Structured Abstract

Purpose – The objective of this exploratory study is to increase the understanding of how local residents in tourism destinations perceive their role in the creation of tourist experiences.

Design/methodology/approach – Qualitative research was conducted with 16 local residents in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, a tourism hot-spot in Germany. The study used thematic analysis combined with qualitative content analysis to identify various themes associated with host-guest based tourist experience creation.

Findings – Findings demonstrate how diverse local residents contribute to tourist experiences. A model was developed that suggests a distinction between active and passive contribution to tourist experiences. Only little evidence was found that the concept of co-creation plays a role in host-guest relationships, which contradicts other literature.

Research limitations/implications – The chosen qualitative research approach does not allow for generalization of the research findings. The examination of perceptions raises epistemological questions.

Practical implications – This paper includes implications for improved internal marketing strategies and the involvement of local residents in tourism destination development.

Originality/value – This study contributes to knowledge by conceptualizing the role of local residents in tourist experience creation. The paper closes research gaps by using a qualitative study design in Germany to explore the underlying conditions that affect host-guest encounters to the discussion of tourist experience creation. Research findings may be adapted to other geographical or cultural settings with similar levels of tourism development.

Keywords: tourist experiences, co-creation, community perceptions, Germany, qualitative research, tourism hotspots.

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Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has severe consequences for the tourism industry. While some destinations are cut off from international tourism streams, others suffer from overcrowding due to limited travel options for domestic travellers, and temporary increases in recreational day trips. In summer 2020, travel destinations in Germany along the Baltic Sea coast and in the alpine regions experienced overcrowded tourism hotspots. This potentially decreases the tolerance level of local residents in tourism destinations and requires action from tourism policy makers. Long before the pandemic, tourism strategies from countries around the world identified a strong need to cooperate with, or even involve the local population in tourism development (European Commission, 2010; Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs, Regional Development and Energy, 2010; Tourism Industry Aotearoa [NZ], 2016).

Communities in tourism destinations have only a limited 'social carrying capacity threshold' and tolerance level for tourism development (Mansfeld & Jonas, 2006; Weber & al. 2017). Literature suggests that local people should be involved in planning and decision-making processes to increase the support for tourism (Dragouni & Fouseki, 2018; Mansfeld & Ginosar, 1994). Involving communities in tourism development also enriches and enhances the visitor experience (Dodds et al., 2016; Ellis & Sheridan, 2015). This aspect is particularly important, as travellers are increasingly demanding authentic tourism products and more meaningful interactions with locals (Paulauskaite et al., 2017).

There is an increased understanding among tourism scholars and marketers that the various stakeholders within experiencescape frameworks (O'Dell, 2005) play a significant role in shaping and co-creating tourism experiences (Binkhorst & den Dekker, 2009). Co-creation can be defined as "an active, creative and social process, based on collaboration between producers and users" (Roser et al., 2009, p. 9). Applied in the tourism context, the co-creation of experience creates added value not only for the visitors, but also for the visited, and therefore contributes to the uniqueness and authenticity of the tourism destination (Binkhorst & den Dekker, 2009).

The local population of a tourism destination plays a fundamental role in experience production (Scheyvens, 2003), but we still know very little about local residents' perception of their place as a tourist destination (Stylidis, 2020). Existing studies focused largely on value co-creation processes between tourists and other tourists,

or between tourists and tourism service providers (Buonincontri et al., 2017; Cabiddu et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2018). Little knowledge exists about how local residents understand their role in tourism experience creation (Zhang et al. 2019). There is also a need for qualitative research methods to gain emic perspective on residents' perceptions and attitudes and to re-validate the existing items that measure perceptions (Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2020).

The objective of this study is to fill these research gaps and to increase the understanding of how local residents perceive their role in the creation of tourism experiences. This study employed a qualitative research design to enhance knowledge of the multiple components of and conditions for the creation of host–guest-based tourism experiencescapes from a local residents' perspective. This study is guided by the following research questions:

- How do local residents perceive their role in the creation of tourist experiences?

- What are the underlying conditions shaping host–guest interactions and how do they affect host–guest-based experience creation?

- How do residents experience the co-creation of tourism?

A Literature Review

Host–guest interactions and tourism perceptions

Tourism is interactive by nature (Fennell, 2006), and comprises tourists and local community members as major stakeholders (Su & Wall, 2010). Social interactions are bi-directional, and therefore not only vital for visitors' experiences, but also hosts' satisfaction with tourism developments (Kastenholz et al., 2013; Mansfeld & Jonas, 2006). Sharpley (2014) described host–guest encounters within a continuum framework consisting of intentional encounters (for commercial or personal exchange), unintentional encounters, and sharing space (without physical and verbal contact). While intentional encounters contribute to a high degree to tourist experiences, unintentional encounters and no physical and verbal contact have only some or no influence on visitors' experiences or hosts' perceptions.

