

1 **How to Avoid Swinging: a Social Enterprise’s Quest for Authenticity in Tourism**

2
3 **Chiara De Bernardi**

4 IUSS-Scuola Universitaria Superiore de Pavia

5 **Daniel Arenas**

6 ESADE Business School-Universitat Ramon Llull

7
8 *The final version of this article was accepted for publication in Tourism Management in Sept 2021*

9
10 **Abstract**

11 This study explores the role of authenticity in social enterprises. It argues that the quest for
12 authenticity, which is composed of different constructs and entails several internal actions, helps a
13 social enterprise navigate the typical risks inherent to its organizational form: mission drift and
14 mission lock-in. Drawing on an inductive case study of a social enterprise which operates in the field
15 of tourism, the study shows that the authenticity sought by the enterprise takes the form of
16 consistency, conformity, connection, and exploration. This helps the social enterprise plot a course
17 through the abovementioned risks.

18
19
20
21
22 **Keywords:** authenticity, tourism, social enterprises, mission drift, mission lock-in.

23
24
25
26

1 **How to Avoid Swinging: a Social Enterprise’s Quest for Authenticity in Tourism**

2

3 **1. Introduction**

4 From ancient philosophers to current psychologists, the concept of authenticity has fascinated
5 scholars across a wide variety of disciplines (Harter, 2002; Liedtka, 2008). Recently, this concept
6 knocked on the door of several areas of management studies (Lehman, O’Connor, Kovács, &
7 Newman, 2019). Entrepreneurship scholars have also recognized its importance in guiding
8 entrepreneurial actions (O’Neil, Ucbasaran, & York, 2020; Wagenschwanz & Grimes, 2021).
9 Similarly, in the field of tourism studies, authenticity has emerged as a relevant concept related to
10 experiences, objects or places (e.g. Taheri, Farrington, Curran, & O’Gorman, 2018; Zhou, Zhang,
11 Zhang, & Li, 2018).

12 This paper aims to explore the interplay between authenticity and the concepts of mission drift
13 and mission lock-in in social enterprises (SEs) working in the tourism sector. SEs, considered as a
14 fresh and novel way to tackle complex social issues, have received a great deal of attention in recent
15 years (Mair & Martí, 2006; Defourny & Nyssens, 2010; Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014; Gupta,
16 Chauhan, Paul, & Jaiswal, 2020). Among the plethora of studies, scholars have explored the risk of
17 mission drift; i.e. “that self-interested values, motivations, and commercial objectives that are
18 associated with the ‘business model’ could overpower the social mandate of a social enterprise”
19 (Ramus & Vaccaro, 2017, p. 307-308; Battilana, Lee, Walker, & Dorsey, 2012; Battilana & Dorado,
20 2010). This risk is connected to a loss of authenticity, which has been identified as an asset used by
21 entrepreneurs to gain legitimacy among like-minded audiences (O’Neil et al., 2020). Mission drift
22 might appear as a sign of inconsistency—and hence of inauthenticity—and result in negative external
23 perceptions of the organization. On the other hand, although much less studied, mission lock-in is
24 another important risk for SEs, occurring when “they systematically over-emphasize social objectives
25 and lose sight of economic aspects” (Staessens, Kerstens, Brunel, & Cherchye, 2019, p. 32;
26 Copestake, 2007). The rigidity associated with mission lock-in can also be perceived as a loss of

1 authenticity, insofar as it leads to inability to improve both social and economic performance
2 overtime.

3 Given the double risk of SEs, how does the search for authenticity help avoid them in the field
4 of tourism? To answer this question, we engage in an exploratory case study of a SE that consists of
5 an online platform connecting visitors with local experiences to ensure they positively impact cities.
6 The data analysis shows the relevance of three constructs of authenticity—consistency, conformity,
7 and connection—previously identified in the management literature (Lehman et al., 2019), but not
8 discussed specifically in the field of tourism. We also contribute by identifying a fourth dimension—
9 authenticity as exploration—unrecognized in previous studies in management or tourism. Finally, we
10 suggest that the quest for authenticity in these different constructs helps the SE navigate between
11 mission drift and mission lock-in. We discuss the implications for the field of social entrepreneurship
12 and tourism management.

13

14 **2. Theoretical background**

15 *2.1 Authenticity and entrepreneurship*

16 Entrepreneurship and management scholars have recently become “enamored by the topic” of
17 authenticity (Lehman et al., 2019, p. 3; O’Neil et al., 2020). Nonetheless, Lehman et al.’s review
18 concludes that, despite apparent consensus, the term is used in very different ways by different
19 authors. Authenticity has been examined as three distinct constructs: as *consistency*, where “an entity
20 is authentic to the extent that its external expressions correspond with its internal values and beliefs”;
21 as *conformity*, whereby “an entity is authentic to the extent that it conforms to the social category to
22 which it has been assigned or that it has claimed for itself”; and as *connection*, where “an entity is
23 authentic to the extent that it is connected to a particular person, place, or time as claimed” (Lehman
24 et al., 2019, p. 6).

