Degree Thesis

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A qualitative case study on the Swedish Midsummer event in Tobetsu, Japan

An exploratory approach of the perception of the event in regards to the local community and the organizers

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We confirm that both authors have made significant contributions to the thesis. Hinako Sato has contributed to the collection of data by contacting and interviewing participants, analyzing the Japanese articles, translating and transcribing the results since she is the only one speaking Japanese. Sabina Mammadova has contributed specifically in Chapters 1.1.2, 1.3-1.6, 2.1.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1-3.7. Hinako Sato has contributed specifically in Chapters 1.1.3, 1.1.4, 2.1, 3.7 and 3.8. We have both written, revised and edited chapter 4.

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Abstract

The Swedish Midsummer event has been organized and celebrated for several years in Tobetsu in Japan, especially since the establishment of a sister city relationship with Leksand in Sweden. Yet, there is little to no data or literature on the event as to why Japanese residents chooses to involve the culture of Sweden by organizing such an event annually and what the residents actually perceive of the event. This research explores the Swedish Midsummer event in Tobetsu more closely in the form of a case study which involves the organizers and residents. By conducting semi-structured interviews it was clear that the organizers want to highlight the relationship with Sweden, to enable cultural interaction as well as attracting more people to the town due to its decreasing and aging residents. However, some of the residents find the event disturbing while others enjoy it to some degree.

As a case study on Tobetsu, this research demonstrates the utilization of a sister city relationship in order to differentiate the town and to nurture the relationship with the other town, in this case being Leksand, on a local level by contextualizing it in a yearly cultural event. The findings of this case study along with the theoretical framework highlights the importance of involving the residents in the organization of the event in order to succeed and reach the goals of Midsummer. In the future, there exists an interesting notion of following up this research, in order to investigate whether the goals of organizing Midsummer in Tobetsu have been fulfilled or not and if and/or how the residents have been involved in the organization process.

Key words
Japan - Sweden - Collaboration - Midsummer - Event - Cultural interaction- Community involvement - Case study
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Japan and Sweden have had a relationship since the 18th century with exchange of various people and reasons. The diplomatic relationship between the countries was established in the 1860s, which is a 155 years of diplomatic exchange as of today with embassies on both sides (Embassy of Sweden, 2023). Over the years, Sweden and Japan have had a great number of different exchanges like financial ones with trade and the main import of Sweden being timber, cultural exchanges like exhibitions and performances as well as academic relations with research collaborations and giving out scholarships to students (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023).

1.1.1. The relationship between Leksand and Tobetsu

A sister city, also known as a twin city, signifies an official connection characterized by cooperation, interaction, and mutual support between two cities. As stated by Sister Cities International (2022), this relationship fosters collaboration and assistance between the cities involved. Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines a sister city as a town or city engaged in planned activities and reciprocal visits with a similar municipality from another country. In 1955, the first sister city agreement was established between Nagasaki city in Japan and Saint Paul, Minnesota in the U.S. (Ouchino News, 2019), marking the inception of this concept in Japan. Today, Japan has close to two thousand of sister city partnerships One such instance is the connection between Tobetsu, Hokkaido, Japan, and Leksand, Dalarna, Sweden, which has facilitated cultural exchange and educational initiatives, particularly targeting the younger generation (CLAIR, 2023).

1.1.2. Sweden Hills in Tobetsu

In fact, Sweden Hills is an exact replica of the city of Leksand in Dalarna, and it is the result of a 1979 collaboration between Sweden and Japan. During a trip to the island of Hokkaido at the time, Sweden's ambassador was struck by how much the nature and atmosphere reminded him of Sweden. The creation of a "sister city" - a legal arrangement between two countries aimed at encouraging cultural exchange and commercial connections began. Sweden Hills was created as a modest taste of Sweden in Japan, attracting both Swedish and non-Swedish tourists each year (London Swedes, 2016). Sweden Hills was built forty years ago by the house manufacturer Sweden House. They sell Swedish-made wooden houses in Japan and required a location similar to Sweden to showcase their homes to potential purchasers. The green hills outside of Sapporo proved to be a fantastic match. Furthermore, Tobetsu's municipal administration was eager to collaborate with the wooden house company in order to boost the region's attractiveness (Sweden House, 2023). It soon became clear that there was widespread interest among Japanese around the country, and numerous of them desired to settle in the village. Therefore, the venue was later turned into a residential area.
1.1.3. History of Midsummer in Sweden

Both Midsummer and the Midsummer Pole trace their origins back to a celebration of the growth of spring in northern Europe. Midsummer held a significant role in peasant culture, marking a pivotal moment, while Midsummer Night itself was believed to be a realm of enchanting forces and mystical beings. However, the original religious significance of Midsummer’s Day has now largely faded. Unlike Christmas, which is predominantly a family affair, Midsummer is celebrated in larger circles of friends, often adorned with flags as decorations, a practice scarcely observed in the nineteenth century (Nordiska museet, 2023).

Moreover, the inception of the Midsummer celebration can be traced to a church event honoring John the Baptist, whose birthday falls on June 24, the initial midsummer day in Sweden. Prior to 1952, June 23 was the designated date for Midsummer's Eve. However, in 1953, Midsummer's Day was set to always fall on a Saturday to better align with the workweek, making the celebration movable between June 20 and 26 (Waltner, 2020). Also, one of the important parts of Midsummer is the midsummer pole, sometimes also referred to as a maypole, which likely arrived in Sweden from Germany during the Medieval Ages.

1.1.4 Events and its local community
Events are shaped by three core elements: an organizing entity, a chosen venue, and an engaged audience. From a tourism perspective, cultural events serve as potent promoters of tourism, contributing to the formation of a destination's image and spotlighting an organized event for a specific duration, these events highlight the uniqueness of both the destination and the event itself (Hernández-Mogollón, Duarte & Folgado-Fernández, 2018). Another aspect of events is the fact that they are frequently crafted to harness not only tourism and economic opportunities but also the social and cultural dividends they offer to the local community. Inevitably events have the potential to attract travelers, offering distinctive and exhilarating experiences that motivate exploration, potentially bolstering revenue streams and introducing fresh commercial avenues (Liu, 2014).

Since events considerably have social and cultural influence on attendees, community, exchange of ideas and engagement thus, organizing events becomes an effective means of showcasing the distinctiveness and excellence of a destination. Also, the uniqueness of an event is the fact that they have the remarkable capacity to draw individuals to a place and can even spark prolonged interest in that specific place after the event duration. Worth mentioning is that tourism events are evolving as a result of shifting thoughts and attitudes regarding values and in the future, participants will incorporate these adjustments into new behaviors, since experiences from events impact the changing of desires (Mihajlović & Koncul, 2016).

Within the notion of a successful event exists the vital component of the residents and community and when the intention of supporting an event is evident amongst the residents it is more likely that the organizers and stakeholders will achieve its goals and objectives with organizing the event in the first place (Freeman, 2010). Furthermore, it is essential to delve into the community's perspective on a tourism event, given the distinct role residents play within such events. Considering the fact that event tourism impacts locals differently compared to conventional tourist destinations since the residents are involved in one way or another. Also, while the event's location serves as an attraction for tourists, it's an integral part of the residents' everyday life. Therefore, recognizing this disparity allows for the consideration of local perception and attitudes, which in turn, facilitates the successful enhancement of the community through the residents' influence (Chen, 2011).

1.2 Problem discussion
As outlined in the background, Tobetsu, a Japanese town, has strikingly adopted the same ambiance as Leksand in Sweden, which is a phenomenon as a result of its sister city relationship as well as the establishment of the Sweden House company, which sought to introduce Swedish architectural designs to the Japanese market (Sweden House, 2023). It becomes evident that Sweden House played a significant role in contextualizing Tobetsu's Swedish aesthetic by introducing cottages and houses as those found in Sweden. Also as stated, the Japanese community within Tobetsu, known as Sweden Hills, annually organizes the Swedish holiday "Midsummer" during the summer season. This festivity draws the local community together, fostering shared moments of dining and culture (Sweden Hills, 2022). Beyond its architectural resemblance, the town has evidently embraced certain Swedish traditions such as pastries and cultural events and these practices are not merely superficial but have been embraced and perpetuated by the local community, lending a genuine depth to Tobetsu's Swedish connection. Yet, there is a missing aspect of what the local community of Sweden Hills think and experience of the Midsummer event in combination with what the organizers end goal is, which this research is investigating in order to create a greater understanding of the event. All of the literature
provided and presented in the background described and illustrated Tobetsu as a destination with a Swedish image and they indeed do mention the celebration and organization of Midsummer, however they all seem to fail to mention or analyze the perspective of the community in comparison to the organizers.

