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A critical realist appraisal of authenticity in tourism: the case of the Sámi

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the critical realist conceptualization of authenticity through its development in tourism, especially in relation to indigenous Sámi culture. Authenticity is discussed through the often relativistic perspectives surrounding it. This paper proposes a middle ground between objective and existential views; it considers authenticity to be a compromise, and it focuses on both universal components (present in all Sámi people in the tourism context) as well as mediated components (such as characteristics differently influenced by geo-history). The role of cultural tourism labels is also discussed. The overlying objective is to conceptualize authenticity so that it produces a positive effect on the tourism operations of Sámi people. Specifically, it argues that the use of certain labels or certifications, based on the concrete universal aspects of Sámi, can be beneficial. If the Sámi themselves are involved in the creation of such labels, they need not betray the objective of respecting Sámi culture.

Introduction

This article aims to discuss the conceptualization of authenticity in order to better understand how authenticity relates to Sámi culture and heritage. The Sámi are an indigenous population comprising different groups who speak different languages and live in different parts of Sweden, Finland, Norway and Russia, which the Sámi collectively call Sápmi. The Sámi are traditionally reindeer herders but now mostly have ordinary jobs; and tourism is one of their occupations (de Bernardi, Kugapi, and Lüthje 2017).

This paper will first discuss the conceptualization of authenticity in tourism scholarship as well as its connection to marketing and issues of representation. A section will also discuss critical realism from an indigenous viewpoint. Finally, authenticity will be conceptualized in a novel way in tourism research to ensure that the outcomes of tourism work for the Sámi population is more positive. The role of tourism labels is also discussed.

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Tourism, Sámi and Sámi culture

Sámi entrepreneurs working within tourism have the difficult task of presenting Sámi culture in a way that is both interesting to the tourists, but also faithful to the everyday life and history of the Sámi, whether or not they are reindeer herders. Although the Sámi play a significant role in identifying what counts as authentic Sámi, there are other important influencing factors, such as the national Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), which contribute power relations and a different discourse to the already complicated situation (de Bernardi 2019). The indigenous status of the Sámi – and their marginalization as a minority group – is also relevant. Furthermore, it should be noted that even within Sápmi, there are different contexts, and these often have different outcomes in terms of what it means to be authentic Sámi (de Bernardi 2019). As a result, the Sámi experience of working in tourism can be both rewarding and conflictual.

Cultural labels

Tourism labels and certifications are most often associated with the environment. One example is the *Blue Flag* certificate, which is awarded to beaches that satisfy certain environmental criteria. Nevertheless, there are also labels that certify the ethical use of culture (and these often include nature as well); in Sweden an example is *Nature's Best* (Nature's Best, 2019). *Nature's Best* is also the basis for a Sámi label called *Sápmi Experience* (de Bernardi 2019), which is currently inactive. There is also a label for Sámi handicraft (de Bernardi, Kugapi, and Lüthje 2017). The point of these labels is to reassure tourists that the company is ethical: that is, it should provide authentic Sámi experiences/products whilst also being respectful of nature and Sámi culture and heritage. However, as in the *Blue Flag* case, such schemes have been critiqued as being a marketing tool rather than a management tool for sustainability (Klein and Dodds 2018). In the final section of the paper, the role of labels in the conceptualization of authenticity proposed here will be discussed in more detail.

Authenticity

The development of the concept of authenticity in tourism research has shifted in different directions, not all of which will be treated in depth in this essay. However, in academia, authenticity is mainly discussed in terms of objectivity, subjectivity, existentialism, negotiation and authentication.

