Employee learning in Tourism Experiences: A Communities of Practice Perspective

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explore the processes by which employees in innovative tourism experience organisations learn how to engage in the delivery of experiences. The conceptual framework chosen to do this is the communities of practice concept made famous by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998). This practice-based approach to understanding learning and knowledge allows for them to be understood in a social context rather than determined purely by the actions or abilities of the individual. This approach sees knowledge and action as inseparable and so engaging in a practice with other 'practitioners' is considered a negotiated and continuous learning process. In the case of tourism experiences where the key element of the experience framework is the staff, the practice-based approach is well-fitted for exploring the manner by which employees learn from each other and from customers while engaging in the practice.

This framework has been applied to the acclaimed Hamlet Live experience that, for the previous five Summers, has being held at Kronborg Castle, Helsingør, Denmark. The research period began in the immediate aftermath of the re-opening of the tourism attractions and museums, which provided an opportunity to explore employee learning for an experience that was undergoing dramatic changes. A case study approach has been applied in order to study the dynamics of the tourism employee learning process in-depth.

Some of the issues and areas that have emerged from this study relate to peripheral learning, the canonical and non-canonical interpretation of tasks, learning across community boundaries, the influence of competence on engagement and factors influencing employee alignment with the goals of tourism management. The two key issues that have emerged as points for discussion are the influence of customers on the tourism employee learning process and the related issue of the dynamics between competence and community engagement in practice. The latter saw the application of a new perspective on competence in the communities of practice literature. This was in the form of distinguishing between foundational competence, which related to the long-term, learning that occurred across communities, and practice-specific competence, which related to experience-driven learning that was visible within the tourism employee community of practice. These were represented by language and improvised interaction respectively.

The points for discussion and the concepts of foundational and practice-specific competence were both discussed in relation to how tourism management could understand and facilitate employee learning, particularly when drastic change must be implemented. The use of a single qualitative case study in what can be seen as an exploration of a relatively little researched area, means that that the findings of paper are not meant to be generalisable and any consideration of them should relate to the context from which they were drawn.

Keywords: tourism experiences, communities of practice, employee learning,

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Introduction

Background and the Challenge

The tourism experience sector is increasingly competitive and organisations often have to offer unique experiences that create memorable experiences in order to survive (Tussyadiah, 2013). One of the ways that is increasingly seeing as doing this is the supporting of employees in value creation for customers and in turn for the organisations (Friis Jensen & Sørensen, 2018). Yet experience concepts, which are the 'recipe' for producing and delivering the content of an experience are intangible and not static (Eide, Fuglsang & Sundbo, 2017). This is combined with organisations commonly relying heavily on human resources to deliver the supply-side of the experience to tourists (Hoarau, 2016). The challenge of human involvement in the creation of tourism experiences is heightened by the general characteristics of the tourism sector labour force. This includes seasonal work patterns, tendency towards part-time or temporary work, high turnover in the sector and relatively high levels of non-native workers among the employees (Kusluvan, Kusluvan, Ilhan and Buyruk, 2010). These normal conditions make tourism experience delivery challenging for managers (Eide et al., 2017).

Tourism during Covid19

While the global business environment is generally viewed as rapidly changing, the effects of the spread of the Covid19 virus in the first half of this year has led to an almost instantaneous change from overtourism to non-tourism (Gössling, Scott and Hall, 2020). Tourism has shown itself particularly vulnerable to pandemic crises due to the restrictions on mobility and enforced social distancing and the impact been felt throughout the tourism and hospitality supply change (Ibid).

Yet despite the impact on international tourism, tourism in some countries, such as Denmark, has changed and continued in the form of domestic tourism. The potential and rise of the staycation, has been encouraged and recognised by both academic and media commentators alike (Phi, 2020; Kehlet, 2020). The effect can be seen, for example, in the preliminary estimate of the months of June to August this year, in comparison to 2019. These estimates, based on sales and bookings, show a 28% increase in the number of nights that Danish guests have stayed with Danish accommodation providers (Erhvervsministeriet, 2020a). This can be seen in the context of a strong focus by the government who has heavily promoted domestic tourism. This was done, for example, through a well-funded marketing campaign called "Much more than just Denmark" which has aimed to promote the local holiday opportunities as an alternative and substitute to those normally found abroad (Erhvervsministeriet, 2020b). More significantly for museums and cultural institutions was the government compensation package that allowed them charge entry at half their usual price during the Summer. This saw a doubling and in some cases near trebling of the number of guests in July compared to last year (Borelli, 2020). While Danish tourists have been the biggest market for the tourism sector in Denmark this year, the opening of the borders during the course of the Summer season to some countries, for example Germany, also contributed significantly (Kehlet, 2020).

Studying the effect and response to the Covid19 crisis of innovative tourism organisations could be approached from many perspectives. Not least of these would be to look at the adaptive capacity or change-strategies of these organisations. This approach has been used by Fernandez and Shaw (2020) who show how flexible, delegatory leadership approaches show a strong adaptive capacity in academic contexts. Likewise, Mondoux et al. (2020) propose applying quality improvement measures as being a suitable organisational response to the impact of the Covid19 crisis. This paper, however, intends to incorporate it with less emphasis on the crisis itself and more on exploring how employee learning can be understood with this opportunity to study dramatic change in almost real-time.

Employee learning in the context of changing Tourism Experiences

One way to consider studying how employees in innovative tourism experiences learn to be involved in the creation of experiences is proposed by Eide et al. (2017). This involves looking at how employees learn how to engage with the creation of a unique tourism experience on an ongoing basis. The relevance is that these experiences go through change as do the workforces that create them and this makes the practice of 'keeping them alive' a continuous process (Ibid). Eide et al. (2017) advance a concept that they call experience concept innovation maintenance. In relation to employee learning and engagement in the activity of tourism experience creation, they propose that applying a practice-based approach to understanding the learning and practice of employees. In particular, they recommend the communities of practice concept as a tool for this topic (Ibid).

Eide et al. (2017) see these communities of practice as important spaces for how experience concepts become ingrained in daily work activities. This, they suggest, happens through a process of practicing, contestation and interpretation. They also argue that because an experience concept is not static and tangible, that the engagement in learning is dynamic and needs continual negotiation and re-construction.

The Hamlet Live Experience

The following study will focus on the experience Hamlet Live, which has been running every Summer season since 2016 in the 16th century Kronborg Castle in the seaside town of Helsingør, Denmark. Although on an operational level, the Hamlet Live experience began back in the Summer of 2016 (Jonas, Appendix A), on a creative level, the story of Hamlet Live begins back in 1603 when William Shakespeare published his world-famous play, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark (Bevington, 2020).

The fictional story follows the events that unfold after the young Danish prince Hamlet arrives home to mourn the recent death of his father the king. His mourning is deepened by disgust at the decision of his mother, Queen Gertrude, to marry her late-husbands younger brother, Claudius, who becomes king. The plot takes a pivotal turn when the ghost of his father appears to Hamlet and tells him his death was in fact murder at the hands of his younger brother. Hamlet swears to avenge him. The plot then leads on a devolving path which eventually sees all the main characters die or be murdered, with the exception of Hamlet's close friend Horatio (Bartelson, 2020).

In what was to have a significant impact in the castles cultural significance, particularly internationally, Shakespeare specifically set the play in Kronborg Castle under the name of Elsinore, the Anglicised form of Helsingør (UNESCO, 2000). The first performance of the play at the castle occurred in 1816 but it was in 1937 that this began to happen regularly. Since then minor and major performances have taken place at the castle which have featured stars such as Laurence Olivier, Kenneth Branagh and Jude Law (Kronborg Castle, n.d.a).

This year, Hamlet Live, which in some promotional material has been rebranded as Hamlets Wonderful World, is introduced as:

"*Hamlet has returned to the castle and, as always, has taken his family, friends and enemies with him. But the world has become a very different place for the Danish prince since he last lived in this mighty Renaissance castle. Kronborg has been transformed into a new and wonderful world, filled with fun activities for children and their families. Learn about alchemy with King Claudius, dance with Ophelia, sing with the queen and much more*"

(About Hamlet – Hamlet's Wonderful World, Information leaflet provided on purchase of a ticket)

The Hamlet Live experience is officially described as "an interactive theatrical experience" where characters from Hamlet "take up residence" over the Summer months in the rooms of Kronborg Castle allowing customers to "tumble right into the story" where "the fate of Hamlet unfolds before their very eyes as they walk around the castle" (Kronborg, n.d.b). The experience is targeted for all ages and has been reduced so that it is understandable to everyone who understands modern English (Ibid).

As will be referred to in the analysis, Hamlet Live is unique in Denmark for the experience it helps create and has been recognised for its innovativeness, both academically and within the tourism industry. As will also be examined in the analysis, the concept has not remained the same but has evolved with implications for those who have the job of creating it with guests. That evolution became all the more rapid this year in response to the dramatic change in the catchment area for potential guests brought about by Covid19 restrictions (Jonas, Appendix A). On these grounds, I submit the Hamlet Live experience as a suitable case to apply the community of practice concept as a tool for adding understanding on the process by which tourism experience employees learn to engage in the related practice.

Research Question

How can employee learning in tourism experience organisations be understood through a practice-based perspective?

Research Objectives

- Study the communities of practice and related concepts and consider elements that could be applicable for analysing employee learning in tourism experiences organisations.
- Research and outline an appropriate research approach for investigating features of employee learning in tourism experiences.
- Use the conceptual framework to explore how employees in Hamlet Live engage in practice-based learning.
- Discuss the main findings in relation to the management of tourism experiences.

Significance of the Project

The current crisis caused by the emergence of the Covid19 virus has made all the more relevant, the view, as articulated by Hoarau (2014), that tourism firms must continuously innovate to remain competitive and adapt to global changes. Yet, innovation can be considered an ongoing process and studies have highlighted the tendency of research to forget the later stages or 'back-end' of service innovation and design (Almqvist, 2017). If innovation is to play an important role in how tourism companies respond to this and other crises, greater understanding is needed for how to support it.

This study hopes to address this paucity and consider the usefulness of the proposed experience concept innovation maintenance construct in studying the post-implementation aspects of the tourism experience innovation process. Specifically, this paper will use the communities of practice theory that is recommended by Eide et al. (2017), to examine the learning process that employees participate in while gathering and exchanging knowledge relating to the delivery of experiences.

Although limited in generalisability by being a single case-study, the findings of this paper are intended to provide tourism researchers and tourism managers in relatable contexts with greater understanding on how employees learn to engage in a practice. Additionally, it is intended to contribute to understanding on how tourism managers can support change through employee learning.

Structure of the Paper

The paper will begin with a literature review chapter. This chapter has the purpose of framing the research question in terms of the theory and concepts that will be used to investigate it. This is primarily the communities of practice concept by Wenger (1998) but several others will also be referred to.

The second chapter will focus on research methodology. In this chapter the paper will outline the ontological and epistemological positions taken that determine the choice to apply a qualitative approach in the form of a case study. The research process and design will also be discussed, as will the measures taken to protect the validity of the findings. Finally, some of the limitations of the research will also be presented followed my a shift description of the relevant aspects of the chosen case.

The analysis chapter will be presented next. This will involve the application of the selected theories and concepts to the findings of the primary and secondary research that I carried out. They will be presented in the context of how employees in Hamlet Live learn how to play their parts in creating the experience including supportive or obstructive factors in the process.

The discussion and conclusions chapter will be the last in the paper. In this chapter the findings in the analysis will be used to discuss the key findings of the case in relation to tourism employee learning and the implications for tourism managers.

Literature Review

Introduction

In the following chapter I am going to present a review of literature, theories and concepts relevant to the focus of my research question. I will begin by reviewing literature on tourism experiences, followed by briefly touching on the maintenance of experience concept innovations and the role of employees. This will be lead to a review of the linked concept of communities of practice. This will provide the content that will inform the analysis of learning among employees who deliver Hamlet Live.

Tourism Experiences and Tourism Innovation

What is a Tourism Experience?

In discussing tourism experience innovation, Jernsand, Kraff and Mossberg (2015) acknowledge experiences as being a type of service. They differentiate them, however, from the functional-orientation of most other services on the basis that experiences revolve around feelings and fantasies integrated through the co-creation and presence of customers, which makes them a "personal, interactive and complex phenomenon" (p 98). They also identify the significance of the role of customers on other customers, the notions of social belonging, novelty and surprise, the challenge involved and the role of storytelling in tourism experiences (Ibid). Eide et al. (2017) ascribe certain unique characteristics to experiences, which they state also differentiates them from other services or goods. These include their occurrence within experience-scapes, the use of storytelling and dramaturgy, the involvement of two or more senses in their consumption, the role of consumer interactions and the need for preparation. The unique characteristics of experience products and concepts mean that one requires knowledge about their nature and value in order to both design and produce them (Ibid).

Another feature is the performative nature of practices of tourism experiences. The conceptualisation of tourism as a stage on which workers and locals performed for tourists was popularised by Dean MacCannell's (1973) work on authenticity in tourism. Although the use of stage and performance is metaphoric, it is a seminal work in tourism research, which can partly be seen to be due to how well the notion of performance fits with the experience that is provided to tourists. Jordan (2008) also uses the notion of performance to describe the behaviour of tourism employees, while Edensor (2000) identifies the behaviour of tourists as performative.

Of specific relevance to this paper, Bærenholdt and Jensen (2009) study employees who performatively provide certain experiences in three tourist attractions in Denmark. They emphasise the importance for employees to also have good experiences and therefore the need for a certain amount of the performance needs to be unscripted and improvised. They suggest that performances fail when they become fully routine, acknowledging that there are also routine aspects. Additionally, Bærenholdt and Jensen (2009) find that an important aspect of the performance is that tourists perform their recognition of the work done by employees, this supports the employee self-confidence. The emotional dimension to the performative work employees do makes them vulnerable and requires coping strategies, which can vary depending on their contract. Young employees often consider themselves temporary, which means their identity is less affected. More professional and permanent employees can require chronic recognition, which can be a problem where a situation becomes unstable. The degree of self-control an employee has over their position can help these professional staff in coping (Ibid).

An example of a tourism experience definition that can be considered loose enough to incorporate several of the perspectives Packet lists, is given by Sugathan and Ranjan (2019) who state that a "customer experience in tourism is defined as the subjective personal reactions and feelings associated with tourism activities" (p 208). The two key elements suggested by this definition relate to what has been called the essence and the offering of the tourist experience. The essence refers to the unique or notable elements of what a tourist has encountered in their mind which are encoded as the experience sequence. The offering is that which represents a marketed product offered by a supplier (Volo, 2009).

This understanding corresponds with attempts to define experiences generally. For example, Duerden, Lundberg, Ward, Taniguchi et al. (2018) discuss the concept of structured experiences. They treat these as synonymous to designed experiences, both differentiated from spontaneous experiences by the intention of an experience provider to create or provide for an experience. The elements of a structured framework, customer encounters with the framework and the results of the encounters in the individual participants are all considered to be part of this understanding of an experience (Ibid). Duerden, Ward and Freeman (2015) define these structured experiences as:

"*both the objective, interactive encounters between participants and provider manipulated frameworks (i.e., erlebnis; e.g., dining at a restaurant, attending a concert, playing in a softball tournament) and the resulting subjective participant outcomes (i.e., erfahrung; e.g., feeling unhappy with the quality of food at a restaurant, being emotionally moved by a song at a concert, deciding to return again next year to play in the same softball tournament and win the whole thing) of experiences*" (p 603)

Another important point is that while largely overlapping, tourism and experience are not necessarily synonymous. An example of this can be seen from the survey of Danish experience organisations by Fuglsang, Sundbo and Sørensen (2011). The categories they present of organisations as being within are tourism, art and culture, entertainment and leisure, and design, image and branding. Yet, this classification is problematic as they include restaurants, cafeteria, cafe's and discos as tourism organisations, and although not defined, presumably museums and galleries are separated from tourism under art and culture. This arbitrary categorisation fails to recognise that many tourists visit museums and galleries and many local people visit bars and restaurants, even when in non-touristic or touristic areas respectively. It also suggests a lack of inclusion of domestic tourism. In their study, Eide et al. (2017) also highlight that experiences relate not only to tourism, but also to culture, media, sports and many other sectors. They point out that in tourism, there tends to be either functional and service orientated sub-sectors such as accommodation and transport, or more experience-centric sub-sectors such as culture and food.