Therefore, this research will explore and provide more understanding of the Midsummer event since there is a gap in the literature. As a destination Tobetsu does indeed replicate the image of a Swedish town, but there is a larger aspect besides just the image that this research wants to find and present. How are the organizers perceiving the event in comparison to the residents? There will be interviews conducted with the people from organizations responsible for the event in Tobetsu and with some of the residents living there as well as analysis of Japanese articles mentioning the event in order to bridge the current gap which exists between the concepts of Leksand and Tobetsu being sister cities and therefore implementing a Swedish image and the need to also incorporate the Swedish holiday of Midsummer among the locals (Sweden Hills, 2022).

1.3 Purpose
The main purpose is to compare the perceptions of the residents and the organizers in regards to the Midsummer event. Furthermore, the aim of this research is to gain understanding of the experience of organizing and joining a Swedish midsummer event in Tobetsu, Japan. Through a comprehensive case study approach, the research aims to achieve a multifaceted understanding of the event itself, placing particular emphasis on examining it through the lenses of both the community and the event organizers. By doing so, this study intends to uncover nuanced insights that highlight the intangible factor of the event and perspectives between these key stakeholders. Also, by examining the event from the community's perspective and comparing it to the viewpoint of the organizers, this research hopes to find areas of alignment and difference by exploring how the event is perceived, valued, and experienced by those who organize it versus those who partake in it, which shed light on potential areas of improvement or alignment, and provide a well-rounded assessment of the event's impact. Shortly, this research seeks to go beyond the surface of Tobetsu looking like Sweden and uncover the layers of meaning and interaction that characterize the Swedish midsummer event within the Japanese community.

1.4 Research focus
Based on the problematization, lack of research and the literature gap regarding the reason of organizing and celebrating midsummer in Tobetsu, Japan and the perception of the residents, this research will be conducted as a case study in order to gain greater understanding of the Midsummer event in Tobetsu and explore the event in relationship with its sister city partnership with Leksand in Sweden. The case study will involve both the organizers of the event and the residents of Sweden Hills in order to have a small degree of comparison which enables for the identification of differences regarding the experience and expectation of the event as well as an analysis of articles published in Japanese newspapers about the event (Azarian, 2011).

Following are the research question that have been identified and are the foundation for this research and are used as the guide of the case study in order to create a comparison of the event in regards to the perception of the residents and the organizer:

What is the perception of the local community in regards to the Midsummer event?
What is the perception of the organizer in regards to the Midsummer event?
1.5 Limitations

The aspect being researched in this paper is the reasoning and perception of the midsummer event that takes place in Tobetsu in Japan yearly in relationship to Leksand in Sweden since they are Sister cities. There are countless sister cities across the globe with different prerequisites and goals, however this research is conducted between Japan and Sweden because of the authors familiarity with their own countries and the awareness of the partnership. From one case of sister city relationship and tourism development, it is merely impossible to generalize the issue and make use for other future cases. Rather than that, this research aims to illustrate the current situation by contextualizing the sister relationship between Tobetsu and Leksand by the utilization of the Midsummer event as a means to achieve a greater goal as well as contributing information by deep-focused interview and literature review.

The sample unit might arguably be small, four interviews with organizers and six interviews with residents, however despite being only four the organizers are of great importance to the Midsummer event since they have a leading role as being members of stakeholders and organizations responsible for the event. Similarly, only six residents were interviewed since they were the only ones who agreed to participate in this research but also having just a few voices of the locals adds perspective and depth to the research. However, the findings may not be generalizable to larger populations, but in this case the study is based on a small town in Japan and there is no necessarily reason to generalize (Hackshaw, 2008). Having a small sample unit, enables for dedication of more time and resources to each participant or case, which allows for more in-depth and comprehensive data collection, like interviews, and the rich data obtained from a smaller sample can provide valuable insights and understanding of the chosen case. The detailed and nuanced analysis from a smaller sample can reveal subtle patterns, themes, and variations that could otherwise be missed in larger studies with less devotion and focus. In this research the case study is of exploratory character where the primary goal is to gain insights and understanding of the case and the focus is on in-depth understanding rather than statistical generalization. By studying a small sample, one is able to uncover new ideas, emergent themes, and unexpected findings that can guide for further research in the future (Hackshaw, 2008).

1.6 Disposition of Thesis

Chapter one will give a background to the topic, the gap and the purpose and importance of this research. Chapter two is all about the vital literature framework that establishes the groundwork for this research and provides valuable information and theoretical concepts moving forward. Chapter three presents the methodology being used throughout this research regarding the approach, method and strategy as well as the validity and reliability of the research. Chapter four is about the findings of the conducted interviews, analysis of articles and a discussion that also finalizes and summarizes the research contributions and points out the benefits. At last, there is a conclusion of final thoughts and contributions for future research.
Chapter 2

2. Literature review

2.1 Sister city relationship in regards to events

The existence of a sister city friendship can greatly enhance and facilitate any organized activity or event of a touristic nature within a town. However, Ogawa (2012) suggests that municipalities should prioritize integrating heritage preservation into the city fabric and promoting community engagement in activities, which serves to further bolster local community participation in sister-city cooperation, especially in realms like cultural conservation and friendship. Sister-city initiatives that center on historical preservation and nurturing friendship between the partnered towns have the potential to kindle the desire of local residents to interact with their international counterparts, thus providing them with firsthand learning experiences. Consequently, the sister city relationship should be seen as a versatile tool that towns can tailor and employ to achieve a range of objectives within their specific partnership. Even the smallest towns that may not typically garner attention have the opportunity to establish collaborative projects with their overseas counterparts, fostering direct and personal connections. This, in turn, allows for diverse types of events, exchanges, and tourism activities to flourish (Ogawa, 2012).

Upon entering a sister city relationship, a city gains the ability to collaborate with other networked cities on a global platform, facilitating the sharing of experiences and the organization of new events Therefore, a sister city partnership does not only facilitates cultural interaction, diplomacy, and the exchange of ideas but also encompasses the involvement of local communities in major-scale events conducted in collaboration with partners across the world.Moreover, Ogawa (2012) mentions the pivotal role of volunteers and enthusiastic individuals in ensuring the success of a well-functioning sister city relationship since their participation is essential for the planning, organization, and execution of successful events. Moreover, community participation encourages more individuals to engage and interact with tourists in an authentic manner, aligning with the town's essence while orchestrating attractions without the veneer of artificiality that can sometimes arise. All of these factors, if considered and valued, result in a successful event which is enjoyable both for local communities as well as the visitors.

2.2 Events

2.2.1 The beginning of events

Festivals and events are now a fundamental element of human culture, developed as means of public exhibition, civic ceremony, and community celebration. Sport events were recorded by ancient historians as a prominent and prestigious kind of social activity, which peaked with the creation of the ancient Olympic Games. Festivals have been documented since the Middle Ages, when they were funded by the church, while other sorts of comparable gatherings may be traced back to Roman times
Tourism (Oklobdžija, 2015). Economic developments aided in the resolution of the employment problem and had an influence on economic growth. The influence of huge sporting events including the Olympic Games or World Championships of popular sports on the economic prosperity of host countries is the finest illustration of this. Historical study shows how events evolved from basic celebrations of people for agricultural or religious purposes to contemporary types of events, as well as their lengthy history of drawing tourists and developing the communities that hosted them as tourist attractions (Oklobdžija, 2015). There are some points that are of importance to consider regarding events and that is the fact that events are required to fulfill some things such as attract people or boost tourism, be of short length, be one-time or occur infrequently, improve a region's awareness or reputation, provide a social interaction and carry out something out of the usual (Jago & Shaw, 1998). Moreover, there are several different types of events that can be classified by different aspects such as their relationship to the community, whether or not they occur in other places or not, the size, the purpose and if they are profitable or not (Getz, 2008).

![Classification of events based on their forms](Getz, 2008).

