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ANALYZING THE EFFECT OF THE EXPANDED SERVICESCAPE ON
VISITOR´S SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY IN MUSEUMS

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INDEX OF TABLES

INDEX OF FIGURES

RESUMEN

1. Justificación y objetivos de la tesis

La presente tesis doctoral se centra en estudiar el impacto que tiene el servicescape o entorno de servicios en el comportamiento posterior a la visita a museos y exposiciones de arte. Un trabajo que se ha desarrollado en el marco de las actividades del Programa de Doctorado en Marketing de la Universidad de Valencia.

El sector del arte y la cultura en Europa ha contribuido en gran medida al bienestar económico y social de las comunidades. Según Eurostat (2020), las actividades culturales representaron casi el 3,9% del empleo de la Unión Europea en 2018 (8,4 millones de puestos de trabajo). En concreto, en el caso de Italia, el sector cultural contribuye al 1,7% del PIB nacional (27.000 millones de euros) con más de 250.000 empleados (ISTAT, 2021).

En cuanto a la demanda, casi dos tercios (63,7%) de la población de la UE mayor de 16 años participó en una actividad cultural en los últimos doce meses (Eurostat, 2020). En Italia las estadísticas coinciden con la media de la UE, y el 64,9% de su población participó en 2019 en una actividad cultural durante los doce meses anteriores (ISTAT, 2020).

En este contexto, los museos desempeñan un papel importante en el apoyo a la conservación del patrimonio cultural e histórico, el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico, así como el debate y la difusión de cuestiones existentes como los derechos y libertades humanas y civiles, la desigualdad de ingresos, el acceso a los servicios y la educación

(Blake, 2018). La Comisión Europea (2020) señala el valor y el impacto de estas instituciones en el bienestar individual y comunitario. Además, los museos contribuyen a la economía local ofreciendo puestos de trabajo, siendo centros de atracción y reactivando las comunidades donde se encuentran. Por tanto, los museos son elementos vitales de nuestras comunidades (Hein, 2005).

Según la UNESCO (2022), el número de museos en todo el mundo ha pasado de 22.000 en 1975 a 95.000 en la actualidad, habiendo en Europa 25.033. En concreto, Italia, con 4.812 museos es el segundo país después de Alemania (Eurostat, 2020). En términos de visitantes, a pesar de una fuerte disminución debido a la pandemia mundial, en 2020 el número de personas que visitaron los 20 museos más importantes de Europa alcanzó los 10 millones (Eurostat, 2020).

La participación en actividades culturales ha recibido gran atención por parte de la literatura académica. Esta se ha centrado en gran medida en el estudio de su relación con las características sociodemográficas de los individuos como el género, la edad, los ingresos y el nivel educativo (Swanson et al., 2008). En este sentido, algunos autores han pretendido describir el perfil del espectador medio de actividades artísiticas, siendo identificado como un individuo con mayores niveles de educación formal (O'Hagan, 2017; Booth, 2014) e ingresos y mayor edad, caucásico y mujer (de Esteban Curiel et al., 2012; Keneay, 2008). Se ha demostrado también que las personas con ocupaciones relacionadas con las industrias culturales y la educación tienden a ser espectadores más frecuentes (Borgonovi, 2004).

Además, varios estudios se han centrado en la elaboración del perfil del público en el contexto de los museos, a partir de variables sociodemográficos como la edad, el nivel de educación, la residencia y la nacionalidad (Harrison y Shaw, 2004), mostrando una fuerte correlación entre estas y la probabilidad de visitar un museo (Kawashima, 1998). Sin embargo, la asistencia o participación en museos se ha estudiado también desde otros puntos de vista como la sociología (Friedman et al., 2015; Hanquinet, 2013), la economía (Cuffe, 2018; Cellini y Cuccia, 2013) y el marketing (Ruiz-Alba et al., 2019; Forrest, 2013). En relación con esto último, destaca la discusión y estudio de la participación en museos desde el marketing de servicios (Agostino y Arnaboldi (2021). En concreto, la experiencia y la inmersión de los consumidores han jugado un papel importante en la literatura en dicho contexto (Carù y Cuadrado-García, 2020; Carù y Cova, 2006) y, dentro de ella, los efectos del entorno donde se desarrolla el servicio (Forrest, 2013).

