals in the HB tavern. The Munich Hofbräuhaus is known worldwide and is therefore a place of pilgrimage for many domestic and foreign tourists. However, other informants have perceived it as a hotspot for local tourists, still gathering and lingering at the HB tavern.

"Contrary to popular opinion, you can really still find true Munich people here! It is rustic, authentic and neat."- (Charlotte, 2020)[4]

Charlotte believes that local people still eat, linger and gather at the Munich HB and insists that the HB not only hosts international tourists, but also local tourists. Charlotte´s ideal image of a traditional tavern includes the presence of local visitors. As her recalled ideal image thus matches with the perceived image, she believes the tavern to be authentic. Referring back to MacCannell´s (1973) back and front stage, the backstage shows the unfolding happening 'behind the scenes'. With regards to the front back theory the HB represents the backstage, as local tourists still visit the tavern. This indicates that the HB tavern remains an authentic place

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[3]Original: *"Dem Touristen [ist] hier alles das angeboten, was 'zünftig' ist oder zumindest den Anschein erweckt."*

[4] Original: "Entgegen der landläufigen Meinung findet man hier wirklich noch echte Münchner! Es ist rustikal, authentisch und ordentlich"

but is also accessible to international tourists. Moreover, Charlotte herself is a Munich local and thus, familiar with Bavarian culture, its tradition and originality Stating that she is aware of the popular opinion, she still wants to make the point and emphasize the authenticity and originality of the HB tavern. Besides the outstanding declaration of authenticity, she describes the tavern as rustic referring to the rustic traditional flair at the tavern.

5.1.2. US American Reviews

Some Americans familiar with history concerning the HB tavern were found. Their detailed knowledge indicates diligent upfront information prior to their visit.

"The brewery is owned by the Bavarian state government and they run an impressive operation. [...] We enjoyed the Hofbrau original beer [...]. If you're not a beer drinker you can enjoy traditional Bavarian fare [...]" -Robert (2020)

In this review, very similar expressions for authenticity such as 'traditional Bavarian' and 'original beer' are used. Compared to many other informants, Robert is the only American informant to mention that the owner of the brewery is the Free State of Bavaria. This detailed knowledge indicates that he informed himself about the HB upfront at an expertise source, which coined his ideal image. The sensed image of the Bavarian fare matches quite well with his ideal image of traditional Bavarian fare, hence he perceived it as authentic. The object is perceived as authentic, as it complied with the definition of scholars and experts.

"[...] despite the tourists, it still has its authenticity. You will see tables full of old Bavarian men who clearly have been getting together here as a group since they were young. [...]. And reflect that when hundreds of years ago the munich Opera caught [...] they rushed over here to grab kegs of beer [...] and put out the fire with the beer. Lots of history here." -
Richard (2020)

Richard is another good example indicating fact based and expertise knowledge. He knows about historic details, for instance the opera fire, concerning the HB tavern implying a decent study of expertise sources. Thus, his ideal image was predetermined by scientific experts and authenticity was perceived as his image of the sensed object matched the ideal image. He completes his reviews with pinpointing to lots of history, which emphasizes the long tradition behind the tavern. Another interesting aspect within this text is that Richard points towards the regular´s table gathering and lingering at the tavern. Explaining that these old Bavarian men have met for many years, indicating tradition lasting until today. He observed that despite the

presence of international tourists, the tavern still remains authentic. This draws the attention once more to MacCannell´s (1973) front back continuum. With the presence of the regular´s table, the HB tavern is still a meeting point for local tourists, thus not a place staged for international tourists. The HB tavern can thus be understood as backstage but is accessible also to international tourists.

5.2.   Constructivism

The process of authenticity rating is again a result of comparing the ideal image with the observed and sensed object (see chapter 3, figure 2). The ideal image, by the means of constructivism, is created by the tourist himself, according to his own beliefs and perspectives (Bruner, 1994; Cohen, 1988).

5.2.1.   German Reviews

Among Germans a few tourists constructed their ideal image according to their expectations of the Munich Oktoberfest. Hereby, informants draw parallels between the HB and the Munich Oktoberfest.

> *"[...] typical Brauhaus [...] The beer of course was served in those big Oktoberfest mugs!"*
>
> *- Emil (2019) [5]*

Emil talks about a typical Brauhaus (brewery house) but then refers to the one-liter beer mugs as Oktoberfest mugs. To him the big mugs served in the Hofbräuhaus resemble those served at the Oktoberfest. Therefore, it can be deduced that he either has heard about them, seen them in pictures, or even with his own eyes when he attended the Oktoberfest himself. It seems that Emil associates the Oktoberfest mug as the original and the Hofbräuhaus is copying them, by serving their guests also with one-liter beer mugs. Emil´s ideal image is constructed socially, which means that he himself was involved in creating the ideal image. Thus, authenticity was determined by his personal subjective projection of the Oktoberfest onto the Munich HB tavern. To Emil it is not essential that beer mugs from the Hofbräuhaus were adapted by the Oktoberfest and not vice versa.

