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The degree of sense of community on
Snapchat Live during a 24 hour live broadcast on a destination

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Abstract

In the last few years since Snapchat was launched on social media, the mobile app has developed very fast and gathered a significant number of members. With the introduction of Snapchat Live (also known as Our Story and Snapchat Passport) the users of the app are able to share in real time for 24 hours, a video or photo snap regarding their travel experience around the world. The narrative story about a destination is compiled together and curated by representatives of Snapchat where is posted for 24 hours on Snapchat Live feature. Since Snapchat Live has broadcasted the first live story until today, tourists as well as locals, gathered together for 24 hours to share what is representative for them about a destination, creating a community during this period of time.

The current paper aims to explore and investigate the degree of sense of community that is built during this period of time. Therefore, the theoretical framework, literature review and data collection lead to a discourse analysis divided in three sections. In the first part there will be identified the understanding of the travel bloggers regarding the subjects from the theoretical framework. In the second part, there will be identified different understandings of the sense of community among the interviewees regarding the sense of community. Therefore, the last part of the discourse will focus on two factors which are influencing the degree of a strong sense of community on Snapchat Live and the outcomes on image co-creation regarding a destination. The purpose of this research is not to give solutions of how the sense of community can be improved, but to identify the factors which are influencing the degree of sense of community on Snapchat Live.

KEYWORDS: Snapchat, SL, social media, Web 2.0, sense of community, belonging factor, travel bloggers, image co-creation, tourism social media

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1 Introduction

In the movie “The social network” (Fincher, 2010), one of the characters, Sean Parker, mentions the progress of online communication, contemplating on the idea that people will end to live their life in a digitalized reality: “*We lived on farms, and then we lived in cities, and now we're going to live on the internet*”¹. For a while now, social media has been part of our everyday life. More than one third of us are spending our time on social platforms (Lang, 2010). One of the purposes of social media is to let people form groups or subgroups where they can meet on different online platforms and discuss common topics of interest (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

According to Harris (2009), some of the most common platforms of social media are used for *social networking, text messaging, shared photos, podcast, streaming videos, wiki, blogs, discussion groups* and more (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Harris, 2009). As a general definition, Social media (SM) can be defined as “*a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and it allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content*” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Based on this definition, there can be said that SM is the bridge between people to connect, share, and create information in a virtual community (Yates & Paquette, 2011; Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015). Most of the online applications are summing up these characteristics for the users (e.g. Facebook, Instagram or Twitter), but one application in particular is starting to win domain in the online sector due to its unique characteristics (Kosoff, 2015; Beck, 2016; Levy, 2016). The mentioned application is Snapchat and is a new phone app, which is very popular among SM users (Better, 2015; Hall, 2016).

Snapchat is a context-based application where users are sharing their photos and videos with a person, a group or as a public content. The unique setting of Snapchat is that all the contents are available for a short period of time and then they disappear forever,

¹ Speech by Sean Parker (Justin Timberlake) from “The Social Network” - 2010

making the content ephemeral in essence (Better, 2015; Luckerson, 2015; Mcculley, 2015). When the CEO of Snapchat, Evan Spiegel, was asked “*What is Snapchat?*”², he presented the evolution of photography and communication, and that nowadays the photography and video are very much used as a new form of talking (Dredge, 2015). Therefore, Snapchat is trying to fit the trends and fulfill the social’s media purpose, which is “to be together” when we are not physically together (Bayer et al., 2016). As an application, Snapchat has different features, but for this particular paper, the interest of the researcher falls on the Snapchat Live section of the application. This feature enables users to see and experience the essence and raw truth of destinations and different events across the globe (Robertson, Unknown; Mcculley, 2015; Fynbo, 2016). The interesting fact of Snapchat Live is that these video and photo snaps are online for 24 hours and then they disappear (Robertson, Unknown; Fynbo, 2016). Many of the authors recommend this application for traveling purposes, where users can post live, pictures or videos about their traveling experience without them being alternated (Tolisano, 2015; Manalo, 2015; Group, 2015; Sloane, 2015; Wojdylo, 2015; Fynbo, 2016). Therefore, the researcher considered interesting to research the implications of Snapchat Live into a tourism related context. Later on the purpose of Snapchat Live for this paper will be explained.

The interest of this topic is strongly connected with the personal experience of the researcher with the application. The curiosity for this topic appeared when once installed the Snapchat application on the phone, I was able to watch live photos and video snaps from different destinations and events each day. Short videos and photos were compiled together to tell the story of a particular event or destination. The thing which made the application interesting was the fact that these videos and photos weren’t planned or have not followed any script, but they were the raw truth about what can one find at these events or in these destinations. Behind these compilations of videos there are many other users who have helped and send the related photos or videos to the topic. Therefore, the topic of community on Snapchat regarding various

² Snpachat presentation by CEO Evan Spiegel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykGXIQAHLnA> – CEO Snapchat Evan Spiegel – What is Snapchat?

destinations will be interesting to investigate in this paper.

The principle of a community is to help people to have a purpose and to create memories in a comfortable circle of people (Bayer et al., 2016). According to a Ted Talk, Kramer mentions the necessity to share our experiences, where social media is the most accessible medium to share and contact our friends and family (Kramer, Unknown). People tend to share at length the small or funny moments to others through social media (Bayer et al., 2016). Sending a photo or a video has a bigger impact on the message and studies have shown that people respond better to this type of communication (Anderson K. E., 2015). Moreover, the sense of community can be defined as the relationship between humans to which they work to improve and ensure a healthy environment to live in (Maclellan-Wright, et al., 2007; Townley et al., 2011). The sense of community is based on the connection between people on how they work together for a common goal (Aref, 2011). One will say that following the crowd will make you part of the community, in fact participating actively to a set of local events or developing activities have more power on establishing the sense of community (Aref, 2011). Therefore, in this paper there will be explored the sense of community in 24 hours on Snapchat Live.

Communication through social media has a multitude of options and users have different ways of sending a message text (photos or videos). Studies have shown that these ways of communication reveal patterns of topics for a discussion (Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015). These patterns often are used as an input for creating a narrative story. The topics can vary. The users can relate to different subject themes, such as events (personal or social) or locations (a particular destination which is special in the user's eye) (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Placed in a common environment, these topics can make the user feel like he is part of a community and enhance the "together" factor (Riviere, 2005). Being part of social media, can give as much real interaction as a face-to-face discussion. People will always search for options to connect and interact. Social media is giving the perfect environment for people to find a common ground to meet no matter the

distance or differences (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013). Therefore, social media and sense of community are concepts that are working together. For this paper, they will be used to investigate the sense of community on Snapchat Live.

Furthermore, the context based platforms of social media can be characterized as entities represented by a person, place or item. These are relevant in order to ensure the connection between the user and the online (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015). Research shows a broad subject for the other social media tools (e.g. Facebook, Instagram or Twitter) but not so much for Snapchat. The gap in the literature regarding the last one can be the subject of a multitude of topics concerning the users, the company app and external actors. For this paper, the research will concern the users and their involvement in creating different social constructions to be identified by the other users. To be mentioned, the subject of analysis for this paper is to understand the community sense of the Snapchat users placed in a public content.

1.1 Problem formulation

- **To what extent there can be build a strong sense of community on Snapchat Live during a 24 hours live destination broadcast?**

In order to answer the problem formulation there will be used a theoretical framework, which will study the subjects of *social media*, *sense of community*, *Snapchat* and *travel bloggers*. These subjects will be detailed in the following chapter and later discussed in the analysis chapter.

The subject of *social media* is used to understand the online communities and how they influence different sectors of business; for this paper, there will also be discussed the term of social media in tourism. The researcher is interested into how social media works in the tourism sector; other business sectors are of no interest. Social media is the

place where people gather in different communities to share or communicate common ideas of joint interests. The sense of community in this research is explored to understand how online groups are getting together to be part of an online event.

The current paper is a study case about the *Snapchat* phone app, in particular *Snapchat Live*. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there hasn't been written any paper regarding the degree of sense of community on Snapchat Live 24 hours live broadcast. The intention of this research is to explore the Snapchat Live community, which in 24 hours is showing the unaltered image of a destination. The contributors of these online communities are *travel bloggers*. They share through social media their travel experiences, which generates a constructed content regarding tourism destinations. For this research, the travel bloggers represent the experts of the tourism industry. The reason for their participation in this research is represented by their travel experience and understanding of social media.

2 Theory

During the following chapter, there will be explained the theoretical framework used for this paper. The chapter starts with introducing the reader into the subject of social media and the connection to the tourism industry. Social media is important to be mentioned in order to understand online communities and function of Snapchat. Further, there will be discussed the subject of *sense of community* on social media and *value co-creation* about destinations. Sense of community is also the investigated topic in this research and for that matter it was important to be mentioned. In continuity, there will be presented the subject of *Snapchat* and *Snapchat Live* in order to understand the base of the mobile app as well as its features, in particular Snapchat Live – the sense of community is investigated on this feature. A brief presentation of *travel bloggers* will be found at the end of this chapter, where the empirical data will be based on interviews with them.

2.1 Social media

The term of social media was coined in the 2000's with the appearance of My Space and Facebook, but the original concept appeared in late 70's. Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis from Duke University, created a worldwide discussion system where Internet users were able to post public messages. Later on in the 90's it appeared "Open Diary", a networking platform which brought together diary writers in one community (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The contribution of these two millstones in the history of social media has led to the evolution of Web 2.0. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Lewis, 2012) (this concept will be later explained). SM is a broad subject to be discussed, which is not the aim of this research. In this particular case, the researcher is using SM only as the platform on which social constructions and communities are built. The subject of SM will be used only to understand and link further theories, which will be later presented.

Over the time, SM concept received various definitions mentioning the evolution and characteristics of the context. One of the definitions explains SM as a technological innovation, both in hardware and software, where users can interact, create, or communicate a common content (Wasserman & Faust, 1994; Peters et al., 2013). Kaplan (2009) agrees and adds that SM is formed from Internet-based applications where users can share opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). Moreover, SM is an educational tool, where users educate each other regarding different products, brands, media, or services (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Laroche et al., 2012). In other words, SM is a platform where users can generate a common content by sharing different views of their interests.

A basic classification of the SM can include *blogs, user generated content communities, social networking sites, virtual game, and social worlds* etc. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Additionally, SM is moving to mobile, breaking down the barriers between the time and location limitations (Peters et al., 2013; Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011). The term of *social media* is a construction of two study areas, communication science and sociology (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). In terms of communication, social media represents just a medium of storage or transmitting the information, whereas the sociology, specifically social networks, is leading users (individuals or organizations) to form social structures to be connected by shared views and beliefs (Peters et al., 2013). As for the users of SM, there can be identified six types of SM users: *creators* (write, create, and upload), *critics* (review the content), *collectors* (sort the online content and are influencers of SM), *joiners* (visit and maintain social networks), *spectators* (consumers of SM), and *inactives* (Isakovic & Sulcic, 2008; Howard, 2009). Therefore, for this research the researcher will focus on social structures and the collectors (bloggers – they will be presented in subchapter 2.4), which aims to give an answer on social groups on the phone application Snapchat Live from the problem formulation.

With the evolution of SM, the concept of Web 2.0 blasted on social life successfully, this

led to an interactive model of communication. From this point, the users weren't only the receivers, but active initiators and recipients of the information exchange (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011). Web 2.0 has changed the stage for SM users giving them power to develop, contribute, collaborate, customize, and distribute the online content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Khang, Han, & Ki, 2014). With the new attributes given by the newly improved facet of SM, users found themselves divided into specific communities. These were the result of shared ideas and views, where users started to identify with users with whom they were able to discuss their common interests (Lewis, 2012). Therefore, Web 2.0 is SM but with a flexible and friendlier environment where users find themselves sharing and creating content with like minded users.

At the beginning of this paper, it was mentioned that sharing content on a social online platform makes people feel connected and part of a community. Being part of an online community can have the same effect as being face-to-face, enhancing the "together" factor (Riviere, 2005). The *Maslow's Pyramid of needs*³ (Poston, 2009), (which defines accurately the concept of six levels of human needs), articulated the thought process of feeling connected and being part of a community. Thus, there can be observed that level of love and belongingness (social level), is the border between the basic needs level and *self-fulfillment level*. Even though all the levels are important to understand how humans are functioning, the interest of this research is the *social level*. By focusing only on this level, the researcher aims to understand the motives of SM users to use online platforms.

