Authenticating everyday life: *Dopios* and the authentic experience by the locals

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ALL JOURNEYS
HAVE SECRET
DESTINATIONS
OF WHICH
THE TRAVELER
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Milies, Pelion

"Every perfect traveller always creates the country where he travels"

Nikos Kazantzakis

"A journey is best measured in friends, rather than miles."

Tim Cahill

Executive Summary

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1.   INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the main topic of the study, explains some important concepts and the reasons for focusing on this topic specifically.

It gives a general background of the study, the main purpose, the research problem and the research objective, as well as the research questions.

1.1   General background

"*Dopios*", is an online community of people becoming tourist hosts in their city of residence. Until the present day (August 2014) *Dopios* is spread all over the world; in Greece, and in other places in Europe, in Latin America, Africa, Australia and the US.

> "*Dopios* (which means "local" in Greek) is a new community marketplace that connects travellers and locals in order to create more authentic travel experiences."
>
> (www.*Dopios*.com)

Dopios is a recent initiative (June 2012) of a group of people who want to "change tourism life in their city." Three of the four co-founders are Greeks and particularly two of them Athenians. Being Athenians and interested in showing their way of life, the co-founders created this internet platform where tourists can find their own local 'buddy', as they call themselves, to show them around in the "authentic life" they experience as inhabitants of the city, starting from Athens, Greece. In the *Dopios* site, it is mentioned (as translated from an interview in Greek of the co-founders)"to show them [the tourists] around like we [the locals-members of *Dopios*] would do with our friends or family" (http://www.dimokratianews.gr/, 10/05/2012).

References to 'authenticity' and 'authentic experiences' are abundant in the company's website. Likewise, the subject of authenticity has been essential in tourism studies since it was introduced by MacCannell (1973). Authenticity's etymology comes from the Greek word *αυθεντικότητα* that means "genuineness", therefore, not fake or copied, but original. Authenticity is not only about the genuineness of an object, but also of experiences and feelings. Trilling (1972) argued that the origin of the word 'authenticity' is in the museum, because experts can test the objects' truthfulness. This authenticity about the genuineness of an object that considers an item shown in a museum is what Selwyn characterized as "cool authenticity". It is tested by experts and usually is not questioned unless scientific evidence shows the opposite.

Notwithstanding, even though the scientific "cool" authenticity has been of great interest along the years, this paper will be focusing on the social "hot" authenticity, the one Selwyn explains as a search for the "authentic self" and "authentic other." The reason for focusing on the "hot authenticity" is because is subjective, as it considers individuals life and feelings.

On the basis of the *Dopios* members aiming to show the 'authentic part' of the places they live, authenticity will be extendedly discussed, exploring how *Dopios* can be placed in the spectrum of authenticity as the latter has been discussed by many researchers like Cohen, MacCannell, Wang and so on. Could the authenticity they offer fit in the already existing categories, or is it a new kind?

Starting with it, *Dopios* gives three reasons that people join the community and become "locals". The first reason is that the local inhabitant of the city and *Dopios*-to-be would like to share the secrets of the city and to show the beauties of it through his/her own eyes. In the website, the co-founders say that what they do for them is the need to show the 'real life' of the city and not the 'staged and touristic' one. Yet, it is often seen that in many touristic places, people involved in tourism as hosts support an authenticity, or better, a stereotype of the culture that is often exaggerated. This stereotype is not what locals of a place actually do in their everyday life, but what they do to sustain this stereotype that made them popular as a culture. For instance, showing habits and/or behaviours locals are supposed to have. People in the *Dopios* initiative intend to show what they do in their everyday life or some of the habits they have as inhabitants of their place. For example, restaurants or taverns they go to eat, the night-clubs they go for a drink, or the cafes, and so on. It is not mentioned in their website in details why they have this aim. They only say that the reason/trigger was a trip of a friend where she only felt like a mere tourist. Further details of *Dopios* in Chapter 2.5. What it is mentioned as the goal of *Dopios* in general is that they want to give to the tourists an alternative way of being a tourist. Quoting from the website and their manifesto:

> "The travel experience should be much more authentic and unique for each of us. Enough with the boring and copy-paste travels. Enough with the mediocre and rigid tour guide experiences. Enough with the inability to feel the true side of a location. The best travel stories come from trips that you knew that special someone who opened your eyes and took you off the beaten path.
>
> Let's create an amazing community of people who have the time and desire to show visitors the true colours of a place. Let's open up every last square mile of this world to be safe, unique and breath-taking to step onto. Let's

make traveling better and let's never look back. We have the means and we
have the passion to do so.

(www.*Dopios*.com)[1]

As one could easily understand from the previous statement is that they consider the conventional (mass-tourism) experience to be inauthentic, as it does not show the "true side" of a location nor its people. They aim in making the travel experience better. Therefore, they support that the inauthentic "copy-paste" travelling is not good and should be changed into an authentic one. What will be argued in the next chapter of the paper is what kind of authentic experience they provide.

The second reason is that the *Dopios* member of *Dopios* wants to make acquaintances with people from all over the world. They talk about the desire to be involved in tourism and get to know what is out there how much different it is from what we know and what we have experienced. According to *Dopios*, the tourism they promote is about getting the tourists closer to the visited culture, different in any extend from the one the tourists bring from back home, maintaining the stereotypes. It is also about creating a bigger family of friends and acquaintances.

The third reason mentioned is to earn money. . Greece is currently in the midst of a profound financial crisis and a crippling economic depression. Living in this financial crisis, most people, especially young ones, not having a job (25.1 % on July 2012 and for the youth 55.6 % on September 2012[2]) or people with their salary being reduced significantly and being in need of some extra income, might want to choose to join this platform as a possible financial support.

This paper will be concentrated mostly on the first reason as the basic subject of attention. *Dopios* is a platform on Computer-Mediated Tourism (CMT). CMT is a recent trend that has expanded significantly as the number of such tourism platforms, like *Dopios* and Couchsurfing, is rising. The research focus of this paper will be on how authenticity claimed by *Dopios* is being promoted and what kind of authenticity they support. With *Dopios* being a CMT platform, it will be explored how can authenticity be evaluated by the possibility of reviews and users' grading, gives the opportunity to the tourists-customers to reflect on the experience they had and explain whether they liked it or not, what would they want differently, or whether they found this experience authentic. It has been questioned by previous literature

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[1] http://www.*Dopios*.com/about
[2] according to Eurostat

(selectively, Cohen and Cohen, 2012; Condevaux, 2009) the *who is authenticating* (deciding what is authentic or not)*, for whom and how*, but with CMT platforms it is open to public to see answers to such questions. Taking as an example *Dopios*, the locals-members of it decide what they find as authentic and in the same time tourists can review whether and how they found the experience authentic and if authenticity was what they are looking for.

For that reason, I am interested in understanding how *Dopios*-members conceptualize 'authentic' and by what means they assess which experiences are 'authentic' and which are not.

Furthermore, this paper will discuss debates on authenticity to understand the different discourses of it, the kinds of authenticity as were introduced by Wang (1999) in order to be able to explore the connection of *Dopios* with authenticity and how can we talk about the existence of authenticity. Additionally, even though there is not much literature review on the existence and function of CMT, it will be explored for the better understanding of *Dopios* as part of this.

1.2   Preliminary Problem Statement

Authenticity is a word being used in our everyday life. We talk about authentic food, authentic clothes, authentic experiences. There are several questions that could be provoked by the use of this word, taking as an example the following: what 'authentic' actually is? During a globalized world is it possible to talk about authenticity of a culture or even merely about cultures? 'Authentic' of which period of time; the past, or the present? The questions that will be attempted to be answered in this paper are in relation to an '*authentic tourist experience*'. For whom is it considered authentic and by whom are questions already being made in the past, here it will be questioned whether there is an actual authentic tourist experience.

Dopios co-founders claim, in the *Dopios* website, that they provide tourists with the "real authentic experience" of the host city. They suggest, "[...] *το www.Dopios.com μπορεί να συμβάλλει σε ένα διαφορετικό και πιο αυθεντικό τρόπο ταξιδιού*" {the www.*Dopios*.com can contribute to a different and more authentic way of travelling}[3]. They categorize the

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[3]*Dopios* Press – Documents: Calling for Locals,

experience they provide according to their locals-members' interests: food, arts, museums, technology, trips, shopping, going outdoors, nightclubbing. Is the authenticity they are claiming just the *Dopios* members' everyday life or is it something beyond it?

Dopios's claim for authenticity and the categorization they make between what they offer from what generally exists, is what triggered this study, in order to see what kind of connection these two might have or if authenticity is a way of promotion, as it is an often request of most tourists. This categorization and the claim of authentic experience were made by the co-founders of the *Dopios*.

1.3   Research Objectives

- Explore literature and understand how 'authenticity' is conceptualized, deployed and experienced.
- Explore through interviews and internet content analysis what kind of authentic experiences are being promoted by the members of *Dopios*.
- How are everyday life moments and experiences being used for tourism reasons?

1.4   Research Questions

- What is considered to be authentic tourist experience for the members of *Dopios* and of other platforms of the same philosophy?
- How are the stereotypical authentic experiences being perceived by the tourism the people participating in such platforms, like the *Dopios*?
- What is 'real life' and its position to what is perceived as "really authentic"?
- How is CMT an added value to the objective evaluation of how can one's experience be authentic or inauthentic?

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https://s3.amazonaws.com/*Dopios*_public/docs/*Dopios*_pr_calling_for_locals_gr.pdf

2.   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

At this chapter the core concepts of the study will be defined. Furthermore, the influences and the theoretical basis on which the analysis (information and data collection and interpretation) has been developed will be detailed explained.

Beginning with the initial point of this study, *Dopios* and how it works in Greece will be closely explored, as well as how the authenticity they are promoting through the webpage, can be placed within the spectrum of authenticity as it has been object of big debates in tourism the last four decades. The focal point of the research will be on how *Dopios*'s members perceive their participation in the platform as promoting the Athenian authenticity and how do they consider the authenticity they provide opposite to the authenticity as it is familiar about Athenians and the Greeks generally, till now.

2.1   Computer-Mediated Tourism

Tourism can be beneficial for the locals, with the economic opportunities it can provide them. For many reasons, this is not always the case; either because the opportunities are rather limited, or the wage is at the minimum level, often with no opportunity to raise (Chambers, 2009). Nowadays, people, and more precisely locals, are looking for ways to support themselves via tourism. There are many initiatives taking place and the number is continuously rising. There are "Bed & Breakfast" accommodations, hotels or hostels or any touristic shop, as well as touristic experience-making. The case study of this paper is based on the latter one, the experience-making. To be more exact, it is about selling the touristic experience, via the creation of a personal profile on the *Dopios* platform.

But *Dopios* is neither the first nor the only platform of this kind, and most probably it is not the last one either. Several others already exist with more or less the same content: supporting an alternative way of being a tourist. Namely, some of them are: Couchsurfing and Airbnb, that focus on the accommodation; *Dopios*, Spottedbylocals, Globalgreeternetwork, ToursByLocals, RentaLocalFriend, ATA-alternative tour guides of Athens, and locish.com, that focus on experiencing the place to visit like a local, or through the eyes of a local. All of them are focusing on ways of travelling diverse from the conventional mass touristic one that mostly promotes an all-inclusive travelling. The aforementioned initiatives support locals when it comes either to accommodation, or to what the guest tourist will see, taste, or live. The new era of tourism has introduced the use of internet in many ways: engine searching for destinations, for airlines or accommodation,

blogs and websites, advices and recommendations, and so on. Many researchers have identified internet as an important channel for travellers' information search (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, and O'Leary 2006; Gursoy and McLeary 2003; Pan and Fesenmaier 2006; Xiang, Wober, and Fesenmaier 2008:in Dickinger, 2011:378).

This new era brings in mind the post-Fordist form of tourism (Appendix I), influenced, amongst others, by the Information Technologies (ITs). This new era made travel industry more flexible, like post-Fordism requires.