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The importance of host–guest interactions is widely accepted in literature (Nikjoo & Bakhshi, 2019; Schuckert et al., 2018; Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2020). Studies show that the contact between hosts and guests is subject to specific circumstances affecting the level of personal interactions and related experiences. Su and Wall (2010), for example, suggested that living near a destination affects interactions between members of local communities and visitors.

Local residents' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism is often investigated within an impact research design. A wide range of studies have examined social impact dimensions of tourism including host-guest relationships, resident characteristics, destination characteristics, host resident perceptions, quality of life and social impact outcomes (Deery et al., 2012; Fakfare & Wattanacharoensil, 2020; Kantsperger et al., 2019; Nazneen et al., 2020). Research shows that the amount of contact with tourists positively affects residents' perception of tourism impact dimensions such as community life, image, and economy (Andereck et al., 2005). Kim et al. (2013) revealed that tourism has an impact on economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions and affects multiple life domains such as social and emotional well-being and the sense of health and safety.

Local citizens' characteristics and intergroup differences such as attachment to tourism (Sharpley, 2014), community attachment (Andereck et al., 2005, Shen & Shen, 2020), values and financial benefits (Fredline, 2005), and frequency of intercultural contact (Ward & Berno, 2011) can influence residents' perceptions of tourism impact on their community. Mansfeld and Ginosar (1994), for example, found that tourism managers and decision makers share the most positive perception of the impacts of tourism development compared with those who have no affiliation to the sector. Literature on the relationship between community attachment and perceptions of tourism impacts shows an inconsistent picture. While some studies found no relationship (Andereck et al., 2005; Gursoy et al., 2002), others showed positive (Jaafar et al., 2017) and negative effects (Lankford & Howard, 1994) on residents' perceptions towards tourism.

Value (co-)creation of tourism experiences

Literature suggests that tourists are not merely passive consumers of products and services, but are engaged and involved participants in the shaping of their own experiences (Pera, 2017; Sfandla & Björk, 2013). Boundaries between the production and consumption of experiences have become blurred (Rihova et al., 2015). The active role of consumers in designing experiences is widely discussed in literature within the theoretical construct "value co-creation of experiences" (Buonincontri et al., 2017; Mohammadi et al., 2020; Prebensen & Foss, 2011). Current trends in the sharing economy also suggest an active role of consumers in co-destructing values (Buhalis et al., (2020).

According to Prebensen et al. (2013), experience value is created when tourists perceive benefits from their journey that include not only the tourist's resources but also those assets that bring other tourists (Zhang et al., 2019) and the host to the co-creation experience process. Most literature investigated the active role of visitors, technology, companies, or interactions with other visitors (Binkhorst & den Dekker, 2009; Sfandla & Björk, 2013) and generally neglected how host communities are involved in value-added co-creation processes. This is particularly important because the local characteristics of tourism destinations, such as socio-economic dimensions and cultural practices, can play an important part in tourism production (Karlsson, 2005) and therefore related experiences.

Few studies exist that focus on the role of local residents in the co-creation of tourism experiences. An exception is Lin et al. (2017) who investigated residents' participation in co-creation processes in the tourism context using quantitative research methods. To measure co-creation processes, the authors adopted items that focused on residents' offering resources to support tourists in generating "value-in-experience", information provision, and how the residents treat tourists. The study found that economic and sociocultural benefits, life satisfaction, and increased age were positively related to co-creation processes. Perceived costs of tourism impact and income showed a negative relationship with generating value-in-experience. Chen et al. (2020) built on Lin et al.'s (2017) study and investigated the effect of resident-tourist value co-creation on resident's well-being. Using the same dimensions to measure co-creation they found that co-

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creation processes have positive effects on subjective well-being and residents' support for tourism development.

Methodology

Sampling and accessing research participants

This study used an exploratory qualitative research design to address the research questions. The study involved 16 research participants living in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, which is a district south of Munich, Germany. Garmisch-Partenkirchen is a popular alpine tourism destination in Germany and has a population of around 29,000 residents (Markt Garmisch-Partenkirchen, 2019a; status at 31 December 2018). The district hosts a number of major sports events such as the Alpine Skiing World Cup and the Four Hills Tournament (ski jumping). Garmisch-Partenkirchen was selected as research site because it is considered a tourism hotspot, which can provide valuable insights from a well-developed tourism destination. Garmisch-Partenkirchen attracted vacationers already by the mid-eighteenth century (Markt Garmisch-Partenkirchen, 2019b). Today the district is one of the most popular destinations in Germany. More than 480,000 tourists arrived in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in 2017, which translates to 1,560,000 overnight stays (Markt Garmisch-Partenkirchen, 2018). Almost 70 per cent of the arrivals came from Germany, followed by Arabic countries (4.5%) and the United States (3.9%).