One of the first tourism-related discussions of authenticity was by Daniel J. Boorstin, who in 1961 discussed what he called 'pseudo-events'. Pseudo-events are planned – or planted – and they are ambiguously related to 'reality.' They are often connected to a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Boorstin [1961]2012, 11–12). Tourists seek the exotic whilst also demanding certain things, such as the same comforts of home. The main characteristic of pseudo-events is that they are inauthentic (Boorstin [1961]2012). The tourists travel, but it is as they have never left home (Boorstin [1961]2012, 77–117). MacCannell (1973) discussed how tourists want to see how life is really lived in the places that they visit, but they are rarely if ever able to reach their goal. Cohen (1988) criticized the concept

of authenticity because it tends to be treated from the viewpoint of the tourists, but rarely from the point of view of the locals. He (1988) outlines early conceptualizations of *authenticity* as being tied to whether an object has been produced in a certain way or with specific materials. One of the problems identified by Cohen (1988) is also the alienation attributed to authenticity in academia. In a previous article, Cohen (1979) connected authenticity to the conceptualization of tourist experiences and how deep such experiences are. In this case, the alienated travellers 'look for meaning in the life of others' (MacCannell, 1976, 3; as cited in Cohen 1979, 186). Tourists seeking an experience that is more 'existential' will be the ones who will want to go closer to the local populations (Cohen 1988).

In contrast to objectivistic, constructivist and postmodern approaches, Wang (1999) argues that authenticity is existential. In the early conceptualizations of authenticity, authors such as Boorstin ([1961]2012) deemed the tourists incapable of seeing the 'original' through the pseudo-events, indirectly placing an 'original' in the discussion. However, postmodern versions argue that there is no original, instead authenticity is dependent on different interpretations, usually motivated by issues of power. The tourists therefore project their expectations onto the local people and landmarks, in the form of stereotypes. Furthermore, it is often the case that something that has been previously deemed to be inauthentic, later becomes 'emergent authenticity' as time passes (Cohen 1988). One example is Disneyland (Wang 1999, 355). In this case, the quest for authenticity is not a difference between something that is objectively authentic but is symbolic and relies on a social construction.

In the case of Disneyland, there is no original to refer to and therefore it does not matter whether it is false or not (Wang 1999). The boundary between what is real and what is not becomes then very blurred. The quest becomes then for 'genuine fakes' (Brown, 1996, as cited in Wang 1999, 357).

Wang's (1999) proposition on the problem of the definition of authenticity lies in the conceptualization of existential authenticity. The feeling of having an authentic experience is then related to 'the existential state of Being activated by certain tourist activities' (Wang 1999, 359). One example offered by Wang (1999) is the fact that when tourists dance rumba in Cuba, it does not matter whether the dance is re-enacted as close to the traditional version as possible, because the tourists find in this dance 'an alternative source of authenticity' (Wang 1999, 359). Wang (1999) describes the two dimensions that constitute existential authenticity, one is intra-personal (feelings of the body) and the one is interpersonal (the making of oneself or self-making). Interpersonal authenticity is also related to family travels and to travel within a community.

It is difficult to make a clear distinction between the constructivist, postmodern and existentialist approaches to authenticity because often they often overlap with each other and are interconnected. However, it is possible to provide some illustrative examples. One is the constructivist approach in which authenticity is seen as something socially constructed, through photography (Hannam and Ryan 2019). Authenticity is also a layered concept, which depends on the group as well as the relation to the object (Goulding and Derbaix 2019). Furthermore, the discussion also includes a conceptualization of authenticity as experienced authentic by the tourists, but inauthentic from a research viewpoint (Saarinen and Varnajot 2019). Negative authenticity is also studied from the constructivist viewpoint; it is 'the true but unacceptable part of the destination' (Zhou et al. 2018, 60) such as poverty. From this perspective, some things are selectively

forgotten (Zhou et al. 2018). In this case, authenticity is assigned if considered appropriate. According to Lane and Waitt (2010), authenticity helps with understanding of how different people view a certain place, the decision-making processes related to such places and how different groups interpret being authentic (see also Dueholm and Smed 2014). Other studies from a constructivist viewpoint include the construction of identity and performance between tourists and local entrepreneurs (Ateljevic and Doorne 2005). Performance is also involved in the construction of places related to guided tours (Crang 1996; Overend 2012) and in the interaction between hosts and guests described by Bruner (2001) in the case of the indigenous population Maasai. Performance is also important for authenticity regarding the recreation of folk songs for tourists (Knox 2008). Olsen (2002) describes how a constructivist view of authenticity allows one to gain a better understanding of the individuals' experiences. Another study (by Dlaske 2015) – whose position is closely related to what is being proposed here – demonstrates how Sámi artists use localness in their artistic production and how authenticity is constructed through said localness.

