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Perspectives on proximity tourism in Fryslân

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Chapter 3

Pluralizing touristic production and consumption roles of residents? An SME perspective on proximity tourism¹

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Chapter 3

Abstract

Production and consumption roles in tourism are often attributed exclusively to different stakeholders. However, when touristic consumption and production of 'home' and 'away' blur, stakeholder roles and relationships become entangled in circuits of 're-consumption', making exclusive role attributions problematic and restrictive. This qualitative study explored SME-resident relationships in the Dutch province of Friesland by scrutinizing how tourism SMEs attribute touristic production and consumption roles to residents of this province. Roles were attributed along four themes: 'Being a tourist', 'Discovery and unawareness', 'Life course experiences' and 'Ambassadorship'. Findings signify a potential 'lock-in' of roles: residents were seen as unattractive target group, given their everyday familiarity, but were simultaneously ascribed insufficient awareness of local attractiveness. Pluralized role attributions and interdependent role switching of both residents and entrepreneurs could overcome this impasse and facilitate 'proximity tourism'. Potential ways for tourism SMEs to incorporate multiple roles of residents into business strategies are discussed.

3.1 Introduction

While various studies on tourism stakeholder perceptions have taken on the perspective of tourism SMEs (Small and Medium sized Enterprises) and tourism entrepreneurs (e.g., Hallak, Brown, & Lindsay, 2012; Komppula, 2014; Saarinen & Tervo, 2006), few have focused particularly on their perceptions of the roles that residents may play within the process of producing and consuming tourism places and activities. This is surprising, given that tourism SMEs are not only attributed key roles in destination branding (Jeuring, 2016), they also are important intermediaries between visitors from outside a destination and residents living within these places, and arguably depend on residents for entrepreneurial success in various ways (Braun, Kavaratzis, & Zenker, 2013). Moreover, tourism business activities are shaping the boundaries and conditions for touristic consumption and production. Consequently, the question how “managers, investors, and entrepreneurs negotiate the cultural (con)text in which they make economic decisions” (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004, p. 299) not the least pertains to how tourism SMEs characterize their relationships with residents and to the ways residents are attributed various touristic roles within their everyday environment.

Based on the multiplicity of roles residents can play with respect to a place as tourist destination, interests behind and consequences of tourism practices can easily contradict or complement each other. This pertains in particular to residents as (potential) touristic consumers, participating in touristic activities within the region in which they live: their experiences of (un)familiarity and touristic otherness arguably differ from those of visitors from further away. Also, because residents can experience a city, region or country both as a tourist *and* as a resident, their consumption roles simultaneously depend on *and* inform production roles (Firat, Dholakia, & Venkatesh, 1995), for example in terms of Word-of-Mouth communication (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017). However, do tourism SMEs see residents as potential consumers? Do they strategically connect with residents as

producers of tourism products and services? And do tourism SMEs perceive various roles of residents and of themselves to be interdependent?

These questions pertain to an underlying interest in understanding the perceived value of 'proximity tourism' (Diaz-Soria, 2016; Diaz-Soria & Llurdés Coit, 2013; Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017). The idea of proximity tourism revolves around the notion that in a hypermobile world where everybody has become a tourist and every place a destination (Franklin & Crang, 2001), touristic experiences of engaging with the 'Other', negotiating between familiarity and unfamiliarity (Kastenholz, 2010; Szytniewski, Spierings, & van der Velde, 2016) and the general purpose of tourism are relative to each other, strongly embedded in everyday life and decoupled from travelling long physical distances (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017).

Proximity tourism hereby thus integrates ontologies of touristic experiences and representations (Elands & Lengkeek, 2012; Lengkeek, 2001; Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011) in a micro-level context (Canavan, 2013) in which the facilitating and restricting conditions are explored for consuming and producing the exotic of the everyday and the mundane of the exotic (Kaaristo & Rhoden, 2016). Importantly, such an approach also alludes to the need for tourism industries to move toward more sustainable (i.e., low-carbon) travel and transport approaches (Dubois, Peeters, Ceron, & Gössling, 2011), while at the same time having to grapple with institutionalized societal dynamics such as attitudes toward (Hibbert, Dickinson, Gössling, & Curtin, 2013) and spatio-temporal experiences of (Dickinson & Peeters, 2014; Larsen & Guiver, 2013) tourist travel.

This study builds on ideas rooted in a sociocultural approach to the construction of tourism destinations, which has gained considerable momentum among tourism scholars in the last decades (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2003b; Forsey & Low, 2014; Pearce, 2014; Pritchard, Morgan, & Ateljevic, 2011; Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011). Principally, the concept of 're-consumption' (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004) is used, along which "production

and consumption are seen as complements, feeding off each other in an endless cycle" (Ateljevic, 2000, p. 376), allowing to explore the dialectics of the 'third space' (Amoamo, 2011; Everett, 2012; Hall, 2005) in between the conventional dichotomies of touristic production and consumption, filled and enacted upon by residents in multiple ways. Doing so, the study builds on the contention that "[m]ultiple readings of local residents while working, living, playing, or, in other words, consuming and producing their localities through encounters with tourism should be explored and further revealed" (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004, p. 299).

In sum, understanding SME perspectives on their relationships with residents is valuable in order to get insight in the peculiar ways production and consumption roles are intertwined. Therefore, within the context of the Dutch province of Fryslân, a coastal region characterized as a rural tourism destination, this study employs a qualitative approach to explore how owners and employees of tourism SMEs perceive their relationships with residents of this province through the attribution of touristic production and consumption roles.

