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Co-Creation of the Ski-chalet Community Experiencescape

Abstract

Ski-chalets provide skiers with a unique experience where 'consumer communities' of like-minded people engage with each other using a blend of online and offline social interactions. In this case study, we draw upon theoretical underpinnings from the brand and consumer community literature to explore individuals' experiences in the consumer community of ski-chalet aficionados. We investigate how the experience is co-created among other community members and service providers, thus answering calls for more research focusing on the co-creation of tourist encounters. The results of an ethnographic study identified five themes that incorporate both the motivators for engaging in a ski-chalet community and their co-created experiences (socialisation, all-inclusive chalet offering, active hedonistic skiing, location/place, the 'augmented' community of online and offline skiers). Providing new insights into the co-creation of tourist experiences, a framework is developed for understanding augmented communities and the ski-chalet experiencescape.

1. Introduction and overview

Through social interaction, many tourists engage with other members of their travel community prior to, during and after travelling to a destination or place. For example, reading reviews on the online TripAdvisor community to help inform decisions on which destination to visit; developing physical bonds with other travellers on a Contiki European bus tour or organised group motorcycle tour community; as well as sharing photos/videos with a tourist's social community during or after a holiday. While scholars have focused on consumer communities (e.g. Williams, Inversini, Buhalis & Ferdinand, 2015; Syrjälä, 2016), a lack of knowledge exists regarding how consumers co-create the travel service experience with other community members and/or service providers (see Frochot & Batat, 2013; Kristiansen et al., 2015). This paper contributes to the fast-growing and fragmented literature on communities by refining the understanding of its dimensions and situating it in a network of conceptual relationships. The enquiry focuses on traditional offline and online communities, exploring the core social and interactive characteristics of experiences within a group of like-minded people.

Members of a community exhibit mutual consciousness, communal rituals and traditions (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) while sharing common values, pride and togetherness (Bellezza &

Keinan, 2014). Over time, the historical notion of geographically-bounded rural communities based on familiarity and emotional values has been replaced by global non-geographically-constrained virtual communities such as social networks and online travel communities, driven by wider Internet access and faster connectivity (Zaglia, 2013; Casalo, Flavián & Guinali, 2010). Consequently, there has been an increase in studies of virtual tourism communities. Recent papers have explored online/virtual travel and tourist communities (e.g. Lee, Reid & Kim, 2012; Luo & Zhang, 2016; Lee & Hyun, 2016) – to the exclusion of offline communities, or communities that involve a combination of virtual and physical activities. More research is needed focusing on the juncture of online and offline communities.

A key component of tourism services involves physically visiting a destination or actively participating in the consumption experience. Examples include: ski tourists (Hudson & Hudson, 2015); surfing tourists (Barbieri & Sotomayer, 2013); mountain-biking tourists (Moularde & Weaver, 2016); and motor-cycle tourists (Skyles & Kelly 2014) – all of whom travel to find snow, waves, terrain or routes. This paper sets out to, firstly, address the literature gap between studies of online and offline consumer community research and, secondly, to rebalance the research agenda.

The context of our study is the under-researched community of ski-chalet holiday guests (Major, 2005); a facet of contemporary adventure tourism, bringing together travel, sport and outdoor recreation (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). Guests cohabit in an all-inclusive holiday; skiing, dining and socialising communally among themselves and with chalet staff, united by a common passion for winter sports. They share online photos, anecdotes and clips of their co-created experience, enthusing and motivating other skiers or potential members of the ski-chalet community. The experience offline consolidates legitimacy, longevity, loyalty and authenticity; further endorsed and embellished in the online environment. Skiers are motivated by the lure of the ski environment, linked to the social aspect, construction of individual and collective identity, and participation in the staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973), as skiers co-create their holistic tourism experience (Kreziak & Frochot, 2011). Drawing from the literature on brand and consumer communities, we use a case study to develop a theoretical lens, addressing three questions: (i) What experiences are associated with the ‘consumer community’ of ski-chalet aficionados? (ii) What motivates individuals to participate in the community? (iii) To what extent is the experience co-created with other

community members and service providers? We then develop a framework for explaining the augmented online and offline community experiencescape.

Our study draws from and adds to two strands of research: (i) augmented online and offline tourism service communities; and (ii) the co-creation of the tourist experience. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. After reviewing relevant literature on communities, an overview of value co-creation in a tourist context is provided, highlighting the need for further research. We present the context of the ski-chalet holiday, methodological approach, results and conclusions, including limitations and areas for future research.

2. Literature Review

Given the unique context of the ski-chalet community – which lies at the juncture of offline and online experience – a multi-disciplinary approach is taken to explain the phenomenon. We draw from literature in the communities (physical and virtual), value co-creation and experience fields. Subtly related, these disciplines or research fields deftly explain the multifaceted nature of the ski-chalet community.

2.1 Communities

Communities provide a mechanism for fostering complex and lucrative synergies between individuals. Traditionally, studies in the sociology literature focused on physical communities where people have commonality; communities have been one of the most enduring fields of study (Crow, 2014). Drawing upon frameworks such as social identity theoretical (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1985), sociologists and psychologists have attempted to understand how, for example; individuals join a social groups/community and what defines their membership (e.g. Stets & Burke, 2000). More recently, there has been a resurgence in academic research focusing on different and/or other types of communities (Zaglia, 2013). Scholars have studied groups of individuals who: share a common interest (Communities of Interest: Brown & Duguid, 2001); have a concern/passion for something they do and want to learn more about by interacting regularly (Communities of Practice: Wenger, 1998); admire or have interest in a brand (Brand Communities: Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann e2005; Shim et al., 2015); or as a crowd participating in creativity processes with organisations seeking to develop innovative new products and services (Co-creation Communities:Gebauer, Füller, Pezzeri, 2013). They have also explored how online communities encourage collective

decision-making, creativity, entrepreneurship and cooperation (Mačiulienė & Skaržauskienė, 2016).

Communities provide a vector for fostering complex and lucrative synergies between individuals. In marketing, studies of communities have been largely oriented towards 'monetised' aspects, particularly the processes of value creation among networked firm-facing actors in communities based on branded goods or services (Schau, Muniz & Arnould, 2009). The widespread adoption of information and communication technologies (ICT) has consolidated online/virtual communities (Baker & Ward, 2002; Krishnamurthy, 2003), enabling interpersonal communication and information retrieval, interactively and in real-time (Kim, Yu & Lee, 2003). A social ensemble of networks is formed among members of virtual communities, bringing together large, loose, geographically-widespread populations (Brown & Duguid, 2001). Members co-create and voice opinion via online ratings, reviews and forums (Buonincontri et al., 2017). Tourism researchers and professionals cannot ignore ICT-driven transformation, particularly co-creation (Filieri, 2013) stemming from the juncture of online/offline communities; where tourists generate valuable, original, novel and feasible ideas that can stimulate product and service innovation (Suntikul, & Jachna, 2016; Buonincontri et al. 2017).