The sampling strategy followed Binkhorst and den Dekker's (2009) tourism network approach, which suggests a contextual point of view on tourism development and a holistic perspective on stakeholder networks. The study used a maximum variation sampling to ensure heterogeneity within the sample. The objective of this strategy was to find common patterns based on great variation (Patton, 2002). The main characteristics of the research participant selection related to a) tourism association (no relationships with tourism, what type of relationship), b) local resident status (native local or migrated local), and c) gender (see Table 1). This approach enabled the sampling of a wide range of stakeholders within the tourism network including those involved in tourism service industry, organizing and governing tourism development, as well as non-tourism related residents. Data collection and analysis followed an iterative process until theoretical saturation was reached and no further information was expected to be revealed (Mayring,

2002). Studies show that in qualitative research theoretical saturation can be reached after 12-17 interviews (Francis et al., 2010).

Table 1: Research participant characteristics

ID	Gender	Local resident status	Professional tourism relationship	Age
1	male	non-native	transportation	45
2	male	native	hospitality	55
3	male	native	none/social services	54
4	male	non-native	none/environmental association	70
5	female	native	retail	51
6	female	non-native	hospitality	35
7	male	native	tour operator	57
8	female	non-native	none /resident	64
9	male	native	none/environmental association	51
10	female	native	hospitality	56
11	male	native	hospitality	36
12	male	native	none /cultural association	38
13	female	native	Destination Management Organisation	54
14	female	non-native	culture	45
15	male	native	culture	55
16	female	international	hospitality	54

Table 1 shows that nine of the 16 research participants were male and ten were born in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Most people interviewed were somehow involved in some form of tourism businesses including transportation, hospitality, retail, tour operators, culture (e.g. museums), and the Destination Management Organisations (DMO). The Garmisch-Partenkirchen DMO supported the access to research participants. Adopting a gatekeeper approach (Creswell, 2009), a staff member of the DMO helped to recruit potential interviewees according to the sampling strategy. The staff member signed a confidentiality agreement to ensure anonymity of the participating citizens. A researcher who was experienced in qualitative research conducted the interviews. Before
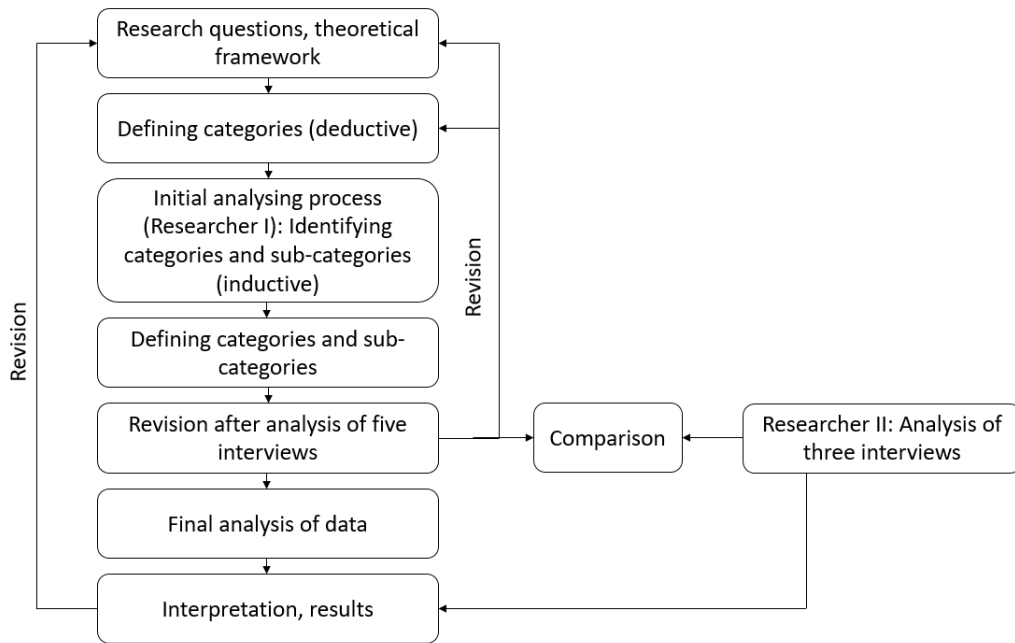
the interviews, participants were informed about the research and procedures and they signed a consent form, which ensured that data and collected information are processed confidentially.