**2.2.2 The attractiveness of events to tourists**

Inevitably, different events have different attractiveness to tourists and their reach to people outside of the community. For example, festivals are events arranged mainly for locals and frequently with the assistance of volunteers. Although the bulk of these events are modest and have little or no tourist appeal, they can nonetheless serve as an excellent chance for visitors to the region (Getz, 2008). Yet the majority of local events do not require tourism; in fact, many organizers are frightened by it and take pleasure in their activities not being marketed. That is hardly surprising given that they are communal and culturally focused, and mass tourism would likely have negative consequences and destroy their authenticity (Getz, 2008).

Then there are events of both regional and municipal importance that have the potential to draw a large number of tourists. These gatherings are rarely intended to grow in size. However, its tourism potential may be increased with the support of tourists drawn to the event and additional funding. Typically, events in this category feature a professional staff (Getz, 2008). Finally, there are events with national as well as global importance that are particularly appealing to tourists. These events draw domestic visitors and visitors from across the globe, and they can help a destination’s reputation and desirability. In contrast to local events, its major purpose is to promote the host destination’s tourism appeal as much as possible (Getz, 2008).
2.2.3. The qualities and associations of events

According to Collins English dictionary “An event is something that happens, especially when it is unusual or important” and “An event is a planned and organized occasion, for example a social gathering or a sports match” (Collins English Dictionary. 2023). Events are associated with belonging and inclusivity because they bring cultural and social significance. Furthermore, from a cultural standpoint, it covers multiple aspects such as economic, environmental, and social. Some of the social challenges include community development in preparing for the event, greater employment, but also security concerns and changes to one's daily lifestyle (Raj & Musgrave. 2009). Events are largely influenced by three elements: an organizing body, a venue, and an audience and events rely on the availability and usage of resources such as people, infrastructure, and finances as well as relationships between the management, the local communities, and participants. The quality of an event is determined by optimizing economic impacts, improving socio-cultural impacts, and minimizing environmental repercussions (Raj & Musgrave. 2009).

Events are also useful for association, communication, and involvement and cultural events are progressively being used by communities to boost their image, drive urban development, and attract more people and investments to the area (Lee, Brown, King & Shipway. 2016). Festivals and special events play a vital part in the lives of communities as they offer significant activities and spending channels for both residents and tourists, and they improve the image and social cohesiveness of local communities. The backgrounds and themes of events vary, but those devoted to eating as well as those that conserve tradition, rituals, heritage, and craftsmanship are the most appealing (Blešić, Pivac, Đorđević, Stamenković & Janićević, 2014). Usually the goal of an event is, but not limited, to bring in more visitors (especially during the off-season seasons), to operate as a stimulant for urban regrowth and by expanding infrastructure and the ability of the destination, to encourage a proactive destination image, to offer to overall marketing and to project specific landmarks or sectors (Getz. 2008).

2.2.4 The importance of events in tourism destinations

Moreover, cultural events function as tourism marketers and aid in the development of destination image since they highlight the destination for a period of time and emphasize the event and its approach (Hernández-Mogollón, Duarte & Folgado-Fernández, 2018). Tourism and economic prospects, in addition to social and cultural advantages, are frequently used to develop events. Events have the possibility to draw travelers to locations by offering a one-of-a-kind and thrilling experience that encourages people to go and discover new places, which has the potential to increase income and open up new commercial options. Additionally, events boost economic growth in destinations by stimulating local spending and supporting local companies, which could further have a ripple effect and impact on the local economy, opening up for development and expansion. Events are utilized by organizers to highlight the link between identity and location, and they play a vital role in increasing awareness since they are an important manifestation of human activity that makes a significant contribution to the social and cultural life of the communities that host them (Blešić, Pivac, Đorđević, Stamenković & Janićević, 2014).

Because tourism products are largely intangible, image is the only way a potential visitor has to compare and choose between different locations. Events are widely acknowledged as a potential instrument for image modification, and the use of events for destination rebranding or repositioning is becoming more prevalent (Liu, 2014). One could also introduce new or strengthen cultural features in places that already have a distinct image. Finally, the relationships formed as a result of event
organization have the potential to last well beyond the event's brief duration. Events may both rejuvenate and strengthen existing partnerships and by reintroducing a strong relational approach to communities one is able to provide a high degree of social interconnectivity. Events can also assist to promote and maintain local culture and traditions by highlighting the distinct offers of a certain tourism area, which instills a feeling of pride and identity in local citizens while also attracting people interested in experiencing fresh and diverse cultural manifestations. (Liu, 2014). All events in one place may be categorized using two criteria: demand (as evaluated by the quantity of visitors drawn) and value (as measured by achieving other touristic goals such as media coverage, improved brand development, and sustainability) (Getz, 2008).

2.2.5 Events as a tool for cultural transformation
Special events are described as “specific rituals, presentations or anniversaries specifically planned or designed to mark a specific occasion, cultural or organizational goals” (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, McDonnell, 2011). Even smaller regional events aimed largely at residents give a sense of identification for tourists with locals, providing a glimpse into local customs and adding to a better tourist experience. Cultural developments and tourism are inextricably linked. Culture is an indicator of the significance that an individual acquires as a result of his or her education and perspectives, which further can be altered by events since culture is adaptable and changeable over a longer period of time (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, McDonnell, 2011).

Events result in significant social as well as cultural influence on attendees, such as greater community joy, experience sharing, and improved community involvement. Therefore, organizing events is a wonderful way to emphasize the quality and uniqueness of an area. Events have an extremely strong ability to attract people to a location and can also create more travel to a certain location once the event has concluded. Tourism events are evolving as a result of shifting thoughts and attitudes regarding values and in the future, participants will incorporate these adjustments into new behaviors, since experiences from events impact the changing of desires (Mihajlović & Koncul, 2016). Events may serve to develop awareness and respect for various cultures by showcasing the unique customs and traditions of different populations and by bringing individuals from different cultures together one is able to participate in discourse, exchange ideas, and share experiences (Allen, O’Toole, Harris, McDonnell, 2011). Additionally, this can aid in the removal of obstacles and the promotion of understanding and empathy, which may foster involvement and engagement from individuals of diverse backgrounds, fostering a feeling of community and a sense of shared purpose.

2.2.6 Media coverage of an event and its effect on the destination
Nowadays, events include media coverage due to expanding technologies and the advertising environment. In this way, events and destinations, while existing as separate entities, yet serve one another. The destination receives media coverage and marketing and the number of event participants and visitors who travel to the location to take part in the event provides a significant amount of cash to that location and the host nation as a whole (Jayswal, 2008). Consequently, holding an event can be a very effective strategy to draw tourists to the destination. Through media coverage, events also assist in creating a mental picture of the destination in the minds of tourists who have never been there. Tourists have a variety of options, but the first thing that comes to mind is the destination that stands out based on association (Jayswal, 2008). In this case, Tobetsu is uniquely created and organized as a look alike town to Leksand in Sweden, due to its sister city relationship, which is highlighted in media which further distinguishes the destination among others thanks to the organization of the Swedish Midsummer event. Moreover, a destination is a factor that depends on aspects such as brand
recognition, perception, quality, and emotional connotations. As a result, Jayswal (2008) illustrates that having an unique destination that is highlighted in the media, thanks to curated events and marketing, influences the reputation of the destination.

Some events are brief events with lasting effects according to Roche (1994) and they draw huge numbers of visitors from abroad and these events can increase or temporarily boost transportation, accommodation, or the town in general. Destinations must therefore create an assortment of events if they want to leverage events to strengthen their presence as a unique and stable destination. Additionally, Jayswal (2008) claims that the reach and frequency of event references and media coverage have a significant impact on how the event affects the view of a destination, therefore highlighting the importance of organizing events that aligns with the chosen brand of the destination. In this case of Tobetsu, having a Swedish Midsummer event, besides looking exactly like Sweden, reinforces the relationship to Sweden and their sister city of Leksand.