> "The transition from Fordism to flexible production in manufacturing is mirrored by equivalent shifts in travel and tourism and that major technological innovations [particularly the advent of CRSs (Computer Reservation Systems)], accompanied by new trends in consumer behavior, allow rigid mass-oriented, standardized package tourism to be replaced by more flexible travel forms emphasizing individuality and autonomy."
>
> (Poon 1993: in Ioannides and Debbage, 1997:233)

Internet has played a crucial role in this new kind of tourism. Buhalis and Zoge (2008) resulted that the "most critical contribution of the Internet is that it enabled suppliers to access their target markets directly thus reducing their dependency on intermediaries for the distribution of their products" (Buhalis and Zoge, 2008:491). In the same research, the interviewees noted that the extensive range of opportunities internet has lead to "less dependency on intermediaries, cost reductions and increased returns supporting the competitive position of suppliers" (ibid:487-488). While typical intermediaries have been challenged (Buhalis & Licata, 2002; Marcussen, 2010: in Munar and Steen Jacobsen, 2013), the emerge of e-intermediaries rose. The latters are increasingly benefited from the wide variety of knowledge created by tourists (O'Connor, 2010: in Munar and Steen Jacobsen, 2013). This has led to disintermediation, since the number of intermediaries dropped down. Notwithstanding the disintermediation, another concept took place: re-intermediation. It is the procedure by which new intermediaries started to emerge having as a base the internet. These e-intermediaries were serving for any kind of (tourism) bookings online (Buhalis and Zoge, 2008).

Internet provides with up to date and full information (Cvelić, 2012). All the information preceding the internet had created trust issues on possible clients, because they were lacking in direct communication for the bookings which led to lack of trust. But trust is essential for the customers in order to purchase something online (Fam et al., 2004). Different researchers have their own definition and meaning of what 'trust' is. Fam et al. argue that

trust in an online relationship between consumers and Internet service providers is an area of increasing importance given that consumers are currently contending with privacy, security and tangibility issues whenever they undertake an online purchase (ibid:195). Moorman (1999:25) defined trust as "a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence". Especially for immaterial products, like the experiences, people try to look for other people's opinions, in order to decide whether to proceed with any online buying. Word of Mouth (WoM) is referring to these opinions of other people. Specifically, WOM is about "interpersonal communication" between consumers concerning their personal experiences with a firm or a product (Richins, 1983: in Gretzel and Yoo, 2008:36). WOM is maximizing in situations that the consumer is inexperienced with a service provider (Chatterjee, 2001), which is often the case for travelling options (Chatterjee, 2001: in Gretzel and Yoo, 2008)

The entry of the internet in tourism has not been beneficiary only for the tourists, but also for the suppliers. Now they can see what tourists really want and they can provide them with it. For tourism suppliers, it is easier to deal with the diversity of desires by the consumers. They can communicate with tourist, distribute and market their products to potential customers worldwide in a cost- and time-efficient way (Buhalis and Laws, 2001: in Garín-Muñoz and Pérez-Amaral, 2011). With the internet, all the information can be online and available to all who have access to it. This is very important for the tourism providers because with the use of internet and the tools available to use, like hotel websites, blogs or platforms it can attract the attention of those possible customers that are in quest (Dickinger, 2011).

2.2   Authenticity and tourism

As in most concepts to be able to talk about something, it means that the opposite exists; like in good, there must be bad; in beauty, there must be ugliness; in authentic there must be inauthentic. It is of great discourse what in modern society can be fake and what authentic. Most discourse on authenticity is about "what it is not" (Xie, 2011). Before going deeper into the debates of authenticity, the infancy of the concept will be shortly demonstrated; MacCannell's "staged authenticity". He was the first to identify this concept, which was about authentic experiences that in fact were actually false. These experiences, the events created for tourists, are "pseudo-events" (Wang, 1999: 352). For MacCannell, "there is a staged quality to the proceedings that lends to them an aura of superficiality, albeit a superficiality that is not always perceived as such by the tourist, [...] (MacCannell, 1973:595). It is from these very fake events, or fake shows that *Dopios* wants to differentiate diametrically. What they want to offer is the real, authentic place. What is authentic, though? The key word used

often by *Dopios* members and website about the authentic experience is "through the eyes of the locals". Departing from this phrase, it will be discussed what is authenticity.

It is generally suggested that the concept of authenticity is not absolute, but rather it is a concept that has various interpretations and negotiations. It varies and depends from the perspective of which one discusses it. What seems more important and rather essential is the procedure of how something is defined as authentic? Who defines what is authentic? What are the criteria for something to be or not authentic? When do we start talking about authenticity or the quest for it? According to MacCannell (1973, 1976) and Redfoot (1984) the pursuit of authenticity is a "primitive" instinct. Yet others, like Appadurai (1986) and Berger (1973) have argued that modern human is concerned for the authenticity of the social experiences". The impact of modernity upon the society has led to inauthentic existence. Inauthentic existence for society is to be consisted by members that have no uniqueness or personal identity. Steiner and Reisinger (2006) that such societies and people would always be inauthentic for these very reasons. Quoting Berger (1973:88): "If nothing on the outside can be relied upon to give weight to the individual's sense of reality, he is left no option but to burrow into himself in search of the real." From a sociological perspective, the origin of the 'quest for authenticity' has been interesting and important, to understand what triggers people to ask for it, and therefore those involved in tourism, promote, or even create, authenticity . What is authentic has been changing over the years. What was once considered authentic and most tourists wanted to experience, became the stereotypical famous information of a place. When they would go to the place they would look to identify the information they had on that specific place or culture. Yet, during the most recent years there are tourists looking for places and experiences less touristic and they want to experience what people of that place are actually doing in their everyday life (McGregor, 2000).

So what is authentic?

Regardless of what can be considered as authentic, tourists in order to identify themselves they are looking for authenticity outside their inauthentic everyday life. Calvino (2010) through a story he said:

> Elsewhere is a negative mirror. The traveller recognises the little
> that is his, discovering the much be has not had and will never have.
>
> (Calvino, 2010:25)

Amongst others (MacCannell, 1973; Turner and Ash, 1975; Smith, 1978) Uriely (2005) sees it as "de-differentiating the experience" that means the experience is to be differentiated from the everyday life. Uriely also points MacCannell's theory on this differentiation. He noted that tourism is a modern form of searching for authenticity, and people considering their

everyday life as inauthentic they turn to tourism to look for it as a break from their everyday life (MacCannell, 1973: in Uriely, 2005).

Different from what MacCannell has argued, for history curators and ethnographers judging strictly what an authentic product is, they say that it is a product by the locals with no intension of profit by aliens of those locals (McLeod, 1976; as quoted by Cohen, 1988:375). For them, it is a matter of being "hand-made" with no use of artificial materials (Cohen, 1988). Cohen, in the same article, continues his argumentation with the anthropologists, saying that for them the criteria are more rigorous. They depend on the level of alienation of the individuals: the more alienated they are, the less rigorous the criteria will be.

The same holds true for tourism. Cohen (1988) using Goldberg's theory (1983) on tourist and the authentic experience, argued that the more concerned the tourist is on the authenticity of his experience the stricter he will be on what is authentic and what is not. As mentioned before, many individuals are in search of authenticity, of authentic experiences. The same for a big part of tourists, they look for authentic experiences in the culture they have travelled. Authenticity for them becomes a conspicuous subject as modern tourists.

Going back in the very beginning of authenticity as a concept, for Cohen (1988) authenticity is not primitive, as MacCannell had suggested, but rather it is a "socially constructed concept" (Cohen, 1988). To support this argument he creates the concept of "emergent authenticity". This concept concerns a cultural product that once was considered to be inauthentic, but as time went by it became generally accepted as authentic, "even by experts" (Cohen, 1988:379). This "emergent authenticity" could be linked to the "constructed authenticity" by Wang (Wang, 2000). Both concern an authenticity that is not a primitive concept, but a constructed one. The concept of "constructed authenticity", will be further developed in the next chapter (Chapter 2.3).

2.3   Authentication and Tourism

As we see from all the above and like many researchers have suggested (Cohen and Cohen, 2012; Xie, 2011; Koontz, 2010; Cole, 2007), it is rather useful to discuss about authentication as the procedure when something becomes authentic, than arguing about merely authenticity itself. Authentication is the procedure of 'authenticate' which means to "prove or show (something) to be true, genuine, or valid" (Oxford Dictionary). There are several

categorizations of authentication. All of them try to explain who is to decide what is authentic and what is not.

More popular are those from Cohen and Cohen' (2012) "cool" and "hot", and of Selwyn's (1996) "scientific" and "social", but also Wang's categories of authenticity which explain authentication, since they talk about how authenticity is perceived in each category. About the first two researchers, they have a correspondence in their two types of categorization. What is for Cohen and Cohen "cool authentication", for Selwyn is the "scientific". These types of authentication are related to the rationality, to the "common-sense and dictionary definitions of the term" (Cohen and Cohen, 2012:1296). It is an authentication based on expertise and on scientific knowledge, on "certification" (ibid, pp. 1298). They consider mostly historical monuments or museum objects. In the domain of tourism, "cool authentication" is in a very low level. It is not clear who is to authenticate what (which authorized person or institution), yet there are some physical, historical attributes and characteristics of an area and of a culture.

An international institution that authenticates is the United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This vagueness of authentication boosts the staging of attractions for tourists. There are no clear regulations and restrictions in the 'world of tourism'. It can be a monument that was made some hundreds years ago, or a construction that was built even a couple of years ago, like the Metro of Athens that completed construction in January 2000.

For the needs of this research it is more essential to discuss about the second kind of authenticity. Cohen and Cohen's "hot authentication", or Selwyn's "social", is more complex, not to describe but to explain what influences it. For the reason that this kind of authentication is influenced by the individual and his or her relation to the society. It is a process of emotions and beliefs, rather than proofs and scientific evidence (Cohen and Cohen, 2012). It is produced by a participatory and on-going procedure within the society, rather than stiff decisions by experts and expertise. Thus, the criteria for "hot authentication" vary between societies, since societies are different from one another, but also within one society and within time. Therefore, it would be logical to say that what is supposed to be authentic also varies. This concludes that the authentic experience also varies as it is lived by different individuals. Individuals are different in the way of thinking and seeing things, or in what they want. This means that they probably perceive authenticity differently, especially when it comes to the authenticity of an experience, which involves the "hot authentication". Consequently and respectively, the power to authenticate is more specific when it comes to the "cool authentication" and less to the "hot authentication". The fact that these two are

different by kind, does not mean that they are co-exclusive. There can be cases that they occur at the same time constituting together the authenticity of a site (Cohen and Cohen, 2012).

At this point, for the further understanding of all aspects of authenticity, it could be useful to go back to authenticity, as categorised by Wang (1999). The development of the theory will be based on this categorization as it is holistic, recent and generally commonly accepted from most researchers and especially tourism researchers. Wang has identified three categories: Objective, Constructive and Existential authenticity. These are not stiff categories that an object or an experience can only belong to one. Rather, there are connections between them and the barriers are blurry. Notwithstanding, these connections will not be analysed in this paper, because, even though very important, they are not important for the understanding of the authenticity. The objective authenticity includes authenticity on a scientific level and the criterion is 'knowledge'. This kind of authenticity considers the "epistemological experience" (Wang 1999: 352, Table 1). In "objective authenticity" there is always an unconditional and objective principle for what is authentic. "Objective authenticity" is about the historical monuments, the museums and the architecture. It is most probable that all tourists, most of the times, seek to see these as they are; as unquestionable facts and heritage a place has. They show what is there from the history of the visited culture. An example of this is the Acropolis or the Acropolis museum; buildings and creations of another time, or concerning another time of the past, that show nothing of the today's culture. Yet they are both two must-visit allures. Apart from this, factual authenticity, Wang has discussed another one that is more questionable.

The second kind is the "constructive authenticity". Like the authenticity derived by "hot authentication", "constructive authenticity" follows a social construction, having no absolute criterion of what is authentic and what is not. It is a social construction that could start from (or be) an idea, a cultural stereotype or an expectation someone has. A constructive authenticity is an object, an idea, a person or a culture that once was not authentic but as time went by, social constructions, like a trend, made it authentic. A significant example of such authenticity is Disney World, an initially theme entertainment, which now is tightly connected to America as an authentic place to be (Harvey, 2004). It was a tourism product constructed for attracting people and producing money, which ended up being integrated into the American local culture and now it is seen as an authentic feature of that culture (Reisinger, 2006). Anything can become authentic if society and particular conditions allow it that to happen.