Value co-creation in tourism takes place when there is social interaction between resident and tourist communities (Lin, Chen and Filieri, 2017); it involves active participation and intra/inter collaboration with other service providers (Levy, Getz & Hudson, 2011; Campos et al. 2017). Tourists are (inter)active, collaborative consumers of user-generated content for co-creation (Cermak, File & Prince, 1994; Cabiddu, Lui & Piccoli (2013). Communities can be online or offline, small (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006) or large (Adjei, Noble, & Noble, 2010).

Tourists form communities both in the sense of the traditional place-based notion of community (Putnam, 1995) and a relationship-based perspective where shared norms and interests create a sense of belonging (Wellman, 2001). Many tourist communities are place-oriented but embrace virtual interaction with individuals (both present and absent), creating opportunities for social contact outside one's usual circle of friends (Dickinson et al., 2017). In a virtual community, members collaborate for a common purpose and share similar interests (Kim, Lee & Hiemstra, 2004; Koh & Kim, 2004). ICT have empowered individuals and re-shaped the process of seeking, retrieving and exchanging information (Sigala, Christou

& Gretzel, 2012; Lichy & Kachour, 2016). The travel and tourism literature has examined the juncture of brand communities and virtual communities, such as Couchsurfing (Rosen, Lafontaine, & Hendrickson, 2011), Tripadvisor.com, Virtualtourist.com and Mytravelguide.com (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Shim et al.'s (2015) focus on cruise-ship communities stands out as a rare illustration of a 'non-virtual' community, and serves as a reminder of the differences between online and face-to-face interaction.

Much research has been undertaken on brand communities – which Muniz & O'Guinn (2001: 412) define as a “specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand ... marked by a shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility”. Consumers identify with branded goods or services; dominant brands like Coca-Cola (Sicilia & Palazon, 2008) and Red Bull (Cova & Pace, 2006) are distinct in their members' common interest in – or infatuation with – a brand (Albert, Merunka & Valette-Florence, 2008), constituting a fundamental characteristic of brand communities (Marzocchi, Morandin & Bergami, 2013). Marketers are aware of the power of experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) and shared extraordinary experiences (Arnould & Price, 1993) to create value for customers (Schouten, McAlexander & Koenig, 2007). There is scope to integrate these elements into tourism studies, by exploring the co-creation of experiences within a tourist community.

Communities foster social exchange through the consumption of products and services, as much for their *'linking' value* (to other community members) as for their *'use' value* (Cova & Cova, 2002). The tribal nature of brand communities (Cova, Kozinets & Shankar, 2007) and the experiences generated by interaction with the brand while belonging to a group (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009) are important for post-modern consumers (D'Urso et al., 2016). Interconnected relationships enable consumers to perceive social identities with other like-minded individuals, physically and virtually (Bagozzi et al., 2012). In online travel communities, active participation among members is vital to guarantee community longevity (Filiari & McLeay, 2014); a community would cease to exist if no-one contributed (Casaló, Flavián & Guinalú, 2010). In a community of networked individuals, defined by the relationships created by fans, customers or admirers (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001), members engage in electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) to create awareness and interest; relationship building; transactions; and fantasy. The co-creation of value within tourist communities however remains relatively unexplored (Lin, Ye & Filiari, 2017).

2.2 Value Co-creation

Co-creation is the process by which consumers and producers/service providers collaborate to create value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Acknowledging the multidimensional nature of value (Gallarza et al., 2015), co-creation can be viewed as an “interactive relativistic preference experience” (Gallarza, Gil-Saura & Morris, 2011: p. 188), generally associated with more satisfied and loyal tourists (Mathis et al., 2016). Value becomes more embedded in co-creation as customers move from being a passive audience to more active players (Gronroos, 2000; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Value co-creation takes place when a service provider and community members are aligned (Brodie et al., 2013) but fails when enactment misaligns (Skålén, Pace & Cova, 2015). Key stakeholders and service providers need to understand these imperceptible shifts in the travel and tourism landscape.

The relationship between value co-creation and tourist experience is well-documented (c.f. Mathis et al., 2016; Suntikul & Jachna, 2016; Prebensen & Xie, 2017). Value is co-created through: experiences (Payne, Storbacka, Frow & Knox, 2009); encounters with service providers (Sørensen & Jensen, 2015) and experiential consumption with hospitality providers (Lugosi, 2014). O’Dell & Billing (2005:16) refer to ‘experiencescapes’ to describe sceneries of experience organised by producers yet actively desired by consumers. Campos et al. (2017) highlight the need for more research on the mutual influences associated with participation and interaction, echoing calls made by Mathis et al. (2016) for further investigation into the co-creation of experiences ‘among tourists’ rather than for tourists. This paper answers calls for additional inquiry by exploring the co-creation of tourist motivations and the experience, using a community lens (e.g. Gambetti & Graffigna, 2015; Skålén, Pace & Cova, 2015) framed by the online/offline context.

As customers are increasingly co-creating their own experiences, behavioural, sensory, emotional, cognitive and relational values are replacing functional values (Schmitt, 1999; Mathis et al., 2016). Studies of the tourism experience have compared relationships between the experience and other constructs; examined the causes of an experience; and classified tourist experiences (Walls et al., 2011). However, it is recognised that value arises from consuming the experience itself, especially in the context of experiential services (Arnould & Price 1993; Pine & Gilmore, 2013; Lugosi, 2014) and that there is a need to focus on

‘experience encounters’ involving the engagement and participation of users (Sørensen & Jensen, 2015). As such, this paper contributes knowledge on the co-creation of experience encounters in specific alternative tourist contexts.

Service experience encounters are associated with a combination of attributes that motivate tourists to engage in a consumption experience. Such attributes include socialising and hedonism. Socialising, social interaction, meeting new people, and interacting with staff and other holiday-makers form an important part of the tourist experience (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Trauer & Ryan, 2005; Wong & Kwong, 2004). In their research on white-water rafting experience, Arnould and Price (1993) revealed that one of the key dimensions of an extraordinary experience was *communitas* (Chalip, 2006) with friends, family and even strangers. Tourists interacting with others can improve existing friendships, develop new friendships and/or an increased appreciation of family/relatives, and generate memorable experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Hedonism also plays an important part in the tourist experience (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Ryan, 2002; Major & McLeay, 2013), especially when associated with experiential consumption (Agapito, Valle & Mendes, 2014). Such factors are relevant to the ski-chalet community.