3.2 Theoretical background

3.2.1 Tourism SMEs

Touristic business activities are often characterized by small enterprises, employing a limited amount of people. Together however they can form an important part of the socio-economic structure of regions (Komppula, 2014). Moreover, given their small size, SMEs are flexible in how they employ their business and can therefore play an innovative role in the development of both local tourism industries and the livability of regions. At the same time, tourism entrepreneurs and employees of tourism SMEs often tend to balance the purpose of their activities between income and lifestyle goals (Carlisle, Kunc, Jones, & Tiffin, 2013; Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005). Hereby, their services and offerings to potential consumers are a result of pragmatic

choices, which might, but not necessarily always do, contribute to regional competitiveness and well-being of residents (Markantoni, Koster, & Strijker, 2014; Markantoni, Koster, Strijker, & Woolvin, 2013).

Carlisle et al. (2013) stress the importance of multi-stakeholder approaches in innovative tourism entrepreneurship in order to be economically viable. For example, collaboration with universities enhances the development and application of specific and localized knowledge. Akkerman et al. (2008) show how SMEs form communities of practice in which meaningful collaboration can enhance their competitiveness and, hereby, that of the region in which they operate. Similarly, cooperation with other SMEs and with local authorities in terms of marketing and promotion (Jeuring, 2016) is essential in order to construct 'umbrella' destination brands (Boisen, Terlouw, & van Gorp, 2011; Hankinson, 2010) that are –ideally– supported by the 'local community' and recognized by (potential) customers. Thus, healthy relationships with spatially proximate stakeholders are essential for tourism SMEs.

Few studies however have focused on how tourism SMEs and residents collaborate and how residents are perceived to contribute to how SMEs are "getting things done" (Jóhannesson, 2012, p. 192). Insight in such perceptions is important from both business and societal perspectives, as Hallak et al. (2012) found that business performance and support for the local community were positively affected by the level of place identity of tourism entrepreneurs. Similarly, when marketing the 'local', community embeddedness appeared a key factor for success (Coca-Stefaniak, Parker, & Rees, 2010). Cheong and Miller (2000) build on the political thinking of Foucault to understand stakeholder roles in tourism development and depict a tripartite system of brokers (i.e., SMEs), locals (i.e., residents) and tourists in which brokers and locals have the biggest influence on (regional) tourism development. By stressing the political nature of tourism stakeholder relationships, the need to understand how SME-resident relationships shape

tourism roles and construct spaces in which these roles can be performed by some and not by others becomes an even more important topic of research.

3.2.2 Touristic roles of residents

In depicting tourism as a performance, Edensor (2001) allows for understanding the interactions between stakeholders through various roles, adopted willingly or unwillingly. Many of such roles are continuously re-enacted, hereby contributing to the development of norms and values of touristic performances, navigating them into taken-for-granted assumptions about which actor plays which role, when this is appropriate and how a role should be played. Along this line, residents often are attributed roles that signify spatial immobility, to be passively observed by active, mobile visitors (Salazar, 2012). It follows that such a dichotomization of tourism roles strongly connects with the ways consumption and production of destinations are understood and attributed.

When zooming in on the various performances that constitute tourism production and consumption on an intraregional level, the potential roles of residents in tourism are much more dynamic and hybrid than just depicted. Emphasizing the importance of considering residents in place branding processes, Braun et al. (2013) argue that residents simultaneously play three roles. First, they are part of the place brand through the mere fact of their physical presence by living in a city or region, but also because their social interactions with each other and with visitors shape the (touristic) experience of places. Second, residents are attributed a role as place ambassadors, through what Kavaratzis (2004) calls 'tertiary communication'. By being considered as "informal, authentic and insider sources of information" (Braun et al., 2013, p. 21), residents can function as trustworthy communicators about places. Such a role builds on a felt sense of responsibility among residents for positive image and development of

their everyday environment (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017). This strongly connects with the third role: residents as citizens. Citizen roles pertain to the legal obligations and rights of residents such as voting, but also to being included in decision making processes about, for example, tourism development (Kavaratzis, 2012). Similarly, as citizens they can obstruct and protest against developments threatening their everyday life needs, for example when they experience tourism overcrowding. All of these roles however pertain also to the wider context of tourism consumption and production (Firat et al., 1995), where various intrapersonal interests come together, depending on which roles are relevant.

Clearly, different roles of residents influence each other and the way they are played out becomes even more complex when considering a fourth role: residents as tourists. Indeed, while being a consumer within one's region of residence is an evident part of being a resident, consuming through tourism entails a role that is considered less regularly, and which brings along some conceptual complexity. This is not entirely surprising, since the role of residents as tourists is slightly paradoxical from the (conventional) perspective where tourism is defined by traveling outside one's everyday environment. However, this paradox is rooted less in the behavioral inability of residents to engage in proximity tourism, than that it emerges from the social conventions of what it means to be a 'tourist'. This is neatly exemplified in research on domestic tourist experiences in Israel (Singh & Krakover, 2015a, 2015b), which highlights the ambiguity of attributing tourism labels along a dynamic interaction between perceptions of national identity, (un)familiarity and othering. They conclude that residents, "being aware of themselves as the producers of the culture that they visit, [...] are unable to acknowledge themselves as the consumers of the culture to which they belong" (Singh & Krakover, 2015a, p. 229). Thus, adopting the role of a tourist in one's familiar environment requires a conscious negotiation of self-identities and place identities in ways that overcome

'uncomfortable familiarity' and enable experiencing a sense of 'comfortable unfamiliarity' (Spierings & van der Velde, 2012).

As such, the study of Diaz-Soria (2016) on the participation and experiences of residents from Barcelona (Spain) in guided city walks, provides evidence of residents who intentionally adopt touristic roles in order to be able to re-value their familiar everyday environment. For these residents, a deliberate act of 'distancing' is self-oriented, to give way for new ways of knowing the places they inhabit, through tourism. Importantly, this both complicates and opens up the variety and interaction of resident roles within the production-consumption process of tourism. Such augmented understandings of resident roles thus imply stakeholder relationships to be multiple and overlapping, informing each other and embedded in a continuous process of consumption and production.