The *social level* represents the people's need of belongingness to their family, friends, or intimate partners (Tardini & Cantoni, 2005; Harsha, 2008). There is point out that one of the main reasons why people join SM is to fill in these needs of fulfillment and togetherness (Harsha, 2008). Moreover, the feeling of being socially connected is part of the central element of one's psychological sense of community (Laroche et al., 2012).

³ *Maslow's Pyramid of Needs* is a five stage model with representations of the human needs. Maslow wanted to understand the needs of people and what motivates them. In order to do so he designed the Pyramid of needs. The five stages can be identified as: 1. Physiological 2. Safety 3. Belonging 4. Self-Esteem 5. Self-Actualization (Poston, 2009). Therefore, for this paper there will be discussed only the belonging level

Morrow (2014) talks about the beauty of staying connected with family and friends, but also with artists or sport related events through SM. Another characteristic, which is playing an important role in the communication with others on SM, is blogging (Morrow, 2014). The characteristics and usage of the term blogging in this research will be explained in the next chapters.

Authors mention that people are also linked by the physical interaction and SM will only weaken these links (Davis, 2001; Gackenbach, 2011). Despite this idea, SM is a flexible environment and users can easily create the necessary functions to fulfill their specific needs (Anonymous, 1998). Rheingold (1999) argues that people will always use the new technology to fit their needs and not for what is firstly intended by its inventors (Rheingold, 1999). According to this statement, the technology of SM can be used in accordance to the user's needs. People will use this tool to create communities where they can fulfill the need of belongingness with like-minded people.

Each community is context based and members are sharing, discussing, and exchanging ideas regarding a particular topic. The online communities have a great impact on how each industry is developing. The tourism sector is getting more interesting for SM every day (Gyimóthy, Munar, & Larson, 2014). Further, there will be discussed the relation of SM within the tourism sector. This topic is relevant to answer the problem formulation regarding the formation of an online community on a destination. The subject of community will be further explored in the next subchapter.

2.1.1 Tourism social media

SM and Web 2.0 have managed to find their way in most of the aspects of our life. As discussed before, SM is a very important influence of how we perceive people, business, or social (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011). Regarding the current paper, the research is related and aimed to the tourism industry and therefore the researcher is interested about SM in tourism, and how is SM different from tourism social media. With the evolu-

of SM and appearance of Web 2.0, the tourism industry was one of the domains in which users were able to see the difference (Leung et al., 2013). Philip C. Wolf⁴ has labeled the new Web 2.0 applications from the tourism sector as Travel 2.0, where the content created will give a different image of the tourism world (Miguéns, Baggio, & Costa, 2008). Tourism social media is an extension of SM where users with interest on travel and tourism are sharing and commenting on this subject (ibid.). The tourism industry has clearly suffered changes in the last few years. With the introduction of the Web 2.0, tourists now don't just get the information from the online platforms, but they have the chance to influence what is posted (Munar, Gyimóthy, & Cai, 2013).

Tourists nowadays have the power to share, comment, or explore on destinations before, during, or after their travel experience. This step is a major leap into the future of traveling and how destinations are perceived (Weinberg, 2009; Gyimóthy, 2013). Web 2.0 has become more than just an informational medium, but is a technological tool, which is changing social interactions and communications, enhancing the online relationships (Weinberg, 2009). Since the progression of the Web 2.0, the tourism industry has expanded tremendously, adding a more raw and unaltered image of the destinations (Miguéns, Baggio, & Costa, 2008; Xiang & Grezel, 2010). Tourists are sharing on different platforms their experience or they provide tips and recommendations of do's and don'ts in a destination. In the new Web 2.0, tourists are engaged and contribute to the tourism industry more than before (Xiang & Grezel, 2010). Their participation in the online communities enables new ways of communications, creating the online effect of word-of-mouth (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2015).

As mentioned before, users are actively online on social media to share, communicate or create a content-based subject (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2015). In this case, travelers are sharing their travelling experiences in the online communities to accentuate the tourism fluid experience (Gyimóthy, 2013). Social media in tourism is based on emotions and imaginative travel, where the mundane is just a memory of the reality (Munar,

⁴ President and CEO of PhoCusWright, a leading consultancy firm in the tourism arena.

Gyimóthy, & Cai, 2013). Supposedly, the online tourism experience is altering the overall experience of the travel, where tourists are more concerned about what picture or video they share rather than enjoying the destination (Munar & Jacobsen, 2013; Ek, 2013). Jansson's (2002), on other hand, mentions that by sharing and committing to find a good moment that reflects the overall experience of the travel, enhances the on-location awareness (Jansson, 2002). Moreover, tourism social media can be perceived as a storytelling environment based on collective value creation (Munar & Jacobsen, 2013).

Tourism social media gives a sense of knowledge and appreciation for the destinations which are uncommon or presenting the old destinations from a different light (Jansson, 2002). For tourists sharing on SM is part of the holiday enjoyment, where they forget about the everyday life. Moreover, sharing the excitement of the holiday is vital in producing new or adding content to the online communities (Munar & Jacobsen, 2013). Therefore, by sharing, tourists feel a sense of identity with the shared content and can also strength their cultural view, richness in improving knowledge or ideas (Ek, 2013). Thus, the relation of this subject with the research stands in the online app Snapchat and the destinations that are presented each day in a social online content.

2.2 Sense of community on social media

From a sociological standpoint, a community is a deep, familiar, and cooperative connection that the members of a group share (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). According to Durkheim, the community is a sign of solidarity and loyalty to a shared set a values; he pins this as the collective conscience. Niesbet (1970) agrees with these statements and also mentions the personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion and continuity in time. However, these links are not exclusive, but rather reactive, contradictory and complementary (Cohen & Kennedy, 2007). The social link nowadays is transformed by fear and global changes for which people find peace in local communities and forms of belongings (Cohen & Kennedy, 2007; Moscardo, 2008). According to some authors, communities can be classified in three levels (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Cohen & Kennedy, 2007):

1. *Localism*: here there can be identified the small communities such as families, kin, ethnic and subnational sentiments.
2. *Nationalism*: groups that seek to improve or reform the state of a nation as form of loyalty and association.
3. *Transnationalism and multi-level identity*: the community level here is represented by organizations, groups or individuals which are trying to bring awareness on diversity and positive links between people at a local, national or global level.

People, who join SM, as mentioned at the beginning of this research, share the same desire to fulfill a need of belongingness. McAlexander (2002) relates, *“a community is made up of its entities and the relationship among them”* (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002). Based on this statement there can be said that the community factor is one of the most important characteristics of SM. In a SM community, the members are part of an interactional process where they comment, like or dislike, and create online content, which is shared in the digital environment (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011; Seraj, 2012; Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013). Therefore, the term of community is the extension of one’s need to feel connected to the others in order to not feel alone.

Based on McMillan (1986), sense of community represents the *“spirit of belonging together, a feeling that there is an authority structure that can be trusted, an awareness that trade, and mutual benefit come from being together, and a spirit that comes from shared experiences that are preserved as art”* (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Additionally, memories and the history of a group are quite definitive for a group. The sense is defined by the people who are involved in discussions and decision-making process, in which they protect and nurture the shared ideas of the community (Rovai, 2002). Belonging is more a state of faith and acceptance where they are representative for the sense of community. *“Faith that I will belong”*, as presented by McMillan (1996), is referring to the attraction that one might feel regarding a group (McMillan, 1996). One can hope that he/she is accepted as they are. Most of the times, people connect with famil-

iar environments and where they feel welcomed. *Acceptance* is the group/community response of the previous (McMillan, 1996). If an individual has the duty to demand their right to belong to a group, the group has the responsibility to accept that member (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; McMillan, 1996). When the desired community accepts one, then the attraction is even stronger (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Therefore, sense of community is the need of belongingness of members of a community, where they are linked by common understandings of concepts and memories.

According to the *interactionist theory*, the social interactions are more than just receiving and transmitting the content (Peters et al., 2013). People have the power to perceive, evaluate, augment, or alter the meaning in many ways (Edvardsson, Tronvoll, & Gruber, 2011). In that sense, social roles are relative and they can't be pinned to something permanent. The social roles are always changing, action based on members behavior in a social group (Seraj, 2012). The dynamic of the change stands in the process of the social interaction where groups are constantly aspiring to attract more members and for a superior social role (Peters et al., 2013). Riviere (2005) comments on improving communication and members' interaction, by the use of a hyper-real language (Riviere, 2005). The visual effect is a very important aspect for communication these days and users of SM are using more often this type of communication for an efficient real-time message (Ling & Pedersen, 2005).

Another aspect that needs to be taken in an account when discussing sense of community on SM is the *personal extensibility* of the members (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). When Web 2.0 was introduced, the users' possibilities to connect with the others multiplied tremendously. Families, friends or groups of any kind are at one click away. Personal extensibility refers to the ability of a person or group to overcome the time and space through technological communication (Riviere, 2005; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). This approach is innovative in regards to developing new communication technologies, because in this way people will be able to cut the necessary time in order to connect

with the others (Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007). It has been argued that when distant connections are easier to uphold, the social patterns are also changing, meaning that social groups will always find new ways to communicate and be together (Rheingold, 1999). Sense of community is one of the focus points of the problem formulation and therefore is important to explore the process of co-creation regarding a tourism content on SM. Further there will be explored the co-creation value in the tourism industry on SM.

2.2.1 Value co-creation in tourism industry through social media

Co-creation is an interactive process on which the users of SM share, comment, or like their ideas, thus creating new knowledge (Prebensen, Chen, & Uysal, 2014). The reason why the concept of co-creation is included in this paper is because it stands at the base of SM and Web 2.0. and adds a new understanding on how communities are working on online platforms.

Tourism social media is a complex set a factors which entails aspects such as type of destination and travel form, also levels of e-literacy, demographic factors (age or nationality and personality characteristics of the tourists) (Gyimóthy, Munar, & Larson, 2014). Although sharing travel experiences on SM may look fun, studies show distinct characteristics in terms of the type of content shared as well for the type of platform that the tourist is using (Bowen & Clarke, 2009). Pan (2006) acknowledges that the online platforms can support many types of communications and for that matter the users have the freedom to decide on the context that they personally reflected upon. As a response against the planned image by the promoters, the users created blogs to diminish the promoters control over the shared context (Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006) The Internet has a huge influence on image creation in the tourism industry, and more, the tourist can easily find the resources to find the information that they need.

The virtual community has a great effect on how the tourism industry is perceived. Due

to their communication tools, the travelers are becoming part-time marketers and value co-creators (Gyimóthy, Munar, & Larson, 2014). Most of the times, a shared content from these travelers is more trustworthy and authentic than the messages coming from media or travel agents. This phenomenon alters the local branding and the promotional messages for the tourism industry (Kozinets, Hemetsberger, & Schau, 2008; Gyimóthy, Munar, & Larson, 2014). Nonetheless, the amateur opinions coming from travelers are constructing and contributing to the travel experience. These opinions are often based on fantasy, emotions and playfulness (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). Tourists are value co-creators, and with this label come also the responsibility to continue and sustain the work for developing the image of the tourism industry. As such, tourists can be seen as key elements of development and innovation, which concerns the evolution of tourism industry (Kozinets, Hemetsberger, & Schau, 2008; Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010).

The co-creation process involves also the destination (Gyimóthy, Munar, & Larson, 2014). The tourists are an active and networked consumer which provides different meanings of the destination culture. But how does the destination contribute to the value co-creation? The travelers can give a different perspective to a destination due to their extended knowledge on travelling, and dealing with various cultures (Kozinets, Hemetsberger, & Schau, 2008). Larson (2012) identifies three types of value co-creation strategy, as it follows: (Gyimóthy, Munar, & Larson, 2014). Based on this classification, the destinations control over the value co-creations is progressively passed to the community member.