Data collection and analysis

Semi-structured interviews were conducted between August and October 2018. The researcher contacted potential participants and arranged interviews at either the interviewee's home or their workplace. Only one of the interviewees suggested by the DMO staff member declined to participate in the study. In preparation for the interviews, an interview guide was developed which included questions on personal information and themes around perceptions and attitudes towards tourism, perceived impacts of tourism, and experiences with tourists visiting Garmisch-Partenkirchen. To evaluate residents' perceptions on their role in contributing to (co-created) tourist experiences, interviewees were also asked about their host–guest interactions, perceived contribution to tourist experiences, and willingness to share their culture and traditions with visitors. These items were selected based on previous research designs (Lin et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2006). The interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 30 and 90 minutes.

The data analysis was based on transcribed audio records and written notes (memos) that were captured during the semi-structured interviews. University students were involved in the transcription process. The qualitative data analysis software NVivo was utilized to store, organize, and code the data. The analytical process was built on thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) combined with a qualitative content analysis approach suggested by Mayring (2002); (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Coding process and data analysis, based on Mayring (2002)

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│ Research questions, theoretical │◄─┐
│         framework             │  │
└──────────────────────────────┘  │
         │                        │
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│ Defining categories (deductive) │◄─┤
└──────────────────────────────┘  │ Revision
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┌──────────────────────────────┐  │
│   Initial analysing process   │  │
│   (Researcher I): Identifying │  │
│  categories and sub-categories│  │
│         (inductive)           │  │
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│  Defining categories and sub- │  │
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┌──────────────────────────────┐        ┌────────────┐ │ Researcher II: Analysis of │
│  Revision after analysis of five │────►│ Comparison │◄│   three interviews    │
│          interviews           │        └────────────┘ └──────────────────────┘
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│     Final analysis of data    │
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│    Interpretation, results    │◄───────────────────────
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(Revision labels appear on both vertical sides of the diagram)

Transcripts were analysed line by line to identify and code themes (inductive approach). After analysing five interviews, the logic of the category-building process was reviewed and the further data analysis process adjusted accordingly. The study adopted an investigator triangulation approach to ensure trustworthiness and credibility in the qualitative data analysis process (Decrop, 1999). A second researcher was consulted to review the data gathering and analysis process. Three interviews were analysed by both researchers and results were compared against each other's to confirm adherence to sound research practices. To present the research results, data-based evidence in form of textual quotes were translated from German in English.

Results

The active contribution to tourism experiences

A number of themes emerged from the examination of the qualitative data, ascribing local residents in Garmisch-Partenkirchen an active role in the creation of tourist experiences. Respondents *involved in the tourism industry* often mentioned how they actively contributed to tourist experiences. Emerging themes revolved around their professional role in host–guest relationships and the importance of providing good service to deliver

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positive experiences (ID 02, ID 07, ID 13, ID 14, ID 16). Even those interviewees not involved directly in tourism mentioned how their profession contributed to tourism experiences (ID 04).

> "You notice [the contribution to experiences] when guests come back and leave positive feedback and say 'good service'. That's why we are doing this, because then it's fun." (ID 02)

> "I played a role [in contributing to experiences] when I was working as a ranger. […] When I was in contact with tourists, I always tried to talk to them about ecology and nature. I think I gave some of them an experience and insights they wouldn't have had otherwise." (ID 04)

A respondent (ID 13) talked about the role of tourism businesses to provide authentic experiences in relation to the global competition of tourism destinations. In this context, the employee of a tourist information centre also mentioned that the visitor experience has changed over the years. For example, homestay providers used to bake cakes for their guests on Sunday afternoons.

> "We have this enormous competition; we need to keep the pot boiling and highlight the particularities to attract the guest. We have the aspiration to provide original and special experiences. Times have changed; [in the past] we thought tourists come just like that. But actually, older tourists are sad because in the past everything was slower, and we [the hosts] put every Sunday a cake on the table." (ID 13)

One interviewee highlighted the significance of traditional clothes in creating authentic tourism experiences. A hotel owner explained that employees could opt for wearing traditional Bavarian clothes to create an atmosphere that reflects local culture.

> "I had many employees who were dressed in dirndl dresses or leather pants [traditional Bavarian clothes] which is totally fine. It's also okay if they come in black and white. But it cannot turn into a joke. I would never think of asking a Turkish guest worker to wear leather pants. […] It's not original." (ID 11)

The role of cultural events in the creation of tourist experiences was often discussed in combination with host experiences (ID 02, ID 09, ID 12, ID 15). Even though respondents

agreed that cultural events such as festivals and parades contributed to tourist experiences and added value to their stay in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, they often highlighted that the celebration of culture was mainly for the locals themselves and to strengthen their own local cultural identity.

> "Of course, they [cultural events] are very important for tourism but also for the
> local identity." (ID 09)

Another interviewee talked about the importance of tourists visiting local music events, as they contribute to the atmosphere of the event, and therefore co-create their experiences of this music event. This also enhances the motivation and experience of the musicians.