3.2.3 Re-consumption in tourism

The continuous, reinforcing and hybrid nature of tourism consumption and production has been acknowledged both as a theoretical implication of relational thinking and as a conceptual point of departure for tourism studies in a variety of contexts (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004). Various theoretical frameworks resonate such dynamic rationale. Salazar (2012) analyzes the perpetuation of tourism imaginaries, being re-created in order to maintain and reinforce an image of activities, places, regions or countries. Indeed, touristic ontologies do shape places (Hultman & Hall, 2012), reinforced by a tourism *mythomoteur* (Hollinshead, 2009), and touristic place meanings are closely interacting with everyday place meanings (J. Chen & Chen, 2016).

Similarly, the 'circuit of culture' (Du Gay, 1997) allows for a holistic study of culture through the circulation of cultural artifacts along and between 'positions' of production, consumption, regulation, representation and identity. It is from this framework that Ateljevic and Doorne arrive at the

notions of re-production and re-consumption (Ateljevic, 2000; Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004). In their analysis of lifestyle entrepreneurship they show how “producers themselves are consuming lifestyle, cultural context, or recreational activities in order to perform the act of production. Indeed, through the endless recycling of cultural circuits the act of production can be seen as an act of re-consumption and consumption as an act of re-production” (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004, p. 292). While this means that re-consumption and re-production are two interactive sides of the same coin (hereafter referred to as ‘re-consumption’), the circular character of this process also highlights how potential touristic roles of stakeholders are strongly interdependent and simultaneously can take different forms (Figure 3.1). As such, role imaginaries can be re-consumed through the relationships and encounters between tourism stakeholders, through performances that are socially constructed, “accepted by those who produce and consume it, socially sanctioned by institutions, customs, rules, ideals and values” (Ateljevic, 2000, p.376).

The political and power-laden nature of the re-consumption of roles is evident. As stated by Ateljevic and Doorne, “...‘producers’ and ‘consumers’ communicate and negotiate between each other in the economic, social, political, and cultural (con)texts they create, constitute, and re-consume, thereby constructing a particular realm of power-knowledge” (2004, p. 298). For example, with globalizing marketing discourses, externally oriented tourism policies and the reconfirmation of external visitors as key consumers, touristic consumption is often primarily attributed to external stakeholders, to visitors from outside (Jeuring, 2016). Such a hegemonic ideology (Avdikos, 2011) of touristic role distributions arguably limits the opportunities for residents to consume their own region as a tourist.

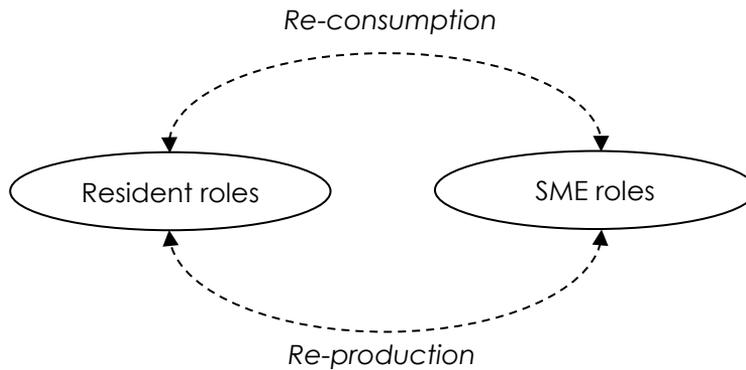


Figure 3.1 Relating resident and SME roles through re-production and re-consumption.

Forsey and Low (2014) emphasize the need to understand how tourism imaginaries are (to be) transformed (as opposed to being merely reconfirmed), in order to account for their normative implications. To that end, it is the opportunity to destabilize the taken-for-grantedness of tourism roles that makes the concept of re-consumption a valuable approach. So, using re-consumption as a theoretical lens permits a critical analysis of the ways tourism SMEs perceive their relationships with residents through the attribution of touristic roles.

3.3 Methodology

Interviews were conducted with owners and employees of profit-oriented tourism companies. Such qualitative methodology allows for an in-depth understanding of individual perspectives (Jennings, 2005), which aligns with the purpose of this study. The empirical focus was on Fryslân, a province in the north of The Netherlands. As such, during the interviews references to residents pertained to people living within this province. While at times participants talked about residents on other spatial levels (e.g. within a city), the initial framing provided a usable default level for discussing SME-resident

relationships that reflected an important construction of spatial identities (Betten, 2013).

Typically a rural tourism destination, people are attracted to Fryslân by its many freshwater lakes, the Wadden Islands and the small villages embedded in a forested or agricultural countryside. Watersports and cycling are popular tourist activities. The province is also famous for its Eleven Cities, including the provincial capital Leeuwarden. Jeuring (2016) and Jeuring and Haartsen (2017) provide a more extensive touristic profile of Fryslân.

Companies were selected to cover a variety of tourism businesses within the province, ranging from watersports and museums to guided tours and tourist information (Table 3.1). The central interest of this study was with the views of tourism SMEs whose main income comes from tourist activities and providing tourist information. As such, tourism accommodation providers (e.g., camping grounds and hotels) were not included in this study. SMEs were contacted via email or phone, explaining the context and purpose of the study. Whenever possible, it was aimed to interview people with a strategic function within the business. A total of twelve people were interviewed, with conversations lasting between 45 and 90 minutes.

The interviews were semi-structured, in order to make sure that a number of intended topics were addressed, but also allowing for a discussion of other issues that could come up during the conversations. The questions evolved around various topics expected to be of relevance from the perspective of tourism SMEs, and at the same time providing a context to discuss participants' ideas about their relations with and roles of residents. The interviews included questions about target groups for the tourism business, promotion and marketing, the local social embeddedness of the tourism company and questions triggering participants to think about their ascribed meanings of tourism.