25 Entrepreneurship scholars have studied authenticity mostly in terms of consistency and
26 conformity. When internal values are aligned with external expressions of those values, entrepreneurs

1 behave consistently in their daily actions (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; O’Neil et al., 2020; Taylor,
2 1991), running their businesses to reflect who they are (Powell & Baker, 2014). At the same time,
3 when enterprises conform to social norms and expectations, they can also be defined as authentic
4 allowing entrepreneurs to attract “kudos, legitimacy, or appreciation from audiences” (O’Neil et al.,
5 2020). Irrespective of the distinct connotations, entrepreneurship scholars agree on authenticity’s
6 positive role in guiding entrepreneurial actions.

7 SEs have been appointed as one of the “organizational forms that may better lend themselves
8 to authenticity” (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2015, p. 148). Studying authenticity in this domain has the
9 potential to provide “a powerful lens for management theorizing and practice—particularly at the
10 intersection of discussions on ethics and management” (Liedtka, 2008, p. 237), since addressing
11 neglected ethical and social problems using business mechanisms is the core of SEs (Mair & Marti,
12 2006). Yet, precisely due to the combination of social mission and financial goals, authenticity might
13 also be permanently at risk in SEs. This paper embraces the call to explore the relationship between
14 this organizational form (SE) and the multifaceted concept of authenticity.

15

16 *2.2 Authenticity in tourism*

17 The tourism industry is one of the fields in which authenticity has become a concern for
18 various actors, as well as for scholars (Nguyen & Cheung, 2016), posing questions such as: Do
19 tourists really look for authenticity? How is this perceived? Can one talk about “staged authenticity”?
20 As a result, the concept of tourism authenticity “has been broadened, developed, and advanced
21 towards a more holistic interpretation” (Taheri et al., 2018, p. 50) involving a number of perspectives.
22 While some authors have suggested that authenticity reflects how experiences are perceived by
23 tourists (Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio, & Campo, 2020), others have studied authenticity as something
24 intrinsic to places and objects (Park et al., 2019). Furthermore, the topic of authenticity has been
25 analyzed with reference to mass tourism and overtourism (Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018). Scholars
26 have pointed out that, beyond the tourism experience, aspects such as the social impact on host

1 communities and their participation become fundamental (Benner, 2020; Tosun, 2006). Accordingly,
2 a search for responsible and sustainable practices in the tourism industry is imperative and requires
3 looking for alternative organizational approaches (Aquino, Lück, & Schänzel, 2018). Among them,
4 social entrepreneurship is often seen as having the potential to counter the negative externalities of
5 the traditional business models employed in tourism and to stimulate sustainable tourism (Deborah
6 & Rachel, 2017; Sheldon & Daniele, 2017; Zhang, Lu, & Sun, 2021). Tourism social
7 entrepreneurship is rapidly growing, with the primary goal of adopting financially sustainable
8 strategies to achieve social aims (Von der Weppen and Cochrane, 2012), such as empowering local
9 communities or support sustainable regional development. According to Mody and Day (2014),
10 tourism SEs face the typical challenges of SEs, above all the combination of different types of
11 rationality to pursue simultaneously local social development and financial sustainability. Yet, the
12 role of SEs in addressing social issues in tourism literature is still largely overlooked (Altinay, Sigala,
13 & Waligo, 2016). In sum, given the social challenges posed by the phenomenon of tourism, it is a
14 relevant field in which to explore the question of authenticity in SEs that informs this study.

15

16 *2.3 Mission drift and mission lock-in in SEs*

17 Over the last decades, SEs have increasingly attracted the interest of scholars (e.g., Dees,
18 1998; Mair & Martí, 2006). Being enterprises with an embedded social purpose, maintaining an
19 equilibrium between their financial and social goals is extremely challenging. These goals are not
20 necessarily aligned, thus resulting in instability (Staessens et al., 2019) and internal tensions. When
21 a SE gradually abandons its social mission in favor of the economic one, it is exposed to mission drift
22 (Battilana et al., 2012). A growing number of studies have theoretically and empirically examined
23 mission drift in SEs, providing an understanding of the trade-offs between economic and social
24 missions and of the strategies SEs can adopt to prevent it (e.g., Ramus & Vaccaro, 2017). By contrast,
25 mission lock-in occurs when a SE significantly increases its focus on its social objectives and
26 performance, systematically losing sight of economic sustainability and growth (Copestake, 2007;

1 Staessens et al., 2019). Although much less studied, mission lock-in is equally relevant for SEs.
2 According to some scholars, it may even be a bigger threat than mission drift (Copestake, 2007) since
3 SEs need to maintain their attention to their economic mission to achieve long-term sustainability and
4 continue having social impact (Staessens, et al., 2019).