2.3 The ski context: The inimitable ski-chalet holiday community

The ski-chalet holiday is a typically British phenomenon, involving the bundling of various components into an inclusive package of flights, transfer, board and lodging. Although the ski-chalet holiday is widespread in French ski resorts, it is mainly frequented by British tourists and operated by Anglo-centric tour operators who adapt the offer to meet customer expectations (somewhat different from the indigenous skiers) – see for example Vakaridis (2014). The service delivered by the operator is fragmented, multifaceted and personal. The average chalet caters for around 20 individuals or groups of skiers (Crystal Ski, 2013) who will ski all day, return to the chalet for afternoon tea with homemade cakes, share breakfast and dinner together with the chalet staff, and then ‘bore each other with tall stories in the evening over dinner’ (Murison-Small, 2003). Motivations for visiting ski areas in winter usually include push-factors such as relaxation, nostalgia, escape, achievement, thrill-seeking and excitement – along with pull-factors comprising terrain, snow conditions, cost, lodgings, resort services and activities (Hall et al. 2017; Konu, Laukkanen & Komppula 2011; Needham et al., 2011). Studies have explored tangible motivations such as challenging topography and favourable snow conditions – rather than intangibles (Richards, 1996; Hudson

& Haworth, 2003; Buckley, 2012). This paper responds to the need for further research on intangible factors and links with the skier experience. While some research has been undertaken on skier motivations (e.g. Hudson & Haworth, 2003; Buckley, 2012) and the holistic ski experience (Hall et al., 2017), the co-created experience has been fundamentally overlooked.

Skiing is a kinetic experience, framed (or staged) within mountain areas (Armiero, 2016). It attracts a fairly homogeneous group of individuals who share similar socio-demographic characteristics (Richards, 1996), and are influenced by the perceived value of the service offering and satisfaction with the service delivery system (Clark & Maher, 2007). Ski tourists build relationships with their environment and fellow-skiers, as well as improve their skills and capabilities (Kreziak & Frochot, 2011). Tour operators recognise the importance of integrating virtual and physical dimensions of the community experience, particularly in the tourism sector (Arnone & Decrop, 2011) where information is widely-circulated online.

Downhill skiing is one of the world's major winter-sports industries (Hall, O'Mahony & Gayler, 2017), with over 110 million skiers skiing in some 2,000 resorts in 70 countries (Hudson & Hudson, 2015). However, despite significant investment on infrastructure and ICT (Cristobal-Fransi et al., 2017; Bausch & Unseld, 2017) in many European markets, climate change and demographic shifts mean many ski resorts are stagnating (Vanat, 2016; Falk & Hagsten, 2016). In France, where skiers account for a large share of inbound tourism, the lack of innovation is creating an unfavourable business environment for winter sports (Paget, Dimanche & Mounet, 2010). Notwithstanding these challenges, the ski-chalet holiday market remains robust (Consesio, 2016), providing an ideal context for this study.

3. Research methodology

This research employs an interpretivist approach to provide an understanding of the subjective experiences of individuals. Service experiences are typically affective, interpretative and subjective; qualitative approaches are most appropriate for analysing and evaluating these experiences (Morgan & Xu, 2009) and for capturing emotional and non-rational influences (Erasmus, Boshoff & Rousseau, 2001; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). A subjectivist approach enables participants to spontaneously recall their feelings, experiences and personal reactions; researchers can collect rich, descriptive data using a traveller's own words.

Adopting an ethnographic case study methodology, we acknowledge other researchers who used auto-ethnography (Syrjälä, 2016), netnography (Zaglia, 2013) and ethnography (Cohen, 2011; Lugosi, 2014). Ethnographic research is particularly useful for scholars seeking to gain a first-hand experience in unique cultural settings (Konu, 2015), both in tourism services (Tumbat, 2011) and in adventure tourism (Arnould & Price, 1993 Costa, & Chalip, 2005). It is therefore appropriate for the current study. Although our methods, data and analyses are ethnographic in character, the collection and analysis of data were more focused than in traditional ethnography (cf., Dobbert, 1982) since the intention was to obtain and explore information specific to the ski-chalet holiday community. Case studies have often been used in tourism research including studies of event tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018), hotel-based disaster management (Nguyen, Imamura and Iuchi, 2017) and Chinese tourists' souvenir shopping experiences (Li and Ryan, 2018). The five stages taken to gather and analyse data are summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Five stages involved with systematic data collection for this ethnographic case study

- 1) *Covert observation (skiing and après-skiing socialising during 6 separate one-week ski chalet holidays/structured field notes during 2 ski seasons)*
 - 2) *Overt observations and informal discussions (following broad interview guideline, encouraging participants to talk about themselves and their ski holiday experiences: structured field notes and observation of online/offline activities)*
 - 3) *37 phenomenological interviews with 31 holiday makers and 6 staff/manager volunteers (interviewing procedure guided by Kvale & Brinkmann's (2009) 7-stage approach: digitally recorded interviews)*
 - 4) *Multiple sources of data including observation of behaviour (skiing, socialising, websites, social media interactivity and interviews) used to establish veracity, credibility, dependability and conformity*
 - 5) *Thematic analysis of all data (2 researchers) with results reviewed by 3 additional academics to enhance the robustness of the findings (Ecker, 2017)*
-

A cross-sectional understanding was gained by using qualitative case study methodology (Ross, 2012) that illustrates the contextual influences in our study. An ethnographic approach encourages the development of a close relationship with stakeholders (Darling-Wolf, 2008) to gain insights into socio-cultural phenomena (Olsen, 1995). This approach is not based on theoretical presumptions but involves living among a group of people, observing and

recording their behaviours and participating in their daily lives (Nussbaum, 1993). Systematic data collection took place over 2 ski seasons, during which the authors lived and skied with members of a ski-chalet community for a week on 6 separate occasions. Repeat visits helped to conceptualise our research and provided a richer understanding of our research findings (Lugosi, 2014). The findings are anchored in realities that are talked and lived (Gergen, 1996; Syrjälä, 2016), gained while socialising, co-habiting and eating in the same vicinity (Cohen, 2011). Overcoming the challenge of adopting two roles, the authors acted as participant researchers by partaking in the ski-chalet activities and, throughout the period of study, undertaking data collection through observation and interviewing. We were able to focus on the research in hand, as we are all experienced skiers and could therefore combine strenuous physical activity with research.

Our identity as researchers was communicated incrementally using both covert and overt approaches (Lugosi, 2006). During dinner on the first night of each holiday, when each guest introduced themselves to others in turn, we identified ourselves as research-active marketing academics who teach marketing and tourism. We therefore initially acted as covert participant observers (Thurnell-Read, 2012). After becoming acquainted with other ski-chalet members while socialising and/or skiing together, trust quickly developed which facilitated the progression of our research (Jorgensen, 1989; Bowen, 2002) to overt participant observers. As we became acquainted with the chalet guests, they started asking us about our work which provided us with an opportunity to discuss our research in more detail. Many of the participants volunteered to be interviewed or even asked to be interviewed after being told by others about the nature of this research. Chalet staff and managers had been informed of our research in advance of our visits and were enthusiastic to share their views. During the research, the ski-chalet guests remained the primary focus of our fieldwork, however we observed numerous other ski-chalet groups.