Table 3.1 Participants' business types and job titles.

Participant	Type of business activity	Function type
1.	Watersports	Manager/owner
2.	Tourism marketing & information	Customer service employee
3.	Watersports	Manager/owner
4.	Museum & heritage	Manager/owner
5.	Watersports	Manager/owner
6.	Museum & heritage	Manager
7.	Museum & heritage	Manager
8.	Guided tours	Tour guide/owner
9.	Tourism marketing & activities	Manager/owner
10.	Guided tours	Manager/owner
11.	Museum & heritage	Marketing & Communication employee
12.	Guided tours	Tour guide

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed ad verbatim. This allowed for a further in-depth analysis based on a Grounded Theory approach (Boeije, 2009; Glaser, Strauss, & Strutzel, 1968; Raduescu & Vessey, 2011). Transcribed interviews were read several times and pieces of the conversations that were assumed relevant (i.e., informative about the way interviewees think and talk about resident roles in relation to their tourism companies) were coded. Following the method of qualitative analysis, the coding process allowed for themes to emerge from the data as the coding structure became more abstract. The coding was concluded when all texts were re-read several times but no new quotes were found that complemented or supported the emerged code structure. The qualitative analysis was facilitated by using ATLAS.ti (version 7).

3.3.1 Researcher positionality

As a male, white and relatively young researcher who grew up in Fryslân, but currently does not live there, my positionality with respect to the topics

discussed and to the interviewees was simultaneously that of an insider and of an outsider (Buda, 2016; Lugosi, 2014). This ambivalence was often helpful in that I was familiar with specific localized aspects that came up during the conversations (e.g., villages, areas), facilitating a more in-depth level of discussions. Also, having lived in Fryslân likely helped in gaining trust from the participants and creating an atmosphere for an open discussion. Still, insider advantages did not inhibit the attempt to objectively study the ideas and opinions of the interviewees. Thus, during the main part of the conversations, I consciously positioned myself as an objective researcher (as opposed to a former resident), which is also reflected in writing the results in third person pronouns.

Introducing myself as a PhD researcher however at times resulted in having to negotiate my position as expertized and 'serious researcher' (Buda, 2016), since not all interviewees were familiar with what an academic PhD research entails. For example, some thought it was similar to that of a thesis for a Bachelor or Master degree, hinting at an interesting aspect of researcher-subject power relations. Nevertheless, these positionality aspects reflect the 'double reflexive gaze' (Everett, 2010) through which the data collection, analysis and the emerging results described below became personal, in-depth and situated.

3.4 Findings and discussion

This section provides a qualitative insight into the "multiple readings of local residents" (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004, p. 299) from the perspective of tourism SMEs, through a lens of re-consumption. The findings display a discursive space where roles often strongly entwine, but sometimes also appear rigidly dispersed. Four major themes emerged from the interviews: 'Being a tourist', 'Discovery and unawareness', 'Life course experiences' and 'Ambassadorship'. Each of the themes will be now be discussed in more detail, illustrated by quotes from the interviews.

3.4.1 Being a tourist

The meanings associated with the label of 'tourist' were explored, since such associations can reflect connotations of touristic roles (Singh & Krakover, 2015a) and the extent to which they are seen as depending on each other. Interviewees were asked whether they would label residents from Fryslân as tourists, when these residents are on vacation within the province. This triggered a wide variety of responses. For many of the participants, what it means to be a tourist reflects a dichotomized understanding of production and consumption roles. For example, understandings of tourists were based on associations with absolute and measurable indicators: "Tourism I think pertains to a period longer than one day. Including an overnight stay. Or a considerable distance." (11). Reflecting a narrative arguably reinforced by the tourism industry (Jeuring, 2016; Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017), these absolute indicators position tourism consumption physically outside of the everyday environment. As a consequence, touristic consumption roles then become unattainable for residents. Another distinction fitting such an ontology pertains to domestic tourists and international tourists:

"I do not believe people would tend to call themselves tourists when being within The Netherlands. But of course you are tourist, because your home address is at another location and you go to another place to visit or experience something, to go on vacation or just relax. But when I go to Lemmer [city] and I visit a church because it has sparked my interest, then I do feel I am a tourist. But I am not comparing myself with the Germans who come there. For me, they are the real tourists. There are Dutch tourists and there are foreign tourists. Where the boundary is, I would not be able to point out." (7)

Some confusion and nuance is evident in this quote however, with more flexible perspectives when it concerns groups people identify with, while more rigid definitions apply for groups being perceived to be different. This indicates the importance of self- and group-identities becoming salient when labelling people as tourists (Singh & Krakover, 2015a).

For other interviewees a more relative and experiential perspective was useful for talking about touristic consumption in geographical proximity of home. They emphasized aspects of unfamiliarity and novelty that define being a tourist:

“People become tourists whenever they do something they would not normally do. It has also to do with discovery, with experiencing something that is not experienced as a resident. So when you never go sailing and then you rent a boat, I think you are a tourist. (9)

Importantly, such a perspective allows for a decoupling of touristic identity from geographical distance, for an ambiguous relation between people, places and activities which entails, more than anything, a personal experience in which novelty and routine are relative to each other. Decoupling from physical geographical distance does not mean however that geographical distance has no experiential meaning. On the contrary, as the following quote makes clear, the experience of being physically ‘away’ plays a role in how the ‘nearby’ can be experienced as attractive and unfamiliar, indicating the influence of re-consumption: “There is so much variation [here], you just need to see it. I think when someone explores a region far away, and then he turns his glasses around, he will do the same discoveries right here.” (3:28) The consumption of certain places through tourism thus produces opportunities for being a tourist elsewhere, including places which previously seemed too familiar.