> "The more interest the better. A musician prefers to play for 100 or 200 people
> and not in front of two people. […] Our kids have the opportunity to play during
> 10 days in front of up to 2000 people. This makes us proud and it is certainly nicer
> than playing for people who come because they have to, because they are the
> parents of the kids." (ID 12)

A respondent pointed out that performances of the local brass band and spa concerts have a positive impact on tourist experiences. The respondent also commented on the length of stay of visitors and how that affects their experiences.

> "We share our culture [with tourists]. There is a participation even though passive.
> The tourists themselves are not much involved because they don't stay long
> enough. […] But yes, if we play concerts in the spa gardens we participate in a
> relationship with the guest." (ID 02)

The passive contribution to tourism experiences

There is evidence that local residents also contribute to tourist experience on a rather passive and unintentional level. Some interviewees talked about day-to-day interactions with tourists and how this may contribute to tourist experiences (ID 03, ID 06, ID 15). They identified themselves as being part of the local scenery but only if they could be identified as locals; for example, if they were dressed in traditional Bavarian clothes.

> "We create the image. […] When I walk in my leather pants, people approach and
> talk to me. They like this." (ID 15)

"I got two apple trees in my garden and when I collect apples, they [tourists] pass by and approach me. […] This happens, but I am not sure if this makes an impression. I don't know." (ID 06)

A common view among the interviewees was that personal interactions with tourists are just fleeting encounters (ID 12, ID 04) and that private host–guest interactions outside of work relationships remain on a shallow level (ID 07). There was a common sense among the interviewees that hosts and guests share public spaces. These encounters have no particular impact on host experiences.

"We consume and share a place and the infrastructure for a certain time, but it's not about cultural exchange." (ID 01)

"I don't have personal experiences with tourists because normally I am working and I don't notice much from tourism. I and my family, we don't work in tourism and we observe this only from the distance. I notice them [tourists] when I go shopping in town and they are queuing." (ID 03)

Conditions for local residents' contribution to tourist experiences

Research participants also talked about contextual conditions and how they affected host-guest relationships. Some participants who were involved in the tourism service industry (ID 01, ID 16) reported emotional stress associated with their continuous contact with tourists. This influenced their motivation for private host–guest interactions outside of the work space.

"There are days when I think every hour: 'I can't do it anymore.' […] Then, it's difficult to remain friendly. I have to remind myself 'Okay, we work in services, we supposed to be friendly.' […] After work I want to have my private life." (ID 16)

Another emerging theme was intercultural differences that affect personal interaction between host residents and tourists. A number of respondents mentioned that local people had difficulties interacting with veiled tourists from Arabic countries (ID 04, ID 07, ID 13, ID 15) and Russians (ID 10, ID 15). A respondent showed his concerns about interacting with a veiled person, comparing this situation with talking to someone wearing a motorcycle helmet:

> "I don't interact with someone who is veiled. You can't. I don't like it if there is someone in front of me who wears a motorcycle helmet. He has to take it off." (ID 04)

> "There are different tourists, different countries. […] I don't want to offend anyone but, for example, we had Russians and they were not very popular because of their mentality. And now we have an Arabic wave and there are certain resentments." (ID 15)

Some interviewees who were involved in family tourism businesses reflected on their childhood experiences and talked about how host–guest relationships have changed over the years (ID 12, ID 13, ID 15). Memories revolved around closer and deeper relationships between hosts and guests involving the whole host family. Changes towards less intense relationships were also associated with a change in tourist behaviour. A number of respondents argued that there are fewer regular guests in Garmisch-Partenkirchen (ID 03, ID 12) and tourists stay for a shorter period of time (ID 02, ID 11, ID 12, ID 15), which does not allow for closer host–guest relationships.

> "I know this from my grandparents. […] We had guests for more than two weeks and we had dinner together. […] They sat with my grandparents at the table. It was important for them [the tourist], it was part of the holiday programme. […] But it became less intense." (ID 12)

Results showed that community attachment can play an important role in local residents' engagement in tourism. Those locals interviewed who were not born and had not grown up in Garmisch-Partenkirchen did not feel that they contributed to tourist experiences (ID 08, ID 14, ID 16). Some argued that they cannot be identified as local residents because they do not wear traditional clothes in everyday life or at work (ID 14, ID 16).

Tourism industry factors were shown to be most influential for establishing contact between local residents and tourists. One interviewee distinguished between his role in the tourism industry and his private life, where he did not contribute to tourist experiences (ID 01). Others (ID 03, ID 09) indicated that they had no contact at all with tourists because they were not involved in the tourism industry:

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"In my daily life I only have contact with tourists when I walk in the village to see what's going on there. But I don't have contact through my job; neither in my private life." (ID 03)

Another theme related to a general trend towards more anonymous host–guest relationships due to changing business models (ID 04, ID 12, ID 15) and working conditions (ID 15). There is a trend among tourism businesses in Garmisch-Partenkirchen to hire staff from outside the district (e.g. Eastern European countries) due to difficulties finding employees in this industry segment. This has consequences for host–guest interactions.