Participant observation and informal exchanges at mealtimes, via interactive websites, and discussions on the ski-lifts, developed rich insights to enhance the interview data (Arnould & Price, 1993). Participant observation involved the researchers (i.e. us) being involved in various activities over the period of the study (2 ski seasons), enabling us to observe the guests in their daily routine and to participate in their activities (skiing, mealtimes, socialising) to facilitate a better understanding of community-based behaviours and activities. This type of field work involved gaining entry into the ski-chalet community, selecting gatekeepers and key informants, participating in as many different activities as are acceptable

by the community members (skiing, mealtimes, socialising), clarifying our findings through formal interviews and informal conversations, and keeping structured field notes to facilitate data analysis and inform our results (Bowen, 2002).

During informal discussions, the researchers respected a broad interview guideline, encouraging participants to talk about themselves and their ski holiday experiences. Additional questions were prepared to probe further into the extent to which they felt part of a ski community and the extent to which the experience was co-created. Invariably, such information surfaced without probing since the participants were genuinely enthusiastic about discussing their ski-chalet experience and the community to which they belong.

From this community, individuals who expressed an interest in further discussing their ski experiences were selected to participate in phenomenological interviews. These interviews were undertaken with 31 individuals, the majority of whom were couples at ski-chalets located in the popular French ski domain of Val-d'Isère (Consensio, 2016) and nearby villages of La Daille, Le Villaret, and Tignes-les-Brevières, plus two chalets in Les Sybelles. In addition, 6 ski-chalet employees/managers were interviewed. Please refer to Table 1 for details of the 37 participants who volunteered to be interviewed, representing seven different nationalities.

The interviewing procedure was guided by the framework of Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), advocating the use of 7 stages for undertaking interviews: 1) thematising, 2) designing, 3) interviewing, 4) transcribing, 5) analysing, 6) verifying, and 7) reporting. Through these steps, the interviewee is required to select constitutive details of experience, reflect on them, give them order, and thereby make sense of them (Schutz, 1967). The interview process enabled interviewees to “speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings” (Berg, 2007: 96), through meaningful and thorough dialogue. The digitally-recorded interviews were often lengthy (45-90 minutes) and were conducted in the chalet during afternoon tea. Skiers are notorious for recounting their skiing exploits to their interlocutors and no-one declined being interviewed – indeed as indicated earlier, most guests approached us, asking for an interview.

In total, the research involved over 500 hours of participant observation from 40 hours of interviews and resulted in over 400 pages of transcripts, field notes and other observations.

After transcription, two researchers used template analysis to compile a list of hierarchical *a priori* codes to identify key themes and sub-themes, as recommended by King and Horrocks (2010). The template was drafted after reading through the 37 transcripts, as well as field notes and additional observatory data (the process was iterative: amendments were made as new evidence emerged for the findings). The examination of codes against the findings from existing research was helpful in validating the likeness of themes with previous literature; however, the researchers remained open to the data thus allowing theoretical notions to emerge rather than predetermined theories from the literature (Hsu, Cai & Wong, 2007). For several of the key themes, sparse prior literature appeared to exist.

Table 1. Profiles of Interviewees

Name	Country of residence	Ski-chalet holidays – over past 3 ski seasons	Gender	Generation
Alex	Spain	3	F	X
Ally	UK	3	F	Baby boomer
Sarah	UK	3	F	X
Peeks	Sri Lanka	2	F	X
Haika	UK	3	F	Baby boomer
Bill	UK	3	M	Baby boomer
Michelle	UK	3	F	X
Kiri	UK	2	M	X
Kate	UK	3	F	X
Kim	UK	3	F	Y
Simon	UK	3	M	Y
Katrina	UK	5	F	X
Anders	UK	2	M	Y
Louise	UK	2	F	Y
Lynne	UK	3	F	Baby boomer
Sam	UK	6	M	Baby boomer
James	UK	3	M	X
Mike	UK	4	M	X
Nicola	UK	5	F	X
Stephen	UK	2	M	X
John	UK	6	M	Baby boomer
Brian	UK	2	M	X
William	UK	3	M	X
Jake	UK	3	M	Baby boomer
Jessie	UK	3	F	Baby boomer
Lynore	UK	4	F	Y
Michael	UK	3	M	Y
Sven	Norway	2	M	X
Klaus	Germany	4	M	X
Euan	UK	3	M	Baby boomer
Brigitta	UK	6	F	Baby boomer
Tom (Staff)	UK	NA	M	Baby boomer
Rewa (Staff)	New Zealand	NA	F	Y
Samantha (Staff)	New Zealand	NA	F	Y
Mandy (Staff)	UK	NA	F	X
Graeme (Staff)	UK	NA	M	X
Hero (Staff)	Australia	NA	M	Y

In line with other researchers, multiple sources of data were used – including observation of behaviour (skiing, socialising, websites, social media interactivity and interviews) to establish credibility, dependability and conformity (c.f. Davis, 2016; Konu, 2015; Lugosi, 2014; Paget et al., 2010). This process generated a holistic understanding of the co-creation of the ski-chalet experience. Researchers hold inherent biases within their characteristics, roles, thoughts, perceptions and practices (Breuer & Roth, 2003). In line with the work of Ecker (2017), to reduce the effect of our personal biases influencing our research findings and interpretation of these findings, we consulted with 3 other scholars who are experienced skiers and regularly partake in ski-chalet holidays, in order to enhance the robustness of the findings.

4. Results

Key results are presented in Table 2, highlighting five key themes that incorporate ski-chalet community experiences. For many of the themes, our results suggest that experiences were strongly linked to motivations. Certain themes, including ‘socialisation’, ‘all-inclusive’ chalet offering, active ‘hedonistic skiing’ and ‘location/place’ have been previously documented in studies of ski resort choice (see Konu et al., 2011). The augmented community of online and offline skiers was more holistic, encompassing many themes, and was specific to the results of the study. Many of the themes centred on the co-creation of experience and are underscored in the literature (Kreziak & Frochot, 2011; Rihova et al., 2015; Prebensen & Xie, 2017), albeit separately and overlooking the intersections. Each theme is discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

4.1 Socialisation

Socialisation themes were associated with enjoying the conviviality and bonhomie of a ski-chalet holiday. For Ally: “the best aspect of the chalet holiday is the community, you get to meet a lot of people ... that’s the social aspect of it ... bonding with like-minded people at mealtimes, talking about skiing, forming relationships, skiing together.” The social motivator appeared to lead to the experiences pursued, as for Sarah: “there is an amazing atmosphere and ambience in the chalet! The staff went overboard to make sure we had a good holiday, you can mingle with like-minded people – even if you come on your own, you can ski with others.” Borrowing from the field of sociology and psychology, this outpouring or ‘social sharing of emotions’ (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Christophe & Rimé, 1997; Zech, Rimé & Nils, 2004) embodies the verbal expression of an emotion to others by the person who experienced it. We observed how chalet managers and staff played a pivotal role in co-

creating the social interaction among guests throughout the trip, including organising and participating in après-ski activities and mealtimes with guests. Staff always took breakfast with guests, enhancing social interaction. After dinner on the first day, Rewa (staff) was observed animatedly discussing where she had skied that day with Mike, James and Nicola (guests). Subsequently, they chatted over drinks and Rewa helped them plan a ski itinerary for the next day. They vividly discussed options for their lunch breaks i.e. restaurants and ski bars, as well as places to visit for après-ski activities. Social aspects are highlighted in the integrated marketing communications messages and websites of many ski chalets and tour operators that were reviewed during this study. For example, “we love convivial evenings around a dinner table with like-minded skiing friends.”
<https://www.alpineelements.co.uk/ski-holidays/accommodation/chalets>.