Regardless what they are referring to diverse types of authenticity, both objective and constructive authenticity are "object-related authenticity". This means that the experience is related to the quality of the object that is being experienced. This is different from the activity-related experience which

> . . .comprises personal or intersubjective feelings that are activated by the liminal process of tourist behaviours. In such liminal experiences, people feel that they are themselves much more authentic and more freely self-expressed than they are in everyday life, not because the toured objects are authentic, but rather because they are engaging in non-everyday activities, free from the constraints of daily life
>
> (Wang 2000: 49–50, cited in Kim and Jamal, 2006).

According to Wang, there is only one kind of authenticity that is "activity-related". It is the third kind "existential authenticity". What is authentic depends on the way of seeing and judging of the observer of what is to be authentic. In other words, it is an authenticity of the Self. One is looking for the authentic Self in the touristic experience. Getting away from that "inauthentic" everyday life of the tourists, away from their routine, means that they long for an authentic experience to the visited place. This means that their authentic travel is not in relevance to what they will see, but how they will spend their time there. They are leaving their daily routine to join a new world with activities irrelevant from those they had been doing back home. They are looking for authenticity in the place they travel through activities they identify themselves in. To see themselves in a more real world than the one they are living in the everyday life. This world can be found in the touristic experience, at the touristic place of visit. Wang (1999) relates tourism with the "ideal of authenticity" through a nostalgic and romantic feeling, as a contrast to the everyday life. Precisely Wang argues:

> "Tourism is thus regarded as a simpler, freer, more spontaneous, more authentic, or less serious, less utilitarian, and romantic, lifestyle which enables people to keep a distance from, or transcend, daily lives."
>
> (Wang, 2000:360)

Wang also claims that tourists feel more themselves and "freely self-expressed than in everyday life because they are engaging in non-ordinary activities, free from the constraints of the daily" (Wang, 1999:351). To go deeper into the understanding of the existential authenticity it is important to see the two sub-categories of the existential authenticity Wang has identified: the intra-personal and the inter-personal. The intra-personal is about the body and its feelings, and the inter-personal is about the "self-making" (Wang, 1999:361-364). To

explain further, the intra-personal authenticity is about the fulfilment of the bodily pleasures like "recreation" and "sensual pleasures" (ibid). On the other side, the inter-personal explains the quest of the "self-identity" (ibid). The everyday life of the traveller back home has gone in the vortex of a monotonous and routinized life that arose the "feeling of loss". From this feeling he seeks to get away from in his tourist experience.

In this paper, I will base my argument based on the existential authenticity, considering the fact that *Dopios* is a platform that is connected to this kind of authenticity. The reason for this is that the *Dopios* initiative is closely related to the existential authenticity. They are focusing on the tourist and what he will be doing, hence, what he will be experiencing, during his travel. What they try to do is to offer individual and personal experiences. The fact that they provide different kind of authentic experience, giving each *Dopios* member a personal touch in the experience makes it understandable why it can be considered as a case of existential authenticity. They do not merely focus on historical experience, even if there is such a category. Those who offer any a kind of historical tour they make it a bit different than those offered by professional tour-guides. Not only to show tourists something different than the usual, but also because the Greek law constraints them from such tour-guiding (they explicitly mention for the Greek *Dopios* that the *Dopios* member is not allowed by the Greek law 710/77, article.1.1 about the rights of the professional tour guides, to give any professional historical tour guide). What they provide is their own perception and personal taste of what they believe and perceive as authentic. They bring their own Self and they categorize it according to the categories that are found in the website ("Arts Lover, Techie, Avid Shopper, Foodie, Museum Geek, Night Owl, Outdoorsy and Trip Master" [Appendix II]). The tourist and potential upcoming customer can choose from the categories those he prefers the most, where he would identify his own Self. Even if they take the visitor to a historical place, which could be considered as a kind of "objective authenticity" (Wang, 1999), they make it a more particular and personal, which makes it more of an "existential authenticity". These two features arose a couple of questions: each *Dopios* member's belief of what is authentic can be generalized in the society as being authentic? Is it really a matter of authenticity or a simple taste what someone that is a local of a city, likes?

These questions are not a focal point of this research, yet they are important to keep in mind while doing the research in order to understand and explore deeper the debates on literature and the *Dopios* members' perception of authenticity. What is being questioned in this study is not what are tourists looking for in their touristic experience, but rather is analysed the fact that the concept of the authentic touristic experience has diverged from what was authentic for the conventional 'mass tourism' authenticity and how is the concept perceived in the same way amongst different people.

2.4   Authenticating the everyday life

From a quick view of the *Dopios* website, one can easily see that what the members offer has to do basically with their own everyday life, or with any special occasion they would have had as locals. This is what they call the real place, differentiating from the "copy-paste" experiences given by tour agencies. These experiences of "tourist–host encounters is, however, often 'staged' within the tourism establishment" (Steylaerts, 2011: 265)

Nowadays, it can be claimed that authenticity in tourism is promoted in many ways. Most direct are those everyday experiences which we may "identify as authentication by direct experience, and, for example, stem from wandering through streets and markets, eating with locals, and communicating with local people rather than with other tourists (Prentice, 2007: 15-16). This kind of authentication will be further discussed later in this paper.

2.5   "Becoming a local"

2.5.1 *Dopios*

Dopios is a platform of locals wanting to show their place of living. It is an online marketplace that connects tourists with locals, in order to show to the latter the authentic side of the visited place. They want to offer experiences that are not an impersonal "copy-paste" experience. Their mission is to show their place through their own eyes. They believe the more memorable the experience, the better the trip. The more stories the traveller has to say back home, the better. They support that in order to have such experiences a traveller has to connect with the place, to meet people and especially local people and to share moments with them.

Furthermore, in their promotion in the media they talk about uncovering hidden secrets of the city, where the local will share his or her authentic point of view and will offer unique moments to travellers. In this way they will have experienced the place through the eyes of the locals, which made the experience authentic, in comparison to a limited travel and not really authentic they would have had with the "copy-paste" trip, where they would have met and communicate with very few, if any, local people. It is essential to point here that 'authenticity' is an idea that surfaces repeatedly on the site. It is of great importance for the

co-founders, as well as for the members, explaining that authenticity is what they look for when they are tourists themselves.

In addition, the experiences they offer are personal and special for every individual traveller. They have created categories for this reason. As they have said during the interviews, these categories have no social base. It is an outcome of searching what-is-there on internet and especially on dating pages. This specific procedure had no particular reason. It was an unprompted procedure based on their own personal choices. Thus, based on these categories, the traveller can choose a local according to the personality he might have and then communicating with the selected *Dopios* member via messages on the *Dopios* database they can arrange further details on the experience, the dates or any other abeyance.

To make their information more reliable they have the option of feedback and reviews. In addition, they have "Identity Verification". This is referring to the connections of the *Dopios* members to other social network databases, and whether the member has verified herself via interview online or offline with a member from the board of *Dopios*. Without giving special emphasis to the credibility of the members, they mention that the score of the credibility they have, is counted by several factors: the quick response, the authenticity of the experience, the connections with other social networks, how many people have bought the experience and how pleased they were.

> **Comment [MM5]:** They 'measure' and judge this somehow? Interesting.

How does *Dopios* work (see Appendix III)? Possible customers first have to choose destination of travelling. They are "unlocking" cities continuously and the range of choices is growing fast. After they have chosen the destination, they have to choose the local, *Dopios* member. Either they can see all of them and choose, or narrowing down options by selecting one or more categories of interest. In their profiles, the members not only do they demonstrate the experiences they offer, with the price they ask for it, but also they can put personal information like languages they speak or places they have been, as well as characteristics of their personality. After the selection, the customer is contacting the *Dopios* member either to ask for details or more information, or to book dates of meeting. In order to book the experience payment is asked to be done in advance. After these steps, what is left is to actually have the experience.

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, *Dopios* is not the first initiative for supporting tourism with locals, offering more authentic experiences. The following are four websites of the same more or less philosophy. They are selected randomly between websites that show a general tension for promoting such an alternative tourism, like *Dopios* does.

> **Comment [MM6]:** Do you think that 'authenticity' is a thing that exists?
> [is this consistent with the ideas of Wang?]

2.5.2 Other websites

Spottedbylocals.com

Spottedbylocals.com (Appendix IV), do not promote the authentic experience per se. They do not mention it in the website, nor in the media. However, what they promote is that tourists will see the city of visit in "the local way". In this way, because the locals actually live in the city, the information they give is up-to-date, in contrast to the tourist books, where the author, that probably had not lived in the city enough to know the place from within, wrote once the information, which stayed the same for several years. Aim of the Spotters is to help tourists avoid the classic touristic spots and that they make tourist experience more personal.

The big differences of Spottedbylocals with the *Dopios* are two. Firstly, Spottedbylocals do not ask for any financial contribution. They only give advice and information about places to visit in the city of travel or what to do there. They provide with all the information of the suggestions that are necessary; what kind of place that is, the opening hours, contact information and address shown also on Google maps screen shot. The second significant difference is that they do not offer anything that has to do with meeting them, even though it could be arranged after personal communication with the Spotter. Adding to the differences, Spottedbylocals.com has no categorization of the locals. The only categorization is the one of the cities. The members are divided into the cities of choice.

Like *Dopios*, Spotters can also provide with personal information, generally about themselves, share their social networks and give contact information. They also show their part of the city and how they experience it. Besides all the specific similarities or all the differences, these sites have the same philosophy: to show the side of the local as an authentic experience.

ATA - atathens.org

ATA (Appendix V) are a group of Athenians, using their knowledge and profession. They are either architects or photographers or any kind of artists, and they are aiming to show the real life of Athens. The tours are about "revealing" the neighbourhoods and its people. They want to help develop the interaction between the locals and the foreigners. They want to show the new life of the city and want to make locals become tourists and tourists become locals. It is not their aim to show what is there known to tourists for decades, rather they want to show to

touristic places they could never see otherwise. No professional guide would take them there, and no guidebook would have such information.

They do not address only to foreigners, but also to locals who want to know their city in an alternative way. They have on the main page of the website a list of the events they organize with all the details; what is the event about, when and where it is happening, the price of the purchase (if there is any), and the contact information for those who are interested. Adding to that, they have tours they organize regularly and workshops that are taking place in the city. For the former, they have them categorized according to the kind of tour: architecture, street art, social movements, photography, literature, bike tours, arts & crafts, off-centre day trips, combined tours, custom tours, and offers. For the latter, they have a list of the workshops with a small description, the duration, the cost, and the contact for buying the desired activity. All payments are done by cash and receipts of the transaction are given.

Globalgreeternetwork.org

The Greeters are volunteers locals that want to show to people their city and what it means to them. Their mission is to show places out of the beaten path, with sustainability as a core value. In addition, they find important to respect the socio-cultural authenticity of each community. The goal is to show to tourists their city as friends. As locals they know their city best and in communication with the tourists they show them places according to their requests. If, for instance, they want to see architecture, then the local will take the tourist to see how the local sees the architecture of the place, and so on.

The Globalgreeternetwork is a database of Greeters around the world (Appendix VI). The customer first has to choose a destination. Then a list of the Greeters is shown and the customer can choose which of the Greeters he or she will choose. There is not list with specific members available to customers to choose. For more specific information, and taken as a template, "Athens Greeters" have been chosen for explaining how the procedure works. The "Athens Greeters" make it clear in their website that they are free of charge for their services. In order to book a member of the Athens Greeters, the customer is asked to send via email as many information about the trip as possible. Then the Greeters are contacting with the customer to arrange the details of the trip.

Rentalocalfriend.com

Rentalocalfriend (Appendix VII) is an online platform, as well. It is of the same philosophy as all the aforementioned. Its members are people that want to show their place so that visitors will experience it in the way they do. They want to show authentic parts of the city and provide with genuine experiences, in order for the visitor to no longer be a tourist, but a traveller. They see the city through the eyes of the locals. They want to show their favourite places being in communication with the visitor and serve what he or she wants.