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[5] Review was written in the English language

5.2.2. US American Reviews

Similar to the German reviews, some US Americans also compare the HB tavern to the Munich Oktoberfest as their created ideal image of originality.

"The original beer house. [...] Typical Oktoberfest food items."

- Martha (2019)

Martha refers to the HB tavern as the original beer house, because the food items offered at the HB tavern resemble typical Oktoberfest food items. Hence, the Munich Oktoberfest is Martha´s subjectively created ideal image and thus, standard to define authentic Bavarian culture. To rate the HB tavern as an original beer house, Martha was looking for possible parallels she had in her mind regarding the Munich Oktoberfest. Martha took part in creating her own ideal image according to her prior experiences and acquired knowledge. In other words, the food she observed and sensed at the HB matches with her constructed ideal image, which leads Martha to consider the tavern as an original and hence, authentic beer house.

5.3. Postmodernism

The focus of postmodernists is having an enjoyable and valuable experience, whereby authenticity is without concern (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019; Cohen, 1995; Wang, 1999).

5.3.1. German Reviews

As previously mentioned, many informants declared the Hofbräuhaus as a place with many tourists and different nationalities. Opinions differ whether the place still remains an authentic place or not. Some visitors show that even though the place might be authentic or inauthentic, it is not necessarily of their concern, nor does it influence their experience. By taking a look at the German reviews it becomes clear that the component 'fun' is an omnipresent positive side effect accompanying the authentic experience. However, in contrast to most informants, for Emma fun is not a side effect but essential.

"Happy Tourist Trap. [...] But I still loved it. It's definitely worth a visit if at least once and enjoy the touristy feeling of this place. The beers [are] excellent. Good noisy celebratory vibe." - (Emma, 2019)[6]

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[6] Review was written in the English language

She designates the HB tavern as a tourist trap, and therefore might be aware of the inauthenticity of the place. However, she associates the touristy component in a positive way with the words happy and noisy celebratory. She even goes a step further and recommends others to experience and enjoy the touristy feeling, as she believes that it is an experience not to miss out. Referring to the tasty beer and the celebratory vibe, it is obvious Emma strives to have a good time without the concern of the authenticity. This resembles the postmodernists, who are not concerned whether an object or a tourist scene is authentic. As they are aware that they might experience inauthenticity, they do not care as long as their experience is fun, and they are able to enjoy themselves.

5.3.2.   US American Reviews

Within the American reviews a strong focus towards a fun experience, independent of whether the experience is authentic or not, became obvious.

> *"Great experience. [...] the real reason to come here is for the experience!!!GO!! It is well worth it. [...] Take your time. [...] Try some German beer and new foods."*
> *- Daniel (2020)*

Daniel does not mention authenticity or related synonyms by any means. He does not even differentiate between Bavarian and German type of beer and in the last part of the review he is talking about new food without linking it in any to culinary Bavarian specialties for comparison. In a highly straightforward way, he speaks of a great experience only combining it with an explicit order to go there. He encourages others to visit the place with an imperative 'GO' and stresses it even more with exclamation marks. According to Daniel, the visit is worth it and others should go there and have their fun. The whole experience is about fun and relaxation and not about authenticity in any way. This disregard towards authenticity again resembles the postmodernist who is not concerned about it and rather puts the focus on the enjoyment of this experience.

> *"This place is so much fun. We had a great time. Excellent beer and the food was really good. The band was a fun addition to the experience."* - Amy (2019)

Amy is also not concerned with the authenticity of the HB tavern. She describes that she due to the fun she had at the HB tavern, she was really having a good time and enjoyed her visit a lot. She rates the food and the beer as tasty but without any relation to typical dishes and Bavarian culture. Moreover, the traditional brass music played at the tavern is left quite uncommented

by her in relation to any traditional element. She indicates the music solely as a band, which is to her only another fun addition to her enjoyable experience. Here the fun component clearly stays in the foreground, if not even is the only concern, which points towards the postmodernists dismissing authenticity in regard to the tourist experience.

5.4.   Existentialism

Within the existential approach, no ideal image is used to rate authenticity by comparison (see chapter 3, figure 2). Moreover, existential authenticity is perceived through emotions and feelings when participating and getting involved within a non-ordinary tourist activity (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019; Wang, 1999).

5.4.1.   German Reviews

Only a very few informants mention the common seating rules in the Munich Hofbräuhaus, meaning that people not necessarily knowing each other get to share a table. The long wooden benches enable a lot of space around a table and provide ample seating. Two people had only briefly touched on the subject and commented very cautiously that they shared a table with nice people originating from different countries. Yet Franka is the only one to further elaborate her experience sharing a table with strangers.