From an existential viewpoint, research has focused on how tourism can be a catalyst to achieve transformation and an authentic attitude (Brown 2013). Steiner and Reisinger (2006) call for more focus on existential authenticity from the point of view of identity and interaction between hosts and guests. Another study found a connection between existential authenticity and loyalty in the context of heritage tourism (Fu 2019). Authenticity is also related to souvenirs sold in Czech Republic and the fact that souvenirs are subject to globalization and they get separated 'from local culture and history' (Dumbrovská and Fialová 2019, 11). The authors call this 'falsely authentic souvenirs' (Dumbrovská and Fialová 2019, 11). Souvenirs are also investigated by Soukhathammavong and Park (2019) and, in the case of a World Heritage Site, the local population has a clear idea what is authentic and what is not. There are also cases in which souvenirs are considered authentic by tourists in general, but the view of what constitutes this authenticity differs between local and foreign tourists (Elomba and Yun 2018). A related argument is the way that beers coming from microbreweries, which whilst they are actually not local, may be considered authentic in other ways (Debies-Carl 2019). Authenticity is also related to the experience of food. Lu and Fine (1995) argue that in this case authenticity is constructed, while Özdemir and Seyitoğlu (2017) identify different categories of tourists; some who prefer authentic local food and some preferring the 'environmental bubble', in which they can consume familiar foods. Local food can also enhance a destination by giving tourists an experience of authenticity (Sims 2009). People make judgements about authenticity based on a series of characteristics of the object in question (Kreuzbauer and Keller 2017). In relation to local populations, authenticity has been related to please the tourists' expectations (Federici 2019) as well as something to be kept private (Sotomayor, Gil Arroyo, and Barbieri 2019). An interesting study by Chhabra (2010) has found that, although academic discussion that has moved away from objective authenticity, nevertheless authenticity is still considered important by Generation Y. This study by Chhabra will be furthered discussed later in this paper.

Some approaches to authenticity have been significantly relativistic, for instance, Taylor (2001) proposed an alternative term to authenticity called 'sincerity.' He suggests that sincerity represents a more meaningful interaction between hosts and guests in the case of the indigenous Maori. Authenticity characterizes instead a culture that is stuck in time,

which is a recurrent marketing discourse for the Sámi as well (de Bernardi 2019). Even in the context of the management of World Heritage Sites, authenticity is understood in different ways by different levels of government: from more objective and preservation-related at higher levels of government and more subjective and constructivist at lower levels of government (Su 2019). Similar results have been discussed by Chhabra (2008) regarding museum curators and the importance given to essentialist dimensions of authenticity, while at the same time 'delivering messages in constructivist settings' (Chhabra 2008, 442). Similar findings are also reported by Gable and Handler (2018). Authenticity has also been studied in relation to practitioners in ancestral tourism and is connected to the invention of tradition (Bryce, Murdy, and Alexander 2017). The authenticity of heritage has also been recently connected to magic and the postmodern dimension of selective memory and celebration of the past (Lovell 2019).

Authenticity has been operationalized in quantitative studies related to management and one of the relevant findings has been that tourists should be offered an escape from their everyday life to achieve authenticity (Lin 2017; Lin and Liu 2018). Authenticity has also been connected to interaction and customizable experiences in tour guiding (Zatori, Smith, and Puczko 2018) as well as in its relation to the appeal of agricultural landscape. The results show that perceived authenticity depends on how appealing the landscape is to the urban tourist (Nazariadli et al. 2018). Authenticity has also been related to the appreciation of festivals (Girish and Chen 2017) and a higher satisfaction at cultural sites. The authors also found that objective authenticity is connected to subjective feelings of authenticity (Domínguez-Quintero, González-Rodríguez, and Paddison 2018). Similar results have been found by study of on destination image and place attachment (Jiang et al. 2017). Reisinger and Steiner (2006) came to the conclusion that existential authenticity affects tourists' existential anxiety once they have returned home. Furthermore, the meaningfulness of their experience is determined by the value the tourists themselves place on the experience (Kirillova, Lehto, and Cai 2017). Park, Choi, and Lee (2019) found that objective authenticity does not influence loyalty, while constructive authenticity affects both existential authenticity as well as tourist satisfaction. A study on postmodern authenticity shows that experiences are very subjective and also that architectural heritage is particularly important for the tourists (Yi et al. 2018). Similar results have also been obtained by Yi et al. (2017).