5 Authenticity has been regarded as an asset that affords legitimacy to the enterprise (O’Neil et
6 al., 2020). When an organization fails to align with its identity, external audiences start questioning
7 its authenticity and a loss of perceived legitimacy occurs (Whetten, 2006). Grimes et al. (2019)
8 suggest that inconsistent actions encourage external perceptions of mission drift. Thus, mission drift
9 “might be best understood in terms of perceived organizational authenticity” (Grimes et al., 2019).
10 Similarly, we argue that mission lock-in can entail a perception of authenticity loss, insofar as: a) it
11 might lead in the long run to the unsustainability of the SE; and b) it might be perceived as a sign of
12 rigidity, which goes against the innovative character expected from SEs. These risks, as well as the
13 different constructs of authenticity, have not been applied to expand our knowledge of SEs in the
14 field of tourism. Thus, given the importance of authenticity in tourism and following the call for
15 further exploration of the relationship between SEs and authenticity (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2015),
16 this paper examines the following research question: How do authenticity and the risks of mission
17 drift and mission lock-in interplay in SEs in the field of tourism?

18

19 **3. Methods and data**

20 *3.1 Case selection*

21 Given the lack of empirical research and theoretical understanding on the role of authenticity in social
22 entrepreneurship in the field of tourism, we chose to address the research question through an
23 exploratory case study. This method is appropriate for a new and poorly understood phenomenon
24 (Eisenhardt, 1989), “for building theory in situations where there is either no theory or a problematic
25 one” (Gehman, Glaser, Eisenhardt, Gioia, Langley, & Corley, 2018, p. 287), or when processes are
26 complex. Moreover, case studies are not at odds with generalizing findings (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gehman

1 et al., 2018), and hence we believe our research can advance the knowledge of tourism-related SEs.
2 The chosen case study is Authenticitys, a tourism-related SE, which through a platform curates and
3 co-designs social impact experiences for people to travel, share, and learn together in several cities.
4 Although it operates internationally, most of the data collection was narrowed to the context of
5 Barcelona – the headquarters of the enterprise –, a city often cited as a salient example of overtourism
6 (Benner, 2020). Given its name, mission and context, it is a revelatory case, particularly well-suited
7 for addressing the research question. By its nature as a SE, the typical risks of this type of
8 organization—mission drift and mission lock-in—are likely to occur. The study design was inductive
9 and open-ended in order to allow themes to emerge from the data, and was based on material covering
10 the period from January 2014 to June 2021.

11

12 *3.2 Data collection*

13 As appropriate in an exploratory case study, data on Authenticitys came from a variety of
14 sources. Data collection was conducted by the first author, who had unique access to the company’s
15 numbers and business strategy-related information, as well as doing non-participant observation on
16 tours organized by Authenticitys. An important part of the data came from semi-structured interviews
17 with the founder, team members, advisors and key collaborators, and tourist guides. A total of 12
18 interviews were conducted, by the first author, from February 2019 to June 2021, and were recorded
19 and transcribed. We continued to collect data until we felt that most perspectives were covered and
20 that saturation was reached, as no new evidence appeared in later interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1998;
21 Suddaby, 2006). In addition, we were provided with five interviews carried out by other researchers
22 in past years. While interviews were used as the main source of data, secondary sources (website,
23 reports, podcasts, blogposts and other sources) were very useful for triangulation and as
24 supplementary sources providing additional perspectives on key issues (Corley & Gioia, 2004). Table
25 1 provides a summary of all data sources.

26

1 [Table 1 about here]

2 3.3 Data analysis

3 Once the data had been collected, it was analyzed inductively, following Gioia et al.'s
4 methodology (2013) and identifying threads of inquiry that might help understand the role of
5 authenticity in SEs. A three-step procedure was followed aimed at identifying (i) general first-order
6 codes – open coding –, (ii) second-order themes – axial coding –, and (iii) aggregate dimensions
7 (Gioia et al., 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To reduce the risk of personal bias, the analysis consisted
8 of a back-and-forth process, with each author separately creating a list of codes from the data (open
9 coding) in the first step, followed by several discussions among the authors about the emerging
10 patterns, contrasting opinions and results to resolve discrepancies of interpretation and coding
11 inconsistencies. In the second and third steps, we worked together to establish similarities and
12 aggregate them into themes and dimensions. Table 2 illustrates the data structure.

13
14 [Table 2 about here]

15 16 4. Findings

17 4.1 Constructs of authenticity in SEs

18 “Be authentic”: this was what Elena – the founder – and her team believed in and claimed to
19 use every day as a guide when making decisions and developing new tourism experiences. Yet what
20 does looking for authenticity and being authentic mean? Our analysis leads to four different
21 constructs, which we illustrate with some quotes from our data.

22 23 4.1.1 Authenticity as consistency

24 The first understanding of authenticity – consistency between one's external actions and one's
25 internal values and beliefs – was invoked repeatedly by the SE both at the individual and at the
26 organizational level. One example is a document used as a brief presentation:

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29

We call a brand or a person authentic when they're consistent, when they act the same way whether or not someone is looking. Someone is authentic when their actions are in alignment with what they promise. Keeping promises. (PDF – Authenticity at a glance)

References to this aspect of authenticity were also made by the informants when talking about Elena and her imprint on the company:

One thing that's easy to admire about Elena is that she walks the talk. You know what I mean? That she is very much aligned. And in that sense... for me that gives her a lot of credibility. (Daniela)