Table 2. An overview of ski-chalet holiday community experience and co-creation with links to existing literature

Theme	Experience	Co-Creation
1. Socialisation (i.e. co-creation taking place between individuals in the community, and between individuals and chalet staff)	Mixing with like-minded people; commonalities, passion for snow, slopes & mountains Forming temporal community Creating bond with friends/ family Sharing activities (skiing, après-ski, eating together) Nurturing the unique 'homely' chalet experience Major (2005), Hall et al. (2017) Part of a unique chalet environment Major (2005), Konu et al (2011) Socialisation and community participation (Rimé & Nils, 2004)	Chalet managers and staff provide a platform for co-creating socialisation: - eat with guests at mealtimes - organise and participate in après-ski activities with guests - skiing with guests Community members also co-create with each other off-line during meals, skiing and après-ski, and online. Vargo & Lusch (2004), Rihova et al. (2015)
2. 'All inclusive' pseudo-authentic ski-chalet infrastructure	Discovering/comparing experiences of other guests & chalet staff Learning from professionals/ experts (avalanche training) Managing the booking (bespoke communication: before, during and after) Relaxing in front of a wood-burning stove Balconies with mountain views Being able to trust the chalet services Sharing together wholesome food & wine Having clean & comfort accommodation Being able to relax in a homely/cosy setting Frochot & Kreziak (2008), Shim, Gehrt & Siek (2005) Facilitation/organisation of amenities (ski lessons, ski pass, ski hire) Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004), Amirou (2008)	Co-created familiarity contributes to the atmosphere and experience through interactions among individuals and with the chalet staff, set in the chalet 'stage' - Pine & Gilmore (2013) Pseudo-authenticity is constructed in a sustainable manner - Hunter (1995) Includes value co-creation between tourists and other tourists - Rihova et al. (2015) Equity is created from customer involvement in value creation - Ranjan & Read (2014)
3. Hedonistic Skiing (i.e. solo or co-created as a group)	Pleasure-seeking (therapeutic) Joining & contributing to conviviality Overcoming new challenges Story-telling of ski adventures (on & offline) Co-creation involves physical and psychological experiences Palmer (2010), Hirschman (1984), Prebensen & Xie, 2017) Escaping from the routine. Pearce & Lee (2005), Ewart et al. (2013), Pomfret (2011)	Co-creation occurs when the consumer actively participates in on-site experience activities - Campos et al. (2015) Linked to a desire for 'doing' rather than 'seeing' - (Eraqi, 2011) in contrast to a passive gaze Physical challenge among a community of like-minded people - Rihova et al. (2015)
4. Location/place	Enjoying the traditional, timbered mountain ambiance To ascend mountains by 'télésiège débrayable' (superfast, super-safe chairlift) Transfer to/from resort (convenience) Konu et al. (2011), Buckely (2012) Alexandris & Girgolas (2007) Skiing conditions Alpine weather (especially sunshine) Needham et al. (2011), Frochot & Kreziak (2008), Hall et al. (2017)	Co-creation results from experiencing the physical tourism site as well as the service relation Suntikul & Jachna (2016) And can lead to new opportunities and new clients Pröbstl-Haider & Lampl (2017)
5. Augmented communities of online & offline skiers (i.e. co-creation of ski & après-ski practises)	Sharing anecdotal knowledge in situ and online Consolidating the ski-chalet experience Immersing in the ski myth, Kreziak & Frochot (2011), Frochot & Batat (2013), Kristiansen et al. (2015), Puschmann & Alt (2016). Membership of public communities: online reviews, blogs & vlogs Joining/ validating/ adding to the thrill of the ski community Amone & Decrop (2011)	Using ICT, particularly social networks such as Facebook and Instagram, customers collaborate with service providers to create the experience and co-created value - Buoincontri et al. (2017) Suntikul & Jachna (2016) Cabiddu, Lui & Piccoli (2013) Using technology before, during and after visits enables tourists to co-create and reflect on more successful experiences Buoincontri and Micera. (2016)

4.2 'All inclusive' pseudo-authentic ski-chalet infrastructure

Chalet staff provide numerous services to enhance the ski community experience. While lunch is generally an 'extra', the ski-chalet model is essentially all-inclusive (Major, 2005). Being 'catered for' is vital for many skiers, as Peeks gleefully observes: "It's a great plus to have meals prepared for you, no need to shop or find a restaurant – it's just handed to you on a plate." Guests were relieved to be able to rely on the chalet staff to assist with organising ski passes, ski hire and ski lessons, overcoming the language barrier, since "having access to local knowledge is always an advantage" (Louise).

The communal aspect of sharing mealtimes together is fundamental to co-creating the chalet experience, which is augmented by the staff hospitality. This co-created understanding reinforces the cohesion among community members and reinforces the chalet 'stage' (Pine & Gilmore, 2013). We noticed that guests have a vivid expectation of the ski-chalet infrastructure. While putting away equipment in the boot room, guests were frequently observed discussing the authenticity of the chalet itself and the low popularity of chalet holidays among French skiers; invariably these exchanges spilled over into dinnertime conversation with staff and other guests. The stage is central to the chalet community, as Michelle emotively advocates, "I look for a place that resembles my ideal ski village: snow-capped mountains, husky dog rides, wooden chalets and so on." For the purpose of this paper, we describe this stage as 'pseudo-authenticity' owing to the artificialness; we observed that the ski-chalet concept is contrived, lacking in naturalness and spontaneity. For example, while travelling up the *Funicular Neige* to ski the glacier at La Grande Motte, Sven (Norwegian guest) had a heated debate with Stephen and John (UK guests) regarding the authenticity of the *tartiflette*, *raclette* and *fondue* (typical mountain dishes) served at the chalet – then endearingly appraised the chalet staff and décor. The brochures and marketing materials of ski-chalets attempt to highlight the authenticity of the chalets themselves. For example, that Chalet Ebene in Val-d'Isère is promoted as being 'designed in true mountain style, using warm colours and reclaimed wood; adding to the traditional feel of the chalet ... interiors are a perfect blend of modern and cosy decor to create a fantastic ski retreat (see <https://elegant-ski.com/properties/val-disere-chalet-ebene/>).