The procedure of booking is quite similar to the one of *Dopios*. The first step is the one that the customer has to choose a destination. Then either they can choose from the list with all the members, or choose specific categories of languages (English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish) and/or interests, namely these are: Arts& Design, Gastronomy, History, Kids, Local Culture, Nature, Photography, Shopping & Street Markets, Sport & Outdoor. To complete the booking procedure they have to pay via PayPal. The members have also the possibility to upload videos talking about themselves. Furthermore, there is also the possibility to message the members for further information.

Contrary to the *Dopios* initiative there is no possibility to write any reviews or give any feedback visible to anyone who visits the website.

Toursbylocals.com

Toursbylocals (Appendix VIII) is a website that connects locals with travellers , a marketplace for unique travel experiences. Locals can offer their experiences they want to show to visitors; to show their city in a way that the visitors will do unique things, will experience the everyday reality of a place and will see its culture through the eyes of a local person. The website arranges almost any procedure; marketing, booking and payment processing.

The procedure is quasi the same to the *Dopios*; here also the customer has to first select the place of visit. Then the options for tours are on a list. There is also the possibility to select by categories, like the level of the activity, or among kinds of interests, such us Culture, Cycling, Extreme Sports, Food & Wine, Nature & Wildlife, Volunteer and others. After the customer has narrowed down the options and finally selects the tour he desires to have, the final step is the booking procedure, where the customer provides with personal information or requests any changes. Likewise, by sending a message to the member that does the tour, the financial

details are being arranged, and the transaction is done online. Similarly to *Dopios*, ToursByLocals also have the possibility of the customers' reviews and feedback.

These websites have many differences and similarities. The basic similarity common to all the websites is that they try to distant tourism from the conventional tourism and show another side of the cities they are involved in, the side of the locals, considering it to be the authentic experience to have.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology and discusses the method of data collection, data analysis, and limitations.

The main aim of this study is to explore how 'authenticity' is conceptualized, deployed and experienced by *Dopios* members, locals of the cities that they want to show the real aspect of it.

3.1   Paradigm

Before going through the methodology of this research, I will give an explanation of the paradigm I used to write this paper. Paradigm comes from the Greek verb παραδείκνυμι - to show side by side, to compare. The noun παράδειγμα (i.e. paradigm) is a template or an example. The idea of it became famous by Thomas Kuhn and it meant "a basic orientation to theory and research" (1970, in Neuman 1991, p.45).

Neuman supports and I agree with him, that there is not one single paradigm "all-powerful". He characterised sociology as "multiparadigm", since more than one paradigms are "competed with each other" (Neuman 1991:45). He recognises three kinds of paradigms; positivism, interpretivism and critical theory. An explanation of them will be given, focusing more on interpretivism as it is used in this paper. Yet it is important to mention that no one single paradigm exists as a mere category. Rather paradigms are seen as a way to approach a research.

The oldest of all paradigms is positivism; a paradigm that belongs basically in the natural sciences and is about 'objective' research, about facts that have a logic and are explained as such. "Social phenomena are things and ought to be studied as things" (Durkheim 1938:27, as cited by Neuman 1991:47). It favours precise measurements analysing the numbers derived from the measurements. That is why positivism is the approach most used by applied and quantitative researchers. "It [positivism] is best known for its linkage to the structural functional and exchange theory frameworks." (Neuman 1991:46) . This nature of positivism, the nature of objectiveness and precise measurement, together with the fact that it is based on precise observations, are two of the basic differences that positivism has with interpretivism. To better understand interpretivism, I will shortly demonstrate it in comparison to positivism.

When a positivist identifies the nature of an object, an interpretivist asks how this object is what it is, trying to understand the social constructions that shaped it. For positivists the reality is as it is, with facts and descriptions, but an interpretivist will ask for the reasons why and how this reality is as it is. Weber argued that the sociologists should study the "social action". Newman is arguing that it is an action to which people are giving meaning to things (Neuman 1991). Weber puts emphasis on Verstehen, or empathic understanding. The literal translation of it is "understanding/comprehending". Verstehen is related to the emic and is about an observer that attempts to understand what is there (a culture, a situation, a thing, and so on). Schlegel and Hewlett (2011) explain this "emic approach" "[A]s a discipline concerning human life" and it means that with Verstehen a researcher is "understanding the lived experience of others through detailed descriptions and analyses of what they say and do and how they themselves interpret their actions and their world." (Schlegel and Hewlett, 2011:282). In other words emic is when a researcher is studying within the same group the different individuals' behaviours and personalities.

The two diametrically different paradigms are not the only paradigms. The one supports the natural science of what is there, and the other is searching for the reasons why what is there actually exists. There is a third paradigm, already mentioned above, the critical view. This paradigm is not too far from the interpretive view, but it gives some additional criticism. According to the critical view the real world is covered by illusions, which it tries to uncover in order to make the lives of people better (Newman 1991).

Unlike interpretivism many critical theorists focus on the conflicts, those "inner conflicts" that show the real side of the social reality (Neuman 1991:56). It should be noticed here that there are also critical theorists denying the existence of a real world outside of our understandings. Neuman discusses about the "true nature of social reality" (ibid), because

Comment [MM7]: ?

people are misguided due to the "false consciousness" (Neuman 1991:58). People have to uncover the true reality of their lives, which is opposing to the interpretivist point of view which is talking about a unique reality for every individual without judging whether is real or not. Critical viewers support that whatever the reality for every individual, it is not a reality chosen fully conditioned by themselves, and that is why they have to try to uncover the whole truth so that they can make their life better. In principle, a critical view researcher has a starting point of reference, namely, that could be a feminist point of view, or Marxist, and so on. However, there can also be the case that a critical view researcher denies the existence of a value free analysis, like interpretivists do, which makes it understandable that these categories should not be essentialised, since there are not solid distinctions between them.

This study is based on the interpretivist paradigm, for the reason that through this paper I am not looking to give any answers to what is there, nor to judge if what is there is real or not. Rather, I try to explore how people involved in a computer-mediated tourism site, that all information is open to be seen, judged and reviewed, perceive and constitute the authentic experience, i.e. I try to "understand and describe meaningful social action" (Neuman 1991:63, Table 3.14). On the same research Neuman further said that the purpose of the research is on understanding the social meanings of an action and how "individuals experience their everyday life", because each one has a personal "sense of reality" (ibid).

3.2   Research inquiry

The research used for this paper is an exploratory qualitative research, using a case study method: *Dopios*. I have conducted semi-structured interviews, with the *Dopios* members and two of the co-founders, to collect "emic" data. I have collected "etic" data, as well, by exploring the web for information on the *Dopios* platform and on other platforms of the same kind. Content analysis was used for the webpages of *Dopios* (www.*Dopios*.com) and the other websites (Spottedbylocals – www.spottedbylocals.com, ATA – www.atathens.com, Globalgreeternetwork – www.globalgreetersnetwork.com, RentaLocalFriend – www.rentalocalfriend.com, and Toursbylocals – www.toursbylocals.com). Content analysis was also used for additional information collected from a Google-search.

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4 See Appendix

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This chapter will outline the methodology, the methods, the case study, the data collection and analysis, and the limitations of the research. The methodology is the guiding tool and principle. With methodology data can be collected and analysed (Jennings 2001).

The objectives of this study as mentioned in Chapter 1 are:

- Explore literature and understand how 'authenticity' is conceptualized, deployed and experienced.
- Explore through interviews and internet content analysis what kind of authentic experiences are being promoted by the members of *Dopios*.
- How are everyday life moments and experiences being used for tourism reasons?

Qualitative research was chosen over quantitative because as one can derive from the objectives just mentioned, numbers are not part of the goals. With this research I aim to understand and explore *why* and *how* questions, instead of *how much*. With a qualitative research there is the opportunity to understand behaviours, interests and values better. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2,5):

> [...] qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter [...] researchers attempt[ing] to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.
> [...] qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story [...]
>
> (Denzin and Lincoln. 1994:2,5)

3.3   Research method

3.3.1 Case study

The method used for the needs of this research is a case study. Yin (1994) finds a case study suitable, amongst others, for thesis and dissertations in social sciences. He explains by citing Stoecker (1991, in Yin 1994:13) that "a case study is not either a data collection tactic or merely a design feature alone, but a comprehensive research strategy." In order to understand a phenomenon better, case study is a very useful tool. Furthermore Abercrombie et al(2000) defines case study as :

Comment [MM10]: Very vague

"The detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena, a case study cannot provide reliable information about the broader class, but it may be useful in the preliminary stages of an investigation since it provides hypotheses, which may be tested systematically with a larger number of cases."

(Abercrombie et al., 2000:41)

He adds that due to lack of information resources or difficulties in finding "research subject", researchers choose to use case study. Many also use more than one. With a case study a researcher aims to comprehend the case and its natural setting profoundly (Punch, 2005). The reason to choose a case study approach is that even if generalization is difficult to be accomplished, it is a way to get rich and in detail data, that otherwise it would be difficult. There are many who doubt the validity of a case study in terms of generalization because they claim that from only one example you cannot draw general conclusions and theories. In the case that generalizability is an aim, then the case study should be properly examined and explored, at a "sufficient level of abstraction"(Punch, 2005:147)

Nonetheless, usually a case study doesn't have as a goal, the generalization, but the better understanding of the case, in all of its aspects; both its intricacy and wholeness. Besides, like Denzin (1983) has argued, generalization should not be a goal always, regardless the method or strategy. Case study, if conducted properly, can definitely be a start for further research.

The reason for choosing this case study is, first of all, the fact that it is a CMT platform. The promotional actions (website, media and online videos) that are focusing on the authenticity of the experiences they provide. In order to understand what is this authenticity and the "real authentic experience" they promote, I did the following: I went through all pages of the website and quoted everything that was referring to authenticity, local people and everyday life. The reason I chose mainly these keywords is because in their manifesto they connect authentic experience with the experience of the everyday life of the locals. In addition, I used the "reviews" and the "online platform" as keywords in order to understand how these platforms work. Following the same procedure I had an overview of what there is online about the platform. In addition, I went through the websites of other similar platforms, firstly to explore what is authenticity for them and whether local people are of the same importance like in *Dopios*. I was looking for similarities and differences with *Dopios* in order to understand better how is authenticity perceived by such initiatives and where *Dopios* is in the tourism spectrum of such online platforms that promote the local participation and the authentic experience.

3.4   Data collection

The data has been collected in two ways. Firstly, the interviews of the *Dopios* co-founders and the *Dopios* members and secondly an online overview of other similar online platforms that aim as locals to show to tourist real side of their place, through authentic experiences. In this chapter I demonstrate the methods I used to collect the data.

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

I used semi-structured interviews, or what Patton (1987) mentioned as the "interview guide". According to Finn et al(2000) a semi-structured interview has a structured framework but allows also unplanned questions to be made. They have more "latitude" than the structured interviews (ibid:73). I chose to do interviews because they are the basic method to collect qualitative data. The qualitative data I will collect will help me understand the individuals' insight of their reality and how they constructed it (Clark et al. 1998). Even though by collecting the data through open-ended questionnaires would provide me with a numerous of data, yet the reliability of the data would be questioned. Having a more direct communication with the interviewee made it easier to encourage them to express themselves, to answer to unclear statements they might have found, or answer to possible questions they might have had (Veal, 1997). For example, one of the interviews was conducted via *facebook chat*.

Traditionally, the interviews are being made mostly via a face–to-face communication between the interviewer and the interviewee. In the case of this study this was not impossible, therefore the interviews were carried out through Skype video calls.

The language of the questionnaires for the co-founders and the Greek locals-members was in Greek and for the two *Dopios* members of San Francisco was in English.

Specifically for the conducted interviews, the data collected are coming from interviews from the members of *Dopios*. There were 8 interviews conducted, 6 in Greek, for the members from Athens, and 2 in English, for the members from San Francisco. The reason why I did not do all in English, is because it is very difficult for people talking the same language to communicate in a foreign one. Furthermore, when I asked them which language they prefer to be interviewed, they would rather be interviewed in Greek, in order to understand better and express themselves in a more accurate way. The interviews were recorded, some with Vodeburner, an application for recording Skype calls, and other with voice recorder. After I finished with interviewing I transcribed all interviews. The interviews in English remained as such, but the

interviews in Greek were translated into English, trying to keep the most objective approach possible, to avoid misinterpretation.