4.1.2 Authenticity as conformity

Secondly, Authenticity is a SE, and wants to be recognized by others as such: not as a fake, but as an *authentic* SE. It publicly displayed its social category. To strengthen its identity and visibility, it also attached value to obtaining the certification “B-Corporation”. According to this understanding of authenticity, it is important to find others that recognize and support one’s efforts rather than trying to be authentic on one’s own:

Another thing you have to learn to maintain your authenticity is to sort of find this ecosystem. It's just like communities and families that are kind of thinking aligned with who you are, because you are disrupting in a new place. (Elena)

Along the same lines, the SE was seen as part of a larger movement, as recognized by one of the participants in a podcast launched by the organization:

I really believe in, as you Elena, to see hospitality as a very important part of the puzzle in order to create a more regenerative society and inspiring the way of being (Charles Michel-Apex Hearts, experience designer, podcast #2)

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26

Furthermore, driven by the resolve to fight overtourism and following the expectations from the category of impact tourism, Authenticitys produced a Social Impact Report.

4.1.3 Authenticity as connection

The third construct of authenticity related to the tourism experience provided by the organization in terms of connection to people and places. Perceptions of authenticity were often mentioned by tourists in relation to the uniqueness of the place, connection with locals, embracing and preserving local culture, and even the relationships among tourists created during the experience itself, as explained by Carlota during one of the tours in Barcelona:

I think the most authentic thing we have here is the place where all the fishermen work. It is a really old place. [...] It's a special point, place, for a small group, where you can really see and appreciate the beauty and authenticity of it. (Carlota, tour guide)

In addition, authenticity is mentioned in relation to feelings and social interactions that arise when meeting local communities:

I really believe we need to go back to the values that a place is able to offer. And the community, especially. Bring more from the foreground, because is where true authentic connection happens. (Barbara Neuhofer, Tourism Advisor, podcast #10)

This connection was intended to trigger in tourists the desire to preserve local culture, which is one of the aspects that those advocating a sustainable form of tourism want to emphasize.

4.1.4 Authenticity as exploration

1 A fourth construct of authenticity emerged from our analysis: it entails generating a new self,
2 re-inventing from past experiences, and sitting on the edge. Authenticity made constant efforts to
3 promote a new way of thinking and behaving at both the individual and organizational levels:
4

5 *And you constantly explore as you express yourself. You're adjusting fields. The act of*
6 *crossing the fence multiple times a day; it happens constantly. I think about it this way. I am*
7 *sitting on the fence I made myself. (Elena)*
8

9 Generating a more aligned, more authentic organization comes through a process of trial and error.
10 According to Sandra (COO), being pioneers in defining social impact experiences, they had to create
11 everything from scratch as nothing along these lines existed yet. It was described as a continuous
12 process of “prototyping”, involving both practicality and creativity. In other words, they felt as
13 walking in uncharted territory:
14

15 *What I mean with “sitting on the edge” is the idea that you don't bring out the product and*
16 *that's it, it's done. It's more the concept that you always try to see how you are evolving, and*
17 *how you best can evolve with your clients and their needs (Elena).*
18
19

20 *4.2 Entrepreneurial actions to navigate mission drift and mission lock-in in SEs*

21 *4.2.1 Dodging mission drift*

22 Since 2014, when Elena founded the company, she and her team made efforts to bypass the
23 risk of neglecting their social mission in order to secure profits. For example, the desire to stay true
24 to itself—authenticity as consistency—led the SE to decide not to collaborate with some investors.
25 Selecting the right team members and partners since the beginning was another fundamental path to
26 avoid mission drift. As Daniela explained:
27

1 *If you have to partner, you have to look for partners that are aligned with your mission, vision,*
2 *etc. [...] If you partner with the wrong person, you lose authenticity. (Daniela, Tourism*
3 *Advisor)*

4
5 Furthermore, the team was very aware that their growth had been, at least in the first years,
6 slow. They could have pushed more aggressively into the market, but they would probably have had
7 to sacrifice quality, which would have endangered authenticity as connection. As Sandra put it, the
8 “gold model” – i.e., scaling up, attracting investors, and growing as quickly and as big as possible –
9 simply “doesn’t fit”.

10 11 4.2.2 Dodging mission lock-in

12 Authenticity’s desire to conform to the SE category implies maintaining profitability as a basic
13 goal, together with pursuing social goals. Three related elements emerged from data analysis:
14 awareness of the importance of scaling up, denying the trade-off between impact and money in the
15 long term, and declaring that “making a profit is not a sin”. The team reached a point where they
16 realized they had to scale up if they wanted to survive and continue making a positive impact on
17 society. It was Manolo, their finance and strategy advisor, who helped them become aware of this:

18
19 *I think she [Elena] can remain true to her values and scale up, but she has to find a way to do*
20 *it. Authenticity gives as much money as possible to the indigenous community. But they*
21 *cannot get more money from one experience. They have to scale it up and sell thousands of*
22 *experiences.*

23
24 Developing alternative strategies to grow would be in line with the understanding of authenticity as
25 exploration, in contrast to sticking to one’s initial ideas or recuperating conventional ways of acting:

26
27 *What is not working anymore with sustainability? We need an upgrade. And this upgrade is*
28 *a shift paradigm (Anna Alaman, experience designer, podcast #3)*

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26

Analysis of Authenticity confirms that when aiming to make a real impact on society, SEs attach importance to having a robust financial basis and avoid prejudices about money. Profit cannot be perceived as a sin: *“It’s sort of being a non-profit, but for profit and for purpose”* (Cristina, Sales and Client Manager).