4.3 Hedonistic skiing

Hedonism is frequently associated with skiing, après-ski and additional experiential elements of the ski-chalet. Motivations for ski-chalet holidays are inextricably linked to the challenge and achievement of active vacations (Weed, 2009; Hudson & Hudson, 2015; Kreziak & Frochot, 2011). As Jessie excitedly suggests, “I got the bug, wanted to do it every year, there is a sense of achievement, and you feel you’ve improved” – a comment that is complemented by Kiri who highlighted “with skiing, you feel you’ve accomplished something, you don’t get that on a beach holiday: ooh I sunbathed a bit better this year, and I’ve gone a bit browner and wrinklier” (laughing). These remarks reflect the holistic nature of the chalet experience and clearly link the social and hedonistic elements. It was observed that the shared, co-created hedonistic skiing experience is integral to being outside and engaged in physical activity, telling tall tales before and while skiing, then later in the day over dinner or a drink. Kate enthused “the camaraderie, like-minded people, sharing tales of daring stories when you get home, the fresh air, being outdoors, being fulfilled – healthy and relaxed.”

Hedonistic behaviour is well documented in the early experience literature (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Hirschman, 1984; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Holbrook, 2006, Palmer 2010) – but has not been explored in a community context. Drawing a parallel with rock-climbing (Ewert, 1985), previous hedonic experiences associated with the travel career ladder (Pearce & Lee, 2005) motivate engagement and contribute to the ski-chalet community experiences. That is, past experience of skiing encourages future involvement in the activity and influences future participation. Motivation is further fuelled by a sense of adventure, “feelings of excitement, fear, thrill, danger and adrenaline-inducing experiences” (Pomfret, 2011:509) and escape. Different types of ski activities generated individual experiences. For example, Stephen and Lynne who are snowboarders spent most of their days on resort-created boardercross (a type of snowboard competition-park), while Sam, the most experienced skier got “a buzz out of” extreme skiing. His face was a picture of excitement-cum-exhilaration when we met for lunch and shared: “I skied down the *Le Col Pers* today for the first time. It blew my mind. The views were fantastic and snow like fine sand”. Sam “couldn’t believe the feeling of floating through the trees on a ‘powder day’ or off-piste on a sunny day.” Other skiers, like Jake and Jessie (baby boomers), were apprehensive about the deep powder, and concerned about “not knowing what’s under all that snow,” feeling that “its like skiing inside a tumble dryer”. Our results complement the findings of existing studies that highlight how co-creation occurs when tourists actively participate in physical challenges with communities

of like-minded individuals (Campos et al. 2017; Rihova et al. 2015) and have a thirst for doing rather than seeing (Eraqui, 2011).

4.4 Location/place

We observed that location/place factors such as chalet locality, picturesqueness, ambience and weather also influenced motivations and the overall experience – findings which complement Kreziak and Frochot (2011) and Agapito et al. (2014). Kim decisively commented, “I chose this chalet because of the location ... a ski-in/ski-out chalet, similar price to other operators but with better services like heated boot-room and ski servicing”. Correlating with the work of Prebensen et al. (2012), the ski-chalet experience as a ‘home’ was prevalent, generating co-created feelings of relaxation and comfort; Bea emphasised “I like a relaxed, friendly atmosphere ... the alpine look – woody bijou cosy room, mulled wine, carved ice sculptures, resort webcams, fast ski lifts and well-groomed slopes”.

While customer service is crucial (Byrd et al., 2016) a ‘bundle’ of co-created factors are important in the ski-chalet community. These co-created factors often contribute to new opportunities and new clients (Pröbstl-Haider & Lampl, 2017). Highlighting the importance of the environs (Davis, 2016), Katrina and Anders stated, “we want to be near a village to do other things, not just go skiing”. Likewise, Louise specified, “we look for high altitude with guaranteed snow, and a lively resort for our teenager kids who want après and shopping”. Our observations and interview data complement studies that suggest destination-related motivations including terrain, snow conditions and proximity will attract skiers to a resort (Alexandris & Girgolas, 2007). In other tourism studies, ‘location’ and ‘destination’ is often referred to as ‘place’ (Suntikul & Jachna, 2016).

4.5 Augmented communities of online & offline skiers

Our findings suggest that skiers, particularly baby-boomers, seek information and generate information via blogs, vlogs and social networks. They join the ongoing conversation of skiers and add to the legitimacy of the community (Kristiansen et al., 2015). Knowledge and co-creation is shared online (and offline) among skiers and providers of ski services, both during the holiday and afterwards. Sam states: “the biggest thing you get from the chalet is the community: you ski together, post it on YouTube and share anecdotes of skiing... the fun is created offline then posted online”. James contributed: “I joined skiclub.co.uk to learn more

about skiing – and now I can share my knowledge, contributing useful information to others online”. Most evenings before dinner, chalet guests would gather together informally and compare each other’s photos and videos taken during the day, before sharing them online with family and friends via Facebook, Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest, Vimeo and other platforms. These activities highlighted the augmented nature of the ski-chalet community and mix of in-person offline and online interactions. Jake and Jessie were observed booking next year’s holiday online while talking to chalet staff about which weeks of the season were outside school holidays and usually better for snowfall and daylight hours. They discussed how e-WOM helps them choose a chalet and location, stating “we look at online reviews on TripAdvisor, and the chalet’s own website” however, it was “the good craic and friends we’re making” that informed their decision to return the following year. Many of the guests were repeat visitors.

Acknowledging the challenges of community management, namely protecting user privacy while being user-friendly (Alemerien, 2017), the notion of trust is paramount. We observed that the tour operator plays a key role in co-creating the ski-chalet experience by bringing the group together and enabling the experience (Morgan and Xu, 2009; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) which tourists later share via social media (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Simon articulated “winning the weekly ‘best social media post’ was awesome ... I’m now in with a chance to win a free ski week if my GoPro clip is selected”. This incentive, organised by the tour operator, illustrates the co-created synergies of the augmented community.