> *"Be prepared to sit at the same table with other parties. [...] it feels like you´re part of a unique German family experience. I wouldn't pass it up!" - (Franka, 2020)* [7]

She describes the tavern as very well attended with both international and local visitors, and that she felt integrated into the overall experience as being part of something greater. Talking about being part of a family experience indicates that she felt welcomed and experienced a feeling of integration. The very important aspect in Franka´s reviews is that she sensed through her feelings and emotions. Franka's description points towards two possible ways she experienced existential authenticity. First, she mentions that visitors of the HB tavern should know that it is common to share a table with strangers, indicating that this could be a possible challenge for some people. Franka seemed to have accepted and enjoyed this challenge, as she is convinced that nobody should miss out this unique experience. She experienced existential authenticity intra-personally, as she found herself identified within a German family experience. Franka achieved self-realization as she managed to handle a challenging situation

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[7] Review was written in the English language

differ from her everyday life challenges. Therefore, she left the role of an observer, actively participating and got involved into the situation. Secondly, she might have experienced existential authenticity through the other parties around her table. As referring to a family experience, she perceived a sense of well-being where social status does not matter, thus communication happens freely and authentic within the tourist communitas.

When taking a look and analyzing the reviews, it is noticeable that the Bavarian atmosphere, or so-called 'Gemütlichkeit' plays a crucial role to the experience at the HB tavern.

> *"Gemütlichkeit and enjoyment of beer on seven days. Atmosphere at any time and seven days a week: This is how people all over the world know about the Gemütlichkeit and the enjoyment of beer in this historic house where several thousand visitors come and go every day." - (Gustav, 2019)* [8]

'Gemütlichkeit' here is consciously not translated, as the word carries a way bigger meaning than any simple translation into the English language. Gustav claims that the Bavarian feeling and atmosphere is known worldwide and points towards the amount of visitors daily stopping by the tavern. Thus, many people aim to experience the Bavarian feeling and atmosphere of social acceptance and brotherhood. People leave the social constraints outside the building and are able to become part of a community within the HB tavern. As mentioned already by Franka, people get to join each other on the table, whether they know each other or not. The feeling of community and easiness is a characteristic of existential authenticity as such feelings of community social status is no concern, thus people are able to enjoy themselves as feeling warmth and well-being as well as are able to communicate freely and authentically.

5.4.2. US American Reviews

Americans often mentioned the atmosphere when describing their experience. One American even used the word "Gemutlickeit" referring to this special atmosphere, the Bavarian 'Gemütlichkeit'.

> *"Gemutlickeit aplenty. Grab a seat at any long trestle table and greet your neighbours while waiting to order [...]. Don´t worry and take your time to talk and laugh and sing along with [the] oompah band." -Anthony, 2020*

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[8] Original: *"Gemütlichkeit und Biergenuss an sieben Tagen. Stimmung zu jeder Zeit und sieben Tage in der Woche: So kennt man nahezu weltweit um die Gemütlichkeit und den Biergenuss in diesem geschichtsträchtigen Haus, in dem täglich mehrere Tausend Besucher ein-und ausgehen."*

Thus, Americans are familiar with the term and the meaning behind 'Gemütlichkeit' as the term was adapted to the English language (see Oxford University Press, 2019). Anthony gives the feeling that the HB tavern is a place with no concerns and rush. He invites people to take their time and absorb the whole feeling of Gemütlichkeit. He refers to the easy atmosphere as you talk to the people surrounding you while waiting for your orders to arrive. This feeling of easiness described by Anthony reflects the understanding of existential authenticity, where people experience being unleashed from the constraints of their everyday lives. Actively participating as singing and laughing and the HB tavern stands for a state of relaxation and the feeling of freedom. It enables people to retrieve their inner true self, which they perished in the shallowness of their daily routines. The visit of the HB could further be understood as vacation for the authentic inner self.

Another aspect revealed by looking through the reviews is that remarkably often the consciously non-organized seating rule at the HB tavern was mentioned. The possibility to meet people from different nationalities by sharing a table was received positively from the US American tourists.

"I was a solo but found a table with a few others and we were instant friends"
- Christina (2019)

Even though Christina visited the HB tavern by herself, she soon shared a table with others. She indicates that they instantly became friends, meaning that the communication happened easily and freely. As she made friends very quick, she probably met likeminded people and felt temporarily included into a social group. Making friends that fast, points towards a certain easiness of becoming instant friends with people considered as equal as social status disappears and thus, people communicate freely and authentically. Christina participated actively in a communication with other people on her table and experienced different feelings and emotions, which triggered the feeling that she made new friends. Christina experienced existential authenticity through her new friends, indicated as inter-personal authenticity. However, Christina doesn't go into further details about how she and her neighbours became friends so quickly.

In particular another good example of the existential authenticity is an online review written by Stephen, as he describes in detail his concern to engage with others and shares some insight into the intimate information exchange.