The above categorisation can be seen as an old problem in trying to define tourism and tourism experience organisations. Leiper (1979) suggests that the six industries relating to tourism were tourism marketing, tourist carriers, tourist accommodation, tourist attractions, miscellaneous services and tourism regulation. Tourist attractions refer to facilities, events and sights that offer experiential opportunities for tourists. Yet, a lot of these are not within the scope of the tourism industry, many being resources from other industries that can also incidentally be used by tourists (Ibid). With a backdrop in this challenge, many studies on experiences refer to tourism experiences but to do not try and separate them or just directly include them with non-tourist experiences (cf. Eide et al., 2017; Eriksen, 2015). The reason for this, as can be seen from the attempt by Fuglsang et al. (2017), is that clear distinctions do not exist, especially when one also considers the presence of domestic tourism, and therefore customers who have the same nationality and potentially culture as local people, making it much harder to distinguish them as tourists.

The inadequacy of trying to distinguish between tourism activities and non-tourism activities has also been supported by recent research aiming to retheorise tourism from a practice-based perspective – tourism as practice (de Souza Bispo, 2016). According to the author, this approach allows for greater understanding on human, as well as non-human, roles in the broader notion of what he terms "the social". Tourism as practice stops the isolation of tourism practices from non-tourism practices as boundaries between them are blurred and both are "a part of a plenum wherein spatiality and temporality control the focus of what is and is not called tourism" (de Souza Bispo, 2016, p 177). The relevance of this concerns the existing research that is examined and used for this study. Previous research paper that study experiences and experience frameworks will be included where they add to the tourism-orientated goal of this paper. This will be done without an attempt to identify if they focus on tourists unless it happens that they specifically exclude tourism experiences.

Tourism and Experience Innovation

In a review of hospitality and tourism innovation research, Gomezelj (2016) proposes that innovative products add value so organisations that develop their capacity for innovation may gain a competitive advantage. The ability to innovate successfully is thus viewed as important because it increases organisations competitiveness. This is considered also relevant for the sub-field of experiences where innovation is increasingly being seen as vital for competing in the experience economy (Eriksen, 2015)

Innovation is also increasingly being viewed as an ongoing process. A concept related to this is after-innovation, which Sundbo (2006) suggests is the development of the innovation after its launch through a series of minor incremental improvements or innovations. The benefit of this perspective is, he proposes, that it allows for an understanding of the customers role in providing practice-born feedback that can be used to guide improvements. Similarly, the proposal of a concept, which incorporates that of after-innovation, and that is termed experience concept innovation maintenance, adds to this focus on the post-launch process (Eide, Fuglsang & Sundbo, 2017). On top of after-innovation, experience concept innovation maintenance (ECIM) is also inspired by the understanding of the maintenance of institutions through institutional work theory. By reinterpreting this societal view of maintenance into one focusing on organisational innovation, the process by which the reproduction of innovations through the creation and recreation of practices and structures can be assessed (Eide et al., 2017).

The linking of these two aspects; post-launch adjustments to innovative experience concepts and the creation and recreation of the practices and organisational structures that the concepts are delivered through, is the foundation for the ECIM model proposed by Eide et al. (2017). They propose four dimensions as forming the basis for ECIM; experience concept, experience system, internal engagement and external engagement. The maintenance of an experience concept involves, according to Eide et al. (2017), ensuring a concept stays attractive and "alive" over a long period of time through adaptions and improvements, while at the same time ensuring the concept is still recognisable.

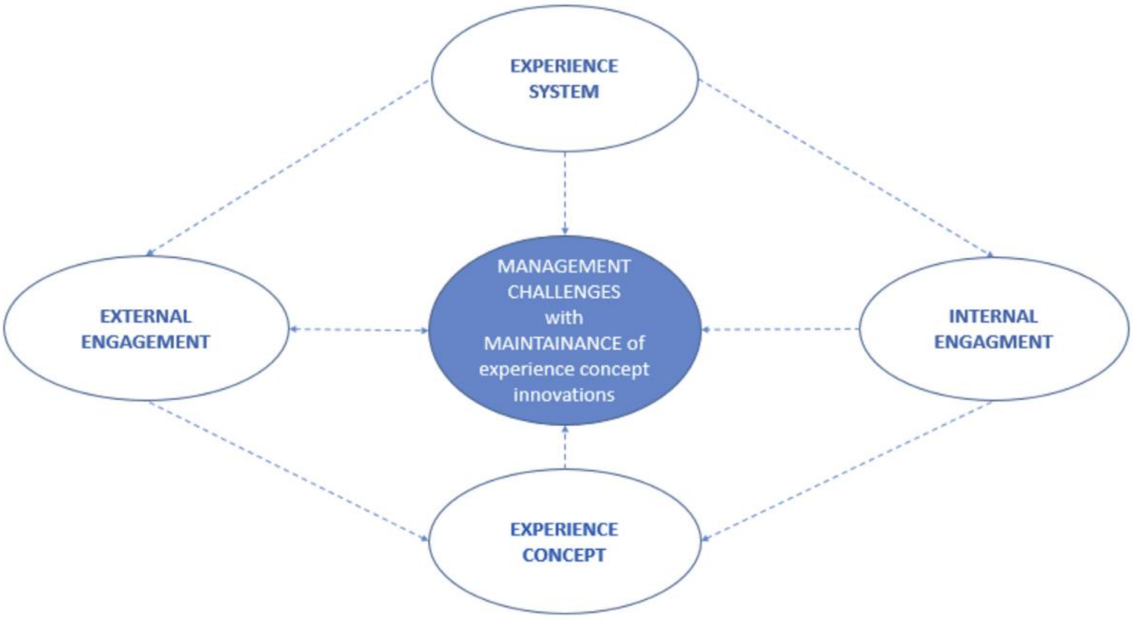

Figure 1 Experience Concept Innovation Maintenance model (Eide et al, 2017, p 454)

They propose some reasons for why experience concept innovation maintenance (ECIM) is a difficult issue for managers and why it should become a focus for research. The most relevant to tourism research relates to the characteristics accredited to workforces in tourism. They relate this to experience concept maintenance by the particularly demanding nature of the anomalous (an anomaly or different from normal) workforces involved in tourism. By this they mean that the workforces are often seasonal, part-time, volunteers or migrants workers with patterns of lower competence levels, high-turnover and burnout leading to higher costs, reduced quality and "brain drain" (Eide et al., 2017).

Eide et al. (2017) make a number of points that contribute to their conceptualisation of the experience maintenance model as can be seen in Figure 1.

- Employees play a central role in the maintenance of experience concept innovations. This is because they that must interpret the intangible concept and this requires constant learning and meaning negotiation. This because more problematic when the nature of tourism workforces are considered as was mentioned above.
- The co-creation of experience value with customers is increasingly recognised as important for companies to remain competitive. The engagement of employees in the innovation construction process is one way of facilitating this co-creation as it the employees who encounter them.

The above reasons combined with the need for research to support greater innovation in tourism and the need for greater research in the management of experiences leads the authors to propose the experience concept innovation maintenance (ECIM) model. It consists of four elements. One of these is the experience system which is the "innovation, production and delivery structure" (p 454) enabling the experience concept. Another is the experience concept, which is the idea for the entire experience content and acts a recipe for the production and delivery of the content. The maintenance of the concept depends on the internal engagement of employees, with the engagement of external actors also included as an important feature in the maintenance process (Eide et al., 2017).

Employee Involvement & Internal Engagement

Eide et al. (2017) describe experiences as unstable, flexible and largely intangible but still requiring consistency. They depend on memories and meaning constructions and so constant awareness of the core innovative idea is needed to ensure it can be reproduced, or adjusted and adapted, as intended. As this can rarely be done by material and technology frameworks, it is the employees who deliver the experience who play an important role in engaging with the reproduction and adapting of an experience faithfully in relation to its core concept (Ibid).

In the context of the experience concept innovation maintenance (ECIM), Eide et al. (2017) discuss the involvement of employees with the experience concept under the heading of internal engagement. They define this as the

"*engagement of internal actors in continuous learning about both reproducing and renewing innovations. Maintenance is done by IE, which brings understanding and capability through systematic practicing, renegotiation of meaning and practice and engagement*"

(p 458)

From the organisational perspective that ECIM is framed within, internal engagement refers to mobilising employees to learn, coproduce and maintain the experience (Eide et al., 2017). This is necessary on the basis that the commitment and passion of employees improves the quality of the experience they deliver and maintain. Within the field of organisational behaviour, employee engagement is reported as being characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption and defined as a work-centred state of mind that is positive and fulfilling (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). By vigour the authors mean resilience and adequate energy while working, dedication refers to being heavily involved in ones work and feeling importance, enthusiastic and challenged, and absorption suggests the deep immersion and focus in ones work to the point that time goes quickly and one can't detach themselves from it (Ibid).

The use of the word engagement in the above context can be seen to refer to an idealised disposition that one holds while working. This can lead to discussion on the existence or change of employee engagement, An example of this comes from Gruman and Saks (2011) who suggest that despite the emphasis on the importance of employee engagement with organisational competitiveness and success, research concludes that employee engagement with their work is dropping.

A different understanding of engagement can be seen as coming from a practice-based perspective, that is the process of involvement in ones work. Engagement within a practice-based understanding of involvement and learning is found in the communities of practice concept that Eide et al. (2017) identify as relevant for understanding the learning context from which maintenance can derive from. Referring to Wenger (1998) who identified engagement one of the modes of which members belong to a community of practice, Eide et al. (2017) describe engagement as significant in understanding how experience concepts are converted into routines practices and how practicing or rehearsing occurs in this process. They imply that practice is a contested, negotiated arena where understandings and misunderstandings can happen, even within low-turnover workforces, which is generally the opposite of tourism experience organisations. The authors see this process of engaging, referring to the learning and renewing of the intangible, changing experience concept, as important for managers to understand (Ibid). It is this concept of communities of practice and its relevance to understanding how employees learn to engage and maintain experiences, which therefore will be investigated next.

Communities of Practice: An introductory overview

The community of practice concept has become widely used in discussions about knowledge, learning and organisational innovation (Swan, Scarborough & Robertson, 2002). There have also been different conceptualisations of what they are, what they are composed of and what they can do such as from Lave and Wenger (1991), Brown and Duguid (1991), Wenger (1998; 2000) , and Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002).

Highlighting that the communities of practice concept has not been widely applied to the field of tourism, Hall & Williams (2008) propose that the findings by Brown and Duguid (1991) probably apply to tourism. Additionally, Eide et al. (2017) identify the learning processes of employees in relation to changing tourism experiences with Wenger's (1998) model. The conceptualisations of Wenger (1998) and Brown and Duguid (1991) will primarily be assessed, as well a being supplemented with further research where I consider it relevant. This assessment will then be used to inform my choice o thef features that will be used for the analysis of information collected for this study.

What are Communities of Practice

A small but growing number of papers have applied the concept of communities of practice to the field of tourism since Hall and Williams (2008) recognised their applicability. In his paper advancing a practice-based perspective of tourism, de Souza Bispo (2016) proposes that the community of practice concept provides an important understanding of organisations as composed of a process of practices. He concisely defines communities of practice in terms of groups that have formed through a common interest of members in a shared practice, within which learning occurs through the mutual engagement of their members in that practice.

In their study proposing communities of practice as a vehicle for linking tourism to sustainable development, Bertella and Rinaldi (2020) offer an explanation for them that encompasses the inter-organisational scope of their paper. They state that "*learning occurs within and across CoPs, which are groups of people, often emerging spontaneously, who share a so-called domain of interest/concern for something they do and who intend to learn together how to do it better*" (Bertella & Rinaldi, 2020, p 4).

The above can be contrasted with a more concise explanation given by Wenger (2000), which is that communities of practice are groups of individuals with common interests who collectively contribute the cultural practices that embody the groups acquired knowledge. Both of these defintions orientate around the same principle of collective participation in a mutually-defined activity. Yet Bertella and Rinaldi (2020) includes more of a focus on the learning dimension while at the same time, despite Wenger (1998) warning against the idealising of communities as always being progressive, they suggest that betterment is the intention of these communities.

A different perspective, which Hall and Williams (2008) propose applies to tourism, comes from Brown and Duguid's (1991). They agree with the idea that separating knowledge from practice is problematic and argue that the fluid learning processes can be described as learning-in-working which can happen within communities of practice. Their study examines how practice-situated groups take canonical descriptions of instructions issued by management and non-canonically interpret them. They do this in order to and as part of the process of successfully engaging in the practice, which often requires them to ignore rules and guidelines in order to do what management ultimately want them to do, that is, successfully do a task (Ibid).

The perspective offered by Brown and Duguid (1991) involves understanding communities of practice as informal, and as Blankenship and Ruona (2007) describe it, to some degree counter-culture.

Applicability of the Communities of Practice concept

Although it has not stem from tourism research per se, there has been criticism of how loosely and widely the communities of practice has been applied which can be seen to have relevance for tourism. Amin and Roberts (2008) warn that the concept is risking being used imprecisely as a standardised instrument to managing social practices and applicable to almost all learning and knowledge contexts. The lack of emphasis on the earlier conceptualisations which were context-specific and studied the performative nature of learning have been gradually lost through the concepts later evolutionary stages so that it has become a managerial one-size fits all approach to expanding knowledge exchange. Although they acknowledge the similarities within a range of learning contexts which make use of the concept appealing, they emphasise that the differences between them also need to be accounted for when deciding to use the concept or not (Ibid).

Amin and Roberts (2008) propose four different characterisations of 'knowing in action', of which they see communities of practice as relating to one, craft/task based activities. The other three categories are termed professional, epistemic/creative or virtual. One of the key reasons they propose for differentiating these different groups is to oppose the conclusion that spatial proximity is always necessary for enabling social learning through its impact on relational proximity. In other words, they do not see the other three characterisations of practice-orientated groups as necessarily needing the community of practice suggested physical interaction between members to learn and contribute to a shared practice. They see this as particularly the case for virtual practice groups but also short-term epistemic/creative collectives (Ibid).

The applicability of Amin and Roberts' (2008) proposal to the context of human-led tourism experiences remains to be seen. The job of many tourism employees could be said in some respects to fit the description of task groups. In these the focus is on learning to competently replicate certain series of tasks within a technological or sociocultural setting (Amin and Roberts, 2008). Tourism, however, is noted as often having employees who follow temporary/seasonal, part-time and often migratory patterns (Kusluvan et al., 2010). In this way, there are temporal similarities between the staff at many tourism organisations and the short-term epistemic/creative groups described by Amin and Roberts (2008). At the same time, there is evidence of repeated employment and staff retention in seasonal environments (McCole, Jacobs, Lindley & McAvoy, 2012) and, depending on the organisations, there can also be full-time and or non-seasonal staff (Kusluvan et al., 2010). This offers a chance for a continuity in both relational and learning terms, which relates more to the ongoing nature of a community.

Perhaps more importantly than the above discussion about temporality, is the performative nature of practices focusing on tourism experiences discussed above. Amin and Roberts (2008) identify performative artists with epistemic/creative groups, yet this is not a term that is ubiquitously used to describe tourism experience employees.

There is also research that supports the identification of seasonal, performative workforces similar to tourism employees, with the community of practice concept. Comunian (2017) finds the concept of communities of practice an effective tool to study temporary arrangements such as festivals and how they act as places and shared spaces where learning takes place. She proposes their use in terms of allowing sense-making and reflective dialogue. This refers to places that through their collective processes allow for self critical-reflection and where contestation and negotiation help develop shared meaning and practice.