"There are now these holiday homes … anonymous offers. Where the key transfer is arranged with the cleaner and local people have no contact at all. […] Many people go to the tourist info to get information or to talk. Because in the hotel … the staff is not always from here [Garmisch-Partenkirchen]; it's very often like this. We don't have these relationships anymore." (ID 15)

Authenticity

Authenticity was a prominent theme which emerged across all dimensions with reference to a host's contribution to tourism experiences. Most interviewees, in particular those who were born and raised in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, reported that the place provides authentic tourist experiences on various levels. Authentic tourist experiences were associated with wearing traditional clothes (ID 07, ID 10, ID 14), celebrating cultural events (ID 11), speaking in local dialect (ID 07), and lived traditions (ID 10, ID 11, ID 13). In particular, wearing traditional costumes (in Bavarian, "Tracht") appeared to be an important aspect in the authenticity discourse.

"It is an issue [the role of local culture in tourism experiences] if you like customs, old traditions, and handicraft. But it's also dangerous when you present yourself … you operate at the edge of authenticity. Is it like selling yourself." (ID 02)

Some of the respondents highlighted that culture and traditions are predominantly celebrated for local residents, but also have significance for tourism (ID 04, ID 09, ID 10, ID 12, ID 15). Tourists are welcome as guests and can add value to the host experiences when celebrating their traditions and culture.

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"We have lots of associations and they do a lot … parades, the Schäfflertanz [a traditional Bavarian parade] and other things, the Almabtrieb [celebrating driving down cattle from the mountain pastures into the valley], sheep awards. This is very important for tourism but also for local identity." (ID 09)

Discussion

Findings demonstrate how diverse local residents contribute to tourism experiences. Based on the empirical findings, a model was developed that can explain the processes of tourist-experience creation from a local residents' perspective (Figure 2). The model includes the two dimensions active and passive tourism experience creation processes. Themes related to actively contributing to tourist experiences refer to tourism industry involvement and cultural production, which includes co-creation. The passive contribution to tourism experiences relates to shared public spaces and day-to-day interactions; for example, when locals provide tourists with information (directions, local knowledge). This framework and related themes referring to authenticity and underlying conditions to host-guest encounters will be discussed in detail in the light of existing theories and literature.

Figure 2. Host–guest-based tourism experience creation

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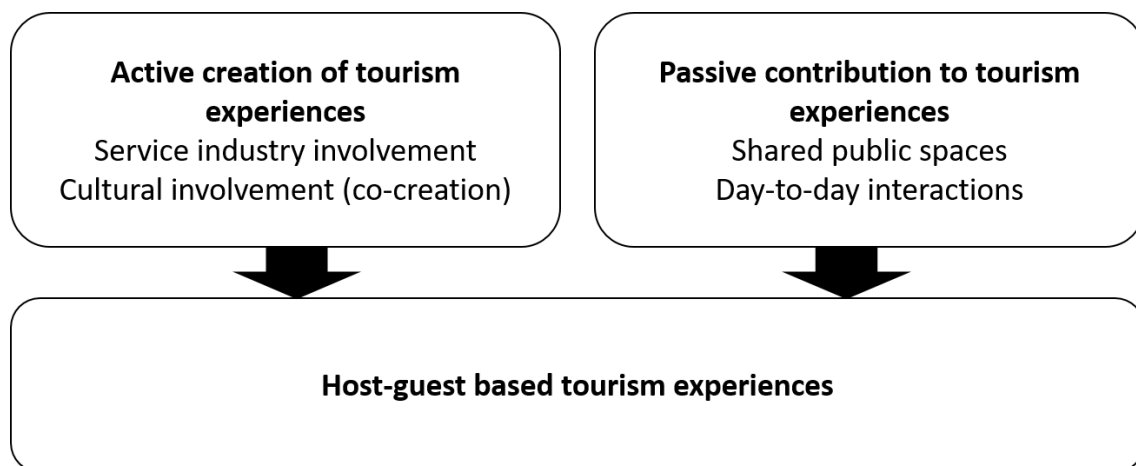
Local residents' contribution to tourist experiences

This study can confirm Sharpley's (2014) proposition that host–guest encounters lie on a continuum based on the nature of contact (e.g. intentional/unintentional), which influences opportunities to create tourist experiences. Empirical findings suggest a distinction between the active creation of and passive contribution to tourist experiences.