However, interviewees show they are very much aware that they are having a business and need to make money. Consequently, tourism SMEs themselves appear to be dealing with tourism meanings in a rather pragmatic way. Consequently, the importance of tourist labels is often substituted by the importance attributed to what it means to be a (potential) consumer. Then, consumption includes touristic consumption but also can pertain to consumption when not fitting conventional tourist labels. This complex relation is highlighted in the context of the marketing strategy of a museum:

"I do not think that a Frisian resident, whether he is a tourist or not, should be approached differently than when he is at home. Yes, we very much try to attract Frisian residents to the museum. But I am not sure if we should discern between Frisian residents on vacation and Frisian residents in general. That would imply to focus on Frisians during the two weeks they are on vacation, while you might as well reach them during all those other weeks. When dividing efficiency by invested money, it might be more profitable to not to see them as tourists but just as residents." (11)

In sum, the perceived opportunities for residents to engage in proximity tourism through consumption roles are contingent with how tourism 'brokers' (Cheong & Miller, 2000) attribute meanings to 'being a tourist'. In this context, the process of re-consumption appears to work in two different ways, both absolute and relative. First, because absolute tourists labels are imbued with associations which residents travelling in their 'own' region or country might not adhere to (Singh & Krakover, 2015a), employing explicit categorizations is delicate and sensitive. As such, the re-consumption of touristic norms and values which imply a segregation of

consumption and production roles limits both ontological and behavioral flexibility. Second, relative meanings based on interaction of and overlap between roles can open up geographically and experientially proximate spaces to be (re)discovered by residents.

3.4.2 Discovery and unawareness

Relations between SMEs and residents, enacted through various performances of consumption and production, are shaped by phenomenological experiences (Cohen, 1979; Lengkeek, 2001) and geographical consciousness (Li, 2000). This implies that a major challenge for proximity tourism is the (perceived) familiarity and mundanity of nearby places and activities among residents (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017). Indeed, interviewees see these aspects as inhibitor of attracting residents living in Fryslân:

"I think it [perceived unattractiveness among residents] is almost a given. [But] what else can you do than to satisfy the rest of the world population? Or [one should] become even more accessible, hospitable and friendly. What else to think of to [attract] people from...[nearby]? For me it is a given and I think it is like that everywhere." (6)

At the same time, interviewees note that many residents are simply not aware of the touristic attractions and activities available near home:

"I think they [residents] would be the least likely target group [customers] I would focus on. But if I would have to, it comes down to that many people living here just do not know all the possibilities. When you tell them there is a great

mountainbike course in Appelscha [village] and on Texel [island]. Around the corner. They are not aware of that." (5)

From these quotes, an image emerges of a lock-in (Ma & Hassink, 2013) of consumption and production roles, of a 'barrier of proximity' which constrains the variety of SME-resident relationships: producers see residents as unattractive target group because residents are unaware of touristic attractions, while the lack of interest in residents as potential customers reinforces the absence of perceived local attractiveness among residents.

On the other hand, some interviewees noted ways to avoid or overcome such an impasse. For example, a growing awareness of and interest in near home places was associated with perceptions of societal instability abroad, as reflected in this account,:

"I noticed that, this interest is currently emerging, people exploring their own environment. It might be because of the current political situation in Europe. This will likely bring people closer to home. But this idea of: actually I still do not know The Netherlands very well." (12)

Such emerging awareness also aligns with Diaz-Soria's notion of 'distancing' (Diaz-Soria, 2016), an intentional activity through which people psychologically re-position themselves vis-à-vis their everyday environment and which allows them to revalue places and activities valued mundane otherwise. Thus, people can adopt a mindset of curiosity, opening up opportunities for a more dynamic interaction between production and consumption roles. A re-consumption perspective can explain and enable this interaction, for example in the context of residents who are hosting visiting friends and relatives (VFRs) (Griffin, 2016). Hosting friends and family pertains to production roles, when residents provide for various

touristic experiences for their guests (e.g., visiting a museum or joining a guided walk). At the same time hosting involves ambassadorship roles, since hosts are representing and promoting their region of residence. Importantly however, the wish for touristic consumption among friends and family also produces a stage on which residents become touristic consumers themselves. Such ways of re-consumption appear to be self-reinforcing, when residents host different guests over time:

“Always some local people join [the walking tour]. They have family or friends who visit them and they think let’s to something fun. Then they join a guided city walk. And then they see, it is a lot of fun. And they return for another occasion, with family or with their colleagues. I really see this as a target group.” (10)

Interviewees discern a strong sense of surprise, positive experiences of discovery and an appreciation of the local knowledge gained through consumption of the nearby:

“I tend to think it surprises them. That is my impression, more and more people are surprised about what there is to be found in their own environment. I am sure people are not very knowledgeable about their own province.” (9)

Hosting VFRs and the inherent dynamics of re-consumption thus can help overcoming a mental boundary to visit nearby places. However, from the above it also becomes clear that often a trigger is needed for residents to engage in proximity tourism as consumers. Various interviewees note this highlights the need for destination marketing that builds on the involvement of various stakeholders, in multiple ways (see also Jeuring, 2016). In this

context, the need for SMEs to be 'local experts' is emphasized in that they need to be knowledgeable about what is on offer. Such expertise requires SMEs to have a never ending interest in learning about the local environment:

"You need to be an explorer yourself. The producer most of all needs to be a discoverer and of course have an affinity with his own region. But when you are not curious and you are not an explorer, you might as well quit. You just do not see it then." (9)

In feeding this constant curiosity, SME-resident relationships are essential. Particularly, the interaction between the various roles of both residents and SMEs through multiple ways of 'role-switching', means that producers need to become consumers in order to be able to carry out producer roles, while for residents this means that they should play the role of local ambassador or the producer of tourist experiences for SMEs. This dynamic echoes the core of re-consumption processes (Firat et al., 1995) and is exemplified in the following quote:

" Last year I was in Kollum [village]. I thought, what am I supposed to do here? I have driven around the village for about ten times. Until the manager of the local harbor told me, do you know how beautiful it is here? I told him, this Saturday I will visit you for an hour. And I have been there all day, I was completely surprised. Because this local, he knows everything. And they were working on promoting tourism among their residents. They were the first who should know about all those beautiful houses. When looking at it you would say, this is nothing, but often things remain rather

superficial, and you need to go more in-depth. So you need to find a local, be a Marco Polo." (9)

Thus, role switching seems a promising strategy for tourism SMEs, enhancing community embeddedness and simultaneously gaining competitive advantage through local knowledge (Dann, 2012). Role switching as strategy was implemented by one of the interviewees, working at a tourist information center which organizes daytrips for employees of tourism SMEs in the city, during which they have a chance to visit their colleagues and get up to date information about local tourist attractions:

"Being a host is also taking shape by organizing excursions for employees of local hotels. Because they, too, need to express this hospitability. So we take them around to visit places in their city they have not visited before. We have done this too with parking officers, bed & breakfast owners, restaurant employees. And now I organize it for the local retailers." (2)

In sum, circulation of local knowledge across various stakeholders, while adopting and switching between various production and consumption roles can enhance competitiveness of tourism SMEs and can increase local knowledge among both residents and entrepreneurs, but is strongly dependent on how flexible stakeholders engage with various role behaviors.

3.4.3 Life course experiences

Various life course experiences were mentioned as critical factors for building enduring relationships, implying interactions between various roles. For example, consumption experiences at a young age facilitate

intrapersonal and inter-generational re-consumption on a higher age, hereby enhancing engagement with tourism activities over time:

"In the coming spring holidays we need sailing instructors for a group. Both parents and children have signed up for this. Children have learnt sailing in a family context, while the parents continue as sailing instructor. And the kids are now old enough to become instructors themselves. I think we are currently having the third generation of sailing instructors."(3)

Various interviewees however saw a (temporary) challenge in terms of a discontinued interest among adolescents, signifying the importance of personal preferences in patterns of tourist behavior:

"When confronted with watersports at a young age, they take it with them for the rest of their lives. Then they get a girlfriend, a family and they go sailing more often. But I increasingly miss that dynamic; people do not head for the water at a young age anymore." (1)

Indeed, when children grow up they want to explore the world, tempted by the unfamiliar, repelled by the mundane (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017). It seems therefore important, while acknowledging this unavoidable tendency, to ensure positive place attachment in multiple ways and at young ages, because when people grow older and start families, they more than once appear to return to the (vacation) return to the regions where they grew up:

"My daughter has made a trip around the world when aged 23. And now she has just discovered Terschelling (one of the

Wadden Islands). I found that very enjoying. Back then, she went to China and wherever. And now she says: we booked a camping spot at Terschelling. We visited them; it was a camping ground where 80 percent was aged 60 or older, like us. And they were the only couple with a child. I said, my God, how do you manage to stay here? And she said; we booked another three days, with the child and the tranquility here. I did not know them this way. And this year they go again. My God. They love it. Then it occurs to you, unaware makes unappreciated. And you could turn it around: unappreciated makes unaware." (8)

Another challenge for tourism SMEs pertained to touristic consumers being of increasingly higher age, the effect of which is strengthened by the declining interest in proximity tourism among teenagers and young adults. This dynamic was also attributed to a lack of consistent and continuous destination marketing and place branding, arguably resulting from destination marketing activities that have "not been completely straightforward" (Jeuring, 2016, p. 68). In this context, one of the interviewees compared Fryslân with Saalbach Hinterglemm, a ski resort in Austria which specifically aims to attract young customers:

"Last week I went skiing in Saalbach. There they are trying very hard to attract young visitors. This results in groups of friends visiting, who eventually also return with their own children. This dynamic is increasingly absent in watersports here, which is more and more an aging market. But when you have fewer younger people, eventually you also end up with fewer older people. You need to invest in the youngsters."(5)

A potential strategy for engaging with residents is the integration of tourism and education. This combination can be attractive from a business perspective, because tourist experiences and learning experiences are closely connected (Bos, McCabe, & Johnson, 2015; Falk, Ballantyne, Packer, & Benckendorff, 2012). One interviewee underlines this:

“What is interesting for a class of children, is also interesting for parents with children during their vacation. When I develop an educational tour, I try to make it as much fun as possible. Learning should be fun, but even more importantly, you should not notice that you are learning. This makes all educational aspects similarly attractive for touristic purposes.” (4)

Several of the interviewees confirmed their businesses are having education programs, that they cater for school trips or provide internship positions. Reflecting various re-consumption dynamics, tourism SMEs facilitate local awareness through learning about the home environment and provide a place to learn skills that prepare for production, ambassador and citizen roles (see also the Ambassadorship section). Similarly, young residents, as students on a school trip, become touristic consumers. As such, engagement with the local environment through a tourism-education context at a young age can be a basis for an open-minded attitude towards both the familiar and the unfamiliar.

Thus, connecting the multiple roles of residents through education can enhance production and consumption of proximity tourism. The importance of school trips and education programs in the region therefore needs to be promoted and sustained by the various regional stakeholders such as tourism marketing organizations, tourism businesses and regional governments.