As previously discussed, authenticity has been connected to performance (Zhu 2012), for instance, when tourists learn to cook in a heritage tourism setting (Walter 2017) or in the context of eco-cultural experiences (Tiberghien, Bremner, and Milne 2017). Tasci and Knutson (2004) advocate for the identification of 'authentic features' for both communities and the environment, while Castéran and Roederer (2013) argue for an operationalization of the concept of authenticity based on certain objective features as well as tourist experiences. Jamal and Hill (2004) support a view on authenticity as constituted by different criteria; both subjective and objective. Another paper that follows this direction is the one by Ram, Björk, and Weidenfeld (2016), which introduces the concept of iconic and indexical authenticities (Grayson and Martinec 2004). Iconic authenticity is based on something resembling something that is in fact authentic, such as reproductions of 'originals'. Indexical authenticity is instead based on certain cues that indicate for the actors that something is authentic, such as a tourist guide's behaviour indicating that he or she is authentic (Grayson and Martinec 2004). Bruner (1994) mentions the important role of

authority when 'authenticating' something. The main argument advanced by Bruner (1994) is the fact that the connections between 'copies' and 'originals' are the result of a process in which meaning is constructed by the visitors of a site.

These approaches to authenticity are also the bases of authentication (e.g. Cohen and Cohen 2012; Lamont 2014; Mkono 2013; Wang, Huang, and Kim 2015). Selwyn (1996) proposed that authenticity be divided into two aspects, one based on feelings and one based on knowledge (Selwyn 1996). A side that is based on the feelings of the tourists and their search for identification as well as the 'Self' that can be found in marketing material. This is 'hot authenticity'. On the other hand, 'cool authenticity' is related to knowledge and its different aspects. There is the knowledge about objects that are displayed in the museum and how they are mediated. Selwyn (1996) also mentions that myths about tourism can have political and social consequences that are far from what is promoted.

Cohen and Cohen (2012, 1296) define the term 'authentication' 'as a process by which something – a role, product, object or event – is confirmed as 'original,' 'genuine,' 'real' or 'trustworthy.'' Cohen and Cohen (2012) explain that Selwyn (1996) describes authenticity as something that is either 'social' or 'scientific.' The first conceptualization is based on the feelings of the tourists, while the second is based on 'a theoretical top-down approach' (Cohen and Cohen 2012, 1297). Instead of separating these two dimensions from each other, Cohen and Cohen (2012) see them as inevitably interlinked. The authors also mention that the process of authentication is surrounded by political issues that should be taken into consideration. Mkono (2013) puts this approach into practice and her results show that the tourists look for 'coolly' authenticated objects, but in the end subjective feelings related to 'hot' authenticity are more visible in online reviews (Mkono 2013).

Authenticity has also been conceptualized in a realist manner, Lau (2010) argues that there is indeed a place for object authenticity in the debate. The main proposition advanced by Lau (2010) is that, despite the strong role discourses have, the reality of a tourist phenomenon should not be reduced to them. Lau (2010) gives the example of a festival revival and Cantonese cuisine to argue that they both exist in reality and can be appraised for their characteristics. Cantonese cuisine exists as a cuisine separated from other cuisines and a festival revival can be judged in respect to the original one by searching for information. This also means that even if a discourse on a certain phenomenon can become hegemonic, it is still possible to question it.