"It's mostly bench seating so you just find a spot, sit down introduce yourself and settle in. Honestly, I was apprehensive. Just 'plop' myself next a stranger talking in a language I don't understand? For most people that is hard. At Hofbrauhaus, it's easy and expected. The beauty of this place is that [...] the spirit of Bavaria takes over. All there adopt that spirit and share things about their lives that they may not normally share. Being anonymous with large, tasty, Bavarian beers, is a truth serum! My 'bench mates' openly told me about secret health issues [...], pain of divorce and their hopes for their children." - Stephen (2019)

He notices that there are benches and mentions that waiters are not organizing seating according to his ideas. He indicates that it is normal at the HB tavern to join other people on their table as he mentions it to even be expected from people. Stephen's description carries the traits of existential authenticity in a two folded way. Firstly, he was able to experience existential authenticity on an intra-personal level by pursuing self-realization when engaging with a challenging situation. Stephen admits that he was concerned to join strangers and get into a conversation with them. Sharing a table with strangers might be a challenging situation. Language barriers could, on the one hand, be an obstacle to communicate with one's table companions and, on the other hand, to push and overcome oneself to even get into a conversation with strangers. Nevertheless, Stephen seems to have accepted and enjoyed this challenge, as further elaborates on the conversation with his table mates. Secondly, he might have experienced existential authenticity on an inter-personal level through the other parties at his table. Speaking of a Bavarian spirit taking over, Stephen no longer feels as an international tourist, but at least as a guest - rather one of the large communities at the Hofbräuhaus. This makes him, despite his anonymity, talk about very personal topics with his table companions such as illness, relationship problems or even wishes and hopes. He gets involved with the people and the atmosphere and arrives at an almost intimate relationship level. He perceived authenticity through social interaction in the form of tourist communitas. The conversation he had with his temporary social group at his table companions was open and free of social constraints or status, thus honest, intimate and authentic.

5.5. Multi-authenticity Occurrence

Another interesting finding is the ability to experience authenticity simultaneously through both, a toured object and through themselves. The following US American review serves as an exemplification where an informant describes the two different types of perceived authenticity, thus a mixed form of authenticity approaches appears.

"Authentic Authenticity! [...] The Hofbrauhaus is like a mini-Oktoberfest held within the confines of a single restaurant." - Susan, 2020

Up front any further description Susan uses the gemination 'authentic authenticity' to emphasize that she truly experienced authenticity, according to her beliefs. Similar to the other previous American informants, Susan also refers to the Oktoberfest when determining the authenticity of the HB tavern. In comparison to the others, Susan takes an extraordinary position when she refers to the HB tavern as mini-Oktoberfest. She takes as reference a Mini Oktoberfest shrunk to the place of a narrow beer hall. In case Susan refers to a small version of the Munich Oktoberfest her ideal image is determined locally, and a similar situation to the others occurs regarding constructed authenticity. If she refers to an US based mini Oktoberfest, this means that her ideal image is not created on the Munich Oktoberfest, but an artificial reproduction without the use of originals displayed in the United States. Susan´s review continues with:

"I´d eat at the Hofbrauhaus and ended up spending 90 minutes there...easy. Just because I wanted to take my time and absorb everything; just relish the entire experience and enjoy myself!" - Susan, 2020

Susan describes that spending 90 minutes at the HB tavern were very well-spent time. She takes her time without any concern of time pressure, as she wants to enjoy and relish her visit. She lets herself in on everything, absorbs it and enjoys it intensively. She is able to take her time, as she does not feel any time constraints which makes her feel free. The everyday life concerns seem to vanish, hence, for Susan the HB is a place where she likes to stay and spend time, thus she perceives it as a kind of vacation for herself. The vacation mood gives Susan the opportunity to feel free and thus she is able to find her authentic self, outside the everyday work life shaped by tight time limits.

Susan was able to perceive authenticity on two levels. On the one hand, through objects, she believed to be authentic as they resembled her ideal image, and thus valued them as authentic. On the other hand, through her emotions, which gave her the feeling of freedom, as time did not matter anymore when she visited the HB tavern.

5.6. Ambiguously assignable Authenticity Approaches

Other than the diversified approaches previously shown, some informants' statements were difficult to assign to a certain authenticity approach occurring mainly in the grey zone between objectivism and constructivism. Objectivism and constructivism are in the literature two clearly distinguishable concepts; however, some assignments of cases are very challenging since the origin of ideal image cannot be clearly deferred by analysis of the online review.

> *"Traditional brass music - a decent pork knuckle and one litre of beer - this is exactly what you associate with the Hofbräuhaus and this is what you get."* – *(Margarete, 2019)* [9]

The review itself allows the conclusion that her experience is authentic because her expectations are met and traditional is understood as true. The arising key question for the origin of the ideal image is, however, is the uncertainty as there is room for interpretation. If assumed, that her knowledge was simply taken from expertise knowledge then Magrete would be assigned to objectivism. If her ideal picture was shaped by social interaction like web 2.0 or simply through word of mouth, then Margrete must be included among the constructivism. This blur of assignment depends on the researcher's interpretation of the entire review itself. It occurs for the grey area between objectivism and constructivism, whereas postmodernist and existentialist can be more clearly delineated. It does not harm the results as it points towards the direction of wide spectrum of authenticity itself.