Comunian (2017) highlights the static and evolving nature of communities of practice and argues that despite their limitations due to the role of power, trust and structures, they are useful to understand practitioner motivation and engagement, particularly in temporary knowledge communities (Ibid). The culture-orientated, performative nature of those who contribute to festivals arguably correlates with that such as found in drama-based experiences such as Hamlet Live. So too does the temporary yet, in many cases, reoccurring cycle they both exist in. While festivals can have a both tourism and non-tourism dimension to them, there has also been a number of studies done which find the community of practice as applicable to tourism.

Applicability of Communities of Practice to Tourism and Experience Research

Locating Communities of Practice in Tourism

Hoarau (2016) argues that behavioural change can be understood through a perspective that is practice-based, as opposed to objectivist. The latter, Hoarau (2016) explains, means to see knowledge as an object that can be independently recognised and exchanged. The practice-based perspective is based on the understanding that practice involves indivisible cognitive and physical dimensions and thus knowledge use and development are an integral part of activity.

Hoarau (2016) argues that both tacit knowledge, that which is personal, subjective, context-specific and hard to share, and explicit knowledge, which is impersonal, objective, codifiable and easily shared, are interdependent, inseparable, and mutually constituting in a practice-based understanding of knowledge. The identifying of the physical and cognitive, tacit and explicit elements in practice-based knowledge leads Hoarau (2016) to propose the need for a shared physical, social and mental space. Knowledge creation, he claims, requires this space to allow the inherent interpretation of information, interaction and developing relationships. Hoarau (2016) terms this space as context and he suggests that communities of practice provide that context as they are vital for the intra and inter-organisational sharing of knowledge.

Reinl and Kelliher (2014) also see the communities of practice concept as useful for understanding tourism learning processes. In their study, the focus is solely on inter-firm cooperation and learning that happens within a voluntary collective of micro tourism firms. In this context the authors find that learning in this situated social system is affected, interpreted and constructed by members. They also find basis for the understanding that social learning happens through fluidity in membership and the role of brokering and boundary activity is important for facilitating learning and preventing insularism.

In terms of the sources of knowledge for tourism innovation, Hoarau (2016) suggests it can include employees, customers, management, conferences and newspapers. In support of this, Fuglsang, Sundbo and Sørensen (2011) identified two of these sources, employees and customers, as particularly vital for experience innovation. Hoarau (2016) treats as synonymous a community of practice and a tourism system and thereby includes the employees, tourists, by-standers, nonhuman actors and artefacts all as members involved in the co-creating of value and knowledge.

In their paper which they strongly link to tourism, Eide et al. (2017) describe the experience system with the openness that Hoarau uses for the tourism system / community of practice. While they recognise the relevance of the open innovation concept, it is possible that they avoid the synonymous use of community of practice and the experience that Hoarau (2016) offers on the grounds that it makes the communities of practice concept too broad to be useful. Whether this understanding of diverse stakeholders, as suggested by Hoarau (2016), can be considered a community of practice will be a point for consideration in the analysis chapter.

Analysis of Tourism Communities of Practice

As with the paper by Reinl and Kelliher (2014), there are other studies which look at the communities of practice from an inter-organisational perspective. An example of that is Bertella (2011) who uses Wenger's (1998) communities of practice model in a case study to explore the development and learning among a collaborative group of small tourism actors in Norway.

Bertella (2011) applies an approach that contrasts with those used by Hoarau (2016) and Reinl and Kelliher (2014). Unlike the latter two, Bertella uses the communities of practice concept as the sole framework for analysing her case and, although there are some features which she does not identify, she is more systematic in her use of the components of the concept to her case. In contrast, Reinl and Kelliher (2014) and particularly Hoarau (2016) use the communities of practice concept flexibly and partially to contribute to broader notions such as evolving learning communities and opent tourism innovation.

Bertella (2011) identifies the relevant elements of the communities of practice concept as they fit with her case. She does this first by looking at the features of the group that relate to components of a community of practice and then the dynamics which represent processes of learning from that perspective. The components include the varying but connected practice of providing tours which Bertella ties to meaningfulness, the shared domain of collaborating to improve products and opportunities, a mutual confidence and familiarity between members, the situated knowledge and strong shared identity, as well as a shared repertoire recognisable in the collective mode for evaluating trial tours. The learning processes she identifies with reification and participation, as well as through the modes of belonging: engagement, mutuality and alignment.

Bertella (2011) concludes that the communities of practice model is useful for unfolding the significance of knowledge and identity as foundations for the development of tourism experience products. She also found it helped to explain the social processes of learning that the collaborative group members go through. In studying learning amongst collaborative tourism organisations in a peripheral area, Bertella (2011) recommends that the concept would benefit from the addition of the concepts of community and lifestyle entrepreneurship, as well as that of terroir. The latter refers to the conceptualisation of an area as both natural and human elements that create a cultural and historic identity within a dynamic system that is essential to the broader tourism destination (Ibid).

A framework for use in the study of experience innovation maintenance

Eide et al. (2017) propose that learning in the communities of practice context can be assessed using Wenger's concepts of learning as doing (practice-derived), learning by belonging (to a community), learning as becoming (the shaping of identity) and learning as experience (the construction of meaning). These four components have been explained as:

- Practice - Learning as doing relates to the resources and contexts that facilitate the active mutual participation of members
- Community - Learning by belonging refers to the being a part of a group that supports the carrying out of a practice and the involvement of peers.
- Identity – Learning as becoming/nurturing concerns how learning changes who members are and are in possession of personal narrative of becoming members.
- Meaning – Learning as experience equates to the ability to relate significantly to the practice and group.

(Wenger, 1998; Bouchamma & Michaud, 2011)

As can be seen in the figure below, these elements are proposed as forming the basic components of Wenger's (1998) social learning theory. In what partially explains why the concept of communities of practice has been used as a multi-purpose tool (Cox, 2005), Wenger (1998) proposes that the high level of inter-connectedness of the components means that each of the peripheral components could replace learning as the core focus and the model would still function logically. This flexibility fits with his view that the concept is a "mid-level category" as an analytic framework, not so narrow to look at individual interactions and not too broad to examine cities with (Wenger, 1998, p 124). He offers the community of practice concept as an entry point into the broader concept of social participation as a process of learning and knowing. This can be also understood from his later description of communities of practice as "the basic building blocks of a social learning system because they are the social containers of the competences that make up such a system" (Wenger, 2000, p 229). Wenger (1998) states that the concepts analytic power comes from its integration of the four components around a familiar experience.

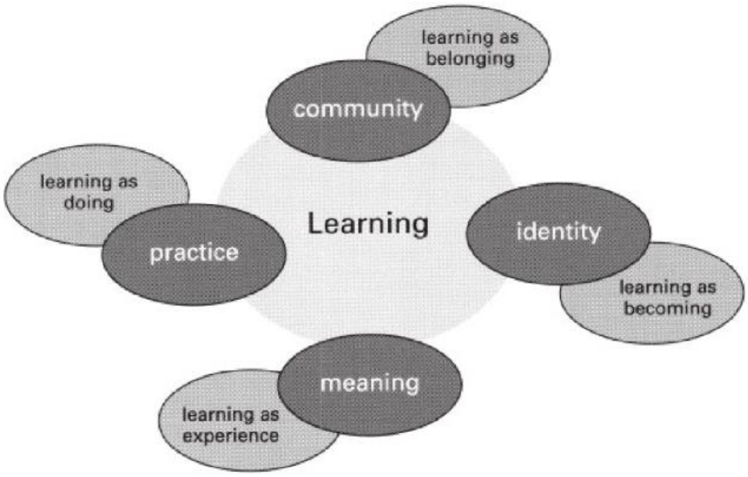

Figure 0.1. Components of a social theory of learning: an initial inventory.

(Wenger, 1998, p 5)

The next sequence of sub-sections will explore these and other components that my interaction in primary research has led me to see as relevant.

Learning in a community of practice

Relevant as a foundation to the framework described above, Wenger (1998) proposes that communities of practice can be considered shared histories of learning. This learning, which can happen over intense, short periods or prolonged, century-spanning periods, is manifested in a number of ways.

One aspect is through understanding participation and reification as forms of memory which can continue or be discontinued with an impact on the development of practice. In this regard, reification refers to how memories are kept or lost through the production of forms that continue or change according to their own rules. Participation is a source for retaining or losing in our memories and through the historically-derived identities that come from it.

Another aspect of learning relates to the three dimensions by which community coherence happens. Mutual engagement evolves through the process of learning how to and how not to engage, as well as building relationships that define identities and create understandings about capabilities and compatibility. The process of understanding and adapting an enterprise which involves learning how to align engagement, becoming and holding each other accountable and the negotiation of interpretations in defining an enterprise. Lastly, the development of a shared repertoire means negotiating the meaning of reified elements through the production of certain tools and artifacts, as well as the invention, changing and abandoning of discourses and routines (Ibid).

Competence and Experience

The result of learning is given a short explanation in the context of communities of practice by Wenger (1998) under the heading of knowing in practice. Essential to knowing in practice, Wenger (1998) proposes, are experience of meaning and regimes of competence for “knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises” (p 4). In a later paper, he defines these as

- Competence is what communities determine it requires to act and be recognisable as a competent member.
- Experience is the ongoing participation of members within a community and the broader environment (Wenger, 2000).

Competence and experience are suggested to be the components of the knowledge that a practice is established upon. They can be either divergent or convergent with the possibility of either largely shaping the other but in either case, learning taking place where one starts pulling away from the other (Ibid). This mutually engaged interaction between competence and experience is vital for the development of practice as it allows either to drive the other and thus individual and collective learning. Learning, from this perspective, is created by the change in alignment of either experience or competence where one has to realign with the other (Wenger, 1998).

In a paper on the competence requirements of managers in the Scottish tourism industry, Watson, McCracken and Hughes (2004) review definitions of competence and refer to three features that are found recurring in the debate. These are that competence relates to the particular context of a job, organisation or role in an organisation, it is linked with superior performance, and it can be identified with specific behaviours.

Pennington and Richards (2016) outline ten areas of competency that second language teachers require to exert expertise in their profession. The different context of these competences makes them irrelevant to this paper. What I consider useful, however, is how the authors divide them up under the heading of competences of language teacher identity, between foundational and advanced competences. The foundational competences relate to those competences that a person requires to engage with a practice, while advanced are those that relate to those that are the desired outcome of continuous experience and learning. A paper by López-Bonilla and López-Bonilla (2014) on competences in tourism education programmes, can be seen to use categories similar to those presented by Pennington and Richards (2016). In their paper they identify competences as either generic/transversal or subject-specific. Generic refers to competences that are subject-independent and can be seen as relevant to any context, while subject-specific refers to those that relate to a particular context and help in the performance of related tasks.

Adapting the above definitions and features, the terms foundational competence and practice-specific competence will be used in this paper. Foundational competence will relate to the competences that a community of practice considers as essential to be able to engage with the practice that they centre around. Practice-specific competence will relate to those competences that a community considers as relating to a superior quality performance and which are gained from experience in a particular context. The mutually-reinforcing relationship that Wenger (1998) places on competence and experience could be interpreted to see these on a spectrum within a given practice, this is something that the paper will consider later on.

Practice

Wenger (1998) describes practice as doing a particular activity that is gains its structure and meaning by being embedded in a historical and social practice. In this way, he sees practice as inherently social. Engaging in a practice requires both acting and knowing simultaneously and includes both tacit and explicit elements It is through the constructs of meaning, community and learning that Wenger (1998) explains and situates practice in the communities of practice concept, these will be looked at below. He does, however, give examples of what practice entails and allows from his case study on medical claim processors. In this case, practice:

- Allows for the resolution of institutionally-born conflict, for example measures, how work is measured and the actual components of what it takes to get the work done.
- Allows for a collective memory whereby members can function effectively without needing to personally know everything
- Allows new members to join through participation in the practice
- Creates perspectives and language fitted to the work and getting it done
- Makes the job bearable through creation of an atmosphere that allows monotonous work to be integrated into stories, customs, rituals, events, dramas and rhythms of the community' work.

Meaning

In the context of communities of practice, meaning explains the level of discourse that the concept should be understood within (Wenger, 1998). This is because "Practice is a process by which we can experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful... about meaning as an experience of everyday life" (Ibid, p 51 & 52).

Meaning is embedded in the negotiation of meaning process. This process is composed of the interaction of two parts; participation and reification. These parts are a duality that is integral to our understanding of meaning and therefore to the nature of practice.

Participation in the CoP context refers to "the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises" (p 55). Reification is defined as "to treat (an abstraction) as substantially existing, or as a concrete material thing" (p 58)

Negotiation of meaning suggests:

1) "Active process of producing meaning that is both dynamic and historical
2) A world of both resistance and malleability
3) The mutual ability to affect and to be affected
4) The engagement of a multiplicity of factors and perspectives
5) The production of a new resolution to the convergence of these factors and perspectives
6) The incompleteness of this resolution, which can be partial, tentative, ephemeral, and specific to a situation" (p 53)

Community

The notion of community in the communities of practice concept relates to the how the practice, the process of our engagement with the world making it meaningful, is associated with the formation of communities. This process of community building and maintaining, in other words community coherence, can be understood as happening through three dimensions; mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998).

Identity

Wenger (1998) introduces identities into the concept of communities of practice in order to focus on both the individual and the social context that relates to them, as well as to allow consideration of the broader processes of social identification and social structure beyond the concept.

In the context of practice, identity is proposed as derived from negotiated experience, influenced by our membership of a community, impacted by the trajectory of our learning marked by the past and potential future, the reconciliation of multimembership in various communities into one identity and affected by the relationship between our local practice and the broader context.

Wenger (1998) also sees identity as relating to our belonging to a community. The processes of identity development and learning in this context can be conceptualised within three forms of belonging; imagination, alignment and engagement. Wenger (2000) argues that each mode requires a different type of work and each adds something to the construction of personal identities and social learning systems. These modes can be conflicting or complimentary with the possibility that one can dominate the other leading to a community having a particular characteristic.

A mode of imagination is described by Wenger (1998) as where the use of the imagination enables one to establish an image of the world and visualise connections between it and their experience across time and space, and

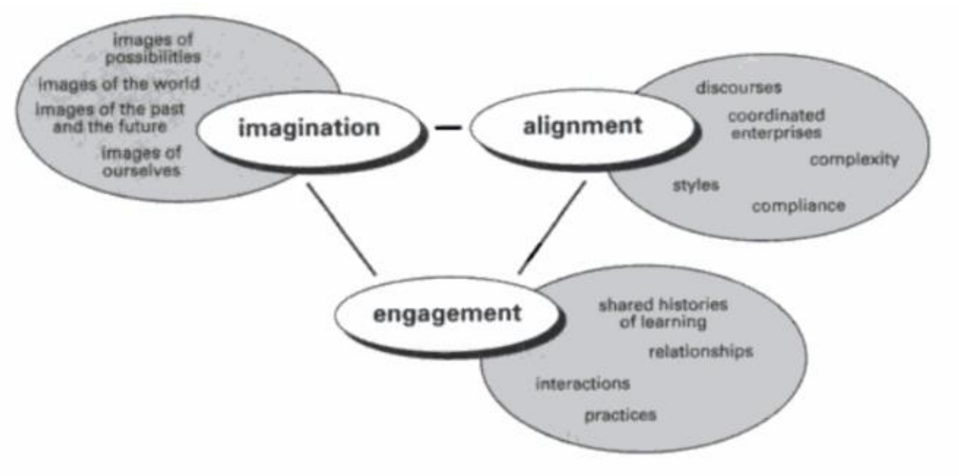

Figure 2 Modes of belonging (Wenger, 1998, p 174)

Engagement refers to the active involvement of members in the collective process of meaning negotiation. This can be considered to compose of the interplay between the continuous process of meaning negotiation, the development of trajectories of learning and the unfolding of practice histories Eide et al. (2017) saw engagement as particularly important for considering how practices that sustain or adapt experience concept interpretations are carried out by the internal engagement of employees. This is due to its power to explain how concepts become part of normal operating practice, which occurs as the practices “renew themselves as part of their ongoing, proactive and dynamic process of reconfiguration” (Antonacopoulou in Eide et al., 2017, p 457).