According to the above, the sense of community is a very important factor on SM. Obviously, the online platforms can't function without the community factor. All the shared content is made and promoted by members of these communities. In regards of this research, the discussed subject is important in order to understand the online communities in relation to the tourism sector and the way they construct the image of a destination.

2.3 Snapchat

The SM world has evolved tremendously in the last few years which led to a change in the meaning of the ephemeral digital content. If the traditional meaning of the ephemeral was standing in post cards, brochures, fliers etc, the modern image reflects upon complex creations of the digital content which live for a short period of time (Anderson K. E., 2015). The opportunities to use the new digital ephemera are countless, and for that reason very hard to quantify. The Library of Congress announced in 2010 a project with the purpose to categorize the content on SM. Three years later, the project was still standing but facing difficulties to grasp the magnitude of the digital content. However, nowadays the project has become infeasible due to the mentioned obstacles (Duke, 2010; Allen, 2013; Scola, 2015). Even though it is difficult to categorize the ephemeral digital content, there has been acknowledged the importance into the daily life (Silverstone, 1989; Anderson K. E., 2015; Bayer et al., 2016).

Changing the contextual idea of the digital ephemeral gave the chance to be developed new social applications. One of the main representative characteristics of these is a specific set of time or number for which the content is available (Anderson K. E., 2015). A particular application has showed fast development in the SM and that is Snapchat. One of the authors' acknowledges *"the rise in Snapchat use has been one of the most rapid and unprecedented in the history of instant messaging services and social networking sites"* (Piwek & Joinson, 2016). Snapchat was invented in 2011 by Evan Spiegel and Bobby Murphy, with the idea of *"communicating with the full range of human emotion—not just what appears to be pretty or perfect"* (Evan, 2012). The application was very fast accepted by millennials at first (Perez, 2014; Kosoff, 2015; Guest, 2016). They were sending photo snaps to their friends as a way of communication. The content was available only for maximum 10 seconds (as generated by the sender). Afterwards, it was disappearing, making the communication process intriguing (Snapchat, 2016). Later on, Snapchat got attention from the business and media sector as well (Anderson K. M.,

2016; Patel, 2016; Gioglio, Unkown). The new channel of communication was a sure way to connect with the teenagers, which represent an important segment in the online sector (Anderson K. E., 2015).

With the new interest, Snapchat has developed new features, which are appealing for a wider range of users. From the new additions of the application, the curiosity of the researcher lies on the Snapchat Live feature. Furthermore, there will be explained the characteristics of the mentioned and its importance in the tourism sector.

2.3.1 Snapchat Live

On October 2013 *Snapchat* introduced *Snapchat Stories* (Snapchat, 2013). The system for the new feature was to collect individual snaps into a narrative story, which can be available for 24 hours (Snapchat, 2013). An interest from the business sector was bound to happen and various organizations saw a potential in this feature (Manalo, 2015; Wagner, 2015; Mansfield, 2015). In order to accommodate the attention from the business actors, Snapchat had updated Snapchat Stories. At the beginning, the snaps were available only 10 seconds and shared only with friends. With the new updates, the users of Snapchat Stories were able to share the content with everyone and creating a longer story, which can be viewed many times (Anderson K. E., 2015; Snapchat, Unknown). By July 2014, Snapchat Stories got upgraded with its own feature, *Our Story* (Snapchat, 2014) (also known as *Snapchat Live* – through this research, *Our Story* will be referred as Snapchat Live (SL), in order to avoid confusion during the research). The new upgrade was delivering the same type of narrative content, but this time everybody was involved in the creation of the story. From users to Snapchat staff to media, everybody was able to add their input on SL (Franzen, 2014).

SL presents an unaltered image regarding the experience of different festivals, sport, political event and cultural celebrations. The users are able to experience the raw image of these events from the perspective of many. Each day is a “day in the life” of a city, such

as Oslo, Madrid, or Rio (Anderson K. E., 2015; Tolisano, 2015; Fynbo, 2016). Many authors acknowledge the influence that SL has on destinations, where everyday users can get a glimpse of what a normal day is in a particular destination (Murphy, 2014; Wojdylo, 2015; Nodes, 2015).

2.3.2 Tourism destinations on Snapchat Live

SL is a very big influencer of how destinations and events, which are occurring in various locations, are seen by the entire world (Dua, 2014; Mcculley, 2015; Fynbo, 2016). For the tourism industry, SL is a new platform, where tourists can meet together to share experiences or to find the next destination where to travel (Fontein, 2015; Scarborough, 2016; Freeman, 2016). The first destination which was broadcasted on SL started in the Caribbean, and later cities such as Tokyo or Dominican Republic appeared on the SL feature (Wright, 2015; Wojdylo, 2015). According to many of the authors, SL brings a true, raw and authentic glimpse of the city (Dodson, 2015). The narrative city stories are showed in a “real-timeish” and after 24 hours they disappear (Mcculley, 2015). A SL story can start from the morning, continuing with different events around the city during the day, and ending in the evening (Dua, 2014). This kind of scenario really presents to the viewer a day in that particular city.

The content from each destination is generated from an online Snapchat community formed from locals and tourists from these destinations. This aspect gives a unique image of the destination, one different from what media in general is trying to present (Anderson K. E., 2015). As one of the authors mentions “*Snapchat for travel is inviting*” (Robertson, Unknown). Every city story is personal and each participant, local or tourists, try their best to show their view of a particular place (Sloane, 2015). Dua (2014) is agreeing, “*...Snapchat is designed for personal, unguarded and free-flowing experiences...*” (Dua, 2014). SL is often used as check-in service by the users in order to let friends and families know where they are and what they are doing (O'Reilly, 2015). The personal aspect of SL is a given when most of the content on the platform is constructed by people for people.

The literature research has also presented SL as an educational tool for those who are not familiar with certain destinations or situations from different parts of the world. In the summer of 2015, Snapchat Live had as city guests Tel Aviv, West Bank, and Nairobi. The first two cities were in a political distress at that time, and the last one unknown in the eyes of the travel world (Drescher, 2015; Ungerleider, 2015). Their presence on SL had both positive and negative comments. In the case of Tel Aviv and West Bank, many misunderstood the stories, claiming that they were not presenting the real side of the story (Braun, 2015; Ries, 2015). The presence of Nairobi was unexpected because this one it was not a known destination in the tourism industry, and some weren't impressed by the SL story to visit the destination (Wojdylo, 2015). These are just two of the examples for which SL is considerate a medium where users can expect something else than just a travel channel. Fynbo (2016) acknowledges "*...The popular app is becoming eyes to the world -- perhaps even for the most close-minded people*" (Fynbo, 2016). In other words, SL can also be an informational channel about what is happening behind the scenes in a particular destination, not only for tourism related issues.

For this paper, SL represents the SM tool, which will be investigated in order to answer the problem formulation. The research question explores destinations on a social platform; therefore SL is the domain, which will be investigated further in this research.

2.4 Bloggers

The term of bloggers is used to identify the virtual writers of a blog (Jenkins, 2006; Agarwal, Lei Tang, & Yu, 2008; White, 2013). They can be characterized as complainers, lovers or fighters, where most of them adopt more than one characteristic; but before they can be labeled, bloggers are filters (White, 2013). For bloggers, the informational volume is enormous and they need to know how to curate the right topics, which will be of interest for the readers. Another task which they fulfill is the one of editing the published content. Due to the wide range of public material, bloggers are not working just with text. Their blog can consist of pictures, likes, comments, videos, everything that can

be recognized as a method of communication (Jenkins, 2006; White, 2013).

As any other magazine or newspaper, bloggers need to identify a niche (Flynn, 2006; White, 2013). Writing about personal life or “kittens”, that is not blogging, but rather an online diary (White, 2013). True bloggers write about subjects that matter within their niche of expertise (Flynn, 2006). Blogging is a communication process where knowledge is passed from one expert to the other. Although many times the blog process can interfere with corporate interests, such as product marketing, blogging can also be a tool to understand culture (Jenkins, 2006).

The subject of this research lies into the tourism industry, which represents the bloggers niches. Furthermore, in the following subchapter, the subject of *travel bloggers* will be discussed. This subject is important to be mentioned because travel bloggers represent the expert interviews, which will be analyzed later on in the analysis chapter. A presentation of the interviewees will be conducted in the following chapter.

2.4.1 Travel bloggers

Travel blogs are “*individual entries which relate to planned, current or past travel . . . are the equivalent of personal online diaries . . . commonly written by tourists to report back to friends and families about their activities and experiences during trips*” (Pühringer & Taylor, 2008). As presented before, blogs are a source of information and for the tourism industry they are a representation of one or many, of the travel experience (Banyai & Glover, 2012; Tse & Zhang, 2013). Readers can find on these travel blogs recommendations regarding accommodation, cuisine, activities or “must see” location and more (Pan, MacLaurin, & Crofts, 2007; Akehurst, 2008). The writers of these travel blogs, travel bloggers, are the link between the destination and the reader. They document every step or what they think is important to be shared, in order to give a different perspective of the destination to their followers (Bosangit, McCabe, & Hibbert, 2009; Azariah, 2012). The shared content is a sign of self-expression and social interaction with

people who have the same interests (e.g. followers) (Bosangit, McCabe, & Hibbert, 2009).

Although a travel blogger can suggest an in-depth understanding of the destination, some authors are skeptic towards the actual experience with the destination (Carson & Schmallegger, 2007). On the other hand, Choi (2007) argues that a travel blog can enable new discoveries in a destination (Choi, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007). Travel bloggers can expose genuine opinions or attitudes and stumble upon strengths and weaknesses which are not presented in the media (Banyai & Havitz, 2013). Therefore, the travel bloggers represent the segment on which this research will be conducted.

3 Methodology

In the following chapter, there will be explained the research methods used for this paper as well as the philosophical approaches under which this paper was written. The chapter will be divided in two subchapters.

In the first part there will be explained the ontological and epistemological view in relation to the chosen paradigm. Prior to the problem formulation, the aim of this research is to investigate the degree of sense of community on a mobile app in a short period of time. The images send to the mobile app by the users are part of social constructions to form a narrative story regarding a destination. Therefore, this research is based in the social sciences and will be written under the social constructivism paradigm.

In the second part of the chapter there will be detailed the data collection techniques, including the analysis methods and details regarding the interview guide and the interviewees. The subchapter will include a model for the data collection in which it will be detailed the stages used in gathering the necessary information for this paper.

3.1 Philosophy of science: An ontological and epistemological view on the social constructivism paradigm

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann first presented the term of social constructivism in the 1996 book "The Social Construction of Reality". In their book they stress on the fact that the new knowledge is constructed on a daily basis from different levels of interaction (Collin, 2013; Egholm, 2014). Later on in 1994 other scholar, by the name of Ludwing Wittgenstein, added two new definitions to the term of social constructivism,

which present a deeper understanding of the paradigm (Holm, 2011). The first definition is referring to the meaning and context of language (*language games*). Each context is followed by rules that later decide the language game of the discussion. The second definition regards the movement of the language (*life-form*). We live in a world where we are constantly influenced by what we say; to a degree, these language games determine how we live our life (Holm, 2011). Previous to the problem formulation, the topic of this research is a social construction of the members' engagement through the SL app to show a constructed image that represents the degree of sense of community in regards of a destination. A common language, which consists in posts such as pictures and video snaps which ties the members. The common language used by the members is the result of a new knowledge regarding the destination and therefore lively representations of what they are sharing (language games -> life-form). Therefore, to understand the view of social constructivism on language and new knowledge, it is important to support these statements before the ontological and epistemological views of social constructivism.