> *"The sauerbraten, well so-so, there was no taste of sourness."*
> *- (Amalia, 2019)* [10]

Amalia has an ideal image in mind as a certain idea or precise conception of the true taste of sauerbraten. Her expectations were not met as the sauerbraten did not taste sour as expected hence, to her the food was not correct and authentically prepared. On the one hand, there is probably a common basic understanding regarding a recipe and the correct preparation, for instance that the sauerbraten has to be sour. Hence, this could be then understood as objective authenticity, as there probably is a standard indicated to be the true or traditional way to prepare the local fare. Nevertheless, is the sense of taste highly subjective and different to every individual outlined already by Horace's aphorism *De gustibus non est disputandum* ('matters

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[9] Original: "Zünftige Blasmusik – ordentliche Haxen und o´an Maß – genau das verbindet man mit dem Hofbräuhaus und das bekommt man auch."
[10] Original: "Der Sauerbraten, naja ging so, von säuerlich war nichts zu schmecken."

of taste are not properly disputable'). In other words, matters of taste are personal preferences only and not matters of authenticity. This means that the ideal picture of the Bavarian food is constructed by every tourist himself. Therefore, in this case it is not possible to draw a clear line between the approaches of objectivism and constructivism.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Within this chapter the derived key findings of the analysis and interpretation are discussed in the light of the conceptual framework to give answers to the research question. The structure of the discussion orientates on the conceptual framework. The chapter also emphasizes the finding's contribution to extant literature. Additionally, it provides brief practical implications.

6.1. Discussion

Overall, 156 reviews were examined on the basis of the netnographic method. The number of reviewers underpins the presumption that a decent cross section of tourists from USA and Germany was captured. The analysis supports the premise that different authenticity approaches exist among tourists when searching for object related authenticity as well as the true authentic self. In more detail, all four approaches of authenticity described in the literature were identified among the tourists, objectivism, constructivism, postmodernism and existentialism. Hence, the tourists' perceptions differ across the entire theoretical spectrum. The detailed analysis further reveals a higher granularity of differences within each authenticity approach.

The analysis identifies that tourists perceived the authenticity of the Hofbräuhaus on the objectivism approach of authenticity. Both Germans and Americans determined the HB tavern as authentic through the presence of local tourists, whereas among Germans further opinions differed. The Absence of the locals was as well recognized by informants, and thus the HB tavern declared as inauthentic. MacCannell's (1973) continuum regarding back and front stage was identified. Furthermore, among American reviews with a profound and detailed background knowledge was particularly noticeable, referring to the history of the HB tavern. Objective authenticity was perceived through the authenticity of the historical background, referring to it as an original (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). No comparable German review was found, indicating fact based and expertise to the same extent. Germans, however, were more concerned with details in terms of traditional fare served at the HB tavern.

The constructivism approach was also manifested in the reviews and very similar among Germans and Americans. Constructive authenticity could be clearly identified, as informants referred to the Oktoberfest as the ideal of original Bavarian culture and fare. Since the Oktoberfest is classified as the largest folks festival worldwide, it is not surprising that either social contact, ads or marketers socially constructed this subjective ideal image of the tourist (Bauer-Krösbacher, 2019; Cohen, 1988). However, the Oktoberfest exists approximately 200 years, whereas the Munich Hofbräuhaus tavern is more than 400 years old (Ribnitzky, 2014).

Some reviews were regarded as ambiguous reviews. In these cases, the origin of the ideal image is uncertain and thus the review is not assigned unambiguously, neither to objectivism nor to constructivism. For the categorization of these ambiguous reviews it needs to be considered that the researcher has an impact on the analysis and its result (Flick, 2014; Holloway, 2011; Kozinets, 2002). Kozinets (2020) acknowledges this issue by indicating a comparison to quantum physics. In modern quantum physics, the observer himself is embedded in the phenomenon. He leaves the external position of the observer and becomes part of the experiment. The result is thus linked to his presence and is interpreted as relative reality. If the same experiment is carried out without this person or by another person, a different result might be obtained and thus a different reality (Fuchs, 2009). Therefore, for the analysis and the result a generalizability is difficult. In netnography the researcher participates in the experiment in the form of interpretation and adds a subjective character. Consequently, the researcher could have categorized these ambiguous reviews differently, leading possibly to a different result and reality- constructivism or objectivism. Overall, quantum physics is widely accepted, despite to its relative reality and hence, results of qualitative netnographic investigations with room for interpretation should be considered as scientific valuable procedure.