In the context of the negotiation of meaning, Wenger (1998) proposes that mutual engagement refers to the creation of meaning proposals and the adoption of those meanings . This integration or separation of these aspects can lead to shared ownership or marginalization, with either a positive or negative impact on learning between communities. This is because “*learning depends on our* *ability to contribute to the collective production of meaning because it is by this process that experience and competence pull each other*" (Wenger, 1998, p 203).

The mode of alignment is defined as the alignment of our energy and actions in a way that fits with the defining structures and adds to broader ventures (Wenger, 1998). It is also discussed in relation to the negotiation of meaning. Wenger (1998) proposes that alignment enables an understanding of ownership of meaning in terms of economies of meaning. He proposes that alignment is possible when a group or individual are able to influence the conferring of meaning on a social arrangement. Alignment involves the collaborative organizing of actions, allowing for different views and their attached meanings to encounter, challenge and trade with each other; currencies in the economies of meaning.

Wenger (1998) identifies two very different alignment approaches. The first is a type of cooperative deliberation which can include negotiation, persuading, inspiring, trusting and delegating whereby alignment constitutes a shared ownership of meaning. The second is a type of forced imposition which can include literal compliance, proceduralisation, violence, conformity and submission in which ownership of meaning is not shared but dictated by those who produce it on to those who must adopt it without negotiation. These two approaches can, according to Wenger, give very different relations in negotiability. Using the understanding mentioned above that collective contribution to meaning is important for learning, the forced alignment approach effect on meaning adopters can be a limit to their fully understanding or accepting the meaning.

A number of other related notions are introduced by Wenger (1998) which may be useful in the analysis of the learning within Hamlet Live. These are briefly mentioned below.

Boundaries and Learning

Wenger (1998) discuss the parameters of communities of practice as relating to the "*continuities and discontinuities in the social landscape defined by the boundaries of various practices*" (p 104 & 105)". These have been proposed as useful for understanding knowledge flows between communities and those who operate at them and across them. Hall and Williams (2008) identify knowledge brokers as useful for tourism organisations, describing them as influential people who interact within and across company boundaries and are important in ensuring intra and inter-community knowledge transfers. Brown and Duguid (1991) see boundaries as potentially limiting learning and knowledge flows and suggest that communities of practice, if interpretive and enacting, can prevent closure and allow for intra-organisational learning. As well as brokering, Wenger (1998) also mentions boundary objects, which "serve to coordinate the perspectives of various constituencies for some purpose" (p 106). While also recognising the risks of slowing or preventing learning in some circumstances, Shaw and Williams (2009) see the location of tourism communities of practice at organisational boundaries with external environments as ideal for facilitating learning and knowledge transfer

Peripheral learning

Another element of community of practice theory that could be said to have some relation to the notion of boundaries is peripheralities, or edges of a practice. In Lave and Wenger's (1991) original work, a key focus was the peripheral participation of would-be practitioners in a practice in what is commonly recognised as apprenticeships. From this perspective, the focus is on learning through participation in a practice as opposed to by following a curriculum. This approach also allows for the broadening of understanding of the process to include the changing nature of a member participation in a community of practice and the resulting transformation in their practice-related identity (Wenger, 1998). It is emphasised that peripherality allows for learning when it is an approximation of full practice, By this Wenger (1998) means that although the expectations and conditions can be more relaxed, participants much have access and be involved in the joint enterprise, mutual engagement and the shared repertoire of the community. Wenger (1998) also proposes that newcomers must be granted legitimacy by being given access to these dimensions of the community, otherwise it will be very hard for learning to take place.

The learning process depicted as taking place can be said to have two main roles, These are the new members of a community who are on the periphery, for example, the apprentice, and the fully competent member who the apprentice listens to, observes and interacts with during practice, for example, the master of a trade or profession (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Equivalents of these master and apprentice roles could be relevant in tourism research. Kusluvan et al. (2010) discuss the notion of core and peripheral workers and the differing approaches tourism managers can apply depending on whether or not they embrace or challenge seasonality. In this context, the core members could viewed as masters and the peripheral or once-off seasonal staff the apprentices, although this is not to suggest that learning always take place between such roles. Another point is made by Wenger (2000) who states that peripheral learning processes are not one-way, new members also bring new experience into a community and this over time can cause the knowledge-base and core competences of a practice to evolve.

Problems with communities of practice

Even where communities of practice are applicable to a context, a number of papers have criticised them as spaces for facilitating learning and knowledge exchange. Hall and Williams (2008) warn that the focus on a particular practice encourages the reapplication of existing knowledge rather than the introduction of new knowledge in tourism. In his study of knowledge management in tourism companies, Cooper (2015) goes further and argues that communities of practice may actually impede knowledge transfer in tourism, although this relates to the inter-organisation/sector relations and the unshared repertoires of tourism organisations and academia. Cooper (2015) acknowledges that the concept has some potential for understanding knowledge exchange in a tourism destination but a pivotal issue relates to the prerequisite of trust for knowledge exchange to happen in a community of practice. Within organisational communities, Roberts (2006) argues that trust is a prerequisite for tacit knowledge transfer but sees the commonly-found management strategies that focus on competitiveness between workers as undermining it.

Critical studies focusing on the limitations of communities of practice within organisations in tourism are lacking, presumably due to the relatively small amount of focus the concept has got in the field of tourism. For this purpose, it is worth considering more general problems that studies and papers have suggested.

Dysfunctional communities of practice

Based on work by Pemberton and Stalker, Pastoors (2007) argues that organisational communities of practice need internal leadership and coordination, which Wenger (2000) agrees with and sees it coming in different forms such as thought leaders, community coordinators and networkers. Pastoors (2007) proposes that where this leadership is provided by managers looking for a badly-fitting alignment in terms of organisational culture, it can lead to dysfunctional practice and the wasting of commitment and resources. This issue of alignment relates to the alignment approaches mentioned abvove.

Problematic Power Dynamics within Communities of Practice

Roberts (2006) agues that whatever about in the context of a particular practice, it is very possible that some members always remain on the periphery within the broader organisational context i.e. the organisations that different practices are situated. In this way, understanding these communities as sites where full-participation and thus influence is attainable is misleading. According to Roberts (2006), these problems and even more those of the power dynamics in political and institutional contexts, are not addressed sufficiently by either Lave and Wenger (1991), or Wenger (1998; 2000).

While Wenger (1998) recognises these power struggles, he decides, however, to discuss power solely from a social rather than institutional or political perspective. A point not challenged by Roberts (2006) is that Wenger (1998) defends this decision on the grounds that he is examining identity as a social concept which involves examining power as a social concept. This equally means that community, negotiation of meaning and identity must also be considered in a discussion of power as a social concept, rather than as an institutional or political one. Wenger (1998) justifies this focusing on power within a social context on the grounds that it is important to understand these social dimensions of power as they would continue in social life even if an ideal political or economic system were to be found.

Conclusion

The theoretical and conceptual foundations adopted for this paper were explored in this chapter. This relates to the particular line I chose for investigating the process by which tourism employees learn to engage in the practice of tourism experiences. At the core of this exploration is the communities of practice concept on practice-based learning processes that was recommended by Eide et al. (2017). Their recommendations were added to by my own understanding of what is relevant for the study of tourism experience employee learning based on my professional experience and the subjectively evaluated strength of theoretical constructs advanced in the papers I encountered them in.

In order to provide the context that will create understanding of why practice-based learning is considered important to the studying of tourism experience employee learning, a funnel approach was initially applied. This began with discussing tourism experiences followed by tourism experience innovation. Finally, in what can be seen as the first part of this chapter, was the introduction of the experience concept innovation maintenance concept and the components that have been suggested as relevant by Eide et al. (2017).

The second part of this chapter examined the communities of practice concept as relevant to tourism, as well as more generally. This was done by discussing its origins, definition, applicability to this context, use within tourism research, a series of features that an analytic framework can be drawn from and finally, conceptual and analytic problems that papers and studies have proposed with communities of practice.

Research Methodology

Purpose of the Paper

An important factor in determining which decisions I will take in carrying out research in this paper is the purpose that the paper is founded on. The purpose of this paper is to add to the understanding of how learning happens among the employees in their interaction with others in delivering Hamlet Live. This could be contrasted with only looking to identify and measure what has been learnt. This purpose will guide me towards some research options and away from others.

Philosophy of Science

In the context of research, philosophy refers to the beliefs and abstract ideas that inform the research. The underlying philosophical perspective one takes gives direction to the goals and outcomes of research and these often relate to our training and previous research experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ontological assumptions

The ontological assumptions a researcher holds concern their understanding on what is the nature of reality that they will study and what they can know about it (Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Although there are several ontological positions, the two opposites are realism and relativism (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Realism sees a true, independent reality existing, one that can be studied and measured. Relativism on the other hand, sees reality as humanly constructed and so no one reality exists but is relative to how it is experienced by individuals in a particular place and at a particular time (Ibid).

The purpose of this paper is to study how employees learn how to engage in practices relating to tourism experience frameworks. Based on the recommendation of Eide et al. (2017), a practice-based approach to understanding learning and knowledge will be applied and its suitability evaluated. This approach means that knowledge will be considered to be inseparable from activity which leads to the view that learning requires both physical and cognitive participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991: Hoarau, 2016). Another approach to knowledge with implications for learning would be the objectivist perspective, whereby knowledge is viewed as an independent entity from people and activity and can be given and received (Hoarau, 2016). In the context of organisational learning, Dibella (2012) suggests that there is no one way of learning and one learning approach cannot always be said to be better than all others in all contexts. As indicated above, I accept that if I take a different understanding of knowledge and the implications for learning, or engaged with different people at different times, I would potentially draw different findings. In other words, the reality I encounter relates to the perspective I take.

The above leads me to consider myself as holding a relativist approach in this paper and accepting that the reality that I investigate and draw findings from could be different for a different researcher or if I applied a different understanding.

Epistemological assumptions

Cresswell and Poth (2018) see epistemology concerning questions such as "*what counts as knowledge? How are knowledge claims justified? What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?"* (p 20).

The relativist ontological position I am taking based on the reasons above leads me to consider knowledge as not independent of me but can change according to circumstances including my perspective and the engagement I have with the field. I assume my understanding of the issues central to this research will be built through my experiences and the experiences of those I interact with, interview and observe. This correlates with a subjectivist epistemology, which is described as the position that what knowledge is depends on the perception and understanding of the researcher. This stems from and contributes to a view that there are realities, which come from meaning and value being imposed on the world under study by the researcher (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Such a position can be contrasted with its opposite, an objectivist position. This position would hold that there was a reality that could be observed and the goal of the researcher is to remain detached from the object being studied. One way this is articulated is the former, which this paper holds, has the motto "believing determines what is seen", while the latter's motto would be "seeing is believing" (Moon & Blackman, 2014, p 1172)).

Methodological approach

Methodology specifies how researchers may go about practically studying whatever they believe can be known" (Blanche & Durrheim, 2006, p 6). The ontological and epistemological assumptions mentioned above all point towards a particular approach and set of options for carrying out the research for this paper. One of the undiscussed points which has both guided and being guided by the sections before is the research approach being adopted in this paper. As the purpose of this paper is to study the meaning attributed to the activities, interaction and events between and involving people and combine them with my own understanding of what is meaningful in relation to how employees learn to deliver the experience, I am pushed towards applying an qualitative approach.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is one of the three approaches to research, the other two being quantitative and mixed-methods (Durrheim, 2006). Qualitative research uses interpretation and the thematic categorisation of either written or spoken words, or language-recorded observations, which is in contrast to quantitative research where data would be collected in the form of numbers in order that it could statistically evaluated. The purpose of qualitative research is to conduct studies of phenomena or objects that are in-depth, detailed and open with the intention of forming a better understanding of the emergent significance and categories of information (Ibid). Creswell and Poth (2018) state that qualitative research is founded on assumptions and interpretive or theoretical frameworks that guide the study of the meaning ascribed to social or human problems by individuals or groups.

Philosophical Position

Cresswell and Poth (2018) identify qualitative research procedures as being noted for the inductive, emergent nature of how relevant issues and even the research problem itself, derive from practice rather than deducted from theory. They also describe them as being shaped by the experiences of the researcher while collecting and analysing the information.

In the case of this paper, I would agree that both the research question and significant issues that could relate to various theories and concepts, emerged from my engagement with the field. At the same time, I agree to some degree with Parkhe (1993) who stated that "In reality, of course, there is no competition, but rather an essential continuity and inseparability between inductive and deductive approaches to theory development" (p 237). My agreement extends to the fact that even when doing initial field research, I had my previous academic knowledge, as well as having done some preliminary reading on relevant topics to innovation processes. As I encountered certain meanings attached to process-related elements and integrated them with my own, I found myself investigating further into certain areas with the final fine-tuning of the concepts that I would use occurring as I completed my interviews and observations.

The purpose of this paper is to increase understanding of the experience concept-related learning processes. Moon and Blackman (2014) align this goal as to understand to the inductive approach and a social constructivist or interpretivist philosophical position.

Social Constructivism and Interpretivism

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), social constructivism is often described as interpretivism, which corresponds with the manner that Moon and Blackman (2014) use the terms interchangeably. Hollinshead (2006) teats them as heavily linked but does suggest a difference between them that is not always recognised by 'soft-science' researchers.

Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim (2006) describe the (a) ontological, (b) epistemological and (c) methodological position of interpretivists as being

(a) peoples subjective experiences are what are real for them,
(b) researchers can make sense of peoples experiences by interacting with them,
(c) which can be done by applying typically inductive qualitative research techniques to gather and analyse information.

This can be compared with the same positions given by Cresswell and Poth (2018) to social constructivists, which are that

(a) numerous realities are developed through our own experience and our interaction with others,
(b) reality is shaped by the lived experiences of researcher and those being researched and is built in their interaction, and
(c) inductive research methods can allow ideas to emerge for analysis (in consensus) with a style that is more literary than scientific.

Interpretivism, according to Hollinshead (2006) rejects attempts to research cause and effect relationships and instead explores what people understand in the world they participate in by studying the meaning these people give their actions. Neuman (2000) defines the interpretive approach as involving the direct and detailed observation of people in their natural setting in order to carry out a systematic analysis of socially meaningful action as it is to them.

On the other hand, Hollinshead (2006) explains social constructivism as a rejection of objectivity and taking the view that meaning is created through the collective interaction with the consciously-identifiable world. This can allow for gradual and continued change through everyday collective engagement with the world. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that the variety of these meanings, which are socially and historically negotiated and constructed, requires the researcher to look at the complexity of views instead of applying a narrow approach to thematic analysis. Social constructivists do not start with a theory but allow a pattern of meaning or theory to generate or inductively develop.

Creswell and Poth (2018) describe the social constructivist approach to practice as involving open questions so that both participants can co-construct meaning in that context. The authors see processes of interaction as often being the focus of social constructivists who aim to understand the cultural and historic context of participants work or lives. The positioning of the researcher in terms of their own personal, cultural and historical experiences within the research is also important for social constructivists, because it is their subjective interpretation to make sense of others meaning of the world.

As implied by the positioning I have described above, my understanding for this paper is that there can be multiple realities for the subject of investigation, which will be determined by both subjective and changing factors relating to me, the participants and our interaction. It is the meaning we individually and collectively attribute to the practice, events and social processes surrounding them, which I see as one way of increasing the understanding we have on how employees in experience organisations engage in and learn from their practice. For this reason, I conclude that my position is that of the social constructivist. In the next section I will examine the implications that has for the research methods and research design that I will apply.

Case Study

Yin (2009) suggests that the appropriateness of a case study depends on the research question. The more the question seeks to explain some present circumstance such as why or how some social phenomenon works the more a case study is relevant. Likewise, the more in-depth a description the research question requires and the absence of any need to control behavioural events, the more applicable a case study method will be.

Yin (2009, p 18) proposes that a case study is, in scope:

"an empirical inquiry that

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident".