5. Discussion of results

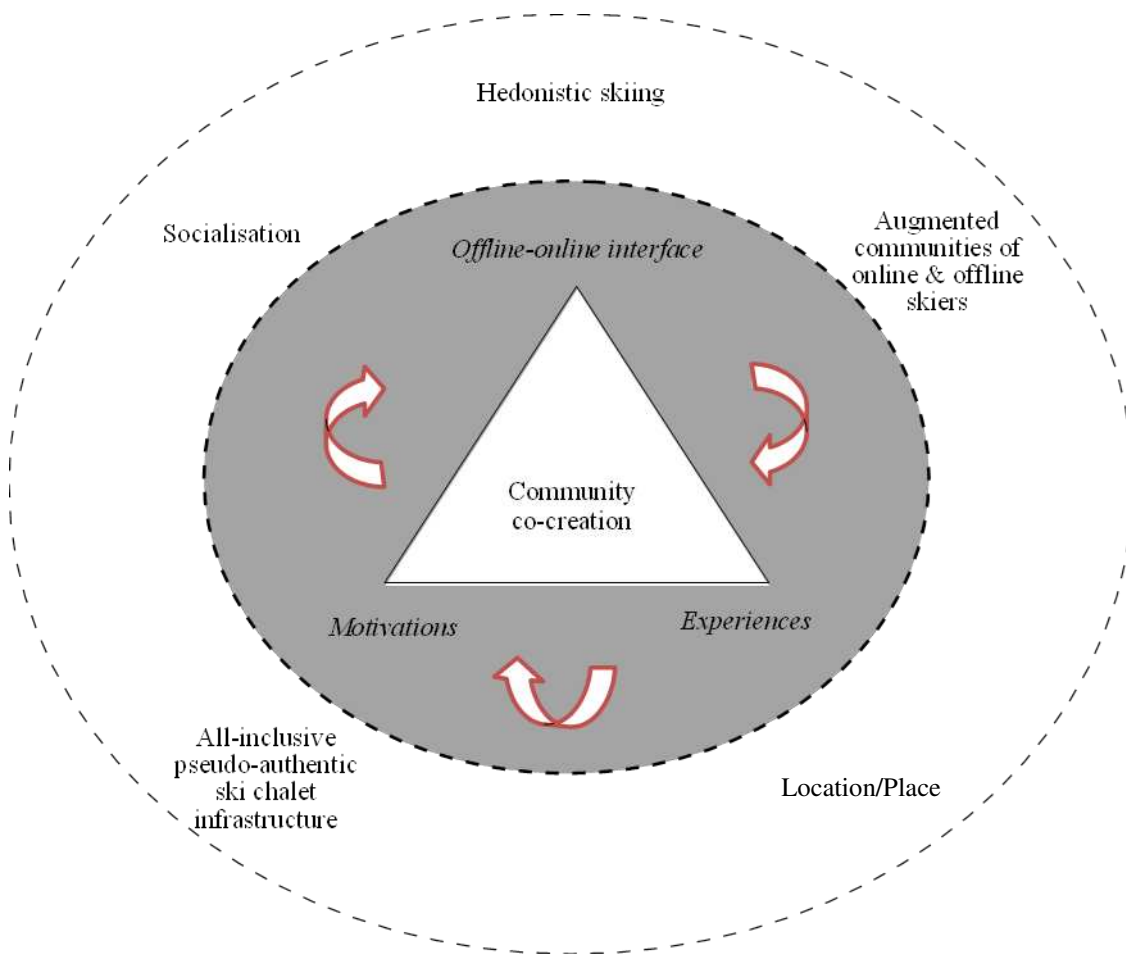
Supporting studies into stimuli and incentives to travel, our results are consistent with existing theories including Iso-Ahola’s escaping-seeking dichotomy and ‘experiencescapes’ (O’Dell & Billing, 2005; Campos et al., 2017). While these theories partly explain certain experiences, they do not provide a holistic lens for observing the ski-chalet community, or explain the offline-online interface. Our contribution to theory is to combine theoretical underpinning from the offline and digital consumer community literature as well as value co-creation research, to develop a framework for understanding the ski-chalet community experiencescape.

The results of this study explain a subtle interplay of factors that influence individual experiences in the ski-chalet community. This dynamic is illustrated as a framework (see

Figure 1) to explain various elements of the augmented community experiencescape. The figure draws from the themes summarised in table 2 and reflects co-creation (Filieri, 2013; Buonincontri et al., 2017) within the ski-chalet community. As represented in the inner core of the figure, our results – which highlight a close link between motivations and the experience – also indicate the cross-over of the online-offline space. The outer ring of the figure illustrates how the motivations and the experience are framed in the wider context of pseudo-authenticity (or pseudo-staged idealisation), social bonds (Konu et al., 2011), hedonistic skiing and the ski-chalet infrastructure (Vakaridis, 2014). The shared consciousness, rites and traditions, and sense of moral responsibility (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001) provide a conduit for membership of this community. Guests of the ski-chalet holiday form a distinct community through their co-created shared awareness, rituals and customs associated with skiing (Shim, Gehrt & Siek, 2005). Many of these factors relate to service experience encounters described by Sørensen and Jensen (2015) and include intangible elements that have not previously been identified in studies of skiers. As the existing literature does not fully explain the interaction in this market, our framework provides a theoretical lens for explaining community dynamics.

The ski-chalet experience partially embodies staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973), i.e. the staging of local culture to create an impression of authenticity for a tourist audience. Tour operators accentuate features that are most different from the tourist’s everyday life by interpreting them in a way that makes these differences more magical or mystical than the ordinary (Ruiz-Ballesteros & Hernández-Ramírez, 2010). In contrast to staged authenticity, we coin the term ‘pseudo-authenticity’ to define the ski-chalet experience, as it is more than ‘staged’; it is an unauthentic co-created representation of simple traditional living in a mountain lodge (Sigrid-Nordby, 2011). In this sense, pseudo-authenticity alludes to co-created idyllisation (Daugstad & Kirchengast, 2013).

Figure 1: A framework for understanding the augmented community experiencescape



Digital technologies, particularly social media, play a central role in shaping the augmented community (Buonincontri et al., 2017) and enabling co-creation (Cabiddu, Lui & Piccoli, 2013). In the online environment, visits to ski domains (via resort webcams, GoPro clips or ski-chalet websites) amplify the non-virtual visits and accentuate existing affinities in social relations (Christophe & Rimé, 1997), not only between guests and ski-chalet staff but also between other individuals (e.g. après-ski providers). Thus, the augmented community extends and deepens the existing relations between guests, hosts and places into a new sphere – and simultaneously transforms the members, for example, by sharing the exhilaration of physical exertion and the excitement of mastering new ski techniques while deepening interpersonal relationships. These shared experiences are communicated both online and offline.

Transformation takes place as a result of encountering the themes identified: social (i.e. people), chalet offering (i.e. infrastructure), hedonistic skiing (i.e. co-creation and social bond), location/place, augmented communities (i.e. co-creation and pseudo-authenticity).

Although members of the augmented community will physically travel to a ski destination, their practice is driven by the representation and stimulation they receive from the virtual community, blended with the offline experience. Thus, our framework differs from the work of Byrd et al. (2016) who explored the role played by core and supplementary services in motivating customers to visit vineyards. In our study, not only was customer service paramount, other factors came into play, that were identified in other themes (e.g. social connections, hedonism and location/place) that influenced motivation.