The ontological and epistemological approaches for the social constructivists are represented by two characteristics with the purpose of creating a general idea of this paradigm. The first characteristic is related to the *material/physical* sphere and the *social* and *human* sphere, where they represent the ground of the paradigm construction. The second characteristic represents the different views between the *ontological and epistemic* constructivism (Collin, 2013). The basic beliefs of the ontological constructivist is concerning the nature of reality and world itself, where as the epistemic social constructivism is dealing with the individuals knowledge of the world (Guba, 1991; Holm, 2011; Collin, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Kukla, 2013; Egholm, 2014). In order to understand the two social constructivist characteristic, Collin (2013) has constructed a table where there can be observed the varieties of social constructivism:

Ontology	Epistemology
<i>The material / physical world</i>	
The material/ physical world is constructed by collecting the human thought and practice	Our knowledge about the material / physical world is constructed by collective human thought and practice
<i>The social and human world</i>	
The social and human world is constructed by collective human thought and practice	Our knowledge about the social and human world is constructed by collective human thought and practice

Table 1. Varieties of social constructivism (Collin, 2013)

As presented in the table above, the form of social constructivism is always highlighting the nature of reality and the construction of the social world. The overall idea of the term is based on the beliefs and tacit knowledge that one might have in relation to a subject (Bevir, 2010). The subject of sense of community is a representation of a group's intention to believe in the power of the many, where their ontological views are to present a common idea of the subject to the world (Collin, 2013; Egholm, 2014). The general idea of the paradigm is that the social world is a representation of our intentional actions (Bevir, 2010; Holm, 2011). In other words, through the process of socialization we acquire a set of beliefs and knowledge which directs the way we perceive the world (Egholm, 2014). SL is presenting this kind of process, contributing constantly to enriching the way members of the app may perceive a destination. Users of SM, and moreover Snapchat, are part of a group with a shared view of the world, which to some extent are automatically categorized. Social constructivism is arguing these beliefs, claiming that the members' intentions are very much influenced by traditions, discourses or systems of knowledge, which stand at the base of these social constructs (Bevir, 2010; Holm,

2011; Egholm, 2014). Alongside, the social actors build these beliefs and meanings, which later are acting upon it (Bevir, 2010).

Prior to the problem formulation, the aforementioned is standing as a frame in consideration to the literature review and research methods. Sense of community is presented as the central point of this research and for the discourse analysis (this type on analysis will be explained in the following subchapters) (Holm, 2011; Egholm, 2014). The direction of the research is very much influenced by the researcher (Holm, 2011). Being a social constructivist it allows the researcher to get involved in the research process. The paradigm is based on constructing new knowledge and meaning, therefore the researcher can interpret collected data in order to explore new findings. Besides, being active and part of the Snapchat community, I am involuntarily influenced by the mobile app content. As a user of Snapchat and a regular viewer of SL, I experienced both sides of the social constructivism ontological and epistemic views. As a social actor, the image perceived by the members of the SL community has influenced my view on how I see different destinations (Egholm, 2014). That was the starting point which constructed the idea about the research and later on directed the frame for the theoretical framework (Egholm, 2014).

3.2 Research methods: A social constructivist approach of a qualitative research

For this paper, the qualitative interviews with travel bloggers serve as the main type of data. The research is written under the social constructivism paradigm. According to this paradigm, social constructivism is based on identifying the language from a community where further is constructed a new knowledge. Therefore using a qualitative research is the obvious choice in pursuing this paper and also recommended by the social constructivism paradigm. Further, the model 1 will be presented, which is a representation of the stages that the researcher followed in order to gather the necessary understanding and data over the researched topic.

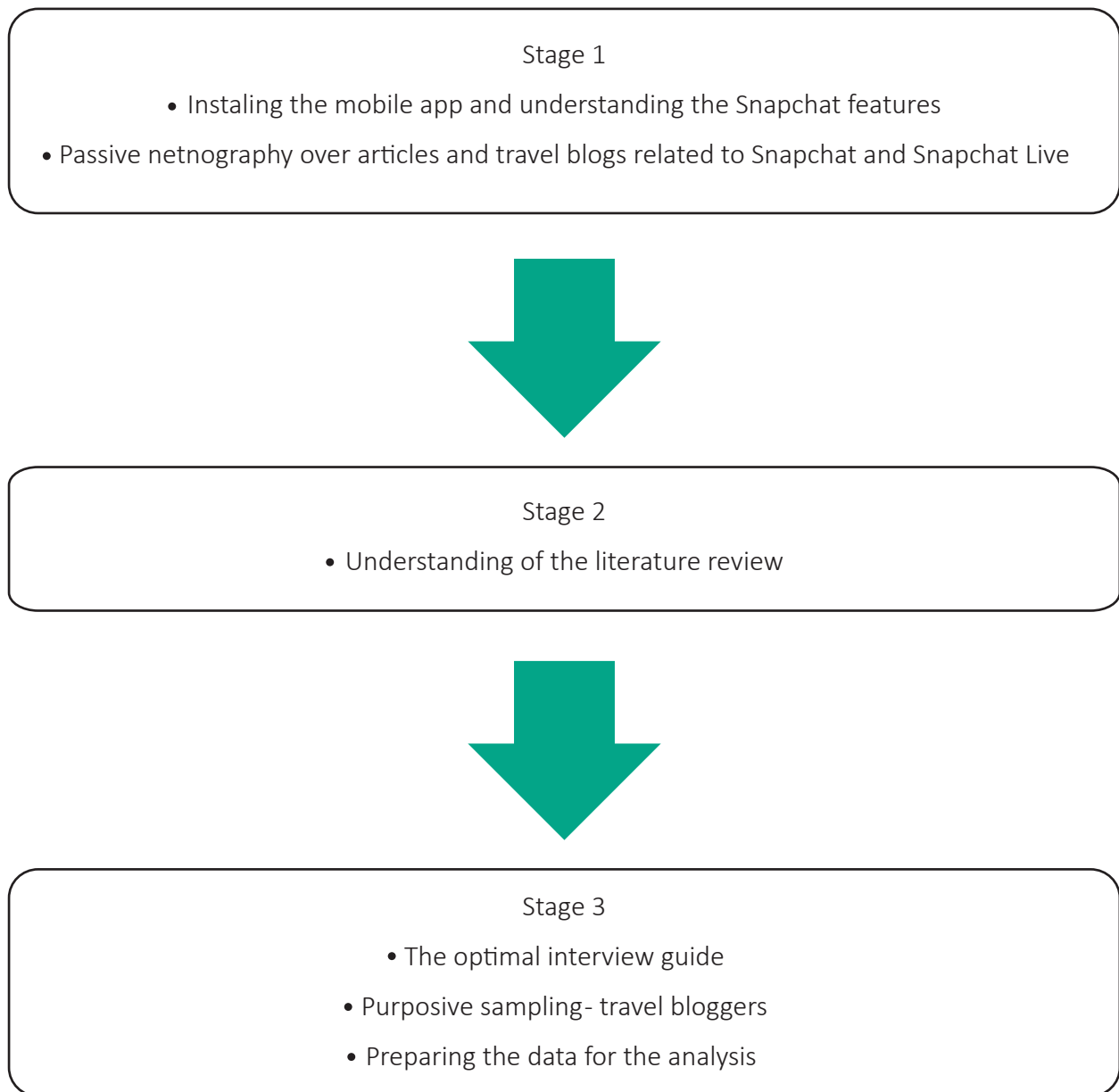


Figure 1: The three stages of the data collection (own illustration)

Stage 1

During the first stage of the data collection, the mobile app Snapchat was installed on the researcher's phone. Once that happened, by actively using the mobile app, other features were discovered, such as SL. In order to have a better understanding over the mobile app and the relation with travelling, there has been done a *passive netnography* over travel blogs and online articles (Bryman, 2008). Throughout the passive netnography phase, the researcher was only reading various online articles regarding the mobile app, in order to get familiar with the utility of Snapchat in tourism and travelling. The next step of the passive netnography was reading travel blogs, where travel bloggers were documenting their travel through Snapchat. Later on, the travel bloggers were picked as the segment (the purposive sampling and the interviewees' presentation will be explained in the following section of this subchapter) for this research. The passive netnography is recommended when the researcher's intention is to get acquainted with a particular topic (Kozinets R. V., 2010). This kind of research implies a passively observation of websites and related online platforms, to indentify various topics which may be of interest for the researcher (Lugosi, Janta, & Watson, 2012; Blichfeldt & Marabese, 2014).

Stage 2

Prior to the Snapchat installation and passive netnography, the researcher got interested in the sense of community on SL. The reason for this topic resulted from the researcher's curiosity towards the momentary process of co-creation of SL content as well as the ephemeral sense of community on this feature. Therefore, the literature review was build based on the researcher beliefs and review of stage 1. The pillar of this approach is accepted by the social constructivist paradigm, where people are influenced in the process of creating new knowledge (Holm, 2011; Egholm, 2014).

Stage 3

In the last stage of the data collection techniques model, there was constructed an optimal interview guide based on the passive netnography and the literature review. This

method was used in order to design a specific set of questions for the interviewees, and to obtain detailed answers in relation to the chosen topic for this research. In the next phase of this stage there were contacted travel bloggers. The sampling of the interviewees was done intentionally due to their close relation with the mobile app Snapchat, and understanding of the tourism industry (Bryman, 2012). For the last phase of this stage, the gathered data was prepared according to the discourse analysis motives (a further explanation of this method will be presented in the last section of this subchapter). Using the discourse method allows the researcher to find new meanings during the data collection, which can be used further in creating new knowledge (Holm, 2011; Egholm, 2014). Therefore, the relevant theories and collected data were compared and analyzed in the analysis.

3.2.1 The optimal interview guide and purposive sampling

The interviews were conducted through email (e-interviews) and Skype. In both cases, the reason why a face-to-face interview hasn't been done is because the distance between the researcher and the interviewees. Having a tight travel schedule, a face-to-face meeting would have implied a visit from one of the sides at the location where they live (in that moment). In regards of the interview types, both methods have positive and negative impacts on the overall result of the interview. The e-interviews consist in an exchange of emails between the interviewer and interviewee (Bryman, 2008). These types of interviews are comfortable for the interviewee because he/she is in their own environment and they can take their time to answer, but on a down side, it can lower the spontaneity of the answer and misunderstandings in the communication process (Bryman, 2012). This type of interview was used for the travel bloggers with a difficulty reaching them by a Skype meeting. The second method of interview is Skype. This type of interview, from where there can be accessed the video camera, can provide a more personal interaction between the interviewer and interviewee (Bryman, 2008; Bryman, 2012). In this sense, the answers can be interpreted on spot which can give the chance to go deeper in the topics of interest. Of course, this method is not flawless and technical problems (e.g. low internet speed, quality of the signal etc.) may discourage

the interviewee to continue with the interview. Nonetheless, this type of interview is more appropriate when the distance between the researcher and interviewee plays a huge role in scheduling a meeting.

The optimal interview guide represents the standing point of this research, where later will be used for the analysis. When constructing the interview guide, it was used the seven stages of creating an interview from Kvale (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015):

Stage 1: Thematizing

The purpose of the research is to explore the degree of sense of community on SL during a 24 hours live broadcast of a destination. The researcher wants to investigate if there is possible to build a strong sense of community during this short period of time. The pre-obtained knowledge about SM, Snapchat and sense of community are the main topic, which stands at the base of the interview guide.

Stage 2: Designing

Prior to the first two stages from model 1, the interview design is based on the researcher's understanding in regards to Snapchat, SL, and the literature review. These two tools helped in identifying specific questions for the optimal interview guide. The next step in the process was to write as many questions as possible related to the topic, where after there were chosen or rewritten only the most relevant, among the sum of questions.

Stage 3: Interviewing

One person writes this project; therefore, solely the researcher of this paper did the interviews. As mentioned in the previous section, there were used two types of interviews, Skype and e-interview. In both types, the interview guide was the same; however, the researcher also experienced different topic changes or misunderstandings of the questions. Regarding Skype interviews, the low internet signal, the background noise or the availability of both side, influenced the quality of how the interview was held. In regards to the e-interview, there was an exchange of emails between the interviewer

and interviewee. The interview process was quite strict and impersonal in regards of the e-interview, but for the Skype interview, there was the possibility to go in-depth with some questions if it was necessary. Both interviews were performed in English, even though the interviewees had different nationalities. Therefore, the language barrier was too a factor in understanding some of the questions.

Stage 4: Transcribing

The researcher decided not to transcribe the Skype interviews. The reason behind this decision was the concern regarding the time that was supposed to be allocated for transcribing, where the same time could be used to write this paper. Even though there are no transcriptions of the Skype interviews, the recordings can be found at the end of this paper, on DVD. However, the e-interviews can be found in the annex section of this paper.