3.4.2 Literature Review

The secondary data collection was done in order to gather information about all the concepts derived from the case study. The aim was to understand and explore them, to understand their significance in order to go in depth with the case study. Comprehending the core debates is necessary in order to create a view of what is being argued on a specific concept, and this helps to create a personal opinion on a concept. Bless et al (2006) has given seven reasons why literature review is important.

- To sharpen and deepen the theoretical framework of the research
- To familiarize the researcher with the latest developments of a research
- To identify gaps in knowledge, as well as weaknesses in previous studies
- To discover connections, contradictions or other relations between different research results by comparing various investigations
- To identify variables that must be considered in the research
- To study the definitions used in previous works as well as characteristics of the populations investigated, with the aim of adopting them for the new research
- To study the advantages and disadvantages of the research methods used by others, in order to adopt or improve on them in one's own research.

<div align="right">(Bless et al., 2006:24-25)</div>

These seven reasons summarize the importance of the literature review and make clear its significance to the research.

3.4.3 Content Analysis

In order to support the findings from the interviews and the literature review, and to make clearer the general tension of this specific kind of tourism, I made an internet content analysis of the platform of the case study, as well as of other websites. Elo and Kyngäs, citing Cole define as content analysis the "method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages" (Cole 1988, in Elo and Kyngäs, 2008:107). While doing content analysis of the webpages, I had as a guideline the codes firstly created from the interview

Comment [MM12]: And through close textual readings of websites, right?
And did you also consult newspaper articles or anything else like that discussing Dopios or other CMT sites?

I think the problem here is that there is some lack of clarity regarding what you DID (how and what kind of data you collected) and how you ANALYSED your data

questions and the literature review, and by the answers of the interviewees (deductive and inductive codes)[5]. I incorporated the findings from the internet in the codes and tried to make the codes more specific, looking for concepts that could be derived from all the data. Discourse analysis is not the main method for this research, put it is a collateral method for more accurate data. The fact that I chose to incorporate the findings from the internet research into the codes is because most of the findings were copied from the websites. Only very few had new information, like an interview of one of the co-founders of *Dopios* to a greek online newspaper (flowmagazine.com).

<div style="float:right; border:1px solid #999; padding:6px; width:40%;">

Comment [MM13]: Can you explain? What is the difference between content analysis and discourse analysis?

Is studying how people create and understand 'authenticity' a matter of content analysis or discourse analysis?
</div>

3.5   Data analysis

Following in this paper will be an analysis of the data collected. Via coding I tried to find the core subjects and discuss them. By analysing how *Dopios* is presented online, I did shortly an analysis of the selected platforms, just presented. In this way I aimed to see what similarities and differences *Dopios* has with them and in what way this, the local authenticity or the genuine parts of a place shown by locals, could be a new kind of tourism or not.

<div style="float:right; border:1px solid #999; padding:6px; width:40%;">

Comment [MM14]: Can you be more specific?

Comment [MM15]: unclear

Comment [MM16]: confusion, I think, between examining how 'authenticity' is constructed and understood versus examining actual authentic experiences (already determined to be 'authentic')
</div>

The research questions have a qualitative value and that is why I used qualitative research as the tool to answer them. Firstly, I gathered the data through the interviews, the literature review, the *Dopios* website, as well as websites of other similar initiatives.

I continued with conducting the interviews, transcribing them and putting the findings under the codes. In the meantime, I was looking for concepts that might occur from the interviews. So I created a few more codes. Reading several times what I had, helped me narrow the codes into more specific ones that were helping me to answer the research questions (see Chapter 1.4).

In order to analyse the data, I used the coding method, of the grounded theory. This method helps to identify common core concepts, which makes it easier and clearer for the researcher to build the theory. Lewins and Silver (in Boeije, 2010) define " qualitative coding" as the

<div style="float:right; border:1px solid #999; padding:6px; width:40%;">

Comment [MM17]: explain
</div>

> [...] process by which segments of data are identified as relating to, or being an example of, a more general idea, instance, theme or category. Segments of data from across the whole dataset are placed together in order to be retrieved together at a later stage.

---

[5] Further analysing of the coding on Chapter 3.5

(Lewins and Silver 2007:81)

The initial goal was to find the core categories based on the research questions, a preview of the *Dopios* website and the literature review. I wanted to gather together all the information about these keywords/concepts, and then find deeper meaning within them for more specific concepts. Starting with the literature review and what I wanted to know from the case study, I created some first codes, which are the categories that a research data has been divided into. These first codes were created in advance, before I collected any data secondary data. From the literature review and the questions of the interviews I had the following codes:

- What is authentic experience?
- What is inauthentic experience?
- Expectations when going on trip
- Copy-paste experience
- Reviews

Boeije (2010) suggests to " segment and reassemble" the data with the aim of making them "findings", focusing on the problem statement. Strauss and Corbin (2007, in Boeije 2010) distinguish three kinds of codes. Namely they are: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. At the level of open coding the researcher is "breaking down, examining, comparing conceptualizing and categorizing data" (Strauss and Corbin, 2007:61). At the level of axial coding the researcher puts "back together the data in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (ibid). At the last level, the selective coding, the researcher is "looking for connections between the categories in order to make sense of what is happening in the field" (ibid).

The next step for the data was the inductive coding. I created codes that put the data gained through the interviews and the discourse analysis of the internet in confrontation to the concepts developed in the conceptual framework. This procedure had the following results:

- Personal experience
- Everyday life
- Reviews create trust
- Stereotypes
- Something different

These were the core concepts found repeatedly on the data I gathered. In order to give meaning to my data and from data to turn them into findings I started putting text under

codes. Having all the relevant text under the codes and going through them several times I "translated" the data into the following concepts:

- How locals see it
- Locals Vs Inauthentic stereotypes
- Connecting the locals
- Authenticating everyday life
- Trustworthiness of platforms

To deal properly with the findings, I had as a point of reference the research objectives and research questions (Chapters 1.3 and 1.4) and the conceptual framework (Chapter 2). Veal (2006) argues that:

> "the essence of any analysis procedure must be to return to the themes of reference, the conceptual framework, and the research questions […] of the research […]. The information gathered should be sorted through and evaluated in relation to the concepts identified in the conceptual framework, the research questions posed, […]. Ideas are refined and revised in the light of information gathered, […]
>
> (Veal, 2006:210)

3.6   The role of the researcher - myself

As I have mentioned in the paradigm section (Chapter 3.1), without being an absolute fact for all researches, a research has a basic orientation that guides it. The researcher is the one who owns it and executes the research. With or without paradigm orientation, it is a common fact that by the time a human is conducting a research it is by default that it cannot be absolutely objective, since a subject, the researcher, is doing it. As a human being, the researcher has a personal history, background, education, upbringing, personality and other influences affecting his or her life and therefore, his or her choices. Swain made it very clear that "all of what I am affects the problems I see and the power dynamics I experience as a researcher" (Swain, 2004:102, in Ren et al., 2010:900). With this phrase she summarized what I have been listening during my studies, that we are not value-free, that is why we always have to explain why we argue about something. A researcher is basically a series of choices made by the researcher. Whatever looks more appropriate to be chosen for the better of the research.

Comment [MM21]: ?

That is why I would like to make clear my position as a researcher. First of all, I have to admit that from the beginning I tried to be as unbiased possible from my personal tension to be critical to ideas that look "too good to be true". Even though I am an open-minded person, ready to see everything and learn from anything, I found myself arguing that "there is no such thing called authenticity", before even questioning "what is perceived as authentic?". Being Greek and having experienced working in a touristic restaurant and being forced to say "Opa" with breaking plates for no reason, or dancing Sirtaki out of the blue, I knew that this is no authentic at all. Nor is authentic the Acropolis and the Parthenon. They are historical monuments made by Greek more than 2000 years ago, but this is not the case of today, of Greece with the financial crisis and the IMF, or Troika.

Then I started looking carefully at the *Dopios* initiative. I got excited in the beginning with such an exceptional initiative, looking at it as a kind of altruistic kind of tourism, opposing to the crisis. Later on, while I was going through the website I realized that "opposing to the crisis" was almost a minimal factor. Rather it looked like a business like all the rest, looking for profit. I felt a bit disappointed, but at the same time motivated to see what is behind it. The answers came with the interviews. And this is because, the website was made by the four co-founders and their IT team. So they were trying to attract people to become members, or customers (or both). What would have given me the real view was the people constituting the platform, namely the members. They inspired me for seeing what is behind this initiative. Who are being supported and what are they showing? I started looking at their *Dopios* profiles, for the Athenians, to see what they offer and what I saw made me really happy. It was how we live in our everyday life. In the beginning I did not label it as authentic or not, but it was what I had been arguing with many Greeks in the Netherlands, that Greece and its people are not Socrates and Plato, nor Acropolis or the Minoan culture. This were Greek, but have nothing to do with us anymore, nothing of our culture, nor of our habits.

I will write more about this here, but in the Data Analysis Chapter where I will explain how what the interviewees said is connected to the theories. The only thing I would like to mention at this point is that this kind of tourism that is showing more of the locality of a place, instead of the busy and common touristic places is an upcoming kind and more such initiatives are being born. Trying to be as object as possible and leave out my personal opinion, in the following chapters I will try to explore and demonstrate how the authentic tourist experience is being seen and perceived.

Comment [MM22]: I think you could have considered this a FINDING of your study.

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This chapter will demonstrate and discuss the results collected from the interviews and the internet content research. Both *Dopios* and five platforms promoting travelling with the guidance of locals, have been analysed. The following chapters give more details on the findings and the analysis of them. The first chapter focuses on how authenticity is perceived by the locals and how they see their place. The second focuses on the authentic experience as a personalized unique experience. The third chapter is about the authentic experience by a representative reality, and finally, the last chapter is a concluding chapter on authenticating everyday life.

Before proceeding to the results, the Research Objectives and Research Questions will be demonstrated:

Research Objectives

- Explore through literature and understand how 'authenticity' is conceptualized, deployed and experienced
- Explore through interviews and internet content analysis what kind of authentic experiences are being promoted by the members of *Dopios*
- How are everyday life moments and experiences being used for tourism reasons?

Research Questions

- What is considered to be authentic tourist experience for the members of *Dopios* and of other platforms of the same philosophy?
- How are the stereotypical authentic experiences being perceived by the tourism the people participating in such platforms, like the *Dopios*?

> **Comment [MM23]:** Interesting choice of words

- What is 'real life' and its position to what is perceived as "really authentic"?
- How is CMT an added value to the objective evaluation of how can one's experience be authentic or inauthentic?

> **Comment [MM24]:** Not really very clear

4.1   Contribution of CMT

Previously in this paper the benefits of the use of internet in tourism were shown; de-intermediation and re-intermediation, more trustworthy information because of the transparency of information and more direct communication regarding market-demand.

4.1.1 Trustworthiness of platforms

As has been already discussed in the Conceptual Framework, internet has brought many changes into people's life generally, and in tourism specifically. The entrance of internet has helped the travellers, as consumers, to interact with the tourism benefactors directly. This has given them the possibility to see wherever they are, whenever they want 'what is new' and please their desires (Gursoy and McCleary, 2004; Mills and Law, 2004: in Garín-Muñoz and Pérez-Amaral, 2011).

In order to proceed with a purchase the customer needs to feel safe of his purchase. This means that the tourism providers should make their possible future customers feel safe, which means that the trustworthiness of the online environment will be increased (Bauernfeind and Zins, 2006; Chen, 2006: in Garín-Muñoz and Pérez-Amaral, 2011).

> *All this {about the relationship between the interested locals and the travellers} are based on mutual trust between the users, but also to some other tools that are offering higher security.*
>
> *Dopios* website

Trust is a key component of success in such an online market (Corritore et al., 2003; Flavián, Guinalíu & Gurrea, 2006; Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa, 2004: in Casaló, 2011). "Trust, together with customer satisfaction and commitment are the central success variables in relationship marketing" (Fam et al., 2004:198).