Andrade (2009) suggest that one of the advantages of case studies is that they allow for a holistic understanding of a particular phenomenon by studying it in its natural settings in order to understand little studied current processes. This makes it suitable for answering how and why questions, as opposed to how much or how many questions. Marshall and Rossman (2006) associate case studies with multiple forms of data collection, often a combination of historical and document analysis, interviews and participant observation. The reports that these studies create tend to focus on organisations or processes and take the reader into the context with a detail that often is missing from more analytical formats.

The social constructivist approach that my research goal had pointed me towards encouraged me to explore the learning processes of employees in-depth and where possible, to try and understand the meaning that participants placed on certain elements by observing their practice. The case study was chosen as an appropriate method as it would allow me to research the case in-depth by using multiple research methods. The methods that were chosen were document and secondary data analysis to provide a broad contextual understanding and semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation to try and give me insight into how learning occurred and manifested itself.

Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that while some researchers see case studies as a choice of what is to be studied, they see it as a methodology. They connect it with qualitative research where a real-life bounded system is explored through collecting detailed, in-depth information from multiple sources. They propose a number of procedures for conducting a case study. These include identifying if a case is bounded and worth examining and considering if it is to be instrumental, understand a particular problem or intrinsic, unique in itself. It also includes choosing data collection methods, indicating which analysis approach will be used and writing a reader-orientated report (Ibid).

The suggestions from Creswell and Poth (2018) were integrated into the general research methodology as is described in this chapter. It is worth noting that the case study will be instrumental, as it seeks to explore the challenge of employee learning in a seasonal tourism experience context.

Research Design

Durrheim (2006) identifies case studies as requiring a flexible and pragmatic guide for research action, meaning the process will be iterative and change as the researcher engages with it. Examples of this are that instead of specific interview questions being listed, a number of themes are identified that will be explored with individuals with greater insight into how best to investigate them (Ibid). It is emphasised that even flexible guides need to specify a list of activities that will ensure the validity of the conclusions drawn from the research and this approach is in fact more challenging as the researcher must be involved in ongoing reflection on the research process. This requires making decisions that lead to the refining and developing of the design throughout the process to ensure it produces valid conclusions (Durrheim, 2006)

According to Durrheim (2006), research design involves four dimensions to be considered:

(1) Purpose of the research
(2) Theoretical paradigm guiding it
(3) Context or situations research is conducted within
(4) Research methods for data collection and analysis

This paper has applied the flexible research design that Durrheim (2006) proposes for case studies and qualitative research, both of which are relevant to this paper. The research process described further down demonstrates the iterative nature of this design. The other issues of the papers purpose, social constructivist paradigmatic foundation, case study of Hamlet Live and the three research methods applied are also discussed in the relevant sections of this chapter.

Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research

In relation to the context of case studies, Yin (2009) proposes that the quality of a research design, or logical plan outlining how a study can get from the research question to the conclusions that answer it, can be tested by applying a number of tests. These tests include construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability.

Andrade (2009) suggests that applying the validation approaches suggested by Yin above, who he identifies as applying a positivist perspective, may not be suitable for interpretive research in case studies. Relatedly, Creswell and Poth (2018) discuss validation in interpretive research such as that involved in social constructivism, which they suggest requires a greater focus on the significance of the researcher. This can involve not attempting to frame the truth of the validation, a validation based on negotiation and dialogue with participants, and interpretations that are based in the context they were studied and open to reinterpretation. Citing Angen, they define interpretative research validation as "*a judgement of the trustworthiness or goodness of a piece of research*" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p 257). They recommend ethical and substantive validation. Ethical validation refers to the questioning of the underlying moral assumptions of the paper and their political and ethical implications, the equal treatment of diverse views, as well as producing some practical answers to research questions that can subsequently lead to change. Substantive validation relates the researchers understanding of the topic, understandings derived from other areas and the documentation of this process within the paper. Ultimately, self-reflection is necessary as the researcher is the instrument of interpretation (Ibid).

In this paper I have adopted a number of the above approaches suggested above. To try and increase the construct validity I have attempted to use multiple sources to support a finding and where it was possible, I have used sources obtained from different research methods. The internal validity tactic is not necessary as the paper does not seek to establish casual relationships between different variables. To increase the reliability of the study, I have included the transcriptions of the recorded interviews in the appendices (Appendix A), as well as the relevant observation field notes (Appendix B).

I have also applied some measures which relate to substantive and ethical validation. The research process I followed is described below and outlines the steps I took. The section on my position as a researcher below describes the understandings I had and where they led me which compliments the outline given in the research process. My ethical validation of the research process can be seen as exemplified by the range of participants that I interviewed from both back-office/management to acting employees. I believe it is also represented by the name changing and coding measures I applied to the insight the employees gave me in confidentiality, silent voices may be silent for fear of repercussions of speaking out. I have also tried to use this paper to investigate employee learning within the problem that my early research suggested existed in trying to change the Hamlet Live experience. In this way, my findings may contribute to problem understandings in that context, which could give others inspiration to explore the findings in other or broader contexts.

Ultimately, I have tried to frame this paper in a way that my own role in co-creating meaning through interaction with the field of study is clear. I have also tried to reflect on alternative meanings that could be applied to my findings where I could.

Research Methods

As mentioned above, Marshall and Rossman (2006) associate case studies with the use of multiple research methods including observation, interviews and document analysis. They define observation as the organised noting and recording of behaviour, events and objects within the social setting of a field of study. They suggest that observations can be a highly structured reporting of behaviour or more general reporting of events or behaviour. An important aspect of this is the consideration of the researchers own stance. My social constructivist approach led me to engage in the field during observations, this included interacting with the experience employees while working, as well as in a more social manner around the scenes and on the train. This helped me to develop a deeper understanding of the group dynamics, for example personal backgrounds that influenced their learning and interpretation of the experience but it also helped build a rapport that facilitated openness in their interviews with me (Ibid).

Kelly (2006) suggests that interviews are a more natural form of interacting than some other research methods such as questionnaires or experiments. He proposes that it allows people to get to know each other and that in essence, it is a conversation. He recommends planning which structure it should have and piloting it, ensuring the interview will be relatively free from disturbance and choose how intimate it should be with regards the use of a recorder or not.

During the interview Kelly (2006) recommends that the interviewer

- take notes of things of interest,
- mostly listens,
- seek clarity and ask follow up questions,
- explores but doesn't probe,
- avoid leading questions,
- keep respondents focused,
- do not reinforce their response, and
- do not interrupt

For this paper I chose a semi-structured interview structure which Kelly (2006) suggests are where the interviewer has an interview schedule of the key topics. I also tried to apply the suggestions Kelly (2006) makes about how to conduct an interview.

Creswell and Poth (2018) identify the use and analysis of documents in case study research. They propose that documents are most commonly used to supplement interviews and observations and can give a strong historical and contextual oversight of a study topic. They identify documents as either personal; such as emails, official; such as organisational documents, or public; such as those found in the media. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend that researchers determine inclusion and exclusion criteria based on the research purpose.

In this paper I used documents to provide historical and contextual background, as well as to confirm points, for example, the innovative nature of the Hamlet Live concept. I did this mostly through using publicly available documents but I also analysed some private emails that were made available to me.

Sampling

While discussing sampling from a statistical and quantitative perspective, Neuman (1999) does give an explanation of sampling that I believe is generic enough to be used here. This is that sampling logic refers to considering what a study intends to talk about and how that relates to what is required to be observed/collected. In qualitative research design, Marshall and Rossman (2006) propose that the inclusion of purposive sampling is often based on theoretical frameworks identified in the literature review. They offer a number of approaches depending on the purpose that the sampling has. These include maximum variation sampling to document diverse variations and identify recurring patterns, theory-based sampling which finds example relating to a theoretical construct and snowball sampling whereby informative sources are identified by others, opportunistic sampling refers to following leads and taking advantage of situations and mixed sampling, which involves flexibility and triangulation to meet multiple interests (Ibid).

This paper has used a semi-inductive approach to conducting research, which meant I used different sampling approaches. The initial sampling approach I took was both snowball and opportunistic, using who I knew and then taking advise from them. As the study progressed, I used my initial findings to consider features of interest relevant to my conceptual framework, which I then used for inspiring my choice of who I would see speak to and what and who I would observe. An example of this is that the importance of language as a foundational competence that influences learning in employee communities of practice was identified by my early participants. I then approached some other participants on the basis of what language they spoke. This could be seen as a theory-based sampling approach.

My Position as a Researcher

My position as a researcher has been influenced by my education and my personal and professional experience. This has included my own employment in a tourist experience company, where I was involved in the delivery and occasionally design of the 'experience framework'. This created an interest in me in how innovative experiences are created. The course on Tourism Innovation at Aalborg University was also influential in that it inspired my interest in the area, as well as encouraging me to see innovation as a process where non-managers, such as customers and employees, can be involved. It is possible that if I had worked as a manager in a tourism experience organisation my interest would have a more 'top-down' tendency. Likewise, another background or academic field may have led me to look at how innovative tourism experiences in a more negative light, either because of the common foundation in 'growth' or in how they often encourage environmentally harmful travel behaviour.

My choosing of the Hamlet Live case was also influenced by the access provided to the members by my own personal network. This was particularly important as my research was conducted during the Summer. This is not only the high season for most tourism organisations, but due to the Covid19 crisis, management and employees alike were extra busy trying to adapt the experience to the new health guidelines and customer base (Jonas, Appendix A). On the other hand, the active production of the experience while I was doing my study gave me opportunities to immerse myself in it and to make contact with potential interviewees. Despite the limitations on access, I was still able to choose between three tourism organisations which provide guest experiences and I chose Hamlet Live because it was both the most tourist-orientated and it was the most innovative.

Ultimately, my own nationality, mother-tongue and personality influenced the experiences I was interested in, the people I spoke to and the meanings I placed on interactions, events or objects. For example, if I had been Danish, or completely without any Danish fluency, this would probably have affected my perception of the experience. Likewise, if I has a background in history or literature, I probably would be more critical of the learning processes that contribute to the 'fragments of Hamlet' (Christian, Appendix A) that this tourism-focused experience represents.

Analysis

Marshall and Rossman (2006) propose that there can be seven stages involved in the analysis procedure. These are data organisation, immersion in the data, thematic categorisation, data coding, memos of analytic interpretations, considering alternative understandings and report write-up. Saldaña (2015) describes themes as long sentences or phrases that synopsise the apparent and underlying data meaning. He recommends categorising themes, clustering them and then creating labels for them.

An adaption of the procedures mentioned were applied. I used the framework that Eide et al. (2017) borrowed from Wenger (1998) and supplemented it with other features that were neglected but that I felt or found were possibly relevant, for example, peripheral learning. I then immersed myself in the data and allow patterns to form and emerge. This was a process that included both employee and mine emphasis on meaning. This helped me to manually find themes in relation to understanding the practice-based learning processes. I then clustered these themes according to the analytic framework that I applied. These clustered themes were then used to unfold the information collected within the scope of the analytic framework.

Research Process

The following section will describe the process that I followed in order to answer my research question. The choices that I took reflect the flexible and iterative research design that I applied as recommended by Durrheim (2006) for case studies. These choices can be seen as having been directed by the results of my interaction with theory, interviewees and observational field research.

Based on the broad interest of exploring the role of employees in tourism experience innovation, an initial examination of research led me to a number of concepts including the doing, using, interacting approach to tourism innovation processes (Nordin & Hjalager, 2017), tourism open innovation (Egger, Gula & Walcher, 2016) and (tourism) experience concept innovation maintenance (Eide et al., 2017). The last of these also introduced me to the concept of communities of practice and the notion of practice-based learning. I used my personal network to open the door to getting interviews in tourist attractions, the initial three interviews were with representatives from Kronborg Castle, the National Gallery of Denmark and Louisiana Museum for Contemporary Art.

The results of these interviews led me to choose the community of practice concept in line with the (tourism) experience concept innovation maintenance concept. While I wanted to include and could not easily avoid the impact of the Covid19 crisis on my study, the latter of these concepts allowed me to use the crisis to examine the impact of change on employee learning, in this case, dramatic, instantaneous change.

The purpose of my study became more narrow looking to explore the process of practice-based learning in tourism experience organisations. In line with this and based on my time resources, I chose the case that was most tourism-orientated, recognised as innovative and experience-based – the Hamlet Live experience at Kronborg Castle.

The social constructivist approach that my research goal had pointed me towards encouraged me to explore the learning processes of employees in-depth and where possible, to try and understand the meaning that participants placed on certain elements by observing their practice. The case study was chosen as an appropriate method as it would allow me to research the case in-depth by using multiple research methods. The methods that were chosen were document and secondary data analysis to provide a broad contextual understanding and semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation to try and give me insight into how learning occurred and manifested itself. The participant observation method was also chosen to give me greater understanding of the practice and the context that employees worked in. This insight was used to identify interviewees, areas of interest and possible follow-up questions during interviews.

In total I conducted eight semi-structured interviews with employees at Kronborg Castle, four from what could be called the back-office and four employees with some overlap between them. Four of these were over the phone or skype due to access or virus fears, four were in person. As the topic examined learning process and the meanings that participants and I placed on different features, I recognised the possibility of my finds creating tension in the personal working environment that exists there. This was also something that many of the interviewees enquired about. For this reason I have given each respondent a different name and a number of codes, which will be able to supervisors on the first page of the appendix containing the transcriptions. I also redacted all identifiable information from interview extracts that are in the main document apart from that which was supplied about others, while I also include personal information in relation to my observations as these were of public performances and therefore need not be considered sensitive or confidential.

I did field research on four different occasions and at different times of the day and days of the week. This was to ensure that the emergent themes that occurred to me were based on a broad rather than narrow engagement. I did this research twice on my own in order that I could observe them closely, as well as try and speak to them in person. The other two occasions I brought my children, this was to allow me a more natural understanding of the experience based on my prior-awareness that the target market were families. This field work also allowed me to speak informally with various non-acting employees about their understanding of certain issues, which in some cases helped me to understand the context better or eliminate certain questions from interviews. An important addition is that the field work allowed me to gain a sense of the lived experience, the interaction of the employees with each other and with customers and the physical conditions it takes place in. In terms of interpretive research such as that of a social constructivist, this understanding proved vital to informing my understanding for both conducting subsequent research and for the analysis of the information that I collected.

Limitations of Research

There are two main points that I will propose can be considered limitations to this research. The first relates to Yin (2009) proposing that case studies are effective instruments for generalising findings if multiple cases are used, or more reliable if the case is longitudinal. Accepting both these points, particularly the benefit of also observing the interactions and events, as well as interviewing members of the employee community at an earlier stage in their learning development, could have given me a greater understanding of the learning process they go through. Where possible I did use footage from previous years to compare with my own observations but these snippets that others provide do not equate to deliberate and engaged observation. As for multiple case studies, this was impossible due to the practical challenges from Covid19 restrictions for organisational employees and the subsequent reduced access to participants. I endeavoured to increase my sample size and field observations to allow for greater understanding of the issues but future research could try and apply the approach to two or more cases.

The Hamlet Live tourist experience

The origin of the Hamlet Live Experience began with a meeting with the then head of experiences for the Royal Castles, Mikael Nielsen, and an actor and director, Peter Holst-Beck (Henrik, Appendix A). This led to the design of Hamlert Live to celebrate Shakespeare's 400th anniversary in 2016. Since then it has become a big international tourist attraction with approximately 80% of the 325,000 guests they got in 2017 being international tourists (Henrik, Appendix A; Jonas, Appendix A).

The basic plot has always been "*to tell the story of Hamlet, this very dysfunctional family where everything goes wrong*" (Henrik, Appendix A). This was and has been used to

"*create a world where they can feel that they've walked through a ripple in time, and they go back in time... a lot of people have said the enormous cliché of, bringing the castle to life but I think that is a major part of it. I think that's a major part of what makes it special. I think we want people to enjoy and maybe learn a bit more about the Hamlet story so there's explaining*" (Christian, Appendix A)

There was a change of direction towards more of a living history demonstration in the second year, which took the focus off the Hamlet drama (Ibid). The experience reverted back to more drama-focused but it retained a focus on experiencing historical life at the castle (Thor, Appendix A).