Stage 5: Analyzing

For this research there was used the method of the discourse analysis. The researcher divided the chapter in two sections. First section managed the analyses of the empirical data for the purpose of identifying the travel bloggers understanding on the subjects from chapter 2. The new findings will guide the path of establishing different understandings of the sense of community on SL based on the travel bloggers understanding.

Stage 6: Verifying

The interviews have exposed different themes and topics that are connecting the interviews. In order to ensure the reliability of the data, there was used the same interview guide for both Skype and e-interviews. The guideline of the interview questions was based on the researcher's understanding and the theoretical framework.

Stage 7: Reporting

The research data will be presented in the analysis in accordance to the social constructivism beliefs. During the Skype interviews, the researcher recorded them, with the

permission of the interviewees. Before starting, the reason and topic of the interview was briefly introduced in order to remind the interviewer the theme of the interview.

The sample size for this research consists in twelve interviews, with six females and six men. The even number of the genders was not on purpose, it's just a coincidence based on the availability and response of the interviewees. The age of the interviewees is not relevant for this research. The focus lies in the interested background of the interviewees, which is travel bloggers. In this case the sampling was purposive; method also recommended when doing a qualitative research (Bryman, 2008; Bryman, 2012). This research is mainly based on the SL feature of Snapchat, however, due to the settings of the app, getting in contact with the members from SL was impossible and therefore travel bloggers with knowledge about Snapchat and SL were the obvious choice for the continuity of this research.

3.2.2 Data analysis (discourse analysis)

The gathered data will be analyzed according to discourse analysis. This type of analysis is strongly recommended by social constructivists (Holm, 2011; Egholm, 2014). The reason why I choose to work with this type of analysis is because it allows to identify new knowledge and language through the data collection. When working with the discourse analysis, Taylor (2013) recommends four reasons to work with when analyzing the data collection and the literature review (Taylor, 2013). These will be later applied in the analysis chapter.

Reason 1: To work with interesting data

Exploring the ephemeral on SM and Snapchat has proven to be an interesting topic to research. During the research process, I, as the researcher and a common user of SM and Snapchat, have learned new aspects and characteristics about the two mentioned. My knowledge on community and the meaning of this concept has improved considerably in regards to how I perceive the online communities and their extent.

Reason 2: To investigate the practices and interactions of ordinary social life

The essence of the research is based on social interactions that are building communities on the online. The practices behind these communities consist in the ordinary shared on a social platform and the reaction afterwards. Snapchat represents a domain in which users are sharing the raw and unaltered reality of a situation. On another side of Snapchat is SL, where there can be observed the ordinary from a destination or event. Thus, these practices and interactions of SL users are of interest for the researcher.

Reason 3: To investigate a particular culture

The investigated culture for this research is the one of Snapchat. As presented at the beginning, Snapchat is quite a new tool on SM. Being part of Snapchat is like being part of a specific culture. The users of this app have a particular language and communicational system that they use, by means of photos or video snaps. That is why the researcher found interesting to research a community, which in essence is ephemeral but has such impact on social online nowadays.

Reason 4: To research identity

The purpose of this research was not to make a classification of gender, nationality or background of the travel bloggers. The only criterion for interviewees was for them to be travel bloggers and document their travel through Snapchat. Therefore, the identified identity for this research lies in the travel bloggers, no matter their sex, age or background. For this reason, travel bloggers were mainly used for their knowledge regarding destinations and SM platforms.

The purpose of the discourse analysis in this research is to understand and identify how the online content of SL is constructed by the feature users. Therefore, the travel bloggers will be used as representatives of the general collective to identify these social constructions and structures (Egholm, 2014). The study of discourse analysis will try to establish the object and subject positions of this research (Holm, 2011; Egholm, 2014). Hence, in the following chapter there will be presented the discourses of the data.

4 Analysis

In this chapter there will be explored the gathered empirical data into the theory framework from chapter 2, where the aim is to investigate the degree of sense of community on Snapchat Live, as it can be seen in the problem formulation and introduction. The analysis chapter will be divided in two subchapters. In the first subchapter there will be explored various themes which were investigated during the data collection in order to explore the understanding of the travel bloggers on the subjects from the theoretical framework. In the second subchapter there will be discussed various understandings of the sense of community on SL. These understandings will be the results of the analysis of empirical data and the interpretations of the researcher from part 1. In order to identify these understandings, there was used the tool of interpretation, as the social constructivism and discourse analysis are recommending (Egholm, 2014). As mentioned in methodology chapter, the analysis type for this research is based on discourse analysis. In that regards, the four reasons of Taylor (2008) were used to identify the subjects of interpretations for this research.

Part 1: Analysis of empirical data

During this subchapter there will be presented various topics which are based on the optimal interview guide. The related topics are important to identify the understanding of the travel bloggers in relation to the already mentioned subjects in chapter 2. The following subchapters represent the results of the researchers' interpretation on new knowledge which was identified during the interviews. The gathered knowledge will be used later to identify different meanings that the travel bloggers have on the degree of sense of community on SL.

4.1.1 Defining social media

SM has had a long development during the years, transcending from a tool with a one way of communication to a creative tool of sharing our experiences and life on the online platforms. As mentioned previously (subchapter 2.1.), introducing Web 2.0 has led to a flexible way of communication, where users can be active members during the process of discussion. The new stage of SM is more welcoming in regards to what users can do. As noted by Kaplan (2010), members of SM can go from developing to customize to distribute de online content as they please and to whom they consider that it will be appreciated. Many of the SM members which were interviewed are using this tool as way of keeping in contact with their family or friends, but at the same time to document their life.

"I like using social media for keeping in touch with friends and family. It's important to me that they know I'm safe when I'm traveling." (@penny764)

"For personal use, I think it is fantastic, because obviously with travelling a lot is just so great to keep in touch with friends and family back home, and before we didn't really have that, you had to call them or write a letter or something." (@thehostelgirl)

@penny764 and @thehostelgirl acknowledge the idea of staying connected with their close ones. One of the reasons to keep them posted is due to the easy reach of the friends or family trough SM. A second reason is to inform them about their wellbeing during their travels. The social level in this case is very much reached. Even though the travel bloggers are far away from home, by being online on SM gives them the interaction they need in order to feel that they are still being part of the community of their friends and family. The above-mentioned statements only confirm the statement of Rheingold (1991), where people will use new technology in manners never intended in the first place. Based on the same idea of Rheingold (1991), it has been shown that SM is a way for users to document not just their moments and travels, but also their life.

Posting and sharing a video or a photo on SM it gives to the users the occasion to follow their own life as well. In this way, they can remember forgotten moments or observe the important milestones from their life. @kickthe grind discusses the idea of following his life and the important moments during the years with the help of SM tools.

"...and document my life too. Because for me just having an ongoing reference is quite interesting, to go back a few years and see what I was doing and watch Snap Stories that I saved back then or videos, it's cool to have that, because no matter what age you are in the future being able to go back and see what you've done and be like "Oh, I forgot all about that one!" even if it's not the most interesting thing, being able to go back and see yourself like that, is very heartwarming too." (@kickthe grind)

@kickthe grind contemplates on his existence over time and space regarding the usage of SM. The thought about being able to be transported in a past memory it makes the respondent emotional regarding his previous work. According to the Maslow's Pyramid of needs (cf. subchapter 2.1), the *self-fulfillment* level represents the following level in the humans needs after the *love and belongingness*. This can be seen as a result of the previous level in the pyramid, where once the user of SM finds itself part of an online group, he is more aware of the past and memories.

The length of SM is going beyond the boundaries of family and friends. In a quest for acceptance and a feeling of belonging, the members of SM are parts of groups that share the same passion and interests as them.

"Social media is a great tool for connecting people in various different ways through interests, passion, news and more." (@cailinoneil)

The blogs and online virtual communities are the proof of the statement of @cailinoneil. With the introduction of Web 2.0, members of SM can easily find other people who are sharing the same perception of the world. They can comment, get informed or develop

content within a specific community which is built on their sole beliefs. At this point SM is viewed as a strong learning tool from which members can get informed.

“People are learning and seeing things around the world live and in the moment that would never have been previously available to them had social media not come about.”
(@cailinoneil)

“Social media is amazing, and not only just to keep in touch, from wherever you are, with family and friends, but you can literally travel everywhere, not to say that as social media user you are exposed to an insanely amount of information from which you can learn a lot.” (@thebrokebackpacker)

@cailinoneil and @thebrokebackpacker are expanding the understanding of SM, where the tool can be used also to teach, inform and educate. Looking back at subchapter 2.1, co-creation is the interactive process on which users of SM are getting engaged to share, comment or like ideas, leading in the end to create new knowledge (Prebensen, Chen, & Uysal, 2014). The new knowledge in this case is represented by the *“insanely amount of information”* which users share on SM. By interacting and sharing, users of SM are authors of new meanings and language that is happening online. Every day the SM platforms are flooded with new information, which is influencing the views of how the world is perceived. As mentioned at the beginning (cf. Introduction), we are spending most of our time online, checking our email or liking a photo, SM is part of our life. Although being active on SM can have so many positive aspects, some are not quite pleased about using it.

“I would prefer a world in which I was not expected to do any social media, because is something that I don't particularly enjoy, but it's a necessary evil in order to get the people to care about what I am doing.” (@baurjoe)

"A lot of people that I know that work in traditional media or work in word print or a bit older, look at social media as a necessary evil or they don't want to do it at all ..."

(@krista_simmons)

As it can be observed, people are still skeptic in regards to SM and what it can offer due to the unexpected and unpredictability that SM presents. @baurjoe refers to SM as the method to reach people, even if he doesn't like to use SM. This shows acceptance from the respondent side and approval that things are changing, and being part of SM can only be controlled by the engagement of the user.

4.1.2 Social media on tourism destinations

The introduction of Web 2.0 in SM has brought a new perspective on how we perceive the world these days. Moreover, in the tourism sector, Web 2.0 has impacted destinations and influenced tremendously the way we travel. Nowadays, the common traveler is the link between the way the world and the online. Everything from positive to negative experiences are shared on the new SM. These days, tourists can find tips and follow different travelers who are documenting their traveling before, during and after, aspect, which can present a different image from post to post, or picture or video. Munar (2014) is mentioning the network factor and the fact that people trust more when somebody famous (for this paper the famous people are the travel bloggers) or trusted, are recommending a destination.

"Using myself as an example, people tell me every day that I have influenced them to take a trip from looking at my travels." (@thehungrypartier)

"It can have a positive and negative influence, but ultimately I think it will depend on your network, and the people you follow because everyone has a different experience." (@penny764)

"Before social media existed, if you wanted to go somewhere in the world, you asked your friends ..." (@thecrowdedplnt)

Being part of a network is certain and secure mostly because every member of the group has the same views as the next one. Everybody seeks the tips and recommendations from the ones who already have experienced that particular subject. In tourism, travelers look for travel blogs where they can find references regarding a particular destination. Travel bloggers are considerate most of the times the link between the destination and the world, due to their extensive experience in travelling and on particular destinations. Every post, picture or video shared by them has a huge influence on a destination, from a positive or negative image. The position of travel bloggers is a special one, because to some extent this is their job as a result of what they choose to work as. On another hand, for someone who is sharing their holiday pictures on SM, they still add value to a destination and can be called influencers, but among their family and friends. In any case, the effect of word-of-mouth has a strong impact on how destinations are perceived (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2015).

"From an influencer point of view, you have to be careful, because sometimes you have to remember that it's not just about you." (@thecrowdedplnt)

"I think it's great but because it is live, I have to be a bit careful not to divulge too much information for safety reasons, especially for my daughter." (@dishourtown)

@thecrowdedplnt and @dishourtown are clearly showing concern not just for their followers, but also for their appropriate family regarding a possible shared content on SM. In a study conducted by Riviere (2005), she mentions that people who are using SM tools are most likely to react to a picture rather than a text. The interactional process nowadays is slowly changing from sending a text to snapping a photo or a video with the desired content. Placed in an online environment, the snap can be interpreted in any way possible, depends only on the receiver's imagination. As the two respondents

agree, the way is placed the content on SM has a big impact on the perception of the destination. @thecrowdedplnt is contemplating the idea of the greater good and refers to her actions that might have a different turnover once the content is online. In that regards, she prefers to “*be careful*” when it comes to the shared content, and to accommodate the destinations needs rather than her personal feelings. When it comes to @dishourtown, the respondent is more concerned about the personal aspect of the people who will interact with her posts, in particular her family; therefore the shared content is based on the network’s needs.