Chhabra (2008) proposed a model for authenticity that conceptualizes it as a negotiation between constructivism and essentialism. This reflects on the historical dimension of museum processes as well as how the community see them. Chhabra (2010) later described how authenticity has been conceptualized as a compromise between a number of factors. Medina (2003) talks about the Maya and how their interaction with the tourists is a constant dialogue in which both identity and authenticity are renegotiated; a similar argument is made in relation to the Maori and the construction of authenticity between hosts and visitors (Condevaux 2009). Furthermore, Chhabra (2010) also adds the dimension of theoplacity (e.g. Belhassen, Caton, and Stewart 2008), which relates authenticity to religious and pilgrimage experiences. By connecting the essentialist, constructivist and religious conceptualizations of authenticity, this can result in a 'compromise between existentialist and essentialist schools of thought' (Chhabra 2010, 796). Chhabra (2010) argues for both object authenticity as well as meaningful interactions with the local population.

In this paper, the different lines of enquiry presented here will be integrated with the help of critical realis. Furthermore, this study also proposes to keep into consideration the host population's own conceptualization (Medina 2003); in this case the Sámi.

Authenticity, representation and marketing

Authenticity has been discussed from several perspectives: the tourists, the hosts and marketing as well. The conceptualization of authenticity proposed here will connect all of these aspects, but one of the main focuses here is marketing. In this section, different positions on representations, authenticity and marketing are presented and discussed.

Following the basic assumption of critical realism, Cashell (2009) rejects the assumption that reality exists because of human knowledge of such reality. Critical realist representations and discourses cannot be about themselves; they need to be based on something ontologically real (Cashell 2009). Discourse can actually be separated from what the discourse is about (Cashell 2009). Cashell (2009, 139) defines the process of representation as 'epistemic mediation of reality', which allows for reality and being to be independent of our knowledge, but at the same time accessible to our knowledge because it is susceptible to representation. The way in which we can predict the reality of a certain object is through two criteria: perceptual and fictional. When something does not satisfy both of these criteria then it cannot be real.

Internalized representations can influence future representations, which is relevant in relation to tourism marketing. The hermeneutic circle of representation comes in different forms. One is presented by Du Gay et al. (2013) and Urry and Larsen (2011) – and not for the first time in these editions – as well as by Jenkins (2003). The one by Du Gay et al. (2013, xxx–xxxi) is called 'the circuit of culture' and it can be used to analyse cultural artefacts. Representations and advertising are said to have played a very important part for the cultural artefact studied in the book. Urry and Larsen (2011, 187) talked instead of a 'hermeneutic circle' in which certain images are produced by different organizations and then reproduced by the tourists. Jenkins (2003) builds on this concept by explaining how destinations initially attract tourists with pictures; the tourists then travel there and record their experience of what attracted them in the first place with their camera. The tourists then show these pictures (nowadays also through social media), and the circle begins again by influencing future potential travellers (Jenkins 2003).

This implies that tourism marketing can be a vehicle of internalized representations of what is authentic; marketing is seen in this context as a kind of practice. A practice is defined by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, 21) as a 'social action', which is related to a certain time and place. This action is also something that has become habitual. According to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, 22–23) practices have three main characteristics: they are forms of production, they are in a relationship to other practices and they have a reflective dimension related to representations. Practices have discursive aspects which are nevertheless irreducible to discourse; and which are also part of a power struggle (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, 26). In the case discussed here, a discourse is meant as different representations and self-representations of social life that are strongly dependent on the actors' positioning. Hence, different actors in different positions have a different way to both see and represent the world (Fairclough 2001).

In the case of the Sámi, tourism marketing has been previously studied as a practice and several recurring discourses have been identified (de Bernardi 2019). Other examples are, for instance, the marketing of dark tourism sites. Dark tourism is a kind of tourism that deals with sites in which, for instance, death and tragedy have occurred. Dark tourism sites and their marketing mostly represent a compromise between object authenticity and some degree of emotional connection, this is what Heuermann and Chhabra (2014, 223) call 'diluted versions' of object authenticity, which are based on Chhabra's (2008, 2010) work on authenticity and negotiation.

Silver (1993) has instead analysed the marketing of host populations. The main argument is that tourists rely on the imagery of the Third World that is presented to them in travel-related advertising. This advertising has a tendency to portray the Other in a way that has been how the Westerners imagined them to be for centuries. The conceptualization of the Other by the West will be discussed later in the section about critical realist indigenism. The portrayal of the Other is usually based on the local populations 'having been largely unchanged' (Bruner, 1991, 304; as cited in Silver 1993, 304). A similar argument is advanced by Hughes (1995), who discusses authenticity as a postmodern and incoherent construct in the context of food campaigns in Scotland.