2.2.7. The future of events in regards to current and future notion of success
Event tourism is a subfield at the intersection of tourism and the studies of events, and it has become intensely competitive on a global scale due to its expanding economic relevance and variety of development responsibilities (Getz & Page, 2016). The majority of the current literature focuses on just single events, their preparation, governance, organization and impact; however, due to the rise of the event industry and increased worldwide competition, the majority of towns and destinations across the globe host a variety of events that have long-term and mutually beneficial consequences, meaning that the topic is vastly complex and is required to be contextualized in regards to its specific objectives from case to case. Furthermore, Getz and Page (2016) states that the motivation for event tourism was typically tied to the appeal of visitors and tourists, related to combating fluctuations in demand, and associated with producing financial revenues, however, today events' roles in co-branding and image improvement have increased in value. Also, how to evaluate the true impact of media attention on events and locations, as well as whether image improvement leads to increased demand or growth, is a key subject of concern according to Getz and Page (2016). A higher understanding of the event experience as well as all of its components (by the type of event, environment, and administration systems) is required in order to create and organize extremely customized event experiences, which have a higher chance of succeeding and reaching the set objectives and goals of the event. There will be a need for a wide range of research methodologies and comparisons, from evaluations of event attendees to qualitative investigations of what people are seeking, meanings they attribute to their experiences, and implications on the years to come in regards to attitudes and behaviors. In this regard, the discussion of sustainability within events is linked to evaluations of value, arguments for organizational involvement, investments, opinions of the communities, and numerous critical discourse argument lines (Getz & Page, 2016).

2.3 The perspective of the community

2.3.1 Community involvement and influence on tourism events
Any type of major organized events in a specific place will inevitably involve various groups of involvement and of them is the local community and its residents. Therefore, there exists an importance of respecting their views and enabling for a smooth cooperation between the community and the organization of the event. The community can decide to give or withhold support and promotion for the event based on their perceived fairness of the organized event, which also
influences their commitment for the event (Chien, Ritchie, Shipway & Henderson, 2012). Similarly, Kaplanidou (2021) highlights in her research that the profile and attitudes of the community and its residents can assist in achieving the goals within the community based on and associated with the organization of certain events.

Moreover, based on the theory of stakeholders presented by Richard Edward Freeman (2010) it is clear that the residents play a major role for the success of an event since the support for the event shown by residents has a direct correlation with the impact of the organized event. Therefore it is of great benefit to nurture and maintain a good relationship with all parties involved. Furthermore, when the intention of supporting an event is evident amongst the residents it is more likely that the organizers and stakeholders will achieve its goals and objectives with organizing the event in the first place (Freeman, 2010). Freeman (2010) also goes on to state that within the case of sporting events the fact of overcrowding can be accepted by the community if there is a collaboration with the organizers and therefore the disturbance can in some case be accepted temporarily during the duration of the event by the residents.

Tourism events have in recent years become a vital part of developing destinations since they are specifically designed to attract visitors, create a positive image of the community and overall to highlight the destination. Also, the perception held among the residents of the event influences the satisfaction and experience of the organized event since the residents are part of the event, both as attendees and the “attraction” itself (Getz, 2008). Tosun (2006) states that the involvement of residents in an organized event illustrates the social structure within the community since it reflects the political situation of involving different stakeholders based on taxation and the private sector.

Additionally, it is crucial to investigate how the community views a tourism event due to the residents’ unique part within the event since event tourism involves the locals differently than usual tourist destinations. The site or area where the event is occurring is the attraction for the tourist whereas it is part of everyday life for the resident and by acknowledging the difference one is able to keep in consideration the perception and attitudes of the locals in order to successfully improve the community by the influence of residents (Chen. 2011).

**2.3.2 Voices of local community from over-tourism events**

Even though tourism development and event management create benefits to the local community, it could turn into disadvantages when a destination loses its control and have no choice to become an over-tourism destination. As defined by Jong, “over-tourism represents the situation where both tourists and residents feel the place is too crowded and over-visited” (2022). In Kyoto, one of the most popular tourist destinations of Japan, is now in a serious situation because of over-tourism. Since Kyoto has many touristic and historical attractions as past imperial capital of Japan, in 2019, 32.8% of inbound tourists with leisure purpose chose to visit Kyoto and that is the third post popular destination after Tokyo and Osaka (Japan tourism statistics, 2022).

Over-tourism causes 6 major impacts; “overcrowding, erosion, isolation of locals, pollution, water scarcity, cultural divide between locals”(Jong, 2022). Especially isolation of locals and cultural divide between locals could be highlighted as horrific impacts for locals. Isolation of locals refers to the increase of price such as food, accommodation fee, and public transport. This could affect local residents to leave the town and move to other places where they feel reasonable enough to live. Cultural divide means the loss of authenticity after too many tourist attractions created at the destination and they changed the standard of prices. In fact, this tendency has been happening in

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Fushimi Inari-Taisha, Kyoto. Fushimi Inari-taisha is a unique shrine where tourists can take Instagramable pictures with multiple tries, the gateway of the residential area of god. As argued by Shukan Gendai (2023), local people are annoyed by too many tourists there and their selfish requirement not to be on their camera while crossing the road. This situation might cause the worst cases such as the increase of people who decide not to travel to Kyoto anymore and exclusionary movement against foreign tourists by locals.

One of the solutions to avoid those circumstances would be controlling the number of admission by setting entrance fee or reservation system. However, those actions are out of philosophy and system of the shrine, which leads to cultural divide in the near future. Likewise, there are countless issues after the destination became an over-tourism destination. In order to keep its authenticity and identity of the destination, local municipalities need to hear local people’s opinion and keep the town safe and comfortable for locals (Gendai, 2023). Once it becomes popular globally, each tourist destination has a risk to be overcrowded and suffer from those problems, so this case study also aims to hear voices of local people in Tobetsu to deeply understand the event and current situations.

2.3.3 Event success through the perception of local communities

Local communities play a vital and multifaceted role when organizing events since their involvement and support are crucial for the success, impact, and sustainability of various types of events. Firstly, local communities are intimately familiar with their culture, traditions, and values and therefore their participation ensures that events accurately represent the local identity, making them more authentic and appealing to both participants and attendees. At the same time the active participation of communities in organizing and volunteering at events, fosters a sense of ownership and pride as they feel invested in the event's success, leading to higher levels of engagement and dedication (Chien, Ritchie, Shipway & Henderson, 2012). Also, community members often have insights into what would make an event enjoyable and meaningful for attendees and their input can lead to well-thought-out event design, activities, and entertainment that resonate with the audience. More importantly, events that involve local communities provide opportunities for cultural exchange and learning. The visitors, as well as event organizers, can learn about different perspectives, traditions, and ways of life, fostering cross-cultural understanding (Freeman, 2010).

Organizing events has the potential to develop the community itself since participating in or attending local events creates a sense of unity and belonging among community members and these shared experiences strengthen social bonds and build a sense of solidarity (Chen. 2011). Meaning that engaging local communities in events can have lasting effects beyond the event itself. It can lead to the development of community networks, increased volunteerism, and the creation of new community-led initiatives. Lastly, local communities and its residents can provide valuable feedback about the event, highlighting what worked well and areas that need improvement. This feedback loop contributes to the continuous enhancement of future events, which highlights the importance of recognizing the perception of the residents when organizing an event (Chen. 2011).
Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1. Case study

This research is conducted as a case study in order to understand and explore the organization of Midsummer in Tobetsu since a case study allows for investigation of a unique context and therefore provides a rich and detailed understanding of the chosen case. A case study is simply described as “an intensive analysis of an individual unit stressing developmental factors in relation to environment” (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p.17). Using a case study in this research facilitates a comprehensive examination of the Midsummer event by considering multiple perspectives (organizers, residents and sister city), which allows considerations of various stakeholders, their roles, relationships, and their influence on the case (Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, 2011). Flyvbjerg (2011) also explains that a case study is specifically useful in the earlier stages of an investigation of a phenomenon and the hypothesis provided by the case study can be further researched.

Regarding the first step when conducting a case study is to define and identify the unit one is interested in analyzing. This process is done in order to learn as much as possible about the case based on previous research, report and literature, which establishes the foundation for the case study and helps in the development of research questions (Heale & Twycross, 2018). In this case, the Midsummer event being held in a residential area of Tobetsu based on the literature and articles mentioned earlier it was clear that the unit being investigated in this case study is the residents and the organizers of the event.