3.4.4 Ambassadorship

Ambassadorship has become an important theme in tourism marketing and communication (Andersson & Ekman, 2009) to the extent that residents, arguably without direct personal gain or top-down triggers, function as independent sources of information for visitors (Braun et al., 2013). In discussing how residents can be involved in such promotion, most of the interviewees acknowledged the potential and importance of Word-of-Mouth (WoM) (N. Chen, Dwyer, & Firth, 2014; Jeurig & Haartsen, 2017). At the same time, various interviewees saw resident WoM as problematic, because of the limited touristic consumption among residents: “Very few residents of Fryslân rent boats...even most of the customers of the sailing school are from western parts of The Netherlands...the use of residents in WoM is limited.” (5) Also, resident WoM was perceived to be uncontrollable due to the diversified nature of resident interests, making it difficult to implement it in holistic communication strategies:

“We do not actively involve them (residents) in WoM... it is very difficult to employ the local population. WoM is of course the best marketing. But it is very difficult to manage. Everybody has a different opinion. I see WoM as something you like and talk about as recommendation to do. That is very complex to initiate or guide.” (11)

From these quotes it permeates that resident WoM is far from a given resource for tourism marketing. Moreover, the perceived lack of potential of residents in WoM communication and the apparent uncontrollability of WoM might also be a sign that tourism SMEs are still coming to terms with these new ways tourism destinations and services are evaluated, how credibility is constructed and how they can usefully employ WoM in their marketing.

Ambassadorship roles also pertain to volunteering activities of residents. Various SMEs depend on volunteers, which enables residents to get active in the production of tourist services. Some of the interviewees worked on a voluntary basis themselves. Volunteering appears to be rooted in citizenship roles, motivated by a personal interest, regional pride or felt need to care for the local environment that extends beyond, but strongly inspires, the will to share the place with visitors. For example, motivations for becoming a volunteer were rooted in a personal interest, as reflected by this tour guide: *"I am very much interested in history. And I think this city is very beautiful and has a rich history."* (12) So, as volunteers, residents are becoming ambassadors of a place, and simultaneously function as essential part of the tourism product and of the relationship between consumer and producer.

A third way residents are performing ambassadorship roles pertains to engagements with tourism materials (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2003a; van der Duim, Ren, & Jóhannesson, 2013). Maps and souvenirs were mentioned to play an important role in the circulation of knowledge about tourism businesses and local attractions. Residents were seen as important circulators of such materials. The following quote highlights the interaction of residents' local consumption roles and ambassadorship roles in the way tourist maps are used and re-used:

"We have tourist maps, and residents like them too. Because they can obtain them just as easily as tourists can. And [those residents] say this [activity] is fun, and recommend it to someone else. Also by being physically present, with those maps. It seems old-fashioned, but it is growing. We produce more and more of them, 30.000. Of course half the residents of Leeuwarden walk around with them. But that is no problem. You need to make sure those maps contain

something valuable. Then they say, did you know, this cheese shop... This also enhances local tourism within the province."(9)

Likewise, souvenirs containing established Frisian symbols, such as the Frisian flag, are sometimes consumed by residents in order to express their regional identity, both inside and outside the province. This way, such citizenship performances feed into production roles in that the physical presence of these symbols can shape the touristic experience of others. Moreover, souvenirs appear to not only become meaningful in relation to touristic consumption, they also are symbolic material expressions of a regional identity, pertaining to ambassadorship roles when these souvenirs travel outside the province:

"A friend of mine who I used to see a lot now lives somewhere else. Last Friday she visited me. She has a dog, and this dog wears this Frisian thing. She likes that. She walks in her town with the dog wearing this Frisian thing. That is recognition [of a regional identity]. People want such things on their caravan or their car. Very chauvinistic."(2)

In a similar way, production roles were connected with ambassadorship roles. Some of the interviewees themselves intentionally collaborate with, and hereby support, local businesses from Fryslân that generate tourism materials such as bicycles and sailing boats. This way, tourism production allows for symbolic consumption of 'Frisianness', through the use of these products. Hereby, the entanglement of consumption and production activities facilitates ambassadorship roles:

“We make money with watersports and bicycling. Just as the province does. Because bikes and boats are manufactured here. I think it greatly reinforces each other. Tourism is promoted, we are an important and excellent tourism destination and the products that are being used are also produced here. That is a double benefit. [...] It [a boat] is a Frisian product, so we also check if it can be made here. And I think it should be made here.” (9)

As became clear earlier, hosting family and friends is an important incentive for residents to engage in proximity tourism. As such, aspects of ambassadorship that influence hosting pertain to feelings of place attachment and pride, which motivates residents to show visitors around. Hereby they produce locally embedded tourist experiences, and at the same time reconfirm their place identities: *“Many residents from Fryslân, but also Frisian companies, bring their relations here. Particularly relations from abroad. They are brought in by proud Frisians.” (4)*

In sum, ambassadorship is not only important in relation to touristic production roles. The underlying conditions for becoming place ambassadors are at least partly rooted in a combination of citizenship roles and consumption roles. So, when intending to employ ambassadorship as part of a strategy for tourism development (i.e., involve residents as producers), it is vital to simultaneously invest in relationships that account for touristic consumption of residents.

3.5 Conclusion

This qualitative study explored SME-resident relationships by employing the concept of ‘re-consumption’ (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004). A sociocultural perspective on the construction of tourism destinations and actors (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011) allowed for scrutinizing the ways owners and

employees of tourism SMEs in the Dutch province of Fryslân attribute touristic production and consumption roles to residents of the province. Attributions of four types of roles (producers, ambassadors, citizens and consumers) emerged along four themes: 'Being a tourist', 'Discovery and unawareness', 'Life course experiences' and 'Ambassadorship'.

From a business perspective, residents were, overall, not seen as attractive consumers: Fryslân is too familiar for residents to be consumed through tourism. At the same time, residents were attributed a lack of awareness about the attractiveness of their proximate environment. Being an indication of a lock-in (Ma & Hassink, 2013), arguably rooted in institutionalized and hegemonic ideologies about tourism (Avdikos, 2011), to this end SME-resident relationships were signified by a limited interaction between production and consumption roles. However, various interactions indicative of a pluralized and interdependent approach to touristic roles (Firat et al., 1995), feeding into each other through re-consumption (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004) emerged too and, importantly, these interactions give rise to several opportunities to counter and overcome a production-consumption lock-in.