After presenting previous conceptualizations of authenticity, this next section will discuss authenticity as a compromise, which is the novel conceptualization advanced in this paper.

Authenticity as a compromise

As previously discussed, in tourism authenticity has been problematized as a 'black or white' concept as well as a completely subjective and relative concept. For instance, something that is constructed as the result of completely subjective assumptions.

Nick Wilson (2014) argues that, despite the strong debate, authenticity is important in our lives. He then proposes a critical realist view of authenticity. His discussion is based on empirical findings on a study regarding working life and specifically the performance of Early Music. Wilson (2014, 289) argues that the case is particularly relevant because Early Music is described as 'authentic performance or historically informed performance (HIP)', which, according to Wilson (2014) can be a source of alienation for the musicians. In his review of critical realism, Wilson (2014) argues that Bhaskar does indeed talk about freedom and the fact that to be free means to be able to act accordingly with one's 'real individual, social, species, and natural interests' (Bhaskar 2011, 145; as cited in Wilson 2014, 290). The conceptualization of authenticity based on Wilson's (2014) study is meant also to reconcile the dimensions of the personal authenticity and the more general one, by relating the subjective with the external factors for both the Sámi entrepreneurs and the tourists. As previously mentioned, this kind of negotiation has been discussed by Chhabra (2008, 2010), but in this article this concept is brought a step forward by using critical realism as basis.

Wilson (2014) explains how, especially in the work of Margaret Archer, one's view of authenticity is connected to one's sense of self-worth and to one's will to achieve an identity that we can define as ours. As humans, we have ultimate concerns, and this means that we have commitments that define us since they are closely connected to our identities. Our commitments also depend on our emotional involvement (Wilson 2014). The

questions that Wilson (2014) asks in the beginning of the paper are related to the link between authenticity, our ultimate concerns and how they depend on each other and on those of others; if they do. Wilson (2014) also comes to the conclusion that, in the first two phases of critical realism, authenticity has been mainly related to its 'counterpart' inauthenticity in a relationship of opposition, and that this relationship can be seen as dialectical. This means that as we live our lives and change, we also are authentic and inauthentic at times. Inauthenticity is seen as absence of authenticity (Wilson 2014).

When presenting the situation of Early Music musicians, Wilson (2014) explains how there is a tension between the desire of the musicians to be able to play the music true to the historical authenticity and at the same time be able to incorporate some of their own musical identity in the performance. The main conclusion drawn by Wilson (2014) is that 'authenticity necessarily involves compromise and, most importantly, *not* acting (always) directly in line with our (ultimate) concerns' (296, italics in the original). The fact that we act in the framework of certain structures (as the fact that we have to work as musicians or as tourism entrepreneurs) does not mean that authenticity is irrelevant. Wilson (2014) goes on to argue that it would be romantic to view authenticity as not posing any constraint to one's life. The main argument regarding critical realist authenticity is that to manage authenticity means to be aware and to coexist with our limits while we also should strive to change what we can in our lives (Wilson 2014). While Margaret Archer argues that authentic alignment cannot be a compromise because it is necessary to prioritize and decide who we are, Wilson (2014) argues instead that compromise is a necessary part of our lives. It means that we give up something in order to achieve something else (Wilson 2014). Critical realist authenticity is about the life as it is lived in the present as well as striving for a better world in the future.

As authenticity is considered to be emergent and therefore independent from the interaction with people, the conceptualization as a compromise is also a way for single entrepreneurs and companies to deal with the conceptualizations of authenticity by dominant forces in tourism marketing. This is very important considering that this discussion focuses on indigenous culture, which is particularly vulnerable to pressures due to discourses and structures (e.g. de Bernardi 2019). The proposed way to conceptualize authenticity will both take into consideration the individual experiences as well as a general category, which will be discussed in the next section.