Also, the case study enables the study of a rare case such as the organization of a Swedish event in Japan and by studying an exceptional case one is able to gain valuable knowledge that may not be available through other research approaches, which can also generate new research questions or directions for the further. Moreover, this research is a case study that is exploring the Midsummer event in Tobetsu through the perspective of the organizers of the event as well as the residents living in Tobetsu, which enables for a small opportunity of comparison in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the event since the involved parties might have different experiences and expectations which further highlights various aspects of the event such as planning and impact (Azarian, 2011). Understanding the differences can improve the event and this research can therefore be used as reference in the future for policy makers and organizations of similar events. Also, by comparing the perspectives of the organizers and the residents one is able to identify strengths and weaknesses which further enhances the event through community communication and relationship (Azarian, 2011). Simply put, by doing some degree of comparison one is able to explain and understand the process of organizing for example an event by investigating its variables (Pickvance, 2005).

An example of a recent case study from a touristic perspective was conducted by Ezgi Tekeli (2023) and is called “What does the tourism print media say about festivals? A case study on the effects of festivals on tourism”. The researcher conducted a case study by analyzing tourism newspapers and presented the status of festival news in those printed media. Tekeli’s (2023) case study revealed that the most news about festivals were printed between march and november and it also provided insight into what type of festivals that were mostly covered and in which cities. The author finalized the case
3.2 Research Approach
This research has been conducted with a deductive approach with the focus moving from general theories of the topics of Sister city events and community to the more specific case of Tobetsu (Streefkerk, 2019). Within a deductive approach one chooses the topic and begins the collection of data and theories, which this research did regarding general theory on the concept of event and the relationship between two cities within “Sister cities’. The theories collected of the topics in the literature review framed the overall theme of this research and provided a sound foundation to add on and base the findings on it.

3.3 Research Strategy
The interest for this research has been to do a case study which explores and provides more understanding of the Swedish Midsummer event in Tobetsu as a destination in Japan, and therefore a qualitative strategy has been identified as the most relevant. Qualitative research is being viewable without the numbers which enables the quality without the need of measurements (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Since this research is focusing on the understanding of organizing the event, the relevant perspective is based on exploring the Midsummer event which is yearly and the concern is on the understanding and interpreting it from the perspective of the organizers and the residents (Bryman & Bell, 2005).

3.4 Research method
The chosen method for this research has been to conduct a case study specifically on Tobetsu and the fact that they annually organize the Swedish event of Midsummer based on the relationship to Leksand in Sweden as sister cities. This case study involves semi-structured interviews with organizers of the event, residents of Sweden Hills and Tobetsu as a whole as well as an analysis of articles published in Japanese newspapers about the Midsummer event in Tobetsu. The purpose of a case study is to focus and work on one case within its environment in order to contextualize it, as described more in detail in point 3.1, (Gerring, 2004). The case study is conducted through semi-structured interviews and analysis of articles, which will be described more in the following sections.

3.5 Reliability and Validity
In qualitative research, reliability defines the credibility and reliability of the research and the researcher. This addresses the concept of later researchers following an earlier researcher's procedures and whether or not they are able to discover the same findings and conclusions. There is a need for the content of the research being conducted and presented to be of stability and consistency (Bannigan & Watson, 2009). Therefore, everything during this research process has been documented and included in the table of content and appendix and the individuals included in the case study are working within the tourism sector of Tobetsu as well as the residents who live in Sweden Hills and therefore are credible sources for this research. Validity defines how significant and relevant the conducted research is based on the chosen and researched topic and includes the content, construct and criteria of everything (Bannigan & Watson, 2009). In order to provide research with high validity the authors have chosen to implement both primary data as well as secondary data in order to further strengthen
the concept and the findings of this case study. Additionally, in order to increase the validity of this research, the case study on Tobetsu only includes individuals from stakeholders of organizations within the municipality of Tobetsu that are relevant to the researched topic and residents that live in the town and therefore can provide valuable insights.

3.6. Secondary Data
Secondary data is information that has originally been collected and used by other researchers for a different purpose and then saved in different databases for others to utilize. In some cases of research one is able to use secondary data, which is data already available, and incorporate it to the current research since it is previously collected, organized and stored information that is still valid and valuable (Hox & Boeije, 2005).

The secondary data used for this research are mainly research papers conducted on the topics that are of importance for this research and that provide a valuable foundation of understanding for the different aspects and theoretical frameworks of the midsummer event being celebrated in the Japanese town of Tobetsu since the established sister city partnership with Leksand in Sweden. Additionally, there have been articles used for this research, in the introduction section, that are from Swedish newspapers with the purpose to merely spread the unique fact that there is a town across the globe that looks like Sweden. As mentioned earlier, the secondary data for this research is merely a groundwork and provides understanding of the topic that is being further researched.

3.7. Primary Data
Primary data is information and data that one has collected on their own and it is provided through research conducted for one's own questions and is based on the current problem being researched. The primary data can always be added to the already existing secondary data to further broaden the understanding of the chosen topic. When collecting primary data one is also providing it to future researchers as means to reuse it as their secondary data (Hox & Boeije, 2005).

The primary data of this research is a qualitative semi-structured interview, which is more flexible both for the researcher and the interviewee since it allows for a natural and flowing communication where valuable data can be collected while still being somewhat organized. The questions used in the interview are pre-planned and thought off based on the literature framework of the research and topic in order to efficiently extract data and then be presented (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.8 Data Implementation
3.8.1. Method of data collection
As mentioned earlier, qualitative methods and in-depth semi-structured interviews were chosen since quantitative methods are improper to explore the voice of sample units. Being flexible and open to their opinion is the appropriate approach in this case since it provides a more in-depth and well-informed foundation of data for the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In-depth semi-structured interviews enable researchers to “have two-way communication, gain open-ended responses from participants for more in-depth information, understand not only the direct answer of the question, but also indirect background or reasoning behind the answer” (Hox & Boeije, 2005, p7).

3.8.2. Method of sample collection
From secondary data collection, some stakeholders, residents and their contacts were collected, and each of them got an email asking to be interviewed with introduction of the research. Organizers,
sponsors, and local municipality officers were chosen as candidates of organizers of the event. The residents were contacted through a Facebook group in Tobetsu of the local community, due to its easy accessibility via the internet and since none of the two researchers of this case study lives in the area. There are two reasons for those multiple choices of interview candidates. First, it enables researchers to gain diverse insights by hearing different voices from them. According to Gibbons, “interviewing multiple stakeholders provides helpful information about their context and different perspectives, allowing us to identify goals they are concerned with” (2022). Another reason is hedging the risk of not being able to have an opportunity to interview sufficiently. Since interviews could not exist without approval and cooperation of interviewees, researchers can not expect to be able to interview all candidates for some reasons. “Common potential issues related to the actual interview include cancellations, postponement, delays, issues with internet connections and power supply” (Phair and Warren, 2022, p32). Therefore, the researchers contacted more than just one stakeholder in order to have enough samples for the research as well as widen the perspectives. Also, including residents in the case study enables for a more comprehensive exploration and understanding of the case since they provide a different view and experience of the event, which further add more nuance to the case study, as mentioned in point 3.1 (Azarian, 2011).

3.8.3. Method of data translation from Japanese to English
Since the primary data of this research is the interviews with Japanese people who have connections with midsummer in Tobetsu, the interviews were conducted in Japanese by one of the two researchers who is a native speaker of Japanese and fluent in English. For accessing the voices of interviewees or academic resources in different languages, researchers need to understand not only the local language at the native level but also its cultural and social uniqueness to properly appreciate the target, with extra thoughtfulness of impossibility to find a perfect translation in some occasions (Filep, 2009). In the process of translation, supplemental explanations about terms, theory, and organization, background knowledge about the region and event, and visual information such as the appearance of the event are essential parts of clearly expressing interviewees’ experiences and voices in English. Working in a team enables researchers to interpret information successfully in multilingual occasions by gathering each field of specialization (Peachy essay, 2021). This could be argued that even though there are linguistic and cultural differences in this research, the cooperation of researchers makes it possible to overcome those differences and inconveniences. Moreover, those differences are even helpful to avoid leaving unclear parts unsolved by boosting researchers to confront and introduce every single meaning and word (Regmi, Naidoo, & Pilkinson, 2010).