The reviews inter alia unveiled tourists that are not concerned with authenticity throughout their experience, indicated as postmodernists (Cohen, 1995; Wang, 1999). Postmodernists were identified among Germans as well as Americans. However, this type was observed of being less common among the Germans and manifests more with Americans. Some minor differences were observed. While Germans describe the fun unobtrusively, Americans emphasize this strongly. Some American reviews even have the tendency to exaggerate the perception of fun. The occurrence of reviews solely focusing on an enjoyable and valuable experience was surprisingly rather rarely. This finding in turn supports the importance of authenticity to tourists.

The analysis further identifies tourist reviews pointing in the direction of an existential approach. They occur less frequently amongst the informants than the previous discussed rational approaches but entail more written details. For both, German and American visitors the social interaction with table companions and the Bavarian 'Gemütlichkeit' elevates the tourists to experience a true authentic self, indicated as existential authenticity (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Wang, 1999). Both enjoyed the spirit of feeling free and unleashed of time pressure. While German informants described their experience relatively reserved and briefly mentioned their friendly table mates, Americans in contrast, were talking about intimate conversation between them and their table mates, they already considered as new friends. The diverse understandings of 'friends' can be referred to possible cultural differences embedded in the two different cultures.

Related to this, the influence of alcohol is not to be neglected when discussing the reviews. Commonly alcohol has an influence on individuals. Referring back to the introduction, an average beer consumption of about 1-1.5 liters per guest per visit can be assumed, resulting in a per mille range of about 0.8 and 0.6 for a 60 kg lady and 80 kg man respectively (Roeder, n.d.). Various theories reveal that this level of alcohol reduces anxieties and people tend to be more talkative and dare to share personal thoughts with less reservation than under sober circumstances (Caudill, Wilson & Abrams, 1987; Monahan & Lannutti, 2000). Hence, alcohol might influence the social interaction at the HB tavern and eases to overcome the barriers of making new friends. Also, Kim & Jamal (2007) discover that alcohol consumption serves as catalyst to experience existential authenticity.

Eventually a 'diversified' authenticity was found as well among the tourists. In this particular case, the tourist perceives authenticity in relation to the toured object as well as a true self authenticity at the same time. In detail, the combination of existentialism and constructivism was traced to an extreme form. It is quite comprehensible that particularly this combination was found, since the constructivist with his interpersonal interaction and subjectivity fit better with existentialism than the rigid objectivist. This finding has an impact on the derived conceptual framework (figure 2) representing the process of object-related and true self authenticity experience. A dashed frame could therefore be drawn around both areas to indicate the appearance of both authenticities in one person. Within this perspective the tourist is considered holistically when searching for authentic experiences on an emotional as well as rational level at same time. The co-appearance has received so far only little consideration in literature and deserves much more attention.

The four widely accepted approaches proposed by Wang (1999), objectivism, constructivism, postmodernism and existentialism are frequently used within authenticity research. Yet the borders between the approaches are blurry and diffused within a personal interpretation corridor, as shown in the example of objectivism and constructivism. Postmodernism and existentialism are also closely positioned to each other discussed already in literature. To some extend postmodernists just focus on playful enjoyment (Cohen, 1995) which has a blurry border to the true self authenticity when thinking about a group of people gathering at at a table enjoying a drink while talking. Hence, it might be possible for a tourist with postmodern intentions to perceive authenticity through unexpected making new friends and would then be directly assigned to the category of tourists seeking for existential authenticity.

6.2. Conclusion

In the discussion of the findings, the emphasized research question of this study was addressed and can therefore be answered. This study's aim was to understand to what extent the different perceptions of authenticity differ among tourists. For a theoretical understanding of the issue being researched, a diligent literature review was performed, resulting in a conceptual framework. It served as a foundation for an appropriate empirical investigation. In the scope of the study's research a qualitative netnographic approach was applied to investigate online reviews on the Munich Hofbräuhaus. The empirical study strived for an in-depth understanding of the perceived authenticity of an experience. With regards to the research question, it can be concluded that the tourists' perceptions of authenticity differ significantly. The study uncovers the existence of all the well-established authenticity approaches among the tourists. In essence, it further reveals that tourists differ even on a higher granulation level of each of the authenticity approaches. It also unveils that a tourist might not embody purely one of the authenticity approaches. Instead for some tourists, the rational approach (object-related) can be supplemented by the existential approach (true-self). Additionally, the findings emphasize that tourists' authenticity perceptions differ based on their cultural background.

6.3. Theoretical Contribution

Former research initiated examinations on the perceptions of authenticity, however, the extent to which these authenticity perceptions might differ among tourists has been neglected so far. The purpose of this research was neither to reject an existent, nor to implement a completely new theory. Instead it aimed for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding. The findings

of the investigation contribute to the extant research streams of authentic experiences and authenticity perceptions in the tourism field. More precisely, the new insights represent an enhancement of the understanding of the differences in tourists' perceptions of authenticity. This deepened knowledge fertilized a more comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of tourist consumer behavior.