5. Discussion

An interplay between authenticity – in all its constructs – and the risks to incur in mission drift and mission lock-in emerges from our findings. Thus, we propose a conceptual model to summarize how the quest for authenticity helps social entrepreneurs navigate mission drift and mission lock-in represented by Fig. 1.

[Figure 1 about here]

Over the years, Authenticity risked to incur in mission drift and mission lock-in, the two tendencies of SEs which make it difficult to maintain an equilibrium between their financial and their social goals. In Fig. 1 this is represented by a pendulum that moves depending on the actions the enterprise takes and may swing from one extreme to the other. We suggest that the quest for authenticity helps SEs avoid going too far towards one end or the other, and keep the equilibrium between their goals. As we saw, the desire to remain true to one’s original views (authenticity as consistency) and to be aligned with the SE category (authenticity as conformity) drove Authenticity to collaborate with certain types of investors while rejecting others, to apply for B-Corporation certification, and to be part of a social ecosystem. This enabled the SE to hold to its social purpose and avoid mission drift. Searching for authenticity in terms of connection to places and communities also played a role in avoiding a “business model’ [that] could overpower the social mandate” (Ramus & Vaccaro, 2017, p. 307-308). Thus, we argue that entrepreneurial actions pursuing authenticity as consistency,

1 conformity and connection enable the SE to avoid the pendulum being trapped in the extreme of
2 mission drift. Thus, we make the following proposition:

3

4

5 **Proposition 1:** The quest for authenticity in terms of (i) *consistency*, (ii) *conformity*, and (iii)
6 *connection* helps the SE avoid mission drift.

7

8 When the risk of mission lock-in looms, efforts to conform to the SE category can also help
9 the SE remind itself that it has two types of goals and that, as expressed by one interviewee, “profits
10 are not a sin”. The desire to continuously explore, innovate, and look for original solutions to
11 challenges, rather than clinging to the initial ways to achieve the social mission, also helps avoid
12 mission lock-in. Thus, entrepreneurial actions which pursue authenticity as conformity and
13 exploration help the SE’s pendulum not being stuck in the other extreme. This leads to the second
14 proposition:

15

16 **Proposition 2:** The quest for authenticity in terms of (i) *conformity* and (ii) *exploration* helps
17 the SE avoid mission lock-in.

18

19 These findings advance knowledge on the role of authenticity in the fields of both social
20 entrepreneurship and tourism. While it has been established that authenticity plays a role in guiding
21 entrepreneurial actions (O’Neil et al., 2020), further exploration has been called for about the
22 relationship of SEs with authenticity (Mazutis and Slawinski, 2015). In particular, no research has
23 previously explored the potential of authenticity at the intersection with the risks of SEs. Our research
24 provides a step forward in filling this gap: the quest for authenticity in its four different constructs
25 helps the SE navigate mission drift and mission lock-in. The study found evidence that the three
26 fundamental but distinct constructs of authenticity – consistency, conformity and connection
27 (Lehman et al., 2019) – are important to navigate these risks and can appear simultaneously in a SE.
28 Furthermore, we contribute to this literature with an additional construct that emerges from our

1 analysis: authenticity as exploration. This new understanding shows how the quest for authenticity
2 implies constant openness and evolution. Although applied to a very different context, this dimension
3 echoes the existentialist philosophy of Sartre and Heidegger (Liedtka, 2008; Wang, 1999), insofar as
4 it is experimental, open to different possibilities, and questions established ways, in addition to being
5 “a continual, reiterative, and ongoing process” (Demetry, 2019; p. 957). The true and authentic SE is
6 not *a priori* defined, but rather is continuously renewed. Yet, as the other constructs of authenticity
7 remind us (as connection and conformity), the quest for authenticity also implies a dialogical process
8 with others and shared “horizons of significance” that, as communitarian philosophers emphasize,
9 come from belonging to particular social and cultural contexts (Taylor, 1991).

10 Finally, our findings suggest that the pursuit of authenticity in tourism is not limited, as usually
11 studied, to the perceived experience (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020), or to objects and places (Park et
12 al., 2019), but can also lie within the organization itself. Organizations might be able to create settings,
13 business models and business practices in order to make an environment that contributes to the
14 emergence of authenticity. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to assess whether the SE under
15 study can deliver all its promises, the research suggests that authenticity may also be *inside* the
16 organization; that organizations need to be the host of authenticity, not its enemy (Taylor, 1991).
17 Authenticity plays a role in the organizational backstage, providing a way to navigate mission drift
18 and mission lock-in and thus, we argue, a guide for social entrepreneurs in the field of tourism to act
19 and make decisions.