3.8.4. Method of data analysis
Thematic analysis is chosen for this research since the primary data of this research is qualitative attitudinal data, which originally came from opinions of interviewees (Rosala, 2022). In the deductive approach of thematic analysis, parts of transcripts of interviews are picked up as code, and code is gathered in a group to find out the theme. For the method of coding, affinity diagramming techniques are used to visualize code and theme in a short period. Affinity diagramming techniques enable researchers to envision random information in a simple way and boost group discussion (Boogaard, n.d.). For the analysis of this research, the following processes are presented (Rosala, 2022);

1. Prepare transcript of interview
2. Read all parts from the beginning to the end carefully
3. Code the text if researchers found it important, surprising, or interesting
4. Categorize codes into groups with the labeling of theme
5. Make additional code to find out the hidden theme
6. Further assess themes and continue step 5 over again
3.8.5 Analysis of articles
Before starting the analysis process of articles one needs to establish concrete objectives and have guidelines to look for, in this case it is about the perspectives of the residents and the organizers of the Midsummer event. Also, the amount of articles being analyzed should be decided early on and is required to be in proportion to the rest of the research and the objective in question (Lynch & Peer, 2002). Articles can in some cases be more complex based on the type of article and newspapers it is, inevitably one needs to firstly know what to look for when analyzing the print media. Secondly, one is required to look for themes, as described in 3.8.4 this case study utilizes a thematic analysis, and see the development of the story within the article in order to gain a full understanding and highlight the core message being presented (Lynch & Peer, 2002). Specifically about articles is the fact that the title of the article highlights the major aspect and presents the story in a shortened format, yet in some cases there are vital aspects of looking beyond the title since they can be deceiving or have a certain motive (Lynch & Peer, 2002). Another crucial aspect is the fact that texts in articles illustrate a story beyond the short linguistic and textualized version in the newspapers and therefore the sentences are used to either validate or reject a common opinion. Due to the concentrated format, it is of even greater importance to set clear aims before starting the process and look for themes behind the words that can be proved with previous research and evidence for their selection in the article (Mautner, Myers, Gruber & Abell, 2017).

3.9 The interviews
3.9.1 Interviews with organizers
First contact to candidates of interviewees were via email and in total 15 candidates were picked up from the position of the host organization, host community, and media as most influential and involved stakeholders as mentioned by Pernecky (2015). Since this research’s focus is the goal and reasoning of organizing the event, sponsors and visitors were not chosen since this topic might be too detailed and not relevant for them. In the end four interviewees approved to be interviewed. The interviews were done online because of difficulty organizing meetings on-site and traveling to Tobetsu. Each one of the online interviews took 1.5 hours to conduct as they followed a semi-structured approach and the questions were already shared with the interviewees at least two days before the interview, which can be useful for interviewees. If questions and structure of interview is shared with interviewees beforehand, they have time to consider what they talk about (Kraus, 2022). For the reason of protecting personal privacy, the names of interviewees were changed to A, B, C, D and introduction of them and their organization are mentioned below.

(A: Date of interview, B: About organization, C: Relationship between the organization and Midsummer festival in Tobetu, D: Reason of choice E: Introduction of organizer)

1. Organizer A- Officer of Hometown promotion department, Sales Strategy Division, Tobetsu municipality
   a. 24th April 2023
   b. This department works for promotion of migration to Tobetsu, custom official works, and so on. From April they also work for Midsummer in addition to their normal works
   c. This organization is responsible of whole event management of a midsummer also directly communicates with municipality of Leksand
d. To gain perspectives especially about current situation from direct manager of the event

e. He is working at Tobetsu municipality especially for promotion of making Tobetsu more attractive for local residents, tourists, and future residents and Midsummer is one of the events he is in charge of.

2. Organizer B- Member of Tobetsu-Leksand Urban Exchange Association, Tobetsu Board of Commerce and Industry
   a. 2nd May 2023
   b. This organization manages distribution of funding between Tobetsu and Leksand for especially supporting and encouraging young generation’s cultural exchange by dispatch
   c. Indirectly supporting the relationship between Tobetsu and Leksand by helping municipality
   d. To gain perspectives of education and sustainability by hearing current situation of young generation there since those people are main target and visitor of Midsummer festival
   e. He is working as head of the secretariat of this organization, but originally he was sent from Tobetsu municipality

3. Organizer C- Officer of Public Relations, Secretary of Swedish Center Foundation
   a. 14th April 2023
   b. Having longer history than official start of sister city relationship, this organization has contributes development and friendship of not only Tobetsu and Leksand, but also Japan and Sweden for over 40 years
   c. Site of this organization is used as location of midsummer event and some workshops there are managed by this organization
   d. To gain full historical background as much as possible from the beginning to today
   e. He has been working at the promotion department there for 7 years and sometimes supports the municipality as translator of Swedish and Japanese when there is ceremony or other gatherings between Tobetsu and Leksand.

4. Organizer D- Board member of the Hokkaido Sweden Association
   a. 24th April 2023
   b. A board member of the Hokkaido Sweden Association and a long-time resident of Tobetsu Town who has made a great effort to interact with Leksand including management of the midsummer festival in Tobetsu.
   c. Hokkaido Sweden Association is an organization of volunteers which publishes the public relations magazine “Tjena!”, updates photo galleries of the beautiful landscape of Sweden and participates or organizes cultural events or concerts so that local people feel and know more about Swedish culture. In the midsummer, this organization has food stands or places for enjoying Swedish coffee and cakes.
   d. To gain full historical background as much as possible from the beginning to today
   e. She was working as a midsummer executive committee for more than 15 years and also communicated to Leksand municipality for a long time. Her love of Swedish culture and knowing lots of people in Leksand and Tobetsu enable her to talk about the long history of midsummer with multiple perspectives.
3.9.2. Organizations
The following picture is a representation of the relationship of all of the organizations that have a major role in the organization of Midsummer in Tobetsu, towards the municipality of Tobetsu. Also, all of the interviewees are from these stakeholders, which highlights their relevance for the research and the reasoning of choosing them as samples for interviews.

![Representation of the stakeholders and organizations in the municipality of Tobetsu that are involved in the organization of the Midsummer event (Tobetsu Municipality, 2023)](image)

3.9.3 Interviews with residents
23 residents of Tobetsu including residents who live in Sweden Hills were contacted from a facebook group and six of them agreed to be interviewed for 30 minutes online. Interviewees were provided a question list at latest one day before the interview. Question list consists of 10 questions based on tendency of participation, communication with organizers, respect from organizers and tourists, commitment, positive and negative impacts, degree of acceptance of overcrowding, future insights of support for longer continuation of the event. Those questions were formed based on literature review of chapter 2.3.1 and mentioned at appendix, in the end of this paper.

Interview was established in the same method of organizers’ interview, which is semi-structured interview, and considering the limitation of time and resources, those interviews were shortened to 30 minutes and held online since it was hard to visit their place one by one. For the multiple entering points, first contact was made from social media. Resident A, B, C, and D are residents of Sweden Hills and Resident E and F live in other parts of Tobetsu.

- **Resident A**
  - Female
  - 43 years old
  - Interviewed 5th June 2023
- **Resident B**
  - Female
  - 58 years old
- Interviewed 11th June 2023
- Resident C
  - Female
  - 69 years old
  - Interviewed 7th June 2023
- Resident D
  - Female
  - 38 years old
  - Interviewed 6th June 2023
- Resident E
  - Male
  - 72 years old
  - Interviewed 10th June 2023
- Resident F
  - Male
  - 68 years old
  - Interviewed 6th June 2023

3.9.4 Choice of articles to analyze
There are 10 articles chosen for analysis and they are of different types in order to bring variation and nuance to the case study, which showcases the topic from different perspectives and with various motives (Lynch & Peer, 2002). The articles analyzed are mainly from local newspapers in Hokkaido and some personal blogs from the area, these are chosen to specifically highlight the views of the locals since they are the main ones involved and influenced by the Midsummer.

Local newspaper
- Hokkaido Newspaper
- MINKEI (Sapporo Keizai Newspaper)

Local website for tourists
- Hokkaido Labo
- Living Sapporo
- Tobetsu Town Tourist Association

Travel review site
- 4 travel
- Kinarino

Personal blog
- Design Studio Shimada
- Højskole Sapporo & Hokkaido "Kizokuyaki"
- Tsujiinomura Construction Insudtry Co.
3.10 Ethical Considerations
This research is based and conducted with respect and consideration of the “The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity” which acts as a structure for self-monitoring in all scientific and academic fields, as well as in all research contexts, for the European research community. The European Commission recognizes the Code as the baseline content for all EU-funded research initiatives, as well as a model for researchers and organizations throughout Europe (All European Academies. 2017).