This is based on the WOM model mentioned in Chapter 2.4. Tourism services, like all services are immaterial products and cannot be easily characterized, therefore, consumers tend to count on WOM, from someone's experience in order to minimize the risk and the uncertainty (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Murray, 1991; Olshavsky & Granbois, 1979: in Gretzel and Yoo, 2008). That is the consumer reviews and ratings, which are the most reachable and predominant form of electronic WOM (Chatterjee, 2001: in Gretzel and Yoo, 2008). A concept like authenticity that is so subjective and with dynamic, is not easily described nor explained.

From the platforms explored in this paper, only *Dopios* is making a reference on the importance of the trustworthiness. For this, they have the possibility of 'reviews'. Specifically they say:

At Dopios there is a credibility score which is calculated with many different variables: how many people you have serviced, how many good comments you have received, if you have linked your Dopios profile with your rest social networks, like facebook, twitter and LinkedIn. Likewise, similar tools will be securing the protection of the locals."
Dopios website

They have the 'reviews' possibility to make the website trustworthy, but also because each *Dopios*-member separately has to be reliable, either as a person or for the experience she is offering. Besides, travellers are using the reviews to be guided in buying a product (Guernsey 2000: in Arsal et al., 2010). Reviews are what several researchers have identified as the possibility for travellers to make comments on tourism products or services they have had experience on, namely these comments are the online reviews that inform and have power on the decision-making of possible future consumers (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Lu & Stepchenkova, 2012; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010: in Sparks et al., 2013).

Internet is used for tourism reasons, like advertising, selling touristic products, or just demonstrating places. Regarding such use of internet in tourism and in reference to the trustworthiness in *Dopios* website is mentioned:

There is transparency and a high competition, which means that the consumer can judge better what he or she likes and what is more beneficial.
It gives security and easiness.
Things have become easier with it. Also in terms of prices. More competitiveness. Internet helps you to see what is there.

Shanker (2008) was clear when saying that "networking and information sharing definitely leads to demands for greater openness and transparency" (Shanker, 2008:abstract).

During the interview with the CEO and one of the co-founders, he was saying often that the 'reviews' option will be further developed for the better safeguard of both the local and the tourist. More specifically he said:

"We want the reviews, especially from people that are doing it seriously. People that you can see and know who said what. Especially reviews for the experience. Reviews keep a good level for quality and reputation. We ask from our members to ask for reviews, but it

still needs collaboration on the system of the reviews, because it was available a bit late. But we want them. They raise the trust of the clients towards the website and the facilities become better."

According to Law et al. (2004), internet offer the tourism suppliers with an understanding of their customers' needs and demands and this leads to a better customization of their products (Law et al., 2004). A *Dopios* member said:

"It is very useful to me, to make the experience better and more likeable."

Talking about this new kind of tourism with purchases online, *Dopios* co-founder and CEO mentioned:

"The online-offline relationships. There is greater transparency. The host cannot lie anymore, nor sell something that actually doesn't exist, or is different from what he/she offers."

This transparency was seen from another scope by a *Dopios* member; from the fact that logically trust of one customer could lead to trust from others.

"First of all it is about trust for the future customers. When someone sees no review and then someone with many, most probable that he chooses the one with the many reviews. It also depends from what they are looking for."
Dopios member

A member of *Dopios*, when she was asked about what is authentic, she said "consistency", referring to what people say and do. She says:

"Someone to be authentic he has to do what he says: word-act coordination. Many people can claim that they are, but they are not. Generally either you are authentic or you are not."

Consistency for her is about being true. A person is authentic if she is true and sincere. One cannot claim to be Greek or Athenian and show something that it is not, because it is popular to most people. Like in many Greek restaurants that address tourists, people from the personnel usually start breaking plates, a habit Greeks used to have in the 60s and that in the 80s was forbidden by law due to massive injuries; or start yelling "Opa" and dance Sirtaki, like Alexis Zorbas did at the movie "Zorba the Greek". This latter practice might be seen by Greeks very rarely, if ever nowadays.

In the *Dopios* website the founders mention about reviews and the transparency of a website, and even more about the transparency of a dynamic platform having reviews:

"Finally, 'accuracy' is one of the dimensions a visitor rates the local after the experience, and as more reviews start coming in, a new visitor can get reassured about the experience he is booking. Soon more features around accuracy and trust will be added in order to secure much more credible information."

"[…] and approves {the tourist} the user depending on the reviews and on the number of "stars" he has from previous clients."

Indeed, the entry of internet in tourism brought many changes in the tourism field. Namely these are: different barriers to entry, less switching costs, "revolutionised distribution channels, facilitated price transparency" and rivalry, and parallel to these it is the enhanced production efficiency (Kim, Nam and Stimpert, 2004: in Buhalis and Zoge, 2007:482).

Reviews are one of the ways for providing visitors with trustworthy information. People that are visiting the website and the specific member, they can see the reviews and the given grade for the experiences. Apart from this, internet also provides the possibility for people using it to explore all their options and judge which one is the best for them. Internet opens the doors to "a choice of dreams, boundless planning, detailed and updated information, tools for planning, social networks, reservations from the sofa with help of e-booking" (Cvelić, 2013:10). In the context of this study and the authentic experiences, not only they can see what members of one platform suggest, but also they can compare it with other platforms. Additionally, they can also check online for forums, blogs or other e-discussions, webpages and so on. This transparency of information gives them the possibility to judge what is true or not, what is more generally accepted, or what fits them best. ...

This kind of tourism is beneficial for the tourists since they can judge whether the product or the service is worth it and due to the competitiveness the offers are better. They can judge because they have the possibility to the information. Tourists are obtaining the needed information to plan their trip using technology. "Information is the key element in the tourism industry" (Shanker, 2008:51).

"I am looking for something special. That's why I have collected information in advance."
Dopios member

> **Comment [MM25]:** I'm finding some of this difficult to follow. (I'm losing focus).

"It's like a necessary evil. I remember when I was travelling without the use of internet, my trip was more personal, but at the same time I didn't have so much information. Now we can plan our trip with every tiny detail and be prepared for everything."

Dopios member, about this new kind of tourism

Neither in the interviews conducted for this research, nor on the webpages of the platforms is mentioned the fact that with the use of internet for purchasing products, or services, one big step of the conventional procedure without the use of internet is skipped: the intermediaries. The customers, or else the travellers, are having a direct communication with the suppliers of these products, or services. They choose the 'when' and 'where' (Olmeda and Sheldon, 2001: in Law, Leung and Wong, 2004). This has been further described on the conceptual framework of Chapter 2.4.

4.1.2 Connecting the local and the tourist

All these platforms promoting the authenticity of the local person, they are providing both tourist and locals with connectivity. This is the difference to what a mere guiding book offers, or a simple website; the possibility for interaction and an online-offline communication. This communication is essential in order to know the explicit personality of each tourist. It is important for a tourist to find a local person in order to have this local authenticity mentioned above.

"Our goal is to create that platform which connects the two parties, the visitor who is looking for a better and more authentic travel experience, and the local who has the knowledge about his city and can show you its true colours!"

Dopios site

"In addition they try to be aid for the development of the communication relationships and the interaction between the visitors (natives or foreigners), the permanent inhabitants and the natural space, as well as the promotion of young talented people, ideas, entrepreneurships and proposals."

flowmagazine.com for ATA-Alternative Tours of Athens

"We link these two customer groups through ToursByLocals.com."

"ToursByLocals connects travellers with local tour guides who are keen to share their knowledge, experience and expertise."

ToursByLocals website

The connectivity appears to be a very important aspect of travelling. As a part of the authentic experience, connecting these two parts is vital. Bringing closer the two tourism poles, tourists and hosts, is of great significance for these platforms. Claiming that usually the tourist who participates in fixed tours with tour guides or a group of other tourist, in an all-inclusive travel, most of these platforms insist on this new way of travelling together with the locals themselves. Either with their advices, but most of the times together with them, taking the role of the tour guide in an alternative way of touring.

The traditional tour guide is part of the mass tourism, which is by far different of what existential authenticity is all about. Steiner and Reisinger (2006) clearly say that "tourists being authentic would be uninterested in a tour guide's explanation. Tourists being authentic might frequent websites and promotional literature to see what's available, but they would not welcome opinions about quality or value" (Steiner and Reisinger, 2006:307).

Comment [MM28]: clarify

Comment [MM29]: significance of quote?

The connection between these two parties is partially for the communication of both sides for the arrangements, but it is also in order to help them have further interaction. With a deeper interaction there can be an exchange with the tourists receiving authentic and direct information of the visited culture.

"Through this we want to connect locals with tourists and help them develop an interactive communication."
Dopios website

The reason lays on the fact that tourists can have an authentic experience, but as clients, they can choose the experience. The choices are meant in terms of taste or desire or need.

" Dopios is a platform that empowers individuals to connect with others that match their travel style for a unique and personalized travel experience,"
Dopios co-founder and CEO, in flowmagazine.com

Therefore, they already connect before they meet, online. The goal of *Dopios*, is also to transfer this connection after the arrival so that both tourist and local will meet and spend time together.

"We wanted an online-offline relationship, not just online. "
Dopios website

They similitude this offline communication, like having a friend that is taking you around the place. They offer such an authentic and generous experience, like the one that would have given to a friend. They want to create a kind of bond, so that the tourist will not feel like a tourist, but rather like a visitor, or a friend meeting another friend.

"Our central idea is to encourage the locals to guide tourists around the city, like they would have done with a friend or family. Because a city has much more to give than just the monuments the guidebooks mention".
Dopios website

"Greeters are volunteers that love their city so much they volunteer to show their city to visitors. Not as a guide, but more like a newly met friend!"
Globalgreeternetwork

When such a relationship, between a tourist and a local is discussed, the issue of reliability is at stake. This was developed in chapter 4.1.1.

4.2   What kind of authentic experience?

Recently, increasingly we hear people saying they want to see the real part of the place they visit, instead of the touristic one. What does this mean? What is the difference? It has already been mentioned here that the platforms of this research are also distinguishing the experiences they promote from the stereotypical and touristic ones. In this chapter it will be shown and discussed the authenticity that is being promoted by the platforms either as opposite to the stereotypes that have been dominating tourism till now, and as an authentication of the local's everyday life.

4.2.1 Authentic locality Vs inauthentic stereotypes

This chapter shows how the stereotypes are perceived by the interviewees and the websites as an inauthentic experience, whereas the touristic experience a local offers is perceived as an authentic one. Kim and Jamal (2007) recognised that "a commodity-driven industry under

> **Comment [MM30]:** ?
>
> **Comment [MM31]:** I don't see how you can keep talking about authenticity as a real thing, like this... you've indicated that it is an individual and social construction, but you use it as if it is an objective quality that tourists either get or don't get.
>
> This is a significant problem.

laid with market capitalism produces a false touristic consciousness and is the epitome of modernity" (Kim and Jamal, 2007: 182).

As shown in the previous subsection, locals are supposed to provide tourists with authentic experiences. Within these authentic experiences they claim to transfer to tourists the "real side" of the visited place. They claim to be the right people to show this real image, how the place really is, as they are the ones that live the city from within, they walk the city's streets and they go to the shops, or the markets or cafeterias and so on. For example, in *Dopios* website:

Our goal is to create that platform which connects the two parties, the visitor who is looking for a better and more authentic travel experience, and the local who has the knowledge about his city and can show you its true colours!

Dopios's members differentiate themselves from the typical tour guides, which are characterized as "stereotypes". The stereotypes are seen as fake, or that they are not representative images of the real life of a place and, therefore, they are inauthentic. What *Dopios* members have said in the interviews, and from what there is on the website, is that the stereotypes are connected to this inauthenticity with the classical tour guides or the guidebooks. That is why *Dopios's* co-founder and CEO when asked about "What is an inauthentic experience?" he said: "a*n experience based on the stereotypes, which I believe are fake".* Adding to that in the *Dopios* website there is the following phrase:

Enough with the boring and copy-paste travels. Enough with the mediocre and rigid tour guide experiences. Enough with the inability to feel the true side of a location.