Indigenist critical realism

In her book, Gracelyn Smallwood (2015) traces the history of the First Australians through historical and personal accounts. This book is important because the author is a member of an Indigenous community as well as a critical realist. Smallwood (2015) traces important connections between indigenism and critical realism. First of all, she discusses truth, objectivity and different accounts. She cites Bhaskar on the different levels that constitute truth (Bhaskar, 2008, 217–218; as cited in Smallwood 2015, 18): normative-fiduciary, adequating, referential-expressive and alethic. The first level is about who is communicating the account. The second is about an assertion that can be verified to some extent. The third level is about 'truth claims [that] refer to something out there' (Smallwood 2015, 19). The fourth and last level is about discovering the ontological truth. The discussion on the concept of authenticity is not so much a quest to reach a truth, because in this case

there is not an ontological truth to be discovered, at least not to the concept itself. However, this account aims at reaching a way to conceptualize authenticity that is a concrete universal. For instance, Smallwood (2015) argues that human nature is something that we all share, and that, while there are other categories related to, for instance, gender and ethnicity that we share with some but not others, there are also characteristics that make us unique individuals. From the point of view of the concrete universal, there is no contraposition between the individual and the social, it is about the intertwining of different macro and micro aspects. Smallwood (2015) advocates for Human Rights from a universal perspective, but also advocates for an understanding of different structures that permeate the different relationships between people, such as racism and discrimination.

The concept of the concrete universal can be applied to the concept of authenticity. Every single Sámi tourism entrepreneur has a subjective way of realising the authenticity of Sámi culture in the products that they offer and market. On the other hand, at a more 'abstract' level, there is a conceptualization of authenticity that is the same for all of them. What is meant by 'Sámi culture' is not defined or discussed in this context, since culture is a very complex term. On the other hand, different aspects of Sámi culture and heritage (such as handicrafts) are mentioned and the reason is that, in this context, the concrete universal of authenticity for the Sámi will also to some degree reflect a concrete universal of Sámi culture.

According to Bhaskar (2016, 130), concrete universals have a universal component, which is 'transfactually applicable properties and laws' as well as what he calls particular mediations. These are particular instances of something with their own subjective characteristics (Bhaskar 2016, 129–130). The universal is also characterized by a 'geo-historical trajectory', which is another way in which it is diversified compared to the other sharing the universal components. In other words, there is a connection between 'the category-as-abstraction and heterogenous individual experiences' (Martinez Dy, Martin, and Marlow 2014, 458). This means that the universal categories (such as authenticity) can be mediated by different individual factors (Martinez Dy, Martin, and Marlow 2014), such as marketing and the individual identity of the single Sámi entrepreneur. Furthermore, this also allows for authenticity to be contextualized both historically and geopolitically. Each individual is considered to be irreducibly unique (Bhaskar 2016, 129–130) so that 'abstract categorical belonging is held to be located in a particular spatial/temporal context, mediated by social positionality, and concretized in the life experiences of individuals' (Martinez Dy, Martin, and Marlow 2014, 458). Martinez Dy, Martin, and Marlow (2014) use this theoretical basis to build a feminist argument that accepts that there is a category 'woman' without excluding all of the heterogenous experiences connected to being a woman. The same applies to authenticity in Sámi tourism. To analyse authenticity is then necessary to understand its universal characteristics, the particular mediations of it as well as the geo-historical context. In this case, the Sámi populations and their relations with the dominant part of the population in the country in which they live and operate. Furthermore, the uniqueness of each entrepreneur and company should also be taken into consideration.

Lastly, Smallwood (2015) describes different forms of Othering. The Other can then be feared, resented, pitied as well as seen as a resource. The first two categories relate to the resentment because of what is interpreted as 'privilege.' Particularly interesting for this account is the Pitiable Other. This is about feeling sorry for the situation of the indigenous

populations (Smallwood 2015). In this category, Smallwood (2015) also includes the Exotic Other. These two categories are carry a significant message for tourism because research on authenticity risks portraying the Sámi in the light of the Pitiable Other, yet most research merely points out how the Exotic Other has been a dominant theme in tourism (e.g. Pettersson 2004; Pettersson 2006; Vladimirova 2011; de Bernardi 2019).