“I think in most cases that social media is creating positive views on the ways destinations around the world are perceived. Most times places around the world are being seen in their best light and the things that they are most well known for are being put into the spotlight. However, at the same time, the bad things about a destination are also being highlighted in the same way.” (@cailinoneil)

As an overall image of SM on tourism destinations, the interviews have presented a positive picture on the influence that SM brings on a destination. The respondents mention that SM is presenting the destination raw and true. The factor of seeing a destination from different perspectives adds more than enough. Even though sometimes the soon to be travelers can see some negative opinions, these are just preparing them for the reality that they might find there.

4.1.3 An unaltered image through Snapchat

In less than four years since the release of Snapchat, the mobile app has managed to establish itself on SM as a strong communication tool among the online users. The mobile app is known mainly for its ephemeral content, where users can share snaps of videos or photos about what they are doing or the places they visit just for few seconds, then disappear. Another feature was later on added to Snapchat, where users of the app were able to create a narrative story during a period of 24 hours by compiling the videos and photo snaps. The aspect, which makes this app unique, is that there are limited

options to alter the content and it can be delivered in real time, in other words what you see is what you get. For travel, this kind of promotion or presentation of a destination satisfies the tourist's curiosity. Travel bloggers are more than happy because they don't have to spend hours to curate pictures and add filters in order to show the beautiful aspects of a place. Nowadays people expect something raw and natural, "*the true image of a destination*" (@thebrokebackpacker, 2016).

"... Snapchat can provide a more raw and real presentation of a destination. And in a world where almost every travel photo on Instagram is edited and cropped ever so perfectly, travelers are now looking to go beyond the Instagram photo, to see behind the scenes and to see how a place really looks like." (@thetrevormorrow)

According to @thetrevormorrow, Snapchat is showing the "*behind the scenes*" of a destination and travelers are more inclined to search for that kind of image rather than seeing a changed picture of a place. People are building expectations based on what they see and hear, planning to experience the same as what they've been presented. That is one of the purposes of SM and Snapchat as well, to let people influence people. Only by having the certainty that a fellow traveler has experienced the destination, one can get the knowledge that they need in order to engage in a similar or the same kind of travelling. Some of the respondents refer to Snapchat as being more personal than other SM platforms. By presenting your own opinion and recommendations in regards to a destination or a restaurant, one tends to believe more the person who is sharing a real time picture or video on Snapchat rather than going on other SM platforms.

"I think out of all the social media out there, it's the most real ... it's the one that real makes you feel like you are there." (@thecrowdedplnt)

"... I find it amazing, it's a quick way to be able to share content with a lot of people that wouldn't normally digest that content ... its very raw and relatable, and people they can essentially hang out with you at a more individual level, at a level that they can't do so on other platforms..." (@kickthegrind)

"I am more of a on the moment kind of guy and Snapchat is just giving me the freedom to share the on the spot moments from my travels." (@thebrokebackpacker)

The respondents only confirm what was stated in subchapter 2.3, Snapchat goes beyond the staged pictures and videos which can be seen on SM. Snapchat is driven by the situational momentum and users creativity in capturing the instant and unpredictable. @thecrowdedplnt, @kickthe grind and @thebrokebackpacker also reflect on the reality that Snapchat intends to capture, transporting the users on the destination in real time. Because most of the shared content is slightly altered and posted immediately on the mobile app, the users can experience the destinations as if they were there. The interaction process is more personal and travel bloggers are always engaging in regards to what they should visit next or some activity that they should try in a particular destination. In this way, the follower is hooked in the adventure and will continue to follow and ask questions. According to @kickthe grind, people can easily hang out with their favorite traveler blogger and visit their favorite place. Based on this reference, users of Snapchat can travel everywhere and see the destinations from a different perspective than the printed media or other online platforms are presenting them. Ultimately, the shared content of Snapchat can be considered a representation of our thoughts and feelings about how we perceive and see the world, which sometimes is not always positive. In that regards, people will always be drawn by the novelty and personal touch in the way destinations are presented, not because a beautiful post card with a great layout is not appealing, but is not showing the true self of the destinations and people relate to what they can apply on themselves (@kickthe grind, 2016).

4.1.4 Snapchat Live - 24 hours live broadcast on destiantions

SL is a new feature introduced by Snapchat (conf. section 2.3.1) where each day users of the mobile app can watch videos or photo snaps regarding a destination. The new feature of Snapchat has a great success among the known and less known destinations, where there can be observed the mundane and the extraordinary from these places.

*"I think it's a great way for everyone to see the smaller areas of destinations."
(@penny764)*

"I like it ... using Snapchat to show a different side of some destination, different than what people see in the news media ... I like the Passport thing (SL), that's probably the one that I've enjoyed the most." (@baurjoe)

"I think it's incredible, most certainly, because you can go somewhere or you cannot go somewhere, and be in this small hometown if you click on one of the Snapchat Live little avatars and you can see a very relatable every day view of a place." (@kickthegrind)

"I try to watch it every day, because it's one of the few ways that really transports me somewhere, you know, I really feel like I am there. For example I watched the one from Lebanon a few days ago, there was one in Portugal and Oslo I think recently, and it really makes me want to go and visit these places." (@thecrowdedplnt)

Since the live broadcasts of these destinations appeared on Snapchat, as it can be seen from the respondents' answers, the overall feedback is positive for many reasons, mainly because the targeted locations involve "smaller areas of destination" (@penny764, 2016). The attention and awareness brought to these destinations has shown different sides of the story about how we perceive tourism destinations, where most of the times it is not the same picture we see on a post card. According to @penny764, @baurjoe, @kickthegrind and @thecrowdedplnt, SL succeeds to transports the viewers into the broadcasted destination, where to some extent, they can feel that they are actually there. The mundane is a very common aspect shared on SL, where the intention is to show how different people live across the globe. Destinations are presented both by travelers and locals, which makes the content more reliable because people share different views; therefore the uniqueness of the overall picture compiles it.

“It’s also nice to see something from tourists, who’s seeing it for the first time, and seeing something from the people who live there, who perhaps knows it more intimately and have different memories than tourists would. It’s also nice to see the differences between what tourists would show and what locals show.” (@penny764)

The central image of a destination on SL is represented by the travelers and the locals’ perspective. The travelers are the ones who are showing the extraordinary in a destination. Their perception of the new can be perceived as a walk on the street or the local architecture, things which for the locals may seem normal. Their excitement to share the destination from every angle is favorable for the locals because they are already accustomed with the destination surroundings. In the case of the locals, their representation of the destination will cover most of the times places known only by them due to their personal attachment with that particular place or local traditions which are uncommon for the public. Both sides are valuable sources of inspiration during a SL broadcast and important for a true representation of a destination.

“I think it’s great and it’s very useful. It’s overtaking the purpose of TV. When I am traveling, I always check the live events to stay updated on sports (because I do not have sports center abroad).” (@thehungrypartier)

“I think the Snapchat discovery section is pretty awesome and wish that it was featured in more cities and for more events. It’s a great way to see what popular events are taking around the world and to learn about them as well as things going on in the city you are in if they have the option (like Chicago or New York).” (@cailinoneil)

From a different point of view, SL is also fulfilling to some extent the purpose of a TV and informational channel. @thehungrypartier and @cailinoneil mention that they use SL to keep in touch with what is happening around the world in regards to different events. For them, SL represents a learning tool, mainly because during a live broadcast, there are shared facts, thematic such as aspects of culture, cuisine, the mundane or traditions,

all are part of a teaching process. These aspects are meant to inform the viewer about the unknown or to get the pulse of different situations that might be of interest on a particular period of time (conf. section 2.3.2).

"...using Snapchat or social media in general to show a different side of some destinations in what people see in the news media ... Istanbul is a place for example that a lot of people are saying "Oh, don't go there now!", because of the unfortunate things that have happened. But it will be great if they made Istanbul your Passport (SL) of the day and then let people see what just regular Turks are doing ... I like the idea of going into cities and countries where people might have some misconceptions of ..." (@baurjoe)

@baurjoe reflects on the beneficial outcomes that SL has or can have over a destination. Political issues are a strongly debated over the tourism industry, and many destinations are considerably affected by what is happening around the world. In that regard, SL serves as an unbiased tool inside of the destination to showcase, at some extent, the true nature of events (Fynbo, 2016). Arguably, SL can show a different side of a destination, but that doesn't mean that it has to be always positive. As mentioned in section 2.3.1, the content from SL is curated by representatives of Snapchat; therefore there can be said that somehow the live stories can be planned. In an example presented in section 2.3.2, the case of SL Tel Aviv was the motive of various controversies when the live story appeared on Snapchat. The dispute was over the wrong image that SL Tel Aviv was showing those days, which were pictures and videos snaps with Tel Aviv people enjoying their drinks at a terrace or lying next to a pool. The people arguing this kind of image were commenting that the political situation at that point was very tense, and that SL Tel Aviv was deceiving the public with what is actually happening in the country. Therefore, SL can do so much when it comes to showing the true image of a destination mainly because it will always depend on the selection process of the content.

4.1.5 Image value and co-creation on a destination

Nowadays the image of a destination is very much influenced by the shared content on online platforms. Snapchat has become a very important influencer on this matter and users of the app are encouraged to share their experience through this channel. The image value of a destination is measured through the engagement of the users, by sharing and creating content on Snapchat, where they show the destination from their perspective. Prior to subchapter 2.3, the co-creation process on Snapchat is an interactive and interactional process, where users juggle with the content in order to create a narrative story regarding a destination.

"My snapchat stories consist of all of my experiences in a destination from learning about new cultures and their important ceremonies like learning about the warrior dancers in Rwanda to trying new and popular foods in a destination like New Orleans and sharing the Hogmanay festival celebrations in Scotland." (@cailinoneil)

"I like to share my interaction with the local people, with the natives and the language, and especially if I am somewhere where is defiantly picturesque or idyllic, I like to share these kind of experiences." (@worldwidenate)

"My site is about food and family travel and so you will see lots of local food that we eat. We show our audience the best things to do in each town and there will always be food." (@dishourtown)

@cailinoneil, @worldwidenate and @dishourtown reflect the various topics of how Snapchat travelers are creating their content. The Snapchat users can be identified as value co-creators due to their strategies to share the destination content. By illustrating different sides of a destination, the users of Snapchat create new knowledge, aspect that establishes the mobile app once again as a learning tool. Browsing on Snapchat and SL, one can learn different facts about the broadcasted destinations, but also brings

them closer to wanting to visit these places. Interacting with the locals adds value to the content and to the destination image, firstly because the information provided comes from a trusted source and second, the interaction feels more personal and close. This kind of approach on adding value on a destination ensures the credibility and authenticity of the information.

According to the above statements, engaging with the native community is the recommended method to learn and experience the true self of a destination. The co-creation process is strongly influenced by the interactional process (conf. subchapter 2.2), where people working together or being part of a community, can create new knowledge and add value to the content and the destination.

Part 2: Snapchat Live and the degree of a strong sense of community

In the second part of this chapter there will be analyzed different understandings that travel bloggers have on sense of community. During discourse analysis of the empirical data there were identified new meanings which travel bloggers have regarding sense of community on SL. This new meanings are a representation of their understanding regarding the degree of the sense of community on SL during 24 hours live broadcast. The following sections are going to be divided based on different themes of sense of community which appeared during the analysis of empirical data.