The well-aimed reference by Lau (2010) on the Steiner and Reisinger (2006) "Heideggerian concept of existential authenticity" explains in theory the previous quote. Specifically, he wrote:

> If they project a my-self, their authentic self, then they will have unique possibilities . . . conformity [projecting the they-self] which Heidegger calls inauthenticity . . . they are not fully themselves . . . authenticity . . . is always about free choices'. Applied to tourism: 'Tourists being authentic would be uninterested in a tour guide's explanation . . . [would] desire to get off the beaten track . . . [would be] interested in self-discovery'.
>
> (Steiner and Reisinger, 2006, pp. 307, 312; in Lau, 2010: 497-498)

This is how they differentiate what they do and what they offer from what a tourist can find without them. Differentiating what they do with the stereotype being, according to them, fake

and boring. One of the co-founders gave his point of view on this: "*As I said with the inauthentic. It is about what everybody does and it has been promoted as such. What a whole economy has been based on. For example, when you want to have a trip with a bus and it makes a stop where it will get kickbacks from*".

In literature also stereotypes are seen as an experience that is not true. They are constructed images to attract tourists and to sell products and services. Local people want to show what they see and experience in their city. That is an authentic experience. The contrary is inauthentic, when people, either hosts or tourists try to fit in the stereotypes. It is a false experience (Steiner and Reisinger, 2010). Inauthentic are those tours that are created to include all tourists massively, therefore they were created in a way to be for everyone. So the massive is not authentic. This is because being an individual (as all humans are) means also an individual perception. Therefore mass is too general and not necessarily authentic for everyone. Existential authenticity is exactly about this. Authentic is a very personal matter and one identifies as authentic what resonates with one's Self. What could be considered according to McCannell's as "staged" and inauthentic, for Wang's categorization it could be authentic. Wang (1999) quoting Daniel (1996) explains about the re-enactment of rumba dance in Cuba, that once tourists feel like joining the rhythm this activity becomes authentic "due to its creative and cathartic nature" (Wang, 1999: 359).

From the data collected here, what one can easily see is that what is being promoted as an authentic experience is set against each ethnic stereotypes. Namely, this authentic experience is the everyday life of the locals. *Dopios* and the other platforms claim that the only truth of a place is what the locals live every day, where they go, shop, have fun and so on. Locals are beyond the historical monuments and the stereotypical places one can find easily with an online searching engine, like *Google* or *Yahoo!*. Each one of the locals with his own taste and personality, knows how and where to provoke all sensations.

> *"I want to show them things; those things that make all 5 senses be there and not only what they see."*
> *Dopios* member

Regarding authenticity within the platforms there were a few and minor differences. *Dopios* members had one common general view of what is inauthentic. Four out of seven interviewed members mentioned the actual word "stereotype" as the inauthentic experience, and all of them said that what the mass does is not authentic, referring to the "copy-paste" experience that is on the manifesto of the *Dopios* website.

Comment [MM33]: Where is the section where you discuss specifically how Dopios owners and members conceptualize 'authentic' and 'inauth'?

Comment [MM34]: Is the Eiffel Tower authentic?

Comment [MM35]: Repetitive and contradictory statements. Organisational problems.

Theory and literature not separated from data/findings.

Comment [MM36]: Good! (This should have come earlier)

4.2.2 How locals see it?

As we saw in Chapter 2.1, authenticity is a socially constructed concept and therefore it can be perceived differently, depending on the social influences individuals have. In this subsection we will see how new initiatives like *Dopios*, Spotters, ATA Greeters and rentalocalfriend.com have been promoting what is authenticity for them. These platforms have some differences within each one and between them. Regardless these differences, minor or not, they all share one common factor: the importance of the local in the real experience of the visited place:

> *"Authentic is to live what locals live."*
> *Dopios* co-founder answering to "What is an authentic experience?"

> *"With the view that only a local can have for his place."*
> *Dopios* website

> *"This website describes itself as 'a series of city-blogs for travellers who like to experience cities "the local way."*
> Spottedbylocals website

> *"We want to make the local as tourist and the tourist as a local Athenian."*
> Alternative Tours of Athens(ATA) website

> *"No one knows a city like the people who live there so who better to show you around than a local?"*
> Globalgreeternetwork website

> *"When seeing the city through the eyes of a local, travellers can escape tourist traps and live the local spirit in a relaxed and genuine way."*
> Rentalocalfriend website

> *"Our travellers want to do unique things, experience the reality of a place and see its culture through the eyes of a local person."*
> Toursbylocals website

As we see here, *Dopios* members perceive as authentic what they live and experience themselves in their lives. Their experiences in everyday life is what makes an experience authentic, not the experiences created for tourists. They also mention that the historical places and monuments are also authentic, but of a very different era. Nowadays, they are not representative, like a *Dopios* member mentioned on her interview.

They all identify the contribution of the local in the tourist experience. As mentioned previously in this paper, the pursuit of authenticity in tourism has been very important for

Comment [MM37]: Good! This finding should be much more prominent! It's central to the whole study.

Comment [MM38]: Very interesting (but see previous comment)

tourists, but it is not only for this. It is also the fact that locals have started to show what they want to show to tourists and not what has been touristic till now.

According to the platforms the authentic way is the local way. What locals do, or how they see their place and what experiences they have had are the authentic ones. A *Dopios* member in San Francisco, for the question "what is an authentic experience?" she said:

> *It is going where locals go. Shopping at the local markets. That is what I am trying to convey the same way with Dopios. To go shopping at local markets and eat local food.*

She mentioned activities, anyone would have done. Everyday activities of all people. *In addition, Dopios*, calling for members, mentions on the website:

> *Share your authentic point of view and offer unique moments to travellers, who choose to experience the city through your eyes!*
> *Show to the foreign travellers your place, through your eyes, your own authentic experiences. With the view that only a local can have for his place.*

<div style="border:1px solid #99f; background:#eef; padding:4px; display:inline-block;">

Comment [MM39]: I wonder, does authentic just mean 'personal'??

</div>

They also claim that "visitors crave the authenticity of a local experience and it is something that is missing most of the times from a trip." Bringing up again McGregor's (2000) argument on authenticity, that, indeed, people today, wherever they travel, are looking for the authentic experience of the everyday life of the locals. This, together with the experience of a friend, is why they decided to promote authenticity. About the experience of a friend they say on the website and one of the co-founders mentioned it during our interview:

> *"The cause for the creation of the platform was a trip of a friend that went to New Orleans and was looking for information and tips that would have helped her organize what she wanted to see instead of spending too much time on "tabs" and impersonal information",*
> *the co-founders say.*

These words could have been from any tourist going to a place without really knowing what would be the best things to do and to see. They include all the reasons of why such platforms are being created. One reason is because, in the guidebooks there is certain information, from people that most probably are not inhabitants of the area, as mentioned earlier in the paper. Therefore, they are calling for the most updated people who not only know where to go, but

also they can show to the tourist the place like no one else could. They know what is happening and where. In *Dopios* website, referring, to this they mention:

The idea is that going to a place you want to experience it as a local and the guidebooks are usually strict and "sterilized" without being close to real life of a place.

In this way they make clear how important is for the authentic experience the presence and the contribution of the local and his experience. More specifically, one of the four co-founders and the CEO of *Dopios*, mentions in an interview in a Greek online magazine:

"The experience in a foreign country becomes stronger and more authentic in comparison to a simple tour guide, since you experience them through the eyes of the inhabitants. Like this, instead of discovering the most beautiful place on your last day of your trip, you meet it already from the first!."

On the Rentalocalfriend facebook page, they say: "w*hen seeing the city through the eyes of a local, travellers can escape tourist traps and live the local spirit in a relaxed and genuine way."*

Already since 1984, Redfoot underlined the significance of the local contribution in the authentic experience as diverse from the typical touristic experience, saying:

"Travelling alone or at least apart from organized tour groups is a must. […] This traveller will likely learn at least a few words of the local language and will stay and eat in places that "only the locals know about."

(Redfoot, 1984:296)

It is generally accepted that what is authentic for a place is what is happening at that place in the everyday life of the inhabitants. For instance, Richards (2007) noted that, indeed, local identity is more authentic and this has been deeply rooted in the analysis and the practice of tourism. What Richards has noted is what we can see through all the websites. Namely:

Dopios: *Dopios is a travel community, full of passionate locals that want to show their place like they know them.*

Spottedbylocals*: Plus, since the locals are active residents of their cities, they're able to keep the guides' information current and provide updates nearly in real-time, so you can stay ahead of the Lonely Planet pack.*

Globalgreeternetwork: *Instead, they introduce visitors to their city by spending a few hours sharing their insider knowledge — their favourite hidden spots, how to navigate public transit, where to find the best bargains, etc.*

ATA: *A group of architects, photographers, artists, musicians, writers will give you their insight of the city.*

Rentalocalfriend: *Local Friends are journalists, photographers, chefs, designers...from all over the world, who like to receive foreign visitors and show them their favorite local spots in the city.*

Having as a starting point, the question of what is authentic for the tourist experience, we now see that for the platforms chosen here authenticity is connected to the eyes of the locals. What they see and live is what the tourists should experience in order to have the real view of the place. But since everyone experiences things and situations differently, how could it be identified what is authentic?

This is where existential authenticity has the answer for such a question. "One is true to oneself". For example, in situations like camping or picnic (that someone can do almost everywhere in the world) people think very little about the authenticity of the activity, but they rather, they are in exploration of their authentic selves through these activities (Wang, 1999).

4.2.3 Authenticating everyday life

Hitherto this chapter has demonstrated that locals are supporting themselves as some kind of guides for tourists offering them the real authentic experience; not historical guides, but rather "cultural" and social guides. For example:

> *"Authentic is to live what locals live. To become one with them. Of course to see also the historical and cultural part of the region, but authentic nowadays is the everyday life."*
> *Dopios* co-founder, answering to: "What is authentic experience for a tourist?"

All *Dopios* members share the same idea, that is basically why they decided to join the platform. They want to make tourists understand what a real local is. Apart from this, and connected to this, what they want for tourists is to share experiences. The tourists with *Dopios* can actually have the same experience as a local one. This experiences formed by *Dopios* member, is an authentic experience. An experience that the member has done or has

Comment [MM41]: Sounds like an overgeneralisation

Comment [MM42]: Not to earn money, say?

been doing regardless tourism and the *Dopios* platform. This extra experience is what can make their trip different.

> *"Because even if you take a photo from a historical or natural scenery, what will stay in memory is a story that you will have lived. That you will have entered the everyday life of the place you visited."*
> *Dopios* co-founder, answering to: "do you think authenticity is important for the tourist experience?"

With this phrase we can see the meaning of this kind of the experience; this memory of living like the local, of having an experience the local would have had with or without the presence of the tourist.

> *"Something different. Something that is not touristic. Authenticity is what happens every day. In everyday life people are their real self. In everyday life experiences and memories are being created."*
> *Dopios* member, answering the question "What is that you want to show as an authentic experience?"

These words by the *Dopios* member on a first glance contradict to Wang's theory (1999) that people in their everyday life live and experience a false life, that is why they are seeking for their real Self in their touristic experience. Yet, what *Dopios* has been trying to promote and show is that tourist are now coming to see not what was created for them as a fake experience, but what locals do normally on a Monday or Saturday and on any other day of the week.

The key phrases they are using are "as they see it", or "through their eyes", or "through their authentic experiences". First of all, this means that "they" belong to the same group, which in this case is *Dopios*. Following, this means that since all of them are different individuals, they have different points of view, and therefore, different views of what is authentic or not. All *Dopios* members for the question *"Do you think that this kind of authentic experience that you offer is commonly acceptable by more people than just you? -among other members -to other people you know is important for the tourist experience?"* answered homogeneously "Yes". It could be what a *Dopios* member said, that *"If you don't have the same philosophy you dont find any interest in Dopios."* or that since they are longing for clients they couldn't say the opposite because that would mean that the experience they offer might not be authentic enough. They are of the same philosophy but with different interests. Some like to experience local food, others local events and so on. Going through the personal profiles of the *Dopios* and the Spottedbylocals platforms most of the suggested experience were of the same kind. *Dopios* is offering experiences and Spottedbylocals is suggesting favourite,

Comment [MM43]: Hmmm…

I wonder if Filippa is taking for 'fact' the things that interviewees tell her.