Thus, to enable an augmented inclusion of residents in tourism, interviewees acknowledge that conscious efforts are required from SMEs, regional government *and* residents, reflecting the paradigmatic approach to tourism as a three-way communication process (Dann, 2012). To this end, an important finding of this study pertains to the facilitating dynamic of interdependent role-switching between various stakeholders (Figure 3.2), which aligns with a socio-cognitive approach to role enactment (Lynch, 2007): tourism SMEs should adopt touristic consumer roles themselves, and residents should become the producers, feeding them with local touristic knowledge and experiences (Firat et al., 1995). In turn, residents becoming producers implies an enriched approach to citizen and ambassador roles,

incorporating a sense of responsibility to engage in touristic discovery in their residential environment.

Future research on touristic role interactions could enhance the integration of tourism and regional development strategies, which increasingly build on ideas of co-creation (Eshuis, Klijn, & Braun, 2014; Oliveira & Panyik, 2015). For example, integrating education and tourism, while considering variations in touristic preferences across the life course, is seen as a major facilitator for proximity tourism and as an important requirement for various other role performances and SME-resident interactions. Some SMEs had already implemented this in their business models. Also, hosting family and friends (VFR) was a trigger for residents to engage in touristic activities (Griffin, 2016), while materials such as tourist maps and souvenirs depended on the consumption and circulation by residents, through which various symbolic imaginaries were communicated to other stakeholders (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2003a). This latter dynamic where

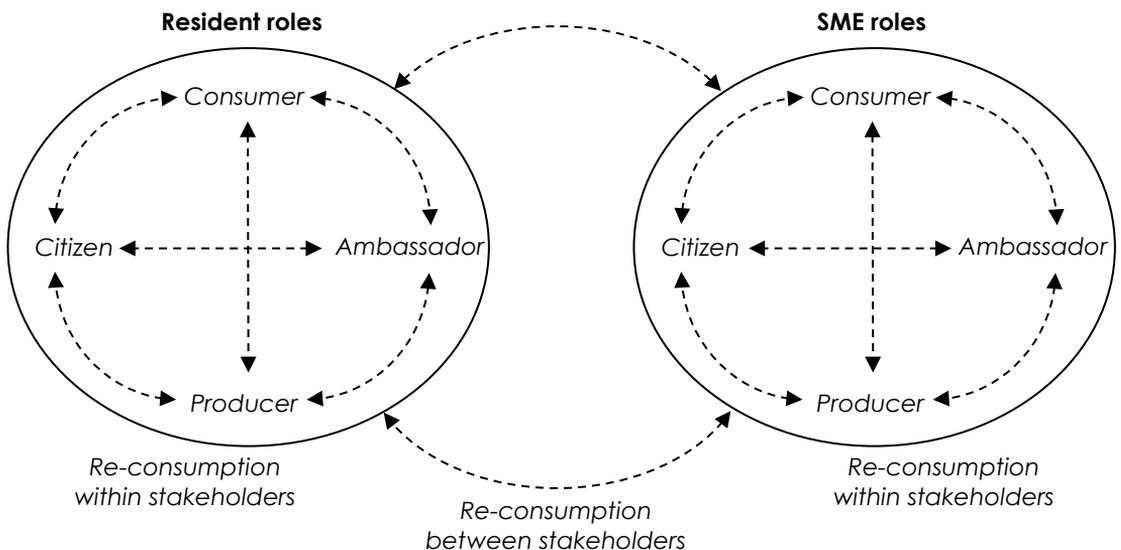


Figure 3.2 Pluralized role interactions within/between residents and SMEs.

tourism materials circulate and hold agency to act echoes an Actor Network perspective (van der Duim et al., 2013), complicating the various meanings attributed to physical objects by their dependency on stakeholder roles.

While regional governments and tourism marketing organizations are attributed an important mediating task in facilitating SME-resident relationships, primary interest of destination marketing is often with incoming visitors, reflected in a homogenizing and externally oriented destination branding discourse (Jeuring, 2016). Such narratives overlook the multiple, profound and detailed relationships residents can have with their region of residence. These ways of destination marketing, consequently, are unlikely to contribute to, nor benefit from, the reinforcing potential of pluralized touristic roles of residents. For example, since residents appear to be willing to engage in positive WoM about their region (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017), it would be advisable to prioritize the facilitation of residents' consumption roles from which WoM acquires its experiential content, especially given the perceived uncontrollability of resident WoM among interviewees in this study.

A conceptual limitation of this study's approach pertains to the relative meaning of proximity and distance. While the province of Fryslân was used as geographical demarcation of who is a resident and what is proximity tourism, it is acknowledged that personal understandings of what is nearby and far away likely varies and depends on context and scale level. Future research could look into how these relative perceptions of 'local' and 'regional' affect understandings of proximity tourism (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017) and the relevance of various resident roles in relation to different perceptions of distance and proximity. The relatively small sample of participants is by no means (intended to be) representative of all tourism SMEs in Fryslân, or other regions. Future research therefore needs to focus on different touristic contexts or embed the findings of this study in insights from

other than SME perspectives (e.g., residents or policymakers) or focus on relationships between a wider variety of stakeholders.

To conclude, this study shows that looking at stakeholder role attributions is a useful approach for understanding how interests, responsibilities and perceptions embedded in various touristic roles are relating to, complementing or obstructing each other. Moreover, being aware of how knowledge about and meanings of tourism places and actors circulates and is re-consumed provides promising openings for integrating the notion of proximity tourism in regional tourism development.

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