In an interview in 2018, Barry McKenna, one of the co-directors for Hamlet Live, supports the point above as to the goal of the experience at that point. The point, he insisted, wasn't to come and see Shakespeare's Hamlet but to see characters living in the castle who are paying homage to Shakespeare, which can include seeing "*Polonius stabbed to death in the queen's chamber*". He expanded on this by stating:

"*You're playing in all these wonderful spaces and not making theatre as much as providing a 360-degree experience, and to do that this year we have added scenarios that we call 'slices of life'. When Laertes is about to go on a sea voyage, he is packing his suitcase and asking what the audience would take on a long trip because he's going off to study. So, we have things that people nowadays can relate to*".

(Raassina, 2018)

More interaction and less story

The experience has seen an acceleration towards becoming more interactive in response to Corona but this was a process that had begun before this season as Thor explains

"So there was a lot of, like, seeing from the outside how the characters might live. They've really reigned that back, even, not just because of Corona but they've changed the direction a bit. So now there's also, they're emphasising the interactive workshops this year and they want that to be kind of a thing" (Appendix A)

This pre-Covid19 movement towards a more interactive experience was also confirmed by Jonas who understood it as a strategic choice on the part of management (Appendix A). In an interview with the Berlingske newspaper, the director of Kronborg Castle answered criticism about the 'childish' experience at Kornborg by explaining that he wants "*to make the castle living. We are already begun. Kronborg shall be made alive with actors and activities, which engage the public... Kronborg shall be an experience centre like the Old Town in Aarhus or something like Experimentarium in Hellerup but with a Renaissance theme... We will tell about what went on in the* *individual rooms. Instead of having an information board up in a window bay, I would prefer to have an actor sitting there, who tells the history about the old kings, that sat in the window bay*" (Reinwald, 2020)

The activities that Thor mentioned were either to be demonstrations of certain activities from the 16th century included archery and renaissance dancing or to be an interactive discussion, about topics such as the use of archery in 16th century warfare or the treatments and response to madness at that time (Sophie, Appendix A); Christian, Appendix A).

In rough correlation with these developments the scenes depicting the story of Hamlet have been shortened and the non-scripted or non-dramatic sequences have been added. The aim of this to provide an experience that is both dramatic immersed theatre and a history experience (Henrik, Appendix A; Jonas, Appendix A). Although Hamlet Live has been described as having always been family-friendly, there has been a massive increase in how it is orientated towards families this year. This was on the basis that, instead of approximately 75% of their guests being from outside of Denmark, this year they expected no international guests to come, in this way the families in mind were Danish ones. As well increasing the focus on activities, this understanding of the target market resulted in the need to change the language of the experience. This was to be a change from everything being in English to 50:50 English and Danish, with the scripted scenes of Hamlet in English and the non-scripted activities and interaction in Danish (Jonas, Appendix A; Henrik, Appendix A).

Analysis

Introduction

The following chapter will analyse the findings of the documents, observations and interviews that I carried out. This will be done by applying the communities of practice concept, as well as referring to others that were discussed in the literature review, to these findings. The purpose of this analysis will be to develop further understanding of how tourism experience employees learn how to engage in tourism experience creation.

Hamlet Live as a Community of Practice

As discussed in the literature review, Eide et al (2017) suggest that employee learning in experience organisations, applicable to both tourism and on-tourism organisations, can be understood through Wenger's (1998) framework of learning as doing (practice), learning as experience (meaning), learning as belonging (community) and learning as becoming (identity). This framework will guide the analysis of my findings but with the flexibility that Wenger (1998) suggested it can entail.

Practice - Learning as doing

The employee activity of (co-)producing the Hamlet Live experience with tourists is embedded in a historical practice that has continued since 2016, as is described in the case study section in the methodology chapter. A historical context is one of the features that Wenger (1998) suggests turns an activity into a practice. The other element is that the activity is socially embedded. I interpret this proposal of social activity in the learning context to mean learning from carrying out an activity with others. One of the constructs that Wenger (1998) and Lave & Wenger (1991) use, which approaches social learning from one particular perspective, is that of peripheral learning. In examining the notion of learning as doing, the learning processes for employees at Hamlet Live will be explored using the notion of peripheral learning.

Peripheral learning

Hierarchies of participation-based learning

The cast of Hamlet Live is comprised of employees who have been there every year, many of the years, a couple of years and those who 2020 was their first year. In short, it is a group, which despite the high turnover in organisational terms which is approximately 50% (Sophie, Appendix A), has old-timers and new members. What is more, it appears that new members are assisted in their learning, particularly in the context of social distanced learning this year, by their mutual engagement in rehearsals and official performances by recurring members.

An example of this can be seen in Benjamin Stender who has played the role of Hamlet each of the five seasons that Hamlet Live has run. He has been described as being very experienced in the role. This is to the point that he can both guide new cast members in how scenes or interactive phases have been previously done, and he has enough experience that he can facilitate any new improvisations that are proposed to him by other actors. These points were made repeatedly by different interviewees. For example, in relation to how learning was enabled during the Covid19 lockdown during the May rehearsal period, Sophie who was new this year, said:

"*At the Zoom meetings, being told about a scene in some particular room, it was very hard to imagine it. It was a bit abstract this year. It was very helpful getting information from the older actors... It was the same with Ben, he has played Hamlet all five years, he has a lot of mental energy, he was able to adapt to anything I might do; he is so confident in his role... with the older established actors it was helpful in the way they could tell us of the way they had done a scene, so we could try it out and maybe keep the way it had been or we could adapt it*" (Sophie, Appendix A).

Similarly, Ole who was also new this year referred repeatedly to how he relied on the experienced cast members to guide him in learning how to play the part in the restricted conditions that were enforced on the rehearsal period due to the Covid19 crisis:

"*I leaned heavily on the veterans at the start, and then I took more and more ownership of it... I had a great working relationship with Ben... he was a great help*" (Ole, Appendix A)

I observed the confidence and competence that Ben has in both acting and interacting (Observation notes B, Appendix B). In this interaction in English with tourists on how to compose a love poem for Ophelia, he asks guests to provide him with words that he can add to the end of different sentences. Despite having no control over the words that are said, Ben was able to incorporate them and rhyme them in a humorous manner. The same scene was also observed with the other, new actor playing Hamlet (Observation notes C, Appendix B). His approach was to ask tourists for words that rhymed with a word he had already chosen, by this manner he had much more control over how he could incorporate them into the poem. The effect was still humorous and entertaining for guests there who it can be assumed had never seen the scene before, as is mostly the case (Ole, Appendix A). When the two can be compared, however, there is a difference in competence.

The difference may relate to factors other than experience, for example, level of English or general personal ability. In terms of language, both actors are Danish but the other actor does have an Irish father. This doesn't prove anything but it does suggest that he does not have a language disadvantage. Personal ability must be considered possible but even taking that into consideration, other employees emphasised the benefit of having experience in a particular role. One example was Jacob who emphasised that his previous experience in the same role was one of the ways that he was able to compensate for the restricted learning conditions and wide-ranging changes made to the experience this year. He also recognised how challenging learning the practice was for any of the cast members who were new (Jacob, Appendix A).

These interpretations together suggest that inexperienced employees develop practice-specific competences such as improvised interaction by their mutual engagement in the practice with more-experienced employees and that those who have more experience are more competent because of it. The learning this would suggest can be conceived as peripheral learning as proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998). Despite the fact that the work is seasonal, the actors who have participated multiple years can be regarded as taking on master-like roles in that new participants who 'lean' on them to develop meaning, can be described as apprentices. The terms '*veterans*' used by Ole, which equates to the '*older actors'* referred to by Sophie, both can be seen as equivalents of master actor, although in a terminology that perhaps avoids the connotations of the power dynamics that the terms master and apprentice have.

Both these cases also highlight the importance of this relationship in relation to unique learning situations. For both Sophie and Ole, their apprenticeships started with no physical proximity and no environmental context due to Covid19 restrictions. This lack of embodied knowledge was compensated for by being able to begin developing a meaningful understanding of both the role and the place by listening to those who had either interacted or played the role previously. Sophie referred to how she first heard and then tested the knowledge in practice. The indicates that the abstract knowledge she has heard was then converted into a more embodied and tacit knowledge through interactive learning with the other employees. This still was done in a way that can be understood as having a peripheral learning dimension as she was guided in engaging in the way that scenes were previously done.

How this evolving learning process towards becoming a full-member can be understood as impacting practice could be understood from how Sophie describes the different on-stage performance of different actors. In certain scenes the difference between the two Hamlet's impacted how she played the role. With Ben, he "*would steer me around... my performance really depends on the Hamlet... Ben is menacing the whole time*". Conversely, the impact of the interpretation by the other Hamlet, played by the new actor, would lead Sophie to respond more compassionately to him. My observation of this scene between the other Hamlet and Sophie, noted the space that he gave to her within the confines of the script (Observation notes D, Appendix B). This alone tells us nothing and the difference is attributed by Sophie to the different interpretations of the two actors. Sophie, however, describes an evolution with her own role in just one season and she suggests that the interpretations of experienced actors such as Ben may not be static and could be impacted by experience in the role

"*I don't know if it might have something to do with how long they have been playing the role; I would be interested to find out if Ben's Hamlet is, and in what way, different from the one he played five years ago... Ben plays Hamlet as quite a jaded character*" (Sophie, Appendix A)

The 2016 interpretation by Ben of the scene Sophie is referring to has been uploaded on the internet (Erin Liz, 2016). My impression of the interpretation is not that Hamlet is jaded but emotional, mistrustful and contemptuous, all of which can be seen as natural to the part. Additionally, despite him taking the lead as Sophie suggests is the case in that scene, he does not steer around the actress playing the same role Sophie had but permits her space within the confines of the script. While this is footage from one particular day that could have been different with another actress or on a different day, it does suggest a different interpretation from the jaded, leading and in control interpretation that Sophie experienced. It also has some resemblance to the emotional interpretation, as well as the space allowed for the actress, that I observed from the other Hamlet in that same scene (Observation note D, Appendix B).

This could have some relevance to the arguments by Roberts (2006) that the negotiation of meaning in communities are fraught with power imbalances, which impact the influence exerted over the practice. In this context, however, it does not mean that new members have no influence. This can be interpreted from how Sophie implies that scenes were adapted to a new interpretation if after trying the established way, they wanted something different. This could be seen to refer to the changing nature of her participation within the community based on her practice-based learning as now she also contributed to what could be considered meaningful to them (Wenger, 1998).

The above analysis is suggestive that an actor's experience and competence development in the practice creates a change in how they socially participate in it. This happens, as was indicated earlier in this section, by their transformation from being one who is primarily learning from more experienced employees to one who is primarily a source of knowledge for newer employees. What the last part of this section suggests is that the nature of this change has relevance to the control of the practice, with more experienced, core employees leading more at that point then they did when they first began. Lastly, this section has indicated that the process of peripheral learning is particularly useful when normal learning processes are disrupted, as happened this year due to the Covid19 crisis. Another related issue to this, concerns learning unique features of an innovative experience.

Meaning – Learning as Experience

Interpretation of Tasks

A number of actors discussed their development in a way that I interpret as relating to what Wenger (1998) described as learning as experience, which he relates to meaning. This is because "*Practice is a process by which we can experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful... about meaning as an experience of everyday life*" (Wenger, 1998, p 51 & 52). Wenger (1998) also proposes the idea of a negotiation of meaning as central to learning as experience. This indicates the active process of meaning production in what can either be resisted or malleable, involve affecting and being affected, involve many perspectives, lead to resolutions that converge these perspectives and be a ongoing, incomplete process (Ibid).

The developments were with regards how the employees made the practice they were instructed to do, meaningful to them. At the centre of this negotiation of meaning was their acting background, which was central to how they interpreted the activities and interactive discussions that were introduced this year. The best example of this relates to the priority that the actors place on dramatic momentum, which can be regarded as a factor for consideration in this context. One interviewee explained it as this:

"*There's always an emphasis, during the rehearsal period, on "learn these historical facts, do this, do that - you know it's important that the audience gets the history of the thing". And then a lot of times you wind up finding that the history stuff, or the educational stuff, doesn't play very well*"

(K4, Appendix A)

It can be seen from this that the intentions of management on how the employees should produce the experience with guests are contrasted with the experience the actors have applying them. Another interviewee expended the same point:

"*So this is the challenge of the way we are doing this play that, we're doing the Shakespeare set but we're also trying to feed historical information to the guests and weave that into the scene. There was a desire for us to take that opportunity to go into, not a lecture but to bring in some factual information about how X was treated in that time. Which was interesting but slowed the pace down a bit. It sort of, it made the dramatic momentum from that moment drop a bit*"

(K6, Appendix A)

Again, the point here is that the proposed changes, the interactive discussions about how certain issues were handled in the 16th century, were tried and this experience resulted in a critical contrast between the plans and the outcome. What becomes clear from both the above statements is that the role and response of the tourists is a key factor for how the actors evaluate the practice. An explanation by the first interviewee mentioned expresses the value they place on the response of tourists clearly:

"*We as performers, just because that's who we are, we naturally will default back to "what is the audience enjoying? What do I feel that the audience is enjoying" and so there's always this sort of "learn all this historical stuff", "oh I have all this historical stuff but actually I'm going to pull it all the way back to here, I'll put in a few facts*"

(K4, Appendix A)

This relates to what Bærenholdt and Jensen (2009) find in their study of employees delivering Danish tourism experiences. They conclude that the sustained engagement of employees in such performative work requires tourists to perform their recognition of the work the employees do. For those employees who see the work as temporary, they can dismiss what they interpret as poor responses on the grounds that the work doesn't matter to them. Permanent or more engaged employees, however, develop a chronic need for recognition, which the authors find fluctuates in the form of changing tourist groups and changing employee engagement.

The professional acting background of the actors in Hamlet Live seems to manifest itself, according to some examples Christian (Appendix A) gives, as a desire to overly engage with the acting element of the experience, treating it like a theatrical version of Shakespeare. As the statements above explain, the effect of poor responses from the '*audience*', makes the actors default to whatever they find entertains the tourists. Despite adapting the practice according to their own audience-based evaluation of what produces the best results, the actors do try to accommodate the original plans to differing degrees. An example of this is proposed by K6 who aims to interpret and incorporate the theme of the interactive talk into the dramatic flow of the experience relevant to that point in the play.

"*So instead... I tried to do a similar thing, which is discuss what should we do with X but make it more dramatic... saying... how do we get rid of this problem?... Is it to send X away? Is it to kill X? Just to still have that discussion about what should we do with the problem but make it more dramatic... And then it still offers them something that might have been offered back then but to a modern audience seems very cruel... Again, I'm still trying to get them to see that difference between how things were handled in the 16th century versus now, but in a way that feels a bit more dramatic rather than going into full historian mode*".

(K6, Appendix A)

What can be seen as moderated position of the action K6 took, was proposed by Christian. While taking a more authorised, canonical approach to interpreting the task, the lecture that he had to engage customers in changed shape during the course of the practice:

"*There were great moments where Yorrick and Laertes practiced sword fighting, or had a little archery tournament. That was more entertaining than when X gave them a lecture on X, which is what I did... Thinking with my actor's hat on, what made them (tourists) laugh, what is more inclusive, what becomes more of a conversation than a lecture, as the month went on I became more of a friendly X having a chat about X rather than giving them a lecture. We accomplished the aim of that particular segment, they learned a bit more about X and all that business*"

(Christian, Appendix A)

In terms of Wenger's (1998) explanation of learning as experience, the actors through their participation in the practice adapted it and interpreted it into either a different still-authorised form or a non-canonical (Brown & Duguid, 1991) form, a reification of the improvisations to the script. What can be seen as different between Christian and K6 and K4 is that Christian has both the fluency of both languages, many years experience in his role and previous experience in interactive experiences. In the other cases they either lack experience or lack the language competence. There are other differences, such as their personalities and the roles they have, which could impact how closely they can interpret the experience concept according to managerial plans.