20

21 **6. Limitations and perspectives for future research**

22 The current study is not without limitations. Being a single exploratory case study, the findings
23 and the conceptual model we draw are based on both a limited amount of data and a limited number
24 of interviews which reflect the perceptions and opinions of the respondents. However, these
25 limitations can turn into avenues for future research. We believe our results about the quest for
26 authenticity and how it helps avoid mission lock-in and mission drift can be generalized to other types

1 of SEs working in the tourism industry, insofar they pursue economic and social goals. Other analyses
2 may continue exploring whether the four constructs of authenticity—as consistency, conformity,
3 connection, and exploration—are relevant in different areas of tourism, including other countries and
4 other highly popular tourist destinations which suffer from overtourism. Finally, new studies may
5 contrast this paper’s findings studying SEs in other sectors, different from the tourist industry, and
6 explore contextual and internal dimensions that might facilitate the quest for authenticity in its
7 different dimensions.

1 **References**

- 2 Altinay, L., Sigala, M., & Waligo, V. (2016). Social value creation through tourism enterprise.
3 Tourism Management, 54, 404-417.
- 4 Aquino, R. S., Lück, M., & Schänzel, H. A. (2018). A conceptual framework of tourism social
5 entrepreneurship for sustainable community development. Journal of Hospitality and Tourism
6 Management, 37, 23-32.
- 7 Battilana, J., & Dorado, S. (2010). Building sustainable hybrid organizations: the case of commercial
8 microfinance organizations. The Academy of Management Journal, 53(6), 1419-1440.
- 9 Battilana, J., Lee, M, Walker, J., & Dorsey, C. (2012). In search of the hybrid ideal. Stanford Social
10 Innovation Review, 10(3), 51-55.
- 11 Benner, M. (2020). Overcoming overtourism in Europe: Towards an institutional-behavioral research
12 agenda. Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie, 64(2), 74-87.
- 13 Copestake, J. (2007). Mainstreaming microfinance: Social performance management or mission
14 drift? World Development, 35(10), 1721-1738.
- 15 Corley, K.G., & Gioia, D.A. (2004). Identity ambiguity and change in the wake of a corporate spin-
16 off. Administrative Science Quarterly, 49(2), 173-208.
- 17 Center for Responsible Travel (CREST). (2018). The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends &
18 Statistics 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.worldtourismdayforum.com/about>.
- 19 Deborah, d. L., & Rachel, D. (2017). Increasing sustainable tourism through social entrepreneurship.
20 International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 29 (7), 1977–2002.
- 21 Dees, J.G. (1998). The meaning of social entrepreneurship. Innovation, 2006 (11-4-06), 1-6.
- 22 Defourny, J., & Nyssens, M. (2010). Conceptions of Social Enterprise and Social Entrepreneurship
23 in Europe and the United States: Convergences and Divergences. Journal of Social
24 Entrepreneurship, 1(1), 32-53.
- 25 Demetry, D. (2019). How organizations claim authenticity: the coproduction of illusions in
26 underground restaurants. Organization Science, 30(5), 937-960.

- 1 Doherty, B., Haugh, H., & Lyon, F. (2014). Social enterprises as hybrid organizations: a review and
2 research agenda. *International Journal of Management Review*, 16(4), 417-436.
- 3 Eisenhardt, K.M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management*
4 *Review*, 14(4), 532-550.
- 5 Flyvbjerg, J.C. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2),
6 219-245.
- 7 Gehman, J., Glaser, V.L., Eisenhardt, K.M., Gioia, D., Langley, A., & Corley, K.G. (2018). Finding
8 theory-method fit: A comparison of three qualitative approaches to theory building. *Journal of*
9 *Management Inquiry*, 27(3), 284-300.
- 10 Gioia, D.A., Corley, K.G., & Hamilton, A.L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research:
11 Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1), 15-31.
- 12 Grimes, M., Williams, T.A., & Zhao, E.Y. (2019). Anchors aweigh: The sources, variety, and
13 challenges of mission drift. *The Academy of Management Review*, 44(4), 819-845.
- 14 Gupta, P., Chauhan, S., Paul, J., & Jaiswal, M.P. (2020). *Journal of Business Research*, 113(C), 209-
15 229.
- 16 Harter, S. (2002). Authenticity. In C. R. Snyder & S. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology*
17 (pp. 382-394). London: Oxford University Press. VED.
- 18 Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time*. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, Trans. San Francisco: Harper
19 Collins.
- 20 Jiménez-Barreto, J., Rubio, N., & Campo, S. (2020). Destination brand authenticity: What an
21 experiential simulacrum! A multigroup analysis of its antecedents and outcomes through
22 official online platforms. *Tourism Management*, 77, 104022.
- 23 Kernis, M.H., & Goldman, B.M. (2006). A multicomponent conceptualization of authenticity: theory
24 and research. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 38, 283–357.
- 25 Koens, K., Postma, A., & Papp, B. (2018). Is overtourism overused? Understanding the impact of
26 tourism in a city context. *Sustainability*, 10(12), 4384.