6.4.   Practical Implications

Considering today's increasingly competitive environment a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior as well as consumers desires, particularly for authenticity, is crucial. Therefore, the following practical implications can be drawn from this research. The Munich Hofbräuhaus tavern accomplished a worldwide vigorous reputation and is well-known for his old culture loaded history. As shown throughout the discussion, the tavern managed to address the search for authenticity of different tourists. Apart from differing in their cultural background, they also differ in terms of the perceived authenticity. Some seek for object- or self- authenticity and some simply for an enjoyable and valuable experience. The Hofbräuhaus serves as a great role model to other taverns or similar traditional tourist settings with respect fulfilling the holistically search for different authenticity needs. The findings moreover revealed that some tourists aim to supplement their rational (object-related) search for authenticity by the existential approach (self-related). As the existential approach refers to experiencing authenticity by participating in activities, a further practical implication would be to provide opportunities to participate in an activity for perceiving authenticity.

7.   LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Overall, the findings of the conducted research present new insights and thereby provide a theoretical contribution to the extant research streams. However, despite a comprehensive discussion of the fruitful findings, the findings are subject to several limitations which are outlined in the following. Notwithstanding, the research provides a first understanding on the issue under study and facilities insights for further investigations, particularly within the intersections of authenticity and tourist experiences.

7.1. Limitations

With regard to the research question a qualitative research approach was applied. The research benefits from qualitative approaches as insights on the tourist behavior can be obtained. However, qualitative research approaches are highly subjective. Therefore, the results are biased by the researcher's values, ethics and idiosyncrasies. Moreover, the analysis as well as the interpretation depend highly on the researcher's interpretative skills. In order to reduce the subjectivity, the same review could also be investigated and interpreted by two or more independent researchers.

The research also faces a limitation regarding the netnography method. Online reviews are primarily anonymous and therewith only grant limited insights into age, gender and educational background. A conclusion in terms of demographics can therefore not be drawn.

Moreover, the study might be constrained by the data selection process. Here only reviews written in German and English language, further limited to Germany and the United States, where taken into account, since these are the languages the author is familiar with. Reviews written in other than these two languages were intentionally excluded, since translations could have led to false translation and misinterpretation of the original reviews. More languages would extend the insights to different cultural perceptions of authenticity.

This leads to the last constraint. As for most qualitative research, the generalizability is subject to provisos. The extent to which tourists perceive authenticity differently is only explored in one single phenomenon, the Munich Hofbräuhaus tavern. Findings that result out of a single phenomenon are often considered as highly contextual and time related (Byram, 2016), therefore it is crucial to understand that a transfer of the results to another context is difficult and needs to be performed cautiously. To crystallize whether the findings are accurate and transferable to other contexts further research is recommended, for instance by exploring a different phenomenon and comparing results or by applying a different research method such as interviews.

Given the resource and time constraints, the present master thesis does by no means claim to provide a completely exhaustive investigation of the topic, rather it shall be considered a first attempt to scrutinize the phenomenon from a new angle. Therefore, further research on this topic is inevitable.

7.2.   Further Research Implications

Considerably greater research will need to be conducted regarding informants´ demographics when analyzing perceived authenticity. As mentioned in the previous limitations section, the reviews were primarily anonymous. They allow only limited insight in terms of demographics or psychographics and therefore, no conclusion could be drawn on whether the extent of perception of authenticity also differs in terms of different ages or generations, gender or even their education background. To achieve a greater comprehensive understanding of the tourist behavior in this context, future research could explore whether the perceived authenticity depends on demographic or psychographic factors.

In terms of achieving broader empirical evidence, the results of the applied netnography could be complemented and extended by additional qualitative approaches such as interviews or even multiple methods for triangulation. The research of this thesis was a first approach to understand the issue under study. However, as mentioned, it is constrained in its generalizability and does not provide any causality. Additional qualitative studies on the same subject but applied to different contexts could underpin the results of this research or even intensify the understanding further, allowing eventually a generalizability of the research topic beyond the online community studied.

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APPENDICES

APPENIX A – Codebook

The following table represents an overview of codes that unfolded whilst the data analysis and data interpretation throughout the data collection process. The codes were clustered into categories. These categories were defined upfront in the context of the conceptual framework. It needs to be stressed, that the verbatim quotes in the table for each code serve as representative examples for the identified meanings (not all reviews are represented in the table). Further it needs to be emphasized, that the number of quotes for each category and code does not indicate any degree of importance by all means.