Several themes emerged from the data that revolved around the active role of local residents in contributing to tourists' experiences in a destination. The study has found strong linkages between a host's contribution to tourist experiences and their occupation; for example, working in a restaurant, hotel, or souvenir shop. Previous research has shown that intergroup differences (e.g. level of attachment to tourism) can affect tourism development participation (Kantsperger et al., 2019) and host–guest relations (Mansfeld & Ginosar, 1994; Sharpley, 2014). Residents identified their role in experience creation not only when they were working in jobs associated directly with tourism, but also in other occupations. This shows that tourism goes across various economic sectors and stakeholders within a destination; for example, working in forestry has a tourism dimension by providing information on wildlife. Residents working in the tourism industry were also aware that providing quality services adds value to positive tourist experiences; a finding that has already been suggested by previous studies (Sfandla & Björk, 2013).

Cultural events and festivals (e.g. local festivals) play an important role in the perceptions of local residents' involvement in tourist experiences. Cultural events and festivals provide interaction opportunities for locals and tourists on various levels: between local visitors, foreign visitors, and local performers. Within this setting, local visitors and tourists share the same experiencescape (Zhang et al., 2019), where the foreign visitor (seeking authentic experiences) benefits from the local visitor's demand to experience traditional local customs (provided by local performers).

Only cultural events showed signs of experience co-creation processes between locals and tourists. This aspect requires a deeper look into definitional issues. By definition, co-creation means that local residents *and* tourists are actively involved in the creation of tourist experience. Lin et al. (2017) and Chen et al. (2020) used items such as "providing tourists with useful information" as indicator for co-creation, which suggests

that some sort of social interaction is sufficient to explain this phenomenon. This approach contradicts other literature. Prebensen and Foss (2011, p.55) point out that "co-creating reflects a more active and even an innovative side of participation in the production part of the experience" which goes beyond unintentional and accidental encounters between local residents and tourists. Cultural events can provide a platform where the interaction between local residents and external visitors creates a unique atmosphere that adds value to the experience of all those visiting the event. This is supported by Mansfeld and Jonas (2006) who showed, that guests' participation in cultural events can have positive socio-cultural impacts on the host community.

An interesting finding is that outside of professional relationships and culture production, local residents perceived their role in creating tourism experiences on a rather passive level. Traditional clothes such as leather pants and dirndl dresses play an important role in this discussion. Distinctive clothing makes locals identifiable for tourists in day-to-day interactions and enables the observation of the local way of living. This contradicts Sharpley's (2014) finding that "sharing space" and no verbal and physical contact has no influence on tourist experiences. This phenomenon may be unique to places such as Garmisch-Partenkirchen, whereas in other settings, such as urban landscapes, practices of tourists, recent settlers, and local citizens blur into one another.

There is evidence that those residents who were born or grew up in Garmisch-Partenkirchen are more inclined to interact with tourists and therefore contribute to tourist experiences. This may be linked to the long tourism tradition of Garmisch-Partenkirchen and a general positive attitude towards tourism development and its associated perceived benefits. This goes in line with Jurowski et al.'s (1997) finding that community attachment can affect the support of tourism. Growing up in a social environment that is largely supportive of tourism may affect also locals' attitudes towards tourism experience creation.

Conditions for host-guest-based creation of tourist experiences

A variety of themes related to the underlying conditions that influence host-guest interaction opportunities emerged from the interviews. This reflects the diverse nature of host-guest encounters. Both groups of interviewees, those involved and those not involved in tourism services or cultural events, suggested that involvement in the tourism

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industry plays an important role in interacting with tourists. This finding is consistent with Kastenholz et al.'s (2013) findings that, apart from encounters in public spaces, most interaction between hosts and guests occur in places where locals work in tourism services.

Results from this study indicate that over the last decades, interaction levels have changed from deeper host–guest relationships towards encounters and shallow interaction levels. Changes in tourism business models (e.g. impersonal hand-over of keys for holiday apartments) and current labour market developments (e.g. employment of staff who are not locals) may have contributed to this trend. Mansfeld and Jonas (2006) argue that local residents may have concerns to deepen host-guest interactions and prefer physical segregation and minimal interaction – depending on how they are situated in a carrying capacity value stretch spectrum. Another more extrinsic explanation for this might be that a trend of shorter stays in the destination and an increased tourist focus on hotspots (Weber et al., 2017) affects the interaction level between locals and visitors.

Privately rented holiday apartments and types of "bed and breakfast" appear to be the business models showing the highest levels of commercial host–guest interactions. The trend towards shorter stays in the tourism destination raises the question what types of authentic and meaningful experiences visitors are seeking. If Paulauskaite et al.'s (2017) statement holds true – that authenticity is a core feature of the sharing and experience economy and tourists are interested in authentic and meaningful experiences – it is important to understand the various dimensions of authentic tourism experiences. Short stays of two or three days in a destination that focus largely on tourism hotspots leave only little room to engage with the local population and to have meaningful social interactions. This supports Buhali et al.'s (2020) concept of co-destruction processes through certain types of tourism.