- 1 Lehman, D.W., O'Connor, K., Kovács, B., & Newman, G.E. (2019). Authenticity. *Academy of*
2 *Management Annals*, 13(1).
- 3 Liedtka, J. (2008). Strategy making and the search for authenticity. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 80(2),
4 237-248.
- 5 Mair, J., & Marti, I. (2006). Social entrepreneurship research: a source of explanation, prediction, and
6 delight. *Journal of World Business*, 41(1), 36-44.
- 7 Mazutis, D.D., & Slawinski, N. (2015). Reconnecting business and society: Perceptions of
8 authenticity in corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 131(1), 137-150.
- 9 Mody, M., & Day, J. (2014). Rationality of social entrepreneurs in tourism: Max Weber and the
10 sociology of tourism development. *International Journal of Tourism Anthropology*, 3(3), 227-
11 244.
- 12 Nguyen, T. H. H., & Cheung, C. (2016). Chinese heritage tourists to heritage sites: what are the
13 effects of heritage motivation and perceived authenticity on satisfaction? *Asia Pacific Journal*
14 *of Tourism Research*, 21(11), 1155-1168.
- 15 O'Neil, I., Ucbasaran, D., & York, J.G. (2020). The evolution of founder identity as an authenticity
16 work process. *Journal of Business Venturing*. Article in press.
- 17 Park, E., Choi, B-K., & Lee, T.J. (2019). The role and dimensions of authenticity in heritage tourism.
18 *Tourism Management*, 74, 99-109.
- 19 Powell, E.E., & Baker, T. (2014). It's what you make of it: founder identity and enacting strategic
20 responses to adversity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57, 1406–1433.
- 21 Ramus, T., & Vaccaro, A. (2017). Stakeholders matter: How social enterprises address mission drift.
22 *Journal of Business Ethics*, 143(2), 307-322.
- 23 Sartre, J.P. (1956). *Being and Nothingness*. H. E. Barnes, Trans. New Jersey: Grammercy Books.
- 24 Sheldon, P. J., & Daniele, R. (2017). *Social entrepreneurship and tourism*. Springer.

- 1 Staessens, M., Kerstens, P.J., Bruneel, J., & Cherchye, L. (2019). Data envelopment analysis and
2 social enterprises: Analysing performance, strategic orientation and mission drift. *Journal of*
3 *Business Ethics*, 159(2), 325-341.
- 4 Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for*
5 *Developing Grounded Theory*, second ed. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- 6 Suddaby, R. (2006). From the editors: What grounded theory is not. *Academy of Management*
7 *Journal*, 49(4), 633-642.
- 8 Taheri, B., Farrington, T., Curran, R., & O’Gorman, K. (2018). Sustainability and the authentic
9 experience. *Harnessing brand heritage – A study from Japan. Journal of Sustainable Tourism*,
10 26(1), 49-67.
- 11 Taylor, C. (1991). *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 12 Tosun, C. (2006). Expected nature of community participation in tourism development. *Tourism*
13 *Management*, 27(3), 493-504.
- 14 Von der Weppen, J., & Cochrane, J. (2012). Social enterprises in tourism: an exploratory study of
15 operational models and success factors. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 20(3), 497-511.
- 16 Wagenschwanz, A.M., & Grimes, M.G. (2021). Navigating compromise: How founder authenticity
17 affects venture identification amidst organizational hybridity. *Journal of Business Venturing*,
18 36(2), 106085.
- 19 Wang, N. (1999). Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(2),
20 349-370.
- 21 Whetten, D.A. (2006). Albert and Whetten Revisited: Strengthening the Concept of Organizational
22 Identity. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 15(3), 219–234.
- 23 Zhang, H., Lu, L., & Sun, F. (2021). Changing role of lifestyle in tourism entrepreneurship: Case
24 study of Naked Retreats Enterprise. *Tourism Management*, 84, 104259.

1 Zhou, Q.B., Zhang, J., Zhang, H., & Li, X.R. (2018). Is all authenticity accepted by tourists and
2 residents? The concept, dimensions and formation mechanism of negative authenticity. *Tourism*
3 *Management*, 67, 59-70.

1 **Table 1.** Data sources.

Sources	Number	Year	# of pages / Time (*)
Interviews			
Elena (founder)	4	2021	4 / 21
		2019	14 / 43
		2019	19 / 72
		2017	6 / -
		2019	10 / 37
Sandra (COO & Experience Curator)	1	2019	6 / 31
Manolo (Finance & Strategy Advisor)	1	2019	11 / 45
Daniela (Tourism Advisor)	1	2019	7 / 28
Pablo Sanchez (B-Corp Spain Country Partner)	1	2019	8 / 30
Cristina Castellanos (Sales and Client Manager/Social Media Guru)	2	2019	6 / 28.5
José and Lily (students for SIR-Social Impact Report)	1	2019	3 / 9
Carlota (tour guide)	1	2019	3 / 9
TOTAL	12		94 / 344.5
Student questionnaire			
Íñigo	1	2016	2 / -
Doru Raduta	1	2016	3 / -
Anna Alaman	1	2016	3 / -
Arma Kleinepier	1	2016	2 / -
Diego Jenzer	1	2016	2 / -
TOTAL	5		12 / -
From the website			