	Code	Definition	Exemplary verbatim quotes	Exemplary verbatim quotes in original German language
Objectivism		This category comprises of tourists that experience authenticity by comparing their perceived image with the ideal image certified by experts.		
	Original Impression		*"The tourist is offered here everything what is 'original' or at least gives the impression."*	*"Dem Touristen [ist] hier alles das angeboten, was 'zünftig' ist oder zumindest den Anschein erweckt."*
	Munich Citizen		*"Contrary to popular opinion, you can really still find true Munich people here! It is rustic, authentic and neat."*	*"Entgegen der landläufigen Meinung findet man hier wirklich noch echte Münchner! Es ist rustikal, authentisch und ordentlich"*
	Background Knowledge		*"The brewery is owned by the Bavarian state government and they run an impressive operation. [...] We enjoyed the Hofbrau original beer [...]. If you're not a beer drinker you can enjoy traditional Bavarian fare [...]"* *"[...] despite the tourists, it still has its authenticity. You will see tables full of old Bavarian men who clearly have been getting together here as a group since they were young.*	

			[…]. And reflect that when hundreds of years ago the munich Opera caught […] they rushed over here to grab kegs of beer […] and put out the fire with the beer. Lots of history here."	
Constructivism		This category comprises of tourists that experience authenticity by comparing their perceived image with the socially constructed ideal image.		
	Oktoberfest		*"[…] typical Brauhaus […] The beer of course was served in those big Oktoberfest mugs!!"*	
	Original Beer house		*"The original beer house. […] Typical Oktoberfest food items"*	
	Mini-Octoberfest		*"Authentic Authenticity! […] The Hofbrauhaus is like a mini-Oktoberfest held within the confines of a single restaurant."*	
Postmodernism		The tourists are not concerned about authenticity, they focus on having an enjoyable and valuable experience.		
	Tourist Trap		*"Happy Tourist Trap. […] But I still loved it. It's definitely worth a visit if at least once and enjoy the touristy feeling of this*	

			place. The beers [are] excellent. Good noisy celebratory vibe."	
	Great experience		*"Great experience. [...] the real reason to come here is for the experience!!!GO!! It is well worth it. [...] Take your time. [...] Try some German beer and new foods* *"This place is so much fun. We had a great time. Excellent beer and the food was really good. The band was a fun addition to the experience."*	
Existentialism		Tourist experience authenticity through emotions and feelings while participating in an activity.		
	Family experience		*"Be prepared to sit at the same table with other parties. [...] it feels like you´re part of a unique German family experience. I wouldn't pass it up!!"*	
	'Gemütlich' Atmosphere		*"Gemütlichkeit and enjoyment of beer on seven days. Atmosphere at any time and seven days a week: This is how people all over the world know about the Gemütlichkeit and the enjoyment of beer in this historic house where several thousand visitors come and go every day."*	*„Gemütlichkeit und Biergenuss an sieben Tagen. Stimmung zu jeder Zeit und sieben Tage in der Woche: So kennt man nahezu weltweit um die Gemütlichkeit und den Biergenuss in diesem geschichtsträchtigen Haus, in dem täglich mehrere Tausend Besucher ein-und ausgehen."*

			"Gemutlickeit aplenty. Grab a seat at any long trestle table and greet your neighbours while waiting to order [...]. Don´t worry and take your time to talk and laugh and sing along with [the] oompah band."	
	Making friends		*"I was a solo but found a table with a few others and we were instant friends"*	
	Bavarian Spirit		*"It's mostly bench seating so you just find a spot, sit down introduce yourself and settle in. Honestly, I was apprehensive. Just 'plop' myself next a stranger talking in a language I don't understand? For most people that is hard. At Hofbrauhaus, it's easy and expected. The beauty of this place is that [...] the spirit of Bavaria takes over. All there adopt that spirit and share things about their lives that they may not normally share. Being anonymous with large, tasty, Bavarian beers, is a truth serum! My 'bench mates' openly told me about secret health issues [...], pain of divorce and their hopes for their children."*	
	Enjoying yourself		*"I´d eat at the Hofbrauhaus and ended up spending 90 minutes there...easy. Just because I wanted to take my time*	

			and absorb everything; just relish the entire experience and enjoy myself!"	
Ambiguous Reviews		Some tourists were difficult to assign to an approach as the origin of the ideal image is uncertain.		
			"Traditional brass music - a decent pork knuckle and one litre of beer - this is exactly what you associate with the Hofbräuhaus and this is what you get."	*„Zünftige Blasmusik – ordentliche Haxen und o´an Maß – genau das verbindet man mit dem Hofbräuhaus und das bekommt man auch."*
			"The sauerbraten, well so-so, there was no taste of sourness."	*"Der Sauerbraten, naja ging so, von säuerlich war nichts zu schmecken."*

APPENDIX B- Reviews and Field Notes

In the following the reviews are shown that were subject to data analysis and interpretation. The different colors represent the predefined categories. The color-code is reproduced in the Codebook of appendix A. Along with coding and analyzing the data, field notes were taken by the researcher and directly written down on the reviews. The field notes enhanced the analysis and interpretation of the data.