The ski-chalet holiday community offers a pertinent illustration of the intricacies of the interface between motivations and the experience. Skiing is a unique sport that combines physical, mental, social and emotional aspects of wellness, incorporating varying degrees of hedonistic *bonhomie* and *camaraderie*, commonly known as *après-ski*. Using social relationships in terms of networks, nodes and ties, the sport environment provides a rich context for exploring communities, owing to the strong sense of identity, fair-play and loyalty: group experience, interaction, communication and commitment (Katz & Heere, 2013). Similar to the micro-communities found on cruise ships (Shim et al., 2015), socialisation helps explain attitude, behaviour and intentions regarding pleasure travel. The literature accentuates brand communities in a traditional, geographically-bound sense rather than digitally and boundary-free; the augmented community is formed from the amalgamation of the different types of communities (brand, consumer and virtual).

Sharing is central to the ski-chalet holiday market as encapsulated in the traditional sociological view of communities (e.g. Crow, 2011). The community is driven by conviviality and sustained by the ‘sharing economy’ (Puschmann & Alt, 2016); individuals enjoy the social experience of skiing and/or dining together and sharing emotions (Christophe & Rimé, 1997; Frochot & Kreziak, 2008), from which user-generated content is created – for example, a Facebook community of the ski brand Oakley (Davies, 2011) or ski blog www.skipass.com. Legitimacy is created by consumer-generated impetus via social networks, and via individual motivation to ski, thus consumption is for pleasure (c.f. socialisation theory of Shim, Gehrt & Siek, 2005) or the well-being of a community (Kristiansen et al., 2015). Participation in such group activities can be linked to needs-based motivations and social emotions theory (Rimé & Nils, 2004), with skiers seeking a sense of belonging, fulfilment and satisfaction (Iso-Ahola & Allen, 1982; Mills, 1985). Similarly, the community of ski resort staff also reveal an equally strong sense of co-created engagement (Brodie et al., 2013) and *camaraderie*.

Our results supplement the findings of studies anchored in sociology, brand, consumer and community literature – and suggest that the sense of belonging and exclusivity is a central aspect of the ski-chalet holiday. Communities provide a hub for sharing: “Among all the things that may or may not be shared within any given community – things such as food and drink, useful information, and moral support – one thing seems always to be shared: the creation and negotiation of meaning” (McAlexander et al., 2002: 38). The experiences reported in this study complement the ‘experience encounters’ identified in Sørensen and Jensen’s (2015) study of a luxury hotel, reflecting the engagement and participation of skiers, as well as chalet staff and managers.

6. Conclusions and implications

The business model of ski-chalet holidays reveals the idiosyncrasies of the augmented community of winter-sports enthusiasts. Despite its size and growth, the consumption of ski-chalet holidays remains an under-researched area in scholarly publications. This paper contributes to the fast-growing and fragmented literature on communities by furthering our theoretical understanding of its dimensions, framing it in a network of conceptual relationships and social emotions, based on intangible and experience encounters. The enquiry draws from both traditional offline community and online community theories in the context of co-created ski communities, and explores the core characteristics of motivations and experiences within this group of like-minded people. Within a community context, it addresses two issues: firstly, the experiences of individuals who participate in the augmented community of ski-chalet aficionados; and secondly, the nature of the co-created experience of a ski-chalet holiday. In addition we develop a framework which highlights the close link between motivations and the experience and the cross-over of between the online-offline space. By doing, so we answer all three of our research questions.

6.1 Theoretical contribution

Our results further the understanding of experience of individuals participating in the ski-chalet holiday community, generating intangible and experience encounters, besides triggering co-creation. The unique combination of experiencescape, bundle of core and supplementary service experience encounters plus pseudo-authentic ski-chalets have not previously been explored in this way.

Within the growing body of literature on communities, this paper builds upon previous research into the skier experience (see Frochot & Batat, 2013; Kristiansen et al., 2015) and contributes to theory by providing a framework for understanding the ski-chalet holiday experience, at the intersection of digital and non-digital community spaces. Intrinsically related to this notion is an exploration of the ski-chalet experience. We contribute to theory by developing a framework for understanding the augmented ski-chalet holiday experiencescape, building upon theoretical underpinnings from the sociology/consumer/brand community and value co-creation literature.

6.2 Practical/Managerial contribution

An understanding of the augmented community is essential for tourism managers seeking to: co-create new types of products and services, enhance the existing offer, build brand image, and develop relationship marketing and customer loyalty. As consumer expectations are constantly evolving, tour operators need to understand emerging trends in consumer motivations and the skier experience in the era of ‘augmentation’. The findings of our investigation can assist tour operators in decision-making and support their marketing efforts; tour operators need to be aware of the motivational factors that lead to booking a ski-chalet holiday plus the factors that constitute the authenticity of the postmodern ski experience. The onus is on tour operators to continue promoting the factors that motivate consumers to book ski-chalet holidays such as the conviviality, customisation and active hedonism. WOM and e-WOM, based on the experience of the ski-chalet holiday, are vital for creating a ‘buzz’. The social aspects of the ski-chalet gathering, including social emotions, are a key component of the co-created consumer experience.

Equally, the results have implications for ski-chalet managers seeking to better understand the ski-chalet holiday experience. This information is useful for managers who are considering innovative and sustainable business models, incorporating tangible and intangible elements of the experiencescape; for example to reposition (Snepenger et al., 2006) a resort as a multi-use ‘four-season’ destination to target consumer segments all year round. Ski-chalet owners, resort managers and tour operators should all be seeking to nurture communities of ski aficionados. When doing so, it is important to take a passive role and encourage consumers to share ideas voluntarily (Hudson & Hudson, 2015) since they are unlikely to engage with a community which they associate with profit exploitation (Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann, 2005).

6.3 Limitations and future research

The case study was conducted in one country, France, thus limiting the scope of the study. Further research could examine generational segmentation regarding the links between skier motivations and the ski experience in other countries and in other contexts such as family/group ski holidays. Especially, the similarities and differences between experiences and motivations relating to ski-chalet holidays in Europe could be compared and contrasted with skiers staying at ‘club field’ accommodation in Australasia such as Craigieburn, Broken River and Temple Basin. Although our study was undertaken over a 2-year period, more longitudinal research could explore how motivations, the experiencescape and co-creation evolve over time. An additional quantitative study could be designed to measure the influence of various factors on skier satisfaction, contentment or other outcomes (i.e. hedonism, augmented offline communities, socialisation, pseudo authenticity, social emotions, etc.). As values, personal norms and behavioural drivers were outside the scope of the present study, further research in these areas is warranted. The tools, techniques and theoretical underpinnings that have been used to study motivations in the adventure tourism literature (see Ewert, 1985; Ewert et al., 2013) could be assimilated to offer additional insights, as skiing can be interpreted as a form of soft adventure tourism (Euromonitor, 2011). As the UK contemplates the effects of leaving the European Union, the future of ski-chalet holidays remains uncertain. The popular press alludes to job insecurity for the 25,000 season workers (many of whom act as ski-chalet hosts), as well as trade restrictions for non-EU members; many British-owned chalets or chalet operators face losing the right to work or conduct business (Aspden, 2017). Research that focuses on changes in the ski-chalet experience during and after BREXIT would provide new insights into how these specific environmental and political factors influence the tourist landscape.

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