Authenticitys What's new Blog	-	20 posts	2015-2017	5 / -
	-		2015-2019	6 / -
Authenticitys press	-	-	2014-2019	5 / -
Other sources (website)				
Manifiesto	-	-	-	1 / -
Social Impact Report 2016	-	-	2016	34 / -
Social Impact Report 2017	-	-	2017	14 / -
Social Impact Report 2018	-	-	2018	28 / -
Document: B-Corp in Spain	-	-	2017	19 / -
TOTAL	-	-	-	96 / -
Audio RTVE (Radio Televisión Española - in Spanish)				
	-	-	2018	- / 54
YouTube channel	-	25 videos	2014-2018	- / 92
Observation				
Tour 'Changemakers in Barcelona'	1	-	2019	4 (field notes) / 6h
Tour 'Fisherman experience in Barceloneta'	1	-	2019	2 (field notes) / 3h
Attendance at ELISAVA class: Impact Design. Creating Transformational Experience				
	-	-	2019	45 (PowerPoint slides) / -

Attendance at Harold Goodwin talk on sustainable tourism	-	-	25/03/2019	23 (PowerPoint slides) / 2h
Others Provided by Elena				
FITUR authenticity experiences	-	-	21/01/2019	16 / -
More than planning: how to design your vacations so you can have the best stories to tell	-	-	29/01/2019	9 / -
Document 'Booking Booster application'	-	-	21/02/2017	5 / -
Document 'Expo Live application'	-	-	06/03/2019	5 / -
Authenticitys at a glance	-	-	08/01/2016	2 / -
Authenticitys - Explore Different	-	-	09/12/2015	1 / -
Recommendation letter	-	-	21/06/2016	1 / -
Submit 2016 Authenticitys	-	-	09/05/2016	5 / -
TOTAL	-	-	-	44 / -
Podcast: ReDesign Travel + Life 15 Episodes				
	-	-	2020/2021	465'

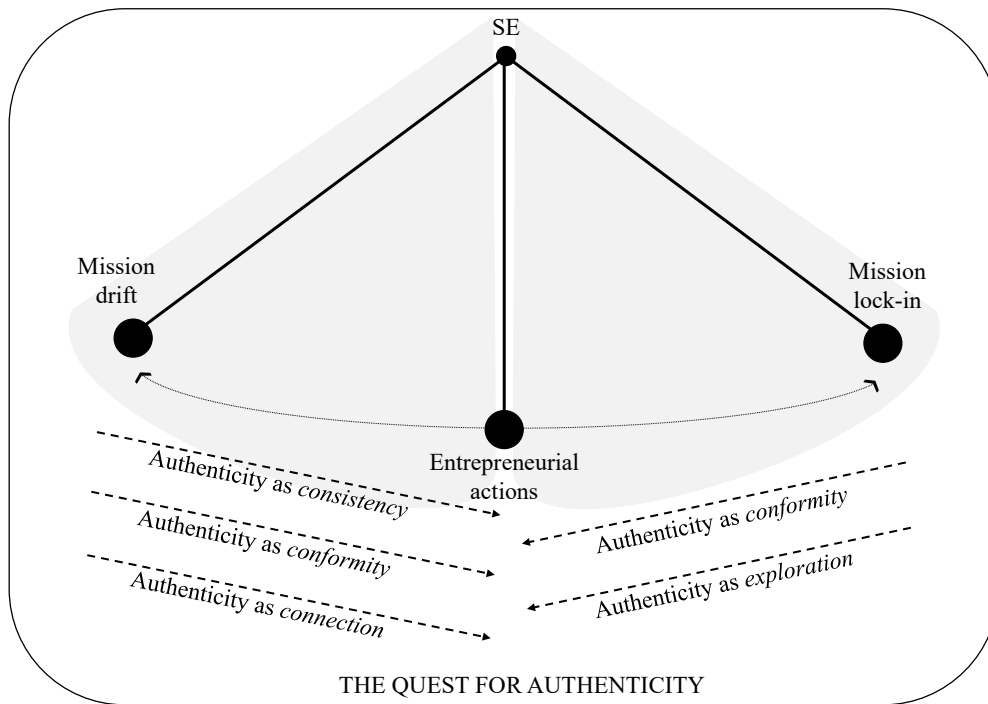
1 **Table 2.** Data structure.
2

First-order concepts	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
Being true to oneself Walking the talk	Authenticity as consistency	
Behaving as a SE Applying for B-Corporation certification Being part of an ecosystem Alignment with impact tourism	Authenticity as conformity	Constructs of authenticity in SEs
Uniqueness of the place Connection with the locals	Authenticity as connection	
Creating and generating a new self Re-inventing from past experiences Sitting on the edge	Authenticity as exploration	
Willingness to forgo investors Avoidance of unethical possibilities Selection of the right partners Acceptance that the 'gold model' does not fit	Dodging mission drift	Entrepreneurial actions to navigate mission drift and mission lock-in in SEs
Awareness of the importance of scaling up No trade-off between impact and money in the long term Making a profit is not a sin	Dodging mission lock-in	

3

1 **Figure 1.** The interplay of authenticity and mission drift/mission lock-in.

2



3