The interpretations, both non-canonical and canonical, can be seeing as the negotiation of meaning that led from something that was not meaningful to the actor being converted into something that was meaningful. This could be considered to be the converging of disparate perspectives, which Wenger (1998) sees as an important part of the negotiation of meaning. In either case of canonical or non-canonical interpretation, the role of the tourist customers in shaping the change and integration of the instruction into a practice.

It is very possible that the negotiation of meaning that led to these suggestions would not lead historians to share their understanding. Jonas (Appendix A) proposed a key difference between historians who engage in live interpretation and actors who do it. This, Jonas said, was that although they are both actors, live interpreters such as those found in Hampton Court become the person they are acting. In this way, their understanding of the role is a question of learning as becoming, which (Wenger, 1998) relates to their identity. In a way that makes this view of 'learning as experience' overlap with learning as becoming, which Wenger (1998) foresaw and encouraged, the meaning the actors attached to the experience also reflects their identity, that of a community of actors.

Boundary Processes

Another perspective on how the role of customers can be seen as influencing what actors regard as meaningful and subsequently affecting their practice, is through the notion of boundaries processes. Wenger (1998) explained community boundaries as the divide between different practices that can be observed in the social landscape. The context for applying this construct will be explored from the information gathered.

The research mentioned in the previous sub-section can be interpreted to suggest that, influenced by their acting backgrounds and the integration of a play into the experience, the employee group consider themselves as actors and thus performers. This in turn can be interpreted to bind them to the customers, their audience. This closeness has led research, for example Hoarau (2016), to conceive the customers as being part of a community of practice with the employees, management and other connected parties. This may help bridge the understanding required for studying open innovation within the tourism experience context but in this case study, that understanding is problematic. Bearing in mind the warning by Amin and Roberts (2008) about the overly liberal application of the communities of practice concept to inappropriate contexts, I disagree that the customers can be considered in this case as sharing a practice with the employees.

What can be seen as a dual reason for viewing customers as separate from employees is that the continuous flow of customers means that they do not resemble anything so fixed, as the term community is intended to imply (Wenger, 1998). The dual aspect of this is that the changes can result in a very big difference in their practice. The employee perception of the customers as the 'audience' is a semi-reification of a wide mix of changing people on the grounds, as will be seen below, that they often engage in the Hamlet Live practice in a range of behaviour in a consistent manner. It has been repeatedly pointed out that some customers would engage, some would just want to look, while others would go and look at the castle and not be involved in anyway (Frederik, Appendix A: Sophie, Appendix A). Nevertheless, where there was engagement by tourists in the experience previously is illustrated by Thor:

"*those of us who've done the show before were much more used to the audience having a lot of southern Europeans and Americans and people who were willing to, like, almost over eager, if you like, "I wanna be part of it*""

(Appendix A)

That level of engagement, which could be considered the tourists practice, however, was not guaranteed and the impact of the Covid19 crisis on the 'audience' who came this year makes this clear. While the actor community still resembles the partially-permanent, partially-temporary group it always has (Henrik, Appendix A), the Danish audience that made up the bulk of the visitors this year are, in cultural and practice terms, a completely different group then previously came. These points concerning the previous audiences and their general behaviour and the contrast with the audience this year, have been made repeatedly made. One example was this explanation:

"*Culturally there are differences like when we had a lot of international guests last year it was intense and amazing and people were really into it, and this year also on smaller scales but sometimes people don't wanna be involved in a storytelling enterprise they just wanna find their own way through the castle... a lot more so this year than last year cos I believe there is a cultural thing involved. I believe culturally, we had a lot of Americans, Canadians, Australians, and Irish, English and different Europeans last year. Also a lot of guests from Asia and some of those cultures are a lot more into embracing people, talking with them and interacting with them and improvising with them. Other cultures, northern Europe, I'm not gonna lie, some people in northern Europe are not as comfortable interacting culturally with each other*"

(Frederik, Appendix A)

Christian also felt that the cultural difference of the customers this year made a big impact on the experience as it was practiced

"*When you are doing it mostly for Danes, the one big drawback is, that they don't want to be involved to the extent that, when you ask people to tootle the trumpet, they just wouldn't. They just wouldn't do it, saying," Nyaah, I am not going to do that, I am not going to make a fool of myself". There were a lot of events that people were reluctant to get that interactive*"

(Christian, Appendix A)

In the context of an immersive interactive experience such as Hamlet Live, the non-engagement of customers has left some actors struggling to try and understand how to maintain the practice. The impact is described in both the physical absence of interaction in the practice but there is also a tone of frustration that is more personal. In some cases, this is combined with frustration relating to changes in the required competence. For example

"*I'm still struggling with the right way to engage with Danish audiences. Because they don't necessarily stand up when you ask them for something, and they don't necessarily respond to being, like, pushed... It's, this year's been kind of a "What's going on? for me. Especially with the scenes* *with like getting Danish audiences to engage with the X for instance. I often feel that I'm throwing everything I know at them and nothing is coming back and that is like (*implying a bad feeling). *And sometimes it doesn't. Usually if you get someone with like a four-year old child in the audience and you ask "er der nogen som kan X?" So somebodies kid will say "I can", "det kan jeg". You'll get that or you'll get- yeah, it's confusing*"

(Thor, Appendix A)

Interpreted using the notion of community boundaries, the flow of information between employees and customers during the experience can be seen to be a boundary interaction. This can be understood as the employee acting community, in a sense, is testing the experience out on the customers, who while not representing a stable community or consistent practice, are still the 'audience' for the employees. This view of interaction across boundaries conflicts with Hoarau's (2016) view of employee-customer interaction taking place within a community, community meaning experience system. This is because there is no shared meaning about the nature of the experience. Instead, the two practices struggle to work together because of the last of shared repertoire and understanding.

In contrast to seeing these two practices as belonging to one community of practice, the above suggests a correlation with Eide et al. (2017). They propose the construct of external engagement, which sees non-internal parties, such as customers, influential on how an experience concept is maintained and interpreted into practice but from outside the organisation. In the context of Hamlet Live, the relationship between the internal engagement of employees and the external engagement of customers can be interpreted to as one based on co-creation but still amounting to the exchange of information between one community and another entity. This customer entity does not resemble a community but from the employee perspective, they do resembles a practice although one that has changed drastically this year.

As noted in the sub-section on the interpretation of tasks above, the influence of the customers is a key determinant in how the employees will interpret the tasks because recognition of their performance is a crucial part of the outcome for engaged employees. In the case of the changed cultural group and how they interact less, this has important consequences for the employee performance and job satisfaction. It also, however, is significant for the management. Despite this case relating only to Hamlet Live, the findings of Bærenholdt and Jensen (2009) suggest that this need for performance recognition by customers is common in tourism experiences. What could be then important for management, is to know how to gather and use this information that customers provide and made accessible by that characteristic of tourism experiences, the simultaneous presence of service and consumption (Gomezelj, 2016). This is particularly important where big changes are made, as happened this year. Understanding the response of the customer, particularly new customers, could be vital in testing strategic or adaptive change.

Identity – Learning as becoming

Engagement and Competence

In what can be seen as an overlap in conceptual meaning, Wenger (1998) identifies the modes of belonging, engagement, imagination and alignment, not as most relevant to community – learning as belonging, but with identity – learning as becoming. The overlap of meanings in the overall framework of practice, meaning, identity and community around learning is, however, something that Wenger (1998) sees as integral to their inter-connectedness and mutually defining nature. This allows the four peripheral elements to be substituted with learning as the core focus of a study, with the framework still making sense (Ibid).

Eide et al. (2017) focus on engagement as a mode of belonging implying that it was the most relevant for understanding tourism and other experience maintenance. This was because they perceived engagement as influential in determining how practices renew themselves through the internal engagement of employees with the experience concept. Wenger (1998) proposes that an important part of this engagement is the negotiation of meaning, whereby the production of what is meaningful is forged by a range of perspectives and the meaning can influence others or be influenced by them.

Wenger (1998) relates engaging in learning to competence and experience, which he sees as closely connected. This section of the analysis will consider the applicability terms foundational and practice-specific competence as drawn from a review of research by Watson, McCracken and Hughes (2004), Pennington and Richards (2016) and López-Bonilla and López-Bonilla (2014). To recap on what these mean, foundational competence relates to the competences that are considered as essential to be able to engage with the practice that a community centres around. Practice-specific competence will relate to those competences that a community considers as relating to a superior quality performance and which are gained from experience engaging in a particular context.

A common theme relating to how employees engaged in the practice of creating Hamlet Live with customers this year was the competence-base that engagement was based on. This issue was quite obvious due to effect of some of the decisions that were made in response to the Covid19 crisis, as was described in the case study section. These decisions resulted in a shift from only English being required by employees to both English and Danish being necessary. At the same time, there was a shift from being mostly a dramatic immersive theatre experience to also being equally focused on providing immersive, interactive history experiences (Henrik, Appendix A; Jacob, Appendix A).

These changes took place without any change in the staff, as they had been hired/re-hired for the season in February before the crisis had begun (Sophie, Appendix A). The problems this caused were explained by a number of interviewees, some who were English speakers and some who were also Danish speakers. An overview of the problem and the eventual solution is given by K7, who is a Danish speaker:

"*They wanted all the workshops, these twenty-minute sections... in Danish with people who didn't speak Danish... And they wanted more conversation in the piece... And they wanted more conversation in the piece, for example, someone who doesn't speak the language suddenly improvising on the top five hardest language in the world... How do we solve this issue where they want us to improvise in a language we hardly can, you know, speak?... Well we, people were talking about "we just need to be more improvised" but we... took the decision that "we just have to write this down. We have to write a solid foundation in the language, translated to Danish, that we know works and then maybe, along the session we can improvise more*""

(K7, Appendix A)

This approach was confirmed and the process by which they applied was articulated by an English speaking employee:

"*what I had to do for the two scenes that I speak solely Danish or a mixture of Danish or English, I had to translate, we wrote the scripts together translate it into Danish I had to get X to make it easier Danish for me to sort of process and learn. And I learned it like, you know, a script so you know like, I have less of an ability to improvise in Danish. I mean almost non-existent so I kind of learned the Danish things and then sometimes I improvise in English*"

(K5, Appendix A)

A number of issues relevant to engagement and competence can be interpreted from the above description of the process. Both the change in language and the change in activity represent a change in what competence was required for the practice. In terms of the competences that were discussed in the literature review, the Danish language could be understood as the foundational competence from which the practice-specific competence of interacting around historically-based activities was to be based on. The initial expectation from management was that these two new changes would be combined, that is, speaking Danish while improvising and interacting. K7 suggests the response from the actors was that these 'improvised' pieces would have to be scripted for English speakers. This can be seen as a solution that fits with the artifacts and shared repertoire of actors – a script.

This problem was not encountered by the Danish speakers I interviewed. One of them spoke about how they learnt to adapt the interactive elements to the tourists who can be said to fit the description of the reluctant to engage Danes:

"*I have two workshops... the very basic premise is that I show them something, I sing or I dance, and then I invite them to join in. This is the challenge, because people are afraid to join in... So now, I get them involved in conversation around the activity rather than having them do the activity; if they want to do the activity, it's great, but I can't count on that... Then we have a conversation afterwards. It eases them up; I have performed for them, so, they have been entertained and I haven't asked them to do anything scary... That can lead into conversation about " Well, we hope you will come tonight, because we have eight litres of wine per person, and it would really be nice if you came, and you can have some wine" Then they chuckle because, eight litres is absurd. Then, if there are children there, " Oh! And for the children then, of course, we have...beer!" and that often makes people laugh... So I'm putting myself where if anyone is making a fool of themselves, it's me, it's my sixteenth century approach to the topic... That is the way I found that works. I think that's because it's a Scandi audience... It's taking their fear of being humiliated and making fun of myself instead because then they relax, they know the joke is not on them, it's on me, but in a good natured way*"

(Interviewee 8, Appendix A)

The above extract shows how learning took place with regards how to interact with Danish guests, but this relates to someone who can speak the same language. The original managerial intention that these activities should be scripted and that they ended up being scripted is also suggested by Jonas (Appendix A). That this was the practice for Danish speaking activities with non-Danish speaking employees was also observed through the repetition of the same lines in activities on my different visits (Observation notes C & Observation notes D, Appendix B). The result of these in terms of satisfaction to listen was also observed. As a relatively fluent non-native Danish speaker, I consider the standard to have varied with employee to employee and from activity to activity ranging between informative but uninspiring to informative to useful and entertaining (Ibid).

In regard to my interpretation, it is important to consider that a non-native might appreciate the slower or more broken pace of other non-natives speaking Danish than a native Dane would. It is also worth noting that my visits were in August when the employees had been engaging in the practice for over two months. The majority of Danes are suggested to have come in July and this meant that they received less-practiced performances, which the employees themselves were not always happy with (K4, Appendix). The combination of these factors may mean that Danish tourists were much less satisfied with the performances of non-Danish speakers trying to speak their native tongue. This is supported to some degree by an article in the Berlingske newspaper which, despite not mentioning the language skills of the employees, heavily criticised the general standard of the performance in July (Hermansen, 2020).

What is also worth contrasting is how the same employees that were observed doing mediocre-scripted activities in Danish were, in some cases, also observed doing engaging activities in English or a combination of both Danish and English (Observation notes A, Appendix B; Observation notes , Appendix B).

In general, the impact of being able to use their native tongue allowed for much more ease and flow in their oral performance. For some, this also translated into being able to interact using tone and other such features or verbally improvise, to much greater effect than they had been able to when I saw them perform in Danish.

An example of this is X, who plays Yorrick. While his intentionally scripted co-enactment of "Hamlets story in five minutes" with the actress playing Ophelia on any given day is in Danish and was observed as being engaging (Observation B, Appendix B), his ability to interact in activities such as the "Yorrick's song & soldier training" varies. He does this activity with the character playing Laertes in either English or Danish, depending on the audiences spoken language, outside on a grassy area beside the castle walls.

The training activity, which involves a sparring and archery competition between Yorrick and Laertes, is meant to be an informative immersive historical experience but has been non-canonically interpreted as an interactive comic performance (Jonas, Appendix A). The first occasion I observed him in the soldier workshop, he only spoke English having found out that the mix of tourists were all English speaking. On this observation, obviously scripted lines were sandwiched between what had the effect of sounding like improvised, as opposed to scripted, insults against Laertes. Likewise, what sounded like improvised lines were used in interaction with the crowd. These were humorous and my interpretation of the response from the crowd was that it both found the experience funny, as well as one where there was tension. More importantly, the use of humour assisted in getting people to engage (Observation notes A, Appendix B).

On another day, I observed him doing the same activity but on this occasion there were young Danish tourists in the audience. Instead of small humorous improvisations, the actors repeated scripted lines and jokes both in Danish and English (Observation notes B, Appendix B). Although the performative nature of the activity, sword fighting and archery, appeared generally entertaining to the audience on both occasions, my interpretation of this second occasion is that it lacked the humorous effect that was observed in the first. My impression of this is that it made guest engagement less natural. Notably, the majority of present Danes, who had initially stood at the front of the crowd, left mid-way during the activity.

This does not mean that the language is the only possible consideration, the dynamics between different actors is also a consideration. This is supported by the fact that the same actor gave me examples of how the experience and personality of different actors changed how much he could improvise (Interviewee1, Appendix A). Likewise, the greater willingness of international tourists to engage more than Danish guests has been discussed above. Yet, the same flow, ease of interaction and comic effect was observed by this actor in another English-spoken activity on a different day (Observation notes D, Appendix B). The activity was an acting class where Yorrick and Hamlet instructed tourists in how to sound and move like various stereotypes that are the inspiration for a puppet show that happens later in the experience. Both actors, but particularly X, used comic effect to engage guests.