Stressful tourist encounters at work may affect host–guest interaction capabilities. This can influence the motivation for tourist engagement on a private level. This adds a new and contradicting dimension to Ward and Berno's (2011) proposition that tourism industry employees have rather favourable responses to tourism. Other conditions to tourism engagement refer to intercultural differences between local residents and foreign tourists from other countries. It is well established in the literature that cultural

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characteristics and values differ across countries (Hofstede, 1980). This goes in line with Zhang et al.'s (2006) argument that interactions between hosts and international guests are linked to cultural tolerance. Two aspects may be important in this discussion. First, a personal interest in a tourist's particular culture can motivate a local to interact with that tourist. This conforms to Kim et al.'s (2013) findings that cultural exchange has a positive impact on a resident's sense on emotional well-being. Second, cultural characteristics such as a woman wearing a headscarf or veil can influence locals' motivation to interact with tourists. It can be assumed that this aspect may be part of a broader political and societal discourse, which is also manifested in tourism contexts at the local level.

Conclusion and implications

This research answers Lin et al.'s (2017) call to explore in more depth the motivations of local residents to co-create value with tourists. The main purpose of this study was to explore how local residents perceive their role in the creation of tourism experiences using the example of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, a tourism hotspot in Bavaria, Germany. The study adds knowledge to existing literature in that it used a qualitative research design to gain an emic perspective of local residents' perceptions. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study that used qualitative methods in this research domain.

This study not only identified different levels of tourism experience creation processes, but also underlying conditions that can help to explain residents' motivation to engage with tourists and contribute to their experiences. The main finding of this study is that there is great diversity among local residents' perception on their role in tourism experience creation. A number of factors inhibit deeper relationships between hosts and guests, e.g. tourist behaviour, shorter visitor stays, changes in tourism business models, and labour market developments. This shows that not only tourists' characteristics such as origin, lifestyle, and mode of travelling influence host-guest relationships but also developments in the tourism destination.

We found only little evidence for co-creation processes between local residents and tourists in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, which contradicts current literature (Lin et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2020). This study contributes to a better theoretical foundation of the

phenomenon of co-creation as it relates to host-guest relationships and may inform research designs of future quantitative studies. The identification of items to measure co-creation needs to consider an active and collaborative role of both visitors and local residents to experience "meaningful interactions".

Findings of this study have implications for destination management organisations and policy makers. DMOs need to understand the role of the local population in tourism experience creation because they can be an important asset for attracting tourists and may add value to tourist satisfaction. Successful tourism development requires the support of the people living in tourism destinations. Tourism policy makers may put more focus on establishing positive connections between the various stakeholders in the experiencescapes. Digital communication channels may be used for information campaigns (internally and externally) to create a better mutual understanding of local residents and visitors' needs while temporarily living together.

DMOs may also engage local residents in tourism development processes. Sfandla and Björk (2013) argue that resources such as equipment, skills, knowledge, and networks can facilitate co-creation processes of companies and tourists. Since this study showed that local residents can have an important role in the creation of tourist experiences, tourism marketers and policy makers may consider developing local residents' competencies (e.g. building socio-cultural competencies), which could, in turn, stimulate long-term community benefits.

Limitations and future research

A final word concerns limitations of this research associated with its qualitative case study research design. First, the study concentrates on a tourism hotspot in Germany that provides tourism experiences for a distinct customer base in the upper mid-high socioeconomic group in a specific sociocultural context; for example, having a long tourism destination tradition and with high relevance of local traditions and customs. Peräkylä (2004) applied the logic of "possibility" where observations may be possibly replicated in different settings. Future research may include destinations with differing cultural contexts or less focus on tourism to identify possible similarities and differences in hosts' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism.

Second, the study is based on 16 interviews with local residents, using a maximum variation sample approach. This does not allow for the generalisation of findings, which is not the purpose of this study. Data collection and research participant selection was supported by a gatekeeper which may create bias in the sample. The sample lacks in younger respondents, which needs to be considered when interpreting the research results. Future research may add this population group to gain further insights into their role in tourism experience creation.

Third, the study's findings are based on perceptions of local residents and what they think about tourism and tourists in their destination. This raises epistemological questions in terms of how to interpret the research findings and conclusions. Even though the investigation of perceptions of local residents is an important indicator for experience creation processes, further research is needed that incorporates the other side of the tourism spectrum: the tourists and their perspective on the phenomenon of host-based experience creation processes. Future studies may develop tourist-centred research designs to increase knowledge of how visitors perceive the role of local citizens in tourism experience creation.

This study was conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic. The latest developments show that health becomes a significant factor for tourism experiences. In the light of this crisis, it is important to increase knowledge of how local residents and visitors better cooperate in such circumstances. Future research may investigate how the pandemic affects social interactions at tourism destinations and tourism experiences.

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