The fundamental principles of research integrity underpin good research processes. They direct researchers' work as well as their involvement with the practical, ethical, and philosophical problems that come with research (All European Academies. 2017). These principles, which also have been the guide in this research, are the following:

- Reliability in assuring research quality, as evidenced in the design, methodology, analysis, and resource usage.
- Honesty in creating, carrying out, reviewing, reporting, and sharing research in a clear, fair, complete, and unbiased manner.
- Respect for peers, collaborators in research, society as a whole, cultural heritage, and the environment.
- Accountability for the research from concept to publication, its administration and organization, education, guidance, and mentorship, and its broader implications.

Moreover, this research has also considered the rules and regulations of ethics provided by Dalarna University in order to follow a good research practice. Therefore, there are considerations and rules being respected in this research regarding the storage of materials, obtaining consent from all participants, distributing information and much more (Dalarna University, 2023)

Also, in order to respect everyone's privacy, none of the names or personal information of the interviewees are mentioned in this research, since the qualitative focus is on their perspective and thoughts on the topic and nothing else.
Chapter 4

4.1. Findings
The findings in this research are based on the case study of four interviews with organizers, six interviews with residents and analysis of 10 articles. The data have been analyzed using a thematic analysis since the primary data of the research is qualitative attitudinal data, which originally came from opinions of interviewees. The transcripts of the interviews have been translated to English and then read multiple times by the researchers in order to identify codes and themes that would explain the overall purpose and explore the perception of the residents in the organization of Midsummer in Tobetsu.

Note: the page number provided after each quote is the page number from the document of the translated and transcripted interviews as well as from the articles being analyzed in part 4.1.3.

4.1.1 Findings from interviews with organizers
The perception of the organizer in regards to the Midsummer event is based on mainly the following two points:

- The locals in Tobetsu
- The visitors

The first point one includes factors such as “Too noisy and crowded for residents at Sweden Hills”, “Do not understand the reasoning” and “Not familiar with the concept of sister city” and some of the quotes mentioned by the organizers are the following:

“...tourists invade their residential area and take photos of their homes. We actually get complaints from them every year regarding noise pollution during Midsummer. After all, Tobetsu is destination for tourists, and home for others” (p.3).

“There used to be an atmosphere of "what's the point of” Midsummer” (p.3).

“They don't know that Tobetsu is in a friendship with a sister city in Sweden and we want to spread awareness” (p.6).

The next point includes factors such as “Locals and tourists from the rest of Japan” and “Lack of parking and capacity” and some of the quotes mentioned by the organizers are the following:

“...more visitors means more interest in Tobetsu, which is a priority for us. Tobetsu has a decreasing population and we need more younger people” (p.5).

“...they come with a car and there is a limited space for parking, unfortunately” (p.6).
4.1.2 Findings from interviews with residents
The perception of the residents in regards to the Midsummer event is based on mainly the following three points which also highlight different levels of interest for the event itself:

- Disturbance
- Indifference
- Interest

The first point includes factors such as “crowds”, “noisy” and “safety” and some of the quotes mentioned by the residents are the following:

“I don't mind the event but there are too many people...” (p.1).

“I moved here 12 years ago because it was quiet but now I don't enjoy the attention and noise” (p.2).

“There are always people outside taking pictures of my home, which I don't like for the safety of my kids” (p.2).

The second point includes factors such as “No involvement” and “Not minding” in regards to the event and some of the quotes mentioned by the residents are the following:

“I am not involved in the event but some of my neighbors participate yearly” (p.2).

“It is only for a day, so I don't have much opinion about the Midsummer event” (p.3).

The third point includes factors such as “Awareness of Sweden”, “Participating” and “Excitement for Midsummer” in regards to the event and some of the quotes mentioned by the residents are the following:

“...also now I know about the friendship with Sweden” (p.1).

“The event is interesting since there is usually not much happening here. Also, my kids are always looking forward to attend Midsummer” (p.2).

“...you can tell that they put in a lot of effort into the event and I would love to visit a real Midsummer in Sweden one day” (p.2).
4.1.3. Findings from articles about Midsummer in Tobetsu

Local newspaper reported the popularity of midsummer in Tobetsu with a specific number of visitors.

“In the town of Tombetsu, the "Midsummer Festival," a reenactment of a traditional Scandinavian event, was held, attracting about 6,000 visitors, twice as many as in the previous event in 2019.” (Imaseki, 2023, p1).

During the pandemic, there was also an article mentioning an alternative to midsummer since it was canceled because of Covid-19.

“Since the Midsummer Festival was canceled like last year due to the spread of the new coronavirus infection, roadside station decided to sell Scandinavian food and beverage and set up a Scandinavian booth at their place so that people can feel Sweden during Midsummer Festival season” (MINKEI, 2021, p2).

Some articles targeting tourists introduce the background of the roadside station, where the Midsummer festival is held after the pandemic.

“Thanks to the relationship with Leksand, Sweden as a sister city, this roadside station offers lots of experiences that you feel in Sweden while you are in Hokkaido” (Hokkaido Labo, 2023, p1).

“Midsummer is the event that was started from sister city relationship with Leksand, and that is the only authentic nordic midsummer festival in Japan” (Tobetsu Town Tourist Association, 2023, p1).

In addition, some articles review the Midsummer as visitors and mention what they like about the event.

“The woman who wore Swedish traditional clothes told us how to dance around the maypole, so I really liked the welcoming atmosphere of the event, and the dance was actually easy enough for all visitors” (4 travel, 2015, p1).

“There was a public wedding of a lovely couple and the atmosphere was so romantic” (Living Sapporo, 2019, p2).

On the other hand, some shortcomings of the event were also mentioned by visitors, especially about the location and transport.

“I could not use the shuttle bus because it was already full. It was a bit unfortunate that there were different events at the same place and that made traffic even more complicated” (4 travel, 2015, p2).

“I came by car but there was no place to park my car so I needed to walk to the shuttle bus stop” (Tsujinomura Construction Industry Co., 2022, p1).
4.2. Discussion

This research has looked at a case study of Tobetsu in Japan in order to investigate the organization of the Swedish Midsummer event annually, despite only having Japanese residents. The previous literature highlights the relationship between Tobetsu in Japan and Leksand in Sweden as sister cities and the fact that the town of Tobetsu looks identical to typical Swedish towns, yet the current literature did not provide any in depth information about the event, neither from the perspective of the organizers or the residents. There are many questions as of previously of the Midsummer event in Tobetsu and a need to explore and understand it more since it is a Swedish event that they organize and celebrate yearly that has nothing to do with the culture of Japan (Sweden Hills, 2022).

Through four interviews with organizers it was found that “the locals in Tobetsu”, and “visitors” were the main points mentioned multiple times regarding the Midsummer in Tobetsu. Each point (code) illustrates different elements and themes such as not having major support from Leksand for the event, complaints from residents and having around 5000 visitors as of the previous year. Nextly, the six interviews with the residents illustrate three different groups of perception of the event. “Disturbance”, “indifferent” and “excitement” are the codes that describe each group, the first one finding the Midsummer event disturbing, the second one not really having an opinion on it and the last one being interested about the event as well as Sweden.

All in all, during the interviews it was evident that all of the organizers saw a greater purpose of organizing such a cultural event and all of them mentioned similar statements. There is an underlying purpose of cultural interaction with Sweden, highlighting the relationship with Leksand, entertaining the locals and tourists as well as making the aging and decreasing population more sustainable by attracting more people, for the larger perspective and a greater benefit of organizing the event despite the temporary complaints from the residents. It is evident that the organizers want to highlight their sister city relationship with Leksand and based on the decreasing and aging population in Tobetsu the organizers are willing to continue to organize the event in order to attract more visitors and therefore increasing the possibility of having more people, especially younger ones, move to the town. This case study illustrates the perceptions, which were investigated and guided by the research questions, of the two groups with significance in the Midsummer event, more precisely the residents and the organizers, which all seemingly have some of the same perceptions and experiences of the event. However, there are differences that are of significance and should be considered moving forward with the event.