4.2.1 Belongingness and the senses of community

The sense of community can be understood by many of the travel bloggers as a group of people who share the same values, beliefs or views. Based on the three levels of communities' classification (conf. subchapter 2.2), travel bloggers can be placed in the *transnationalism level*. The members of travel communities seek for a support system for their travels, where each member has an equal impact on others. The travel community itself serves to share the travel experience from a destination at a local, national and

global level. Often, the travel bloggers find themselves in a standoff due to their different take on the way a destination is perceived, but in the end this is what makes it interesting and what a community is all about: the diversity in perception. The following statements are commenting on the definition of sense of community that such a group might have:

“A community is a group of people with a common interest.” (@dishourtown)

“Community is collection of people who have one similar interest and we can have different takes on that interest. For example, I have a lot of friends that are travel bloggers and we are very supportive of each other, because we all like to travel, but there is a sense of competition or standoffishness because we all have our own take or voice within that travel community.” (@worldwidenate)

@worldwidenate is contemplating on the diversity of the travel community, where each member has a different view and impact in the community. This aspect makes the group to be more connected, creating a support system among the travel community. @dishourtown and @worldwidenate also reveal the need to belong to a group where the travel bloggers can share their diverse views on travelling. According to Maslow's Pyramid of needs (conf. subchapter 2.2), the level of *belongingness and love* is the border between our basic needs and social acceptance in order for us to survive in a society. McAlexander (2002) mentions that a community is built by people and the relationship between them. A shared interest connects people and makes them feel accepted among its fellow group members.

“I think that is one of the basic human needs and everyone needs to be part of something, ... a sense to be included in a group and being good at what you do it's really an important thing to feel included. It's one of the most primal needs for us to feel accepted in a group of people; it's very much acceptance.” (@kickthegrind)

"I will say that being part of a community it gives one the feeling that they belong to a group who have the same views as them." (@thebrokebackpacker)

Belonging and acceptance are two concepts that link people to a community. To be accepted is one of our deepest desires after the basic needs for survival. The sense of inclusion in a community, as referred by Rovai (2002), is very much related to the process of decision-making and the discussion involvement of the community members. Therefore, acceptance is the community's response to the loyalty that one member shows. @kickthe grind and @thebrokebackpacker reflect upon these processes, where belonging is seen as our primal need for acceptance in a community. @kickthe grind comments on the engagement of the members in a community, where *"being good at what you do"* represents the key to be accepted in a group. McMillan (1986) refers to this as a state of faith that one has, when he/she is attracted to the beliefs of a group. As a result, the sense of community is a state of belonging, where the travel bloggers feel part of something universal and intangible.

"...Something that's not necessarily found somewhere else. But also, it could be like the feeling that there's something universal or something that brings together the people who live there." (@penny764)

"All of my followers are following my daily travels, so I have created a community within us." (@thehungrypartier)

The sense of community, or belonging, is an ephemeral concept in essence where people are getting together in order to fulfill their need of family or friends. In that sense, travel bloggers look for acceptance among the travel community and fellow travel bloggers. @penny764 contemplates on the ephemeral perception of sense of community on a destination where people are getting engaged by *"something that brings together the people"* to fulfill their need of belongingness. On another hand, @thehungrypartier is creating his own community, where he is in a constant connection with his

followers. To some extent, @thehungrypartier is a travel community and the followers are members who have the same views of travelling as the creator of this community. Therefore, the sense of community is the extension of a group or a person's need of being accepted in a particular community.

4.2.2 Romanticizing over a Snapchat Live destination

Through the ephemeral approach of SL to present destinations, travel bloggers acknowledged that the mobile app it's more than just a medium to promote or document a destination. Presenting the true nature of a destination, SL bonds the users at a personal level and invites them into a real-time experience into the destination. Through the interviews, the travel bloggers characterizes SL as "*personal*", "*raw*" or "*unfiltered*". Such aspects are inviting for them to watch SL because it stimulates them to visit that particular destination which is broadcasted on SL.

"Being able to click on Snapchat Live I think it's very refreshing ... its inspiring people to travel ..." (@kickthegrind)

"It's also nice to see something from tourists, who's seeing it for the first time, and seeing something from the people who live there, who perhaps knows it more intimately and have different memories than tourists would." (@penny764)

@kickthegrind and @penny764 are acknowledging the potential of SL to "*inspire people to travel*". Over the feature of SL travel bloggers can get the idea of their next trip. Using the experience of the others, they can have a sense of what to expect at that particular destination. SL is the representation of the destination from the travelers and local perspective, where they will present the destination differently. The representations from the perspective of the traveler will, most of the time, focus on building momentum and showing the extraordinary from that destination. On the other side, the locals will always present the nostalgia of time and place, romanticizing the idea of a moment in time. SL is trying to unite both sides in a narrative story so the viewer can live, to a

certain degree, the momentum and nostalgia of a destination. One of the respondents refreshes his memory by watching one of the SL stories, where the destination of the day was a destination he previously visited:

"... they sometimes do this Passport (SL), where it will be a random city around the world one day, and she (respondent's wife) just come from work and we were like "Did you see the Passport today was Panama City?!", and we were in Panama city just about a year ago traveling. And so it's cool to flip quick through everybody's snaps of Panama City and be like "Oh yeah, I remember that!"... "@baurjoe)

Through the feature of SL, viewers can romanticize over previous destinations where they have been, remembering past places and moments. @baurjoe is reflecting on the SL destination that he and his wife visited in the past. Watching the Panama City on SL was a moment to remember the destination and what they experienced there, transporting them into a time and space moment. SL can transport the viewers across the globe to unknown or known places for that matter. Besides, for @baurjoe and his wife, this can be a moment to recap the experience of the visit in Panama City, and contemplate on how the destination changed since their visit. Moreover, they can see the destination from another perspective different than theirs. Viewers of SL can experience nostalgia over a destination even though they have never been there. The next respondent proves to have strong feelings about an event that happened in London, due to her enjoyment of theme of the event:

"Yesterday I was watching the London Marathon Live, and I am also a runner and I am recovering from an injury ... I had tears, I was literally crying with emotion, and you know why, because you can watch an amazing YouTube video, but you know it's been edited ... and having a story like that (she is referring to London Marathon Live) is something else, at least with me it really makes me have feelings that I don't have with other social media." (@thecrowdedplnt)

Even though @thecrowdedplnt is reflecting on her feelings regarding the London Marathon event, there can't be unnoticed her attachment for SL. Being injured and watching the event on SL, @thecrowdedplnt feels emotional about the unique way of how real is portrayed the London Marathon event. She reflects also on other SM platforms that are not giving her the same emotion as SL, due to their altered image. From her point of view, SL is the only SM tool that can make her have feelings towards an online content. According to the above, the narrative of SL illustrates more than just the mundane in a destination or event, but is also reflecting on the emotion that the SL members are sharing. As mentioned in previous sections (chapter 2), people are attracted to people or communities who are sharing their beliefs and worldviews, and on SL people they can select the representations that resonate with their feelings. Another respondent reflects upon the learning process that SL is giving through the live broadcast of a destination:

"It's a great way to see what popular events are taking around the world and to learn about them as well as things going on in the city you are in if they have the option (like Chicago or New York)." (@cailinoneil)

@cailinoneil mentions that watching SL is a great way to get in touch with what is happening around the world, as well as learning about the broadcasted destinations and events. Looking from a social constructivist perspective, SL is an appropriate environment where people are constructing their own image of a destination or event. Through the process of creating the narrative live story, the creators, which are the travel bloggers, are sharing their own personal emotions and understanding over that place, where the viewers are taught about the unseen side of the world.

4.2.3 The degree of a strong sense of community through Snapchat Live

For many respondents, a strong sense of community is relative and can't be quantified, but it does have different factors that are influencing the degree of sense of community. Most of the travel bloggers consider that 24 hours is a fair period of time to build a certain degree of community, where a different part of them will like this period of time to be extended to at least 48 hours.

"24hours is definitely more than enough time to build a strong sense of community around a particular event. Any longer than that and the event is old news and people are already moved on to the next thing." (@cailinoneil)

"I think 24 hours is good, because if people are already on Snapchat then they will see it straight away, that they can be part of their town story ... in terms of building the buzz in a community, I think 24 hours are enough. A weekend would be nice actually, but any shorter than 24 hours wouldn't work." (@thehostelgirl)

According to @cailinoneil and @thehostelgirl, 24 hours are enough for a degree of sense of community to be built. @thehostelgirl mentions that this period of time is reasonable to create a *buzz* in the community, but a weekend period will be more effective in regards to bringing the people together. @cailinoneil argues and highlights that this period of time *is more than enough* for the viewers of SL to get engaged in the sense of community and anything longer than that will prove to be old and faded. SL is all about new and on the moment content, and viewers appreciate the originality of the live stories. The following respondent explains the theory behind the 24 hours SL:

"That's the dynamic or uniqueness of Snapchat, that you only have 24 hours to watch it. Is almost like the game of life, where you wake up and have another day to give it your best shot, so you can't worry about tomorrow. So that's kind of the theory of Snapchat,"

you have today to tell a great Snapchat story and then you have another opportunity tomorrow to tell a great Snapchat story.” (@worldwidenate)

@worldwidenate is explaining how the 24 hours SL stories are a representation of how life should be lived. The theory behind the SL is that we need to focus on the present and live the moment rather than worrying about tomorrow. Making the best out of the present moment, we can strive for more and better. To some extent, the degree of sense of community is the representation of our engagement towards living and enjoying the moment. Building momentum it allows us to look for the unique in an experience, where you live enough to share the story.

“What I think it does is that it keeps the platform (SL) fresh ... having a new country pop-up, will get more interaction instead of having the same one up there ... so I don’t think in general having a 24 hours content is the best way, but on the platform Snapchat it does, so its transitory that things come and go real quickly. That sense, that impression, that feeling to go there and having new content that defiantly drives more clicks.” (@kickthe grind)

“Well 24 hours works because that’s what Snapchat is like ...” (@thecrowdedplnt)

@kickthe grind and @thecrowdedplnt state the obvious of SL 24 hour’s stories, where they agree that the settings of the app are unique and because of that people are watching SL stories. @kickthe grind comments on the fact that SL is fresh and by showing everyday a new destination, this creates interaction among the SL members. The transitory process, as he is referring, represents the emotion regarding the instant. In other words, chasing the moment and the ephemeral in a destination unites people in a community to show off their city.

“I think it depends on the size of the community and the destination together. I do think the amount of time given should be proportional to whatever they’re covering, but for

smaller places, like Caribbean islands for example, 24hrs is enough given that there may be limited things to show and do.” (@penny764)

@penny764 comments on the community and destination size, which affects the degree of sense of community. If the destination is a big city with lots of activities, the length of sense of community can reach high number of SL users to contribute to a live story, but then again the time should be extended to more than 24 hours in order to truly grasp the momentum. Moreover, there is a small destination, for example Caribbean islands, in which building a sense of community may have the same impact as on a big city, but at smaller scale, where 24 hours are enough to create a SL story. Therefore, the destination size influences very much the degree of sense of community and the community itself.

“I think 24 hours just one time is not enough; I think any other campaign that can go longer is more effective. You might see something once and is, you know, out of sight out of mind. Over and over again, looking constantly at the Los Angeles story, I think that’s where things are getting more and more effective.” (@krista_simmons)

“For example, I can tell you what I would like, because I know that there are stories that I have missed, it would be nice if there were a place where you could find them and watch them, even though they have disappeared from your phone.” (@thecrowdedplnt)

Not all respondents are considering the 24 hours as enough to build a sense of community. According to @krista_simmons, a group needs more time and repetition in order to make a sense of what is happening. Having a destination often present on SL it creates a longer narrative where viewers and users of SL get the time to identify with the content, thus the chance of building a strong sense of community will be more luckily to happen. @thecrowdedplnt comes with a solution where the SL stories could be saved somewhere on platform. This alternative can definitely improve the degree of sense of community, because locals and tourists can get the chance to romanticize over the shared

content and also to follow the travel tips that fellow users shared on the SL story. Similar to the mentioned solution, the SL representatives can share a schedule of the broadcasted destinations just to prepare the destination community as well as the tourists beforehand. This will most definitely enhance the community aspect and also the popularity of the destination on SL.