Concluding remarks

This paper started with an overview of the main strands of research related to authenticity in tourism research. Authenticity has been connected to many aspects of tourism: hosts, guests and objects. One connection, particularly relevant to this paper, is the connection between authenticity and how an object is made (Cohen 1988). This is pertinent for discussing handicrafts, for which the Sámi have a label (de Bernardi, Kugapi, and Lüthje 2017). This label certifies that a handicraft is authentic, as made in certain ways and by Sámi artists. On the other hand, Dlaske (2015) discusses how Sámi artists consider their products to be authentic simply because the artist is Sámi and she has made them. In this case the products are made locally, but they are loosely connected to local heritage, which means they cannot be certified with the existing label (Dlaske 2015). This is similar to the case of souvenirs sold in Czech Republic, which are not connected to the local heritage and are called 'falsely authentic souvenirs' (Dumbrovská and Fialová 2019, 11). As argued by Kreuzbauer and Keller (2017), people make judgements of authenticity based on a series of characteristics of the object in question and this is why the process of authentication (e.g. Bruner 1994; Cohen and Cohen 2012; Selwyn 1996) is so important. This is similar to Lau's (2010) conceptualization of a social realist authenticity in a tourist context, in which phenomena and objects can be judged in terms of their authenticity no matter whether hegemonic discourses interfere. As discussed throughout the paper, discourses are also present in the marketing process (e.g. de Bernardi 2019; Silver 1993). Through the circle of representation (Jenkins 2003), there is the risk that images will spread that do not reflect a balanced picture of Sámi culture and heritage. Although this risk is acknowledged, this paper takes the position that it is a risk worth taking and that there are ways to reduce the chances of it happening. For example, the Finnish Sámi Parliament has recently released guidelines for ethical Sámi tourism in Finland (Samediggi, n.d.) in addition to the described label for handicrafts. This shows a willingness to put some degree of regulation in an industry in which Sámi culture has been often treated unethically, especially in the Finnish case (Pettersson 2004, 25).

Authenticity is conceptualized here as a compromise between some degree of historical and cultural accuracy as well as the individual expression of the artist and/or entrepreneur, as shown by Wilson (2014) in the case of Early Music performance. This is different from the 'compromise' sometimes mentioned by Chhabra (2008, 2010) since this conceptualization is backed by critical realist assumptions. Whilst Chhabra's 'compromise' is based on a model for mainly heritage management purposes, the critical realist 'compromise' is backed by a philosophical framework based on Wilson's (2014) work that develops the issues that Chhabra (2008) identified in the case of the work as museum curator (that is, the difficult balance between essentialist and constructivist perspectives on authenticity). The authenticity as 'compromise' proposed here is therefore an example of the critical realist idea of the concrete universal. When the Sámi tourism entrepreneurs present

their heritage and culture in the context of tourism, they do it subjectively. All their subjective representations and handicrafts together form the general category of authenticity for this particular concrete universal. As previously mentioned, concrete universals encapsulate not only a universal component, but also specific mediations (such as one's gender), the geohistorical trajectory as well as the concrete singular (Bhaskar 2016, 129–130). The universal component is the most difficult one to describe in this context because it is about properties that are applicable to all instances of authenticity. The goal of this article is not to list a series of characteristics that apply to the universal dimension of authenticity, although certifications have been mentioned in this respect. In order to avoid representations such as that of the Exotic Other mentioned by Smallwood (2015) and those found in tourism marketing materials (e.g. Silver 1993), which will spread through the hermeneutic circle, it is proposed here that certifications should be managed by the Sámi themselves. The formulation of authenticity as a compromise provides the Sámi with a structural framework from which to operate, which is especially important considering their indigenous status; and certifications can support their endeavours to be successful in tourism by protecting their heritage from unethical use. The existing handicraft label is an example of such a compromise, but it only protects Sámi handicraft produced in a certain way; however, a different label, designed to allow greater artistic flexibility can be created which will offer protection to Sámi artists. Furthermore, such certifications will help tourists to assess the authenticity of the activities, the objects, and the marketing images that they come into contact with, enhancing their subjective experiences. This process will support the agency of Sámi entrepreneurs in the context of tourism.

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