Much like the findings of Gil’s research in 2020, the organizers of the Midsummer event have demonstrated the significance of emphasizing the connection with Leksand, their sister city. This approach is essential for nurturing and celebrating international collaboration between these two small towns located on opposite sides of the world and this strategy not only benefits the friendship but also engages the local communities in the global initiative of sister cities. Cultural exchanges in Tobetsu can play a pivotal role in fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the distinct cultures of these two cities, which in turn, contributes to building stronger relationships among the residents of these towns. Furthermore, by hosting collaborative events and festivities, the bond between the two cities is reinforced, underscoring the value of their relationship. Echoing Ogawa’s insights from 2012, involving the local residents and adopting a personalized approach are crucial elements in cultivating a successful sister city partnership, which is precisely what Tobetsu is accomplishing by organizing a
Swedish-themed event tailored to its Japanese inhabitants. Considering the fact that Sweden and Japan have had a long history of friendship and diplomatic exchange it is of value to continue the friendship by nurturing all aspects of it by also providing a cultural interaction amongst the communities and as stated by the Reitaku University, (2015) there exists a need of understanding and willingness of helping each other in a case of unexpected disaster, which therefore requires an understanding on all levels, meaning not just on state level but also among the residents. Another point is the decreasing population in Tobetsu and the organizers hope of attracting more people by having the Midsummer event, since it is a unique event in comparison to everything else in Japan and just like Li, (2014) mentioned there is a greater chance of attracting more people if something new and fresh is presented and provided.

However, these goals and objectives cannot be fulfilled without the cooperation and positive perception of the current residents. First of all Blešić, Pivac, Đorđević, Stamenković & Janićević, (2014) highlight the importance of friendship among locals and visitors as a key factor of the success of an event and if the resident of Sweden Hills continue to complain and find the event as disturbing then there is unfortunately a small chance of implementing the objectives of the organizers and the municipality of Tobetsu. This case study demonstrates the presence of a certain level of unease among residents regarding the event. Therefore, in order for the Midsummer event to maintain a positive and meaningful trajectory in the future, it is crucial that the organizers take into account the local attitudes. Kaplanidou (2021) asserts that this approach holds significance when striving to achieve communal objectives. Furthermore, the greater the level of resident involvement in the event, the higher the likelihood of its success, as emphasized by Chien, Ritchie, Shipway, and Henderson (2012), which is based in the fact that residents possess the agency to choose whether to extend their support to the event or withhold it. The active engagement of the local community becomes pivotal for the event's outcomes.

Also, as stated by Getz and Page (2016) in their research it is of great vitality to evaluate the event in regards to the community and the media coverage in order to gain a full understanding and organize custom made events that lead to growth within the town. Luckily this case study included and explored both the perception of the residents and the overall attitude portrayed of the Midsummer event in Japanese print media. Additionally, according to Getz and Page (2016), sustaining events necessitates and success is by integrating local attitudes and behaviors, as well as acknowledging the investment and value tied to event organization. In the context of this study, evaluating event perception becomes a critical means to enhance success. This research’s insights and findings, which can be viewed as a condensed assessment of the Midsummer event due to its consideration of multiple stakeholders (organizations, residents, and media), unmistakably reveal the untapped potential for the Midsummer event's further expansion. Moreover, acknowledging and addressing the local community's attitudes and experiences in a structured organizational manner holds the key to unlocking this growth potential.
Based on the explorations and understandings of this case study it would be recommended for the organizers of the Midsummer event to include the residents by applying a more collaborative approach. Especially considering the fact that Freeman (2010) claims that a cooperation can lead to some degree of acceptance from the community regarding overcrowding if only they are involved and feel heard during the duration of the event, which is coincidentally one of the complaints of the residents found in this case study. Therefore, it is encouraged to include the residents in the planning and organization process of the event, both for the Midsummer event in Tobetsu but also other similar scale events that take place in a residential area or merely an area with a large number of locals. Especially since this case study has explored the perceptions of the residents in Tobetsu, which previously wasn't as known as the objectives of the organizer who mainly focuses on the relationship with Leksand. The community and its residents on the other hand, has a more close and personal view of the event that can be easily neglected but this research tried to shine some degree of light on their perceptions in combination with the organizer. The comparison aspect of this case study in regards to both parties and its foundation based on the aim and research question successfully showcases the Midsummer event from an authentic view and not merely as an far away event, giving opportunity to include the residents whom hopefully can further be included in the organization of future Midsummer events.

4.3. Conclusion
This case study has been exclusively centered on Tobetsu, Japan, and its uniqueness of organizing a Swedish Midsummer event, despite being home solely to Japanese residents and the primary aim of this research was to look deeper into the event, surpassing the current insights provided by existing literature. Arguably, the aim has been effectively realized through an explorative case study, which involved new and interesting perspectives that enrich the discourse of this specific topic. Yet, a lot of the findings of this study align with prior research, particularly in relation to the pivotal role of community involvement and events as catalysts for transformative experiences. Moreover the research question surrounding the community's and organizers' perceptions, this study has indeed brought these aspects to the forefront and shared viewpoints have emerged between the two parties, underlining areas of mutual understanding. However, an unexpected finding from this research was the agreement among the organizers that the residents held reservations about the Midsummer event due to concerns about crowds and disruptions, which inevitably was echoed by the residents themselves. However, despite this sentiment, the organizers choose to continue, driven by a broader purpose and objective.

The findings of this research build on existing literature and research on the topic of using events as a tool to sustain and develop destinations, both for residents and visitors, by highlighting their uniqueness. Also, this research further strengthens the notion of maintaining and nurturing an already existing relationship between cities and countries by involving cultural interaction on a local level among residents and not just on international and diplomatic levels. Additionally, this research illustrates the importance of explaining and showcasing the benefits of a sister city partnership to all parties involved, especially the locals, since in this case the residents are reminded of the partnership with Sweden on a yearly basis because of the Midsummer event but more importantly to include the residents a keep a collaborative approach in order to succeed and fulfill the goals of the event in the first place and to ensure the realization of event objectives and cultivates a sense of shared accomplishment. Yet, there is an importance of recognizing the fact that this research and case study is based on the perception of the people in Tobetsu and therefore might not be completely applicable in all instances.
Furthermore, there is immense value in revisiting Tobetsu through a similar study in a few years' time in order to discover the persistence of the findings from this research and assess any shifts in resident perceptions after several additional years of Midsummer celebrations. Additionally, it would also offer insight into whether the organizers have successfully integrated the residents within the community and the outcomes of such efforts. Given that this case study embraces both the organizer's and resident's perspectives, as guided by the research questions, it presents a unique opportunity to enhance the event's framework by incorporating the community's experiences and expectations in a respectful manner, the event can be elevated. Policy makers can leverage these insights to refine the Midsummer event into a more impactful and transformative experience for all stakeholders by acknowledging the community's standpoint rather than sidelining it, thus fostering a collaborative process that enriches the event's overall impact. Especially since the research questions showcased the focus being on the perception of both parties, which now has been highlighted, and therefore the perceptions should be used in the advantage as well as in benefit of the event within the community.
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APPENDIX

Interview Questions to organizers

- What year did you start organizing/celebrating Midsummer?
- Why did you decide to organize/celebrate Midsummer?
- What kind of support did Midsummer in Tobetsu get from Leksand?
- How many visitors are local and tourists from outside of Tobetsu?
- Do you think there are any positive impacts of Midsummer?
- Do you think there are any negative impacts of Midsummer?
- What is the feedback that you receive about Midsummer?
- What is the final goal of being part of Tobetsu for your organization or for you as an individual?
- What is the future goal of organizing/celebrating Midsummer?

Interview Questions to residents in Tobetsu

- For how long have you lived in Tobetsu?
- Do you attend the Midsummer event?
- Do you feel involved in the organization of the event?
- Do you feel that there is a sense of respect for residents from organizers?
- Do you feel that there is a sense of respect for residents from tourists?
- Have you ever supported Midsummer and if yes, what did you do?
- Are there any positive impacts of Midsummer?
- Are there any negative impacts of Midsummer?
- Would you like for Tobetsu to continue with Midsummer in the future?
- Is there anything that needs to change regarding the organization of the event?