When I see the highlighted statement, I have to ask… what locals do normally on a Monday? Like go to work, watch TV or a movie, read a book, cook dinner, clean the house, etc?

What Dopios people say is very interesting but where is the analysis?

alternative and authentic places. The reason for choosing these two platforms is random. They were chosen only because they both include pictures. A few of them are the following:

Dopios

Dopios: Sokratis Koutoumanos, Dinner with family

Dopios: Matta Koulouridi, Lunch or dinner at my place

Dopios: Manos Zacharakis, Walkthrough Plaka and Anafiotika (near Acropolis)

Dopios: Michalis Gkontas, Walktour near Acropolis (Thiseio, Plaka, …)

Dopios: Thanasis Giannopoulos, Hidden secrets around Acropolis

Dopios: Marianna Georgoulaki, Secret Athens

Spottedbylocals

Spottedbylocals: Marilena Salamanou: Omikron Bar (Smooth days and nights)

Spottedbylocals: Dimitris Hall: Tyflomyga – The quintessential "steki"

Spottedbylocals: Aggeliki Georgokosta: Taf – The Art Foundation (Arts and Café)

Spottedbylocals: Margarita Kalogeropoulou:To tsai – Tea time

In *Dopios* examples we see that the locals are offering experiences that even if they are from different people the experiences are of the same kind; for example, some of them offer a meal at a their house, instead of going out in a restaurant. The first two shown here are about local food and as the most authentic is the food cooked at home, at their houses. Eating homemade traditional meals at a locals house is one of the most real experiences a tourist can have. The other four experiences are about seeing historic parts like the Acropolis from a non-touristic perspective, the one that the locals have with their friends, or family. As it has mentioned in the interviews of *Dopios*, about the authentic experience, what is important is not only to see the non-touristic parts of the city, but also to see the touristic ones from another perspective. Like a *Dopios* member said for what is an authentic experience for tourists:

> *So together with the Austrians we went there we discussed a bit of the history, but not only that. There are parts in the historical centre or in the ancient monuments that most people don't know. We also went there.*

Additionally, the two in the middle, are about walks around a very touristic and historical place, Acropolis. These tours are particular, though. They are happening around that touristic area, so close to it and yet so different at the same time. Picturesque images of the centre of Athens, reminding a little bit of old traditional neighbourhoods next to the image of an ancient Greek style monument. These images are very different from one another, yet lying next to each other. Acropolis is a "must" for tourists, but the surroundings are known mostly to the locals, and it is a haunt for many of them. Similarly, the last two are showing hidden spots of Athens. They are hidden from the tourists and from some locals. The locals that offer these experiences are willing to show such places to people who want to see different sides of the city; places made by locals for non-touristic reasons.

On the other page there are the places in Athens suggested by Spotters. They are not the classical touristic cafes with the Greek flag and of bad quality ancient of Greek sculptures. On the contrary they are modern alternative places that the same Spotters like to go. They are places of modern Greece and not of a not-representing-the present kind of style. This evokes what a *Dopios* member mentioned during the interview:

> *" The ancient sightseeing don't create any sense of reality. Those even if Greek they are long far away from what it is to be Greek."*

These pictures of the Spotters show one thing: the locals decide what they consider and show as authentic – in this case authentic Athenian – and they offer it to the tourists. They have authenticated places, habits, places and activities of their everyday life to be authentic. From

the interviews and the internet information, as shown with the interviewees' quotes, earlier in this section, we can see this concept of authenticity.

"Whatever is part of everyday life."
A *Dopios* member answering what s authenticity for her

"One of the things I do with tourists is to teach them the transportation system."
Dopios member while answering to "what is the difference in the tourist experience you offer from the one the tourist might have had from a "copy -paste" one, namely from a mass tourism experience?

This *Dopios* member shows that exact thing. She finds as an authentic experience to make tourists familiar with the transportation system. Transportation is one of the things everyone is using and to know the system of a place is something that not only gives an authentic sense of the place, but also it brings in a way the tourist to a position equal to the one of a local. The tourist becomes a local.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research, like all researches, has some limitations regarding the validity, the reliability and the quality of the data. The major limitation of this study is the fact that *Dopios* has been newly-established. Because of this several other limitation are derived. Even though it has 98 members for Athens (83 by the time I finished doing the interviews) and 41 for San Francisco (SF), only very few of them are actually active. This is what one of the co-founders informed me when I asked for permission to contact the members for interviews. At the end I could only find 9 people, 7 from Athens and 2 from SF. The only way I could contact them is via the webpage as a personal message. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized but because of their homogeneity coming from the answers of the interviewees, they can be an indicator for future studies. The limited number of interviewees/active members did not allow me to choose members from different categories for a more holistic deepening. Adding to this, one of the interviewees claimed no other possible way to communicate, but only through facebook chat. Already by a first look her answers were much shorter and there were many misunderstandings that needed clarification. At the end she gave clear answers but not extensive ones.

Comment [MM46]: ok

Furthermore, none of the members I interviewed had more than 2 experiences with tourists, which made them somehow unfamiliar and inexperienced with the whole procedure of being a local for tourists. Another important limitation is the bilingual nature of the interviews. In order to have concrete codes I decided to translate the two English interviews I had, which undoubtedly led to some loss of data. The problematic with the translation is that the translator unavoidably interprets the text when translating, even if expert in literal translation.

A final limitation I came across with is time. Having only a couple of months to reach members and especially after the fact that *Dopios* is only now, while writing the analysis part is launching at two more cities in Greece and slowly becoming more known to people, constraints me from having more participants and therefore more valid results.

An essential aspect that would have given a more holistic image of the discussion of this research is the one concerning the tourists. This is first of all for a very basic reason. Since tourism is an industry, it concerns two sides, the one who produces and the one that consumes. Those who produce take into consideration what are the demands in the market (consumers) and adjust the product according to these demands. There is always the case that can happen the opposite, that the producers shape the consumer desire and behaviour. This relationship between producer, in this case are those who "offer" tourism, and the consumer, id est the tourists, is a bidirectional and interactive relationship. To understand the one, it is important to understand the other. The time constraint of this research did not allow me to see both sides. Considering it very important, it is suggested to be tested in the future.

6. FUTURE RESEARCH

Starting from the last point of the limitations I would suggest that the other side of the relationship "producer - consumer", should be explored. This study was focused on what kinf of authentic experiences are being produced by the suppliers of tourism. What about what consumers of it search for? It is important to understand not only how tourists perceive authenticity and the authentic tourism experience, but also to see how their perception of it shapes or not the tourism demand.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The third objective of this study was about "How are everyday life moments and experiences being used for tourism reasons". This objective is more of a concluding one of what has been written until this point.

What we have seen is that members of platforms like *Dopios* want to show as an authentic local experience their everyday life. Either they categorize it under specific themes, like *Dopios* does, or they suggest several experiences regardless any category. What is important for them, though, is that they want to show a part of their place that has nothing or little to do with what has been shown by tour guides, guidebooks and the general tourism notion till now. They make use of the internet as a way to market the experience. The reasons for this choice according to *Dopios* members are either because it is trustworthy for both sides, or because the information is all there and the customer/tourist can see all her options openly and ready to choose. Another reason for choosing a platform is that this is the future as most of them has claimed during the interviews. The point is that now locals start to play the role of a tour guide, choosing what they want to show to the visitors.

Being a tourist myself, a person who has worked for "touristic places" and someone who wants in the future to be part of the tourism industry, I have been in deep thinking of this kind of tourism market. Having seen how a touristic place works and being fully against it as it shows a twisted reality, I want the foreigners to see what my place is really about. I want them to see what I normally do on Saturday night and how my father really is, instead of continuing a notion of a My-big-fat-Greek-wedding 'Gus Portokalos' type.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Post-Fordist Production in Manufacturing (post 1970s) The Production Process	'Post-Fordism'/'flexibility' in Tourism (1990s–future)
Economies of scope	Economies of scale **and** scope
Small batch production of a variety of customized product types	Emergence of specialized operators, tailor-made holidays
Market niching	Market niching
Information technologies and robotics	System of information technologies (SIT) (CRS technology, teleconferencing, videotext, videobrochures, satellite printers, etc.), front and back office automation, Internet, World Wide Web.
No stocks, just-in-time inventories	Custom designed, flexible holidays
Production is demand driven	Tourists determine product type
Vertical disintegration, subcontracting of non-strategic functions	Horizontal integration, subcontracting (e.g., the hotel industry externalizes laundry operations or specialized kitchen activities)
Inter-firm strategic alliances	Adoption of regionally-based integrated computer information systems and strategic network alliances in the airline industry
Labor Practices	
Functional and numerical flexibility	Functionally flexible (skilled) year round employees flanked by peripheral numerically flexible unskilled workers
Employment security for core workers, no security for temporary workers	
The Consumption Process	
Individualized consumption	Independent tourists
Very experienced consumers	Experienced, independent, flexible (sun-plus) travelers
Greater volatility of consumer preferences	Fewer repeat visits
Increased preference for non-mass forms of production and consumption	Demand for 'green tourism' or other alternative forms (e.g. ecotourism)

Source: Coffey and Bailly, 1992; Harvey, 1989; Poon, 1993; Urry, 1995.

Appendix II
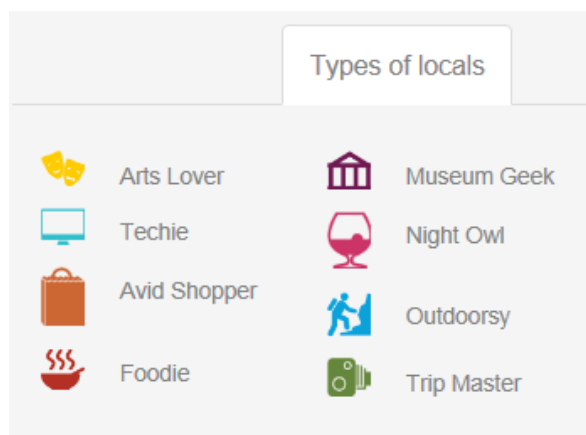
Appendix Ⅲ

How it works

Dopios is just three easy steps to an awesome experience during your trip

Find locals

Search our database of locals with experiences, and extras to find the unique package just for you. Each local brings their own expertise and personality to the table, whatever your travel style, we've got you covered.

Connect and decide

So you've narrowed it down to a couple options – it's time to reach out and find your best match. Contacting locals is free, just click on their profile and send a message – be clear about what you are looking for and make sure you are on the same page.

Experience a better trip

You're on your way! Next step: use Dopios to book your local experiences and any extra services you may need. Pack your bags, your grand adventure awaits!

Appendix IV

Home (cities)   Download   Blog   Book   About us

Spotted by Locals

Experience cities like a local

image by eva101

Spotted by Locals

City guides with insider tips
by locals in 51 cities

Appendix V

Appendix VI

The Global Greeter Network

Home | History | Destinations | Contact

Destinations
Core values
Join us
Search
Sitemap
Responsibilities
Members only

The Global Greeter Network

The Global Greeter Network is an informal association of Greeter programs around the world.

Greeters

Greeters are volunteers that love their city so much they volunteer to show their city to visitors. Not as a guide, but more like a newly met friend! Greeters will show special places that mean something in their lives. They would also show things visitors specifically ask for such as parks, shopping, architecture or a less wellknown neighborhood.
Greeters are no professional guides, that is why Greeters (for example) do not enter a museum with their guest(s), that is up to the professionals.

New members

The Global Greeter Network is proud to present the following cities have recently joined the network and are happily accepted as official members:

- **China:** Shanghai

- **Croatia:** Zagreb

- **France:** Nord

- **Republic of Serbia:** Novi Sad

Sustainability

Sustainability is a key word for the Greeter concept. During Greets the environmental values are well respected, as is the socio-cultural authenticity of each community. Showing visitors places of the beaten path supports socio-economic developments in each destination.

International news
Only recently Susan Boirches, founder of Houston Greeters and visiting India, was interviewd in newspaper The Hindu

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Appendix VII

Appendix VIII