4.2.4 Travel Bloggers contribution to a destination

When it comes to present a destination, travel bloggers are the right people to show both popular and less known places from a destination. Often they are guides, consultants or ambassadors of these destinations (@worldwidenate, 2016). They represent small communities that are following them across their travels. But their impact on a destination is greater than that. Travel bloggers are constructing communities all over the world, enhancing the sense of community of their followers by engaging with them through Snapchat.

"I like to highlight the things that make a destination popular ... Hopefully this will open peoples eyes more to a destination and want to visit a place for longer and get to know it more in depth." (@cailinoneil)

"I'm a New Yorker, and many of my readers/viewers are either from NY or from other destinations in the USA. I bring the destination, big or small, my community, who may or may not have heard of the destinations I visit." (@dishourtown)

"Given that I'm quite normal, in the sense of what I would do, the money I would spend, and the places I would go, I would imagine I can give off the real vibe of what there is to do and what it's like wherever I am, because many people would travel similarly to me." (@penny764)

@cailinoneil, @dishourtown and @penny764 are showing off their personalized style of travelling with recommendations over the destinations. @dishourtown comments on

the fact that she brings the destination to her community, which is a fair trade when visiting a place. The form of this exchange is contemplating on the relationship that the travel blogger has with the visited destination. Furthermore, the travel interaction is a two ways form and @dishourtown acknowledges the importance of the community and the destination.

"I give people an honest review from my experiences, which I document on my blog and social media. I always want to share what I liked, and didn't like, and then let people use that to plan their own trips and make their own adventures." (@thehungrypartier)

"As I mentioned before, I like to show the destination in the most natural and raw context I can presented, and I think that is my contribution that I try to present to true image of that place." (@thebrokebackpacker)

"I bring a perspective, because I have a specific focus, usually on culinary travel ..."
(@krista_simmons)

As mentioned before, travel bloggers are, before anything, are the representatives of the world. The travel community trusts their recommendations and for that matter they are one big segment that contributes to a destination more than other channel of promoting a destination. The length of their experience can be observed in every post they share on SM and moreover to Snpachat, which helps them to pin the destination in real time so their followers can feel connected with the visited place. To show gratitude in return for the gathered knowledge from these destinations, the travel bloggers are writing articles or blog posts where they contemplate on the previous experience. One respondent is reflecting on the impact that the destination had on him:

"I have a book coming out about my year living in Costa Rica and traveling around in Central America. I don't expect to make much money from it, but I do know that a certain percentage of the selling's will go to this charity I found in EL Salvador ... this is my way

of saying “You gave me, your country gave me some of this stories, so I want to repay that.” (@baurjoe)

@baurjoe is talking about the book that he wrote about his time in Costa Rica and Central America. The reason for this book is to show appreciation for the time lived in these places, quantifying the impact that the destinations had on him. Therefore, the sense of community can be shown also through gestures of respect and affection towards a destination by acknowledging the importance in their life.

4.3 Discussion of findings

In the following subchapter there will be discussed the results of the discourse analysis based on two factors which discuss the overall findings from part 1 and part 2. The first factor will touch upon the conditions which are influencing the degree of strong sense of community on SL, where in the second factor there will be discussed the outcomes of the degree of sense of community in the process of image co-creation on a destination.

4.3.1 The degree of sense of community on Snapchat Live factor

When discussing the term of sense of community one will think that it represents the need of belongingness to a group. As recognized by McMillan (1986), the sense represents the spirit of belonging and trust to a shared structure from where the members positively benefit. Although this may be true, identifying a strong sense of community it proves to be difficult due to external factors which are influencing the process of building the strong degree of the sense. As mentioned before (see section 2.3.1), the SL feature is ephemeral in essence and available only for 24 hours, where after the shared content it disappears. Building a strong sense in these conditions proves to be challenging. In that regards, travel bloggers address the issues which are influencing the degree of a strong sense of community, as it follows:

o *No real interaction*: findings of the research have shown that SL is beneficial for bringing awareness on a destination and that users of the app enjoy watching the narrative live story. However, there is no record of what is shared and the viewer can't get in touch with what he or she is watching. Based on the interactionist theory (Peters et al., 2013), social interactions are bound to perceive, evaluate, augment or alter the content in various ways. Therefore, the viewers of the narrative SL stories can't interact or engage with the shared content more than just watching it, thus lowering the formation of a strong sense of community.

o *No available SL stories*: Niesbet (1970) in his studies relates that for the community factor to exist and grow stronger, the members need to create a relationship at a deeper level, where personal intimacy, moral commitment or continuity in time are factors which connects the members of a community (Cohen & Kennedy, 2007). The ephemeral content of SL allows very little for the viewers to connect with the destination and a strong sense of community can't be achieved. The continuity in time of the narrative stories don't exist and the viewer remains with just faded memories of the SL story which in time it disappears. Hence, the strong sense of the community can last only as much as the SL is available, which is for 24 hours, after this period of time the sense disappears and it may not be remembered.

o *The planned ephemeral content*: during the literature review there has been found that the shared content on SL by the users of this feature is first curated by representatives of Snapchat and later added in the public narrative of SL. Munar (2013) and Pan (2006) agree that the beauty of SM in tourism is that the locals and tourists are the creators of the shared content on the online and that is one of the reasons of the success of SM in tourism. Consequently, the narrative story of SL on a destination is purposively planned, although this aspect is understandable. If SL will be open for the users to share no matter what content, there would be a high chance that some content would be inappropriate. Therefore the planned content has a valid explication, but it still affects the degree of a strong sense of community to the extent that some users may feel

wronged because their snap was not posted.

Hence, the degrees of a strong sense of community on SL it very much depends on the settings of the feature. Even though improving these issues may seem as a natural decision, there is yet unknown if the sense will change in degree, considering the ephemeral context of Snapchat.

4.3.2 Image co-creation on a destination factor

Co-creation as mentioned before (see section 2.2.1), is a collective process in which the members of an online platform are engaged in sharing, commenting or like the content posted in this kind of environment. In the aforementioned section, one of the issues which are affecting the construction of a strong sense of community is the curated process of the ephemeral content on SL. During the data review, @krista_simmons and @thecrowdedplnt comment that process of choosing the content for the SL stories is improper and not everybody gets to public their snap on the platform. Base on their observation, the users may feel wronged and the engagement in a SL story can diminish in time, making the users of Snapchat to disappear in time!? Even though the selection process of the content it may seem unclear, SL still accomplishes to create momentum and a different image of a destination. One of the reasons why the platform of SL is so successful is because the presentation of the destination is shown as unfiltered, raw, natural and in real-time for the SL viewers (Dua, 2014). In that regards the analysis and the review of the interviews provided with evidence to sustain the literature review. Sustained by the interviewed travel bloggers, the co-created image is portrayed from their perspective and understanding. Therefore during a narrative SL live broadcast there can be identified different travelling styles which show the destination from numerous angles. The co-created image is the result of a new knowledge regarding the destination and the viewer is transported in time and space to the broadcasted location. Hence, SL is fulfilling its task in regards of co-creating new knowledge about destinations, even though the understanding on the subject can be still be further researched.

4.3.3 Evaluation of the research trustworthiness

According to the social constructivists, the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are recommended in order to ensure the reliability of the paper (Bryman, 2008). Therefore the following section will focus to show the trustworthiness of this research based on the criteria, as it follows:

CREDIBILITY

When working with a constructivistic approach, there is crucial to guarantee the credibility of the research (Bryman, 2008). In order to do so, the researcher has the obligation to ensure that the interpretation of the data was accurately done and that during the interviews there were no misunderstandings in the process (Bryman, 2012). This was achieved by firstly sending an email to the interviewees with an overall presentation of the topic in order for them to understand the reason why they are contacted. Secondly, during the interview they were asked specific questions which were part of the optimal interview guide (see section 3.2.1.), in order to avoid the change of the topic. Furthermore, the researcher has the obligation to conduct the research based on the rules of good practice (Bryman, 2008; Bryman, 2012). For that reason all the interviewees were informed from the beginning of the purpose of this research and how the data will be used. In return the majority of the interviewees asked to be referred in the research by their Snapnames for professional reasons. Therefore, all the interviewees are referred by their Snapname is to provide credibility over their Snapchat profiles.

TRANSFERABILITY

The notion of transferability refers to the information which can be transferred in other studies (Guba, 1991). Therefore, there should be acknowledged potential limitations of this research regarding the context based on the paper, supporting the perspective of the social constructivist mindset (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Furthermore, the purpose of this paper was to explore the degree of sense of community on SL and not to measure or quantify the collected data (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). For that matter, the aim was to

explore the degree of a strong sense of community on SL from the perspective of the travel bloggers on a period of 24 hours live broadcast. The mobile app Snapchat is based on ephemeral content and thus the transferability can come across challenges in transferring the information to other studies. However, following the aforementioned interviewees by their Snapname can offer a start into a new study.

DEPENDABILITY

The process of dependability suggests that the researcher needs to ensure access to all the information and details about this research (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Therefore, all the necessary materials used to conduct this research can be found in the Appendix section at the end of this paper. The mentioned materials are in forms of recordings on the DVD and hard copies of all emails interviews.

CONFIRMABILITY

Confirmability ensures that the researcher acted in good faith and was objective through the process of writing the research (Bryman, 2008). Bryman (2008) argues and mentions that the researcher can try to be objective, but will not be able to fully achieve this. During the process writing of the research, I acted in good faith and strived to be objective. However, being a social constructivist directly implies that the researcher is implicated in the process of creating new knowledge. Therefore, being complete objective it can't be achieved.

Conclusion

Throughout this research there was investigated the degree of sense of community on SL during a 24 hours live broadcast of a destination. From the very beginning, the reason for this topic was based on the curiosity of the researcher to understand if SL can create any type of community through their ephemeral content. Moreover, the aspect of creating a narrative story of the live destination only for 24 hours has emphasized the interest on this subject. Therefore, in order to have a deeper understanding of the choose topic, there was identified a theoretical framework which led the path to analyzing the gathered data. The subject of social media was the first investigated, which led to the understandings of the online in the tourism industry, more specifically to understand if social media has an impact on how destinations are perceived. With the new knowledge from social media it was continued into the subject of sense of community, which is one of the important subjects of this paper. Social media in essence is a community with smaller communities formed by people with shared interests. Through their time in a community, the members share, comment, create or develop new content. The sense of community was a natural instinct to investigate in order to get an understanding of why people choose to be part of these online communities and moreover to share their travel experience on SL when they knew that they have only 24 hours for the content to be online.

Sense of community has proven to be relative in essence and is very much affected by the environment from where it begins as well as the community itself. The interviewed travel bloggers identify the sense with the need to belong in a group or the nostalgia regarding a destination. The majority of the travel bloggers are a community itself, where the members are followers of their travel posts. They create a connection with the members by showing them their travel style and personality, leaving the followers to grade their sense of community as they consider fit. In other words, the content can be

considerate the sense in this case with which the members of the community relate. Therefore, the concept of sense of community is just a mere representation of the members' beliefs and value system.

Exploring SL has demonstrated to be an interesting and tough subject to be explored; mainly because the mobile app is changing quite often and that there is a lack in literature concerning this subject. Although the circumstances have proven to be challenging, the research on SL revealed that the feature has a significant influence on the way destinations are perceived as well as presenting different styles of travelling. Both the literature review and travel bloggers referred to the mobile app as one of the trusted online platforms from where travel communities can receive and send a real image of destinations. For that matter, SL is becoming an important link between destination, travelers and locals, where together form a community where the aim is to bring awareness on destinations around the world.

The degree of sense of community on SL during a period of 24 hours live broadcast of a destination it equally concerns the engagement of the SL users and the app itself in creating the sense. In order to build a strong sense of community on SL there has been acknowledged that the Snapchat feature needs to create a structure regarding the broadcasted destinations. The users of SL don't know how to react or engage on something that it is not announced. Moreover, the narrative content is nowhere to be reached and the continuity of the sense can't be achieved by the users who missed the 24 hours. The interviews reflected on these issues and they all declared that their engagement will be higher and a sense of community will be more present, if live stories can be public outside of the mobile app.

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Appendix