It is the not the purpose of the approach of this paper to identify generalisable cause-affect relationships between competences and outcomes. Instead, the paper at this point seeks to explore potential factors that can influence how a community of practice, represented by it's members, adapts to change. In this context we can return to how Wenger (1998) discussed engaging in the negotiation of meaning in relation to competence. He stated that "*learning depends on our ability to contribute to the collective production of meaning because it is by this process that experience and competence pull each other*" (p 203). In this context, I suggest that the level of alignment between the foundational competence of a practitioner and the foundational competences required for practice-specific competence to be learnt, are influenced by the how closely aligned they are.

The negotiation of meaning of the activities that interviewees mentioned and that I observed varied depending on whether or not the employee had the foundational language from which they could interpret the practice. Where the activities were in English, the English speakers were able to flow with greater ease and in some cases interact and entertain to a greater degree than when they were in Danish. The ability to be humorous was observed where the language was native to the actor and the same actor became less humorous where they were not fluent in the language. Humour on these occasions was a tool for facilitating engagement with tourists. This could relate to what one employee found to be their experience:

"*Sometimes you have to lure the audience in and that's always where you have to do some sort of a set-up because if people haven't watched you from the beginning, you have to build some sense of trust where people learn that this a safe space where people can have a laugh and play along if necessary*"

(Jacob, Appendix A)

Perceived from this perspective, humour can be seen as a trust building tool that breaks down the boundaries between groups. This correlates with what both Cooper (2015) and Roberts (2006) propose, which is that a prerequisite for information sharing in communities of practice is trust, and in this context information sharing could be interpreted as equating to engagement. One interpretation that could be drawn in this context is therefore that the building of trust that is necessary to facilitate open engagement is influenced by the availability of communicational tools. These tools could include humorous effect, which appears to be enabled or restricted by the level of foundational competences that employees have.

What could be interpreted from the above interpretation, from a conceptual point of view, is the strong connection of engagement, one mode of belonging, and alignment another mode of belonging (Wenger, 1998). Alignment, as it is described in the literature review, is to be understood as the alignment of our energy and actions in a way that fits with the defining structures and adds to broader ventures. In discussing how alignment can be either cooperative, through the negotiation and sharing of meaning, or forced, with no shared meaning. Wenger (1998) suggests that these approaches produce different results. Interpreting the above analysis, the forced alignment and subsequent misalignment of possessed competences with scheduled activities, can be seen to hinder employee engagement and information exchange in creating the experience framework. In this context, engagement could be understood as being heavily influenced by the alignment approach used. This lack of engagement due to the alignment of a Danish language activity with a non-Danish speaker could be interpreted from the extract below:

"*Also, on an improvisational level because... this is the first year that we have done anything in Danish. For me, that's a personal frustration that I keep going back into the verbal improvisation kind of thing. If I'm doing the X, I had the most ridiculous amazing conversations with audience people because... Sometimes people engage with it. They'll take it all over the place. I can't-, I don't have that feeling with Danish. So I have my like - I have a sort of set script that I'll go through in Danish - but I find myself ending that interaction a lot earlier than I would have*"

(K4, Appendix A)

The above can be seen to relate to both learning, in that the lack of engagement does not allow for the practice-specific competences to be developed, but also through knowledge redundancy, in terms of having knowledge about how to engage but not being able to use it.

Factors influencing Alignment

The reasons for why such an alignment approach was applied can only be guessed but presumably the massive changes over a very short period of time, meant that no other approach was felt possible. The atmosphere in the formational period leading up and immediately after the launch of Hamlet Live this year allows for some interpretation of why things happened like they did:

"*Tourism is an exciting place to be in right now, in a really, really, hectic way... Mad, absolutely mad. Cos one day you're going one way and one day you're going another and the next hour. Wooh! Wooh... So in this month, we had, well what 25, 30 people involved in an innovation project, to make a product... There were 15 actors, there were 2 directors, there were 5 people from the office and there was some of the castle hosts and the people involved in the actual day-to-day running"*

The size of the group involved in the redesigning of the tourism experience is perhaps, as suggested by Gomezejl (2016), typical of tourism experiences. The following extract, however, explains what is particularly different this year:

In the usual process, obviously you sit together, you can see each other and if you don't understand anything, it is often pretty easy to bring it to them 'but what you mean by that?... During Corona times, we would meet on Zoom and you don't have your daily, sort of, you don't meet people on a daily basis. A Zoom meeting and everybody goes away and then you have another meeting a week later but for a whole week everybody's being talking to their areas, there different groups. So they've been working on a project over here, where he thinks they're working on A where as they're actually working on A plus a little bit of B"

(Interviewee 5, Appendix A)

Although it is not the purpose of this paper to explore why alignment decisions were made, the above extract exemplifies an important point in relation to the engagement and learning opportunities of employees in interacting together in tourism practice development. The point here is that decisions such as alignment require shared understanding, the mutual learning of different perspectives. In the tourism context there is often considerable human involvement involved in the development and execution of practice (Gomezejl, 2016). In this context, collective learning and sharing of understanding requires physical interaction. This also corresponds with the point made by

Sophie (Appendix A) earlier, computer mediated communication such as Zoom, does not allow for effective learning of a practice.

This point could be interpreted in the context of the classifications and descriptions by Amin and Roberts (2008). They based their paper on the intention to dismiss suggestions that knowledge exchange and learning require physical proximity. In the context of this tourism experience organisation, physical proximity has been identified as a prerequisite. That is both across communities within the organisation, as the extract from Interviewee 5 above indicates but also internally within a community. From Ole's perspective it was like this

"*I think you need to be in the room together with the others... So the fact that you are not here for me it would be a completely different thing than just video chatting with my family, having a chat with my dad. It was so much different to sitting there in person, it is the same with acting. I think it was not as effective. It is more effective sitting in the room, having the meeting, trying to think things through, going into a different room if you have to do that...To sum it up, disconnect. It is all the little things. It is just being there, picking up all the little things. When we are doing theatre and it's... it is the body language*"

(Ole, Appendix A)

In a word, what is challenged is the exchange of tacit knowledge, which Hoarau (2016), identifies as an important part of practice. The temporal nature of the Hamlet Live community of practice has similarities to the once-off creative projects that Amin and Roberts (2008) suggest are not heavily dependent on physical proximity. This case, however, suggests that tacit knowledge exchange and learning in tourism experiences that involve a lot of people requires physical proximity. This bears similarity to the finds of Comunian (2017) on learning in festival communities of practice.

Discussion

Summary of interpreted findings

The analysis chapter highlighted a number of different issues with regards learning processes for tourism experience employees. To summarise these using the framework they were analysed within, they are:

- Learning as doing
    - Peripheral learning, whereby newcomers learn through the mutual engagement in practice with more experienced community members, can be perceived as an important dimension for how learning to engage in a tourism community of practice happens.
        - The process of peripheral learning may happen concurrently with a changing nature in employee participation, which can see greater power over the practice rest with the more experienced employees. This does not mean that the less experienced employees have no influence.
        - At the core of peripheral learning can be considered to be competence building based on practice.
- Learning as experience
    - That interpretation of practices in tourism experience communities can be interpreted as heavily influenced by their experience of how tourists respond to their activities.
        - In an acting-orientated community of practice such as that of Hamlet Live, employees can be considered as trying to entertain the tourists, which takes priority over informing where there is a conflict.
        - The process of task interpretation can be interpreted to occur through the negotiation of meaning by which instructions are made meaningful to employees by either non-canonical interpretation or semi-canonical interpretation.
        - There is an indication that both competence and background-based community inclinations influence how canonical or non-canonical the interpretation is.
    - Tourists and employees can be considered as two separate practices, but their interaction and knowledge exchange through boundary interactions in the form of customer engagement or non-engagement in the practice can be interpreted as highly influential on the employee community learning process.
        - Tourism experience employee communities appear to struggle to learn and interpret when there are sudden changes in customer cultures, if their practice and competence is not in tune with the new market needs.
        - The interaction of employee communities with tourists can be perceived to provide learning opportunities to managers through the simultaneous service and consumption nature of tourism experience 'products'.

- Learning as becoming
    - The possession of foundational and practice-based competences can be perceived to influence member engagement in tourism experience communities.
        - Sudden changes to experiences appear to result in new foundational competences being required.
        - This could make the engagement that requires high standards of foundational competence impossible for those who do not have them.
        - Strong foundational competence can be interpreted to allow for trust-building tools to be applied which facilitates customer engagement in the practice.
        - Engagement can therefore be interpreted to be hindered or facilitated by the compatibility of the alignment between management and the employee community.
        - The quality of alignment appears to be influenced by the alignment approach depending on whether it is forced or cooperative.
    - Tourism experiences may involve a lot of people and this affects the learning process.
        - Tacit knowledge exchange and learning can be interpreted in this context to require physical proximity and interaction.
        - This can be perceived to be both for cross-community learning and intra-community learning.
        - The community of practice concept appears to be more appropriate for understanding employee learning in this context than other 'knowing in action' concepts.

The findings above suggest two primary issues for discussion in relation to the practice-based learning processes of tourism experience employees. These concern the role of tourists on the employee community practice and learning process and the dynamics between competence and community engagement in learning and practice. The role of tourists on the employee community practice and learning process will be discussed in relation to the work by Bærenholdt and Jensen (2009) and Eide et al. (2017). The dynamics between competence and community engagement will be discussed with reference to some of the characteristics of tourism workforces outlined by Kusluvan et al. (2010).

Customer influence on Community Practice and Learning

The influence between the tourism experience employee community that create the performative framework for Hamlet Live and the tourists who constitute their 'audience' could be characterised as of representing imbalanced power. This power could be seen to relate to their disparate levels of engagement with the practice, as well as the differences in group structure. At the centre of this power imbalance appears to be the reliance of the employee community on the active engagement of the tourists in the experience. This correlates with the findings by Bærenholdt and Jensen (2009), who saw the need for tourists to perform their recognition of the work done. The transitory nature of tourists means that the relationship they have with the practice could be seen to short-term, while the relationship the employees have varies between temporary occupation to their profession.

In this way, the latent political power dynamics that Roberts (2006) proposes are inherent in the negotiation of meanings between organisational groups and external or other internal groups, can be seen to exist in this case, as well as those of Bærenholdt and Jensen (2009).

The relationship these practices have, tourist practice and employee community practice, can be considered as one of continuous boundary interactions (Wenger, 1998; 2000). This also corresponds with Eide et al (2017) who propose that the routinisation, renewal and adaption of experience practices as being influenced by both internal employee engagement and external party engagement, placing a particular emphasis on customers/tourists. The importance that tourism researchers such as Hall and Williams (2008) and Shaw and Williams (2009) place on boundaries is that they can restrict learning but that, where knowledge brokers and other boundary related interaction is proactive and supported by organisations, they can be sources of knowledge and learning.

In the unprecedented situation that occurred this year, there was a need for immediate and dramatic change in what the experience provided for tourists based primarily on who those tourists would be. This has allowed for a degree of learning on what the experience needs to incorporate to provide for this market in the future. Examples of this is that interaction cannot be forced on them but must be optional (Frederik, Appendix A), and engagement can be achieved by creating relationships with them, for example, through humour or personal rapport building (Ole, Appendix A).

What the above suggests is important is that managers need to find methods for gathering this information and incorporating it into their decision-making process. One of the ways this could be considered to be done by is through the alignment of employee community practices with that of management. This will be discussed further in the next section.

The Dynamics between Competence and Community Engagement

The interpretation of the primary research for this paper suggests that the engagement of a community of practice with a practice depends on the match between their foundational competence and the required foundational competence of the practice. This understanding has been facilitated by the adaption to the community of practice concept, the work of tourism management researchers Watson, McCracken and Hughes (2004) and tourism education researchers López-Bonilla and López-Bonilla (2014), as well as that of language education researchers Pennington and Richards (2016). The adaption of these works has led to the proposal of considering competence, as identified within the communities of practice concept (Wenger, 1998; 2000), to be understood as either foundational or practice-specific. Foundational competence can be considered to relate to the competences that a community of practice considers as essential to be able to engage with the practice that they centre around. Practice-specific competence will relate to those competences that a community considers as relating to a superior quality performance and which are gained from experience in a particular context.

This separation of competence can be considered as following. Foundational competence can be either inherent or gained through long-term experience in more general contexts. These general contexts can still be understood as practice-based, relating to both more transitory 'communities', as well as more permanent in families, education and other groups that Wenger (1998) considered relevant to the communities of practice concept. This can also be considered as taking place through what Wenger (2000) termed multi-membership so in this way they can be understood as cross-community acquired. The role of foundational competence is, as the name suggests, to act as a foundation for the engagement in practice and learning. Practice-specific competence relates to those competences that one learns from experience in a specific practice but that can in some limited manner, begin engagement without. While not foundational, possession of these competences can be seen as important to the determining the quality of the practice. These competences can be seen as more intra-community acquired and ran be seen as happening, for example, through peripheral learning.

The relevance of this understanding of competence was understood in terms of the quick and great changes that occurred in the market that Hamlet Live focused on and subsequently the nature of the experience the management hoped to create. As interpreted in the analysis chapter, these changes related to a foundational competence shift in the form of the language that they needed to be performed in. Simultaneously, they also represented an increase in the need for practice-specific competence in the form of improvised interaction. The combination of these two changes being applied universally on the employee community could be perceived as meaning that those who had the language competence could engage in the practice and learn, while those who didn't possess them could not engage (K4, Appendix A), even where they believed they had acquired the practice-specific competence previously based on the earlier language competence.

The two competences can be related to the general tourism workforce characteristics suggested by Kusluvan et al. (2010). The characteristic of seasonality is one that can be identified within the Hamlet Live context, although seasonal within a recurring context. In this case the practice-specific competence such as the ability to improvise and interact with guests has been suggested to be passed through mutual engagement of experienced and less experienced community members in the practice, which also includes the tourists as an important factor. These competences are vulnerable to foundational competence change. The characteristic of tourism including a lot of immigrant workers is also relevant. This relates to the foundational competence of language. While immigrant employees may generally grasp practice-specific competences quickly, the same does not happen with foundational competences. Where a new foundational competence forms the basis for an experience, the practice-specific competences that are built on a contrasting foundational competence are made redundant for many of these immigrants. Unlike practice-specific competences, these foundational competences are difficult to be acquired within a single community of practice, particularly when the seasonal nature of tourism communities is taken into consideration.

The significance of this for tourism managers relates to their alignment of tasks, based on the competences they require, and the competences of their workers. This alignment, as Wenger (1998) suggests, can come from a cooperative approach where meaning and understanding is shared. In the context of practice-based learning, the engagement of the employees in the practice will provide them with the knowledge they need to inform the management of what alignment can work and what can't. A forced alignment, such as what happened in the disrupted learning process of this year, does not allow for shared understanding and thus led to frustrated employees (K4, Appendix A) and frustrated management (Interviewee 2, Appendix A).

Conclusion

This chapter summarised the findings of the analysis chapter and then presented two of the findings that my interaction with the field led me to understand as particularly meaningful for tourism employee learning processes. These are the role of tourists on the employee community practice and learning process and the dynamics between competence and community engagement in learning and practice. In combination with the analysis which gave a broader picture of the practice-based learning as well as practice interpretation that took place in Hamlet Live, this discussion emphasised some of the features of practice-based learning that can be considered particularly tourism-related. It is hoped that these findings can be useful to tourism management and other tourism practitioners who aim to support employee learning processes.

The practice-based approach applied in this study has reinforced existing understanding and to some small degree added understanding by exploring in detail employee learning processes within this specific context of tourism experience organisations. It has also applied a relatively untried concept in tourism experience research, communities of practice, to an organisationally-internal group. The flexibility of the communities of practice concept, made it a useful analytic tool for studying the dynamic and complex learning processes that tourism experience employees go through. It should be born in mind that this paper has not attempted to establish clear cause-effect relationships but instead, to create an understanding's that other researchers can build on if they wish. Any attempt to use these findings should bear in mind the context-specific nature of these findings and that applying a different approach may produce a different understanding.

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