Los estudios sobre entornos de servicios muestran cómo el contexto externo afecta en gran medida a las intenciones de comportamiento de los individuos (Park et al., 2019). En este sentido, el concepto inicial de servicescape introducido por Bitner (1992) consideraba los aspectos tangibles de la experiencia, como los olores, los ruidos, los colores, la disposición o la señalización y su influencia sobre la experiencia de consumo. Sin embargo, investigaciones posteriores han demostrado cómo otros elementos, como la presencia de otras personas, la cantidad de información y otros aspectos intangibles, pueden afectar a los consumidores en el espacio de consumo

(Line y Hanks, 2019). En este sentido, Rosenbaum y Massiah (2011) desarrollaron un modelo de servicescape ampliado, incluyendo más estímulos externos que pueden influir en los consumidores en un entorno de servicio. Con todo, identificaron cuatro dimensiones para estudiar el comportamiento del consumidor en estos entornos. Son las siguientes: física, social, natural y socialmente simbólica. Sin embargo, a pesar de la relevancia de estas dimensiones y de las investigaciones realizadas, la investigación sobre el servicescape ampliado sigue presentando tres limitaciones principales.

La primera limitación se refiere al contexto en el que se ha estudiado este constructo. Si bien existe una cierta investigación en los ámbitos del deporte (Fernandes y Neves, 2014), el vino (Bruwer y Gross, 2017), la gastronomía (Hanks y Line, 2018) y la hostelería (Line y Hanks, 2019), y también en el espectáculo en vivo (Tumbat y Belk, 2013), los festivales (Mason y Paggiaro, 2012) y la ópera (Tubillejas-Andrés et al., 2020), el contexto artístico, y en concreto los museos, no ha sido apenas analizado por lo que debería ser explorado más profundamente. En resumen, aunque estas líneas de investigación representan un importante paso para fortalecer y desarrollar el constructo servicescape ampliado, se requiere de mayor investigación en otros dominios para mejorar la generalización de las relaciones establecidas, con especial referencia a la de los museos (Conti et al. 2020; Line y Hanks, 2019).

En segundo lugar, aunque la investigación existente ha estudiado el impacto del servicescape en otras variables como la satisfacción, la fidelidad, las recomendaciones del público, la intención de volver y el apego al lugar (Conti et al.,

20

2020; Jang et al., 2015), los modelos existentes no han incluido conceptualizaciones de este constructo considerando las cuatro dimensiones en el contexto de los museos. Así, mientras que tradicionalmente las dimensiones física y social del servicescape han sido consideradas de forma aislada, hay poca investigación que haya considerado el modelo de servicescape ampliado.

La tercera limitación de la investigación existente concuerda con el escaso análisis de los efectos moderadores por parte de diferentes variables, específicamente en el contexto de los museos. Line y Hanks (2019) estudiaron el efecto moderador de la aglomeración en el impacto del servicescape en los restaurantes. En el sector de las artes escénicas (Tubillejas-Andrés et al., 2020) examinaron cómo las emociones median el impacto del servicescape - físico y social - en los comportamientos posteriores al consumo. En este sentido, es relevante comprender si los impactos del servicescape ampliado en el comportamiento del consumidor se ven afectados por las diferentes variables demográficas de los visitantes. En concreto, y debido a la importancia que ha adquirido la diversidad en muchos contextos (Eisend y Hermann, 2020), incluido el ámbito cultural, la orientación sexual es la variable moderadora a considerar.

Con todo, la presente tesis doctoral tiene como finalidad estudiar la relación entre el servicescape ampliado y el comportamiento post-compra, como la satisfacción y la fidelidad de los consumidores del contexto cultural. Además, se ha considerado la

orientación sexual como variable moderadora en esta relación. En particular, los objetivos específicos que se pretenden alcanzar en esta tesis son los siguientes:

1. Revisar los estudios académicos sobre el comportamiento y la experiencia del consumidor en el contexto del arte, con referencia específica a los museos.

2. Investigar el concepto de servicescape ampliado y adaptarlo, a partir de estudios anteriores, al contexto de los museos de arte y las exposiciones, estableciendo un modelo teórico.

3. Llevar a cabo una investigación empírica para poner a prueba el modelo teórico de servicescape ampliado sugerido, específicamente sus relaciones.

4. Evaluar la relación entre el servicescape ampliado (Rosenbaum y Massiah, 2011) y la satisfacción de los visitantes, al considerarse el primero un antecedente del segundo (Park et al., 2019).

5. Analizar y evaluar cómo se relacionan la fidelidad y la satisfacción en este contexto, al haberse comprobado que la satisfacción del visitante es un antecedente relevante de la fidelidad en los museos (Harrison y Shaw, 2004).

6. Verificar el efecto moderador de la orientación sexual en la relación de las variables del modelo, ante la escasa investigación sobre este tema en contextos artísticos (Henderson y Rank-Christman, 2016).

7. Plantear implicaciones e ideas prácticas para mejorar la gestión de los museos a la luz del análisis y los resultados obtenidos.

2. Revisión de la literatura y modelo teórico

El término servicescape, introducido por Bitner (1992), se refiere al "entorno físico en el que se realiza, se entrega y se consume un intercambio comercial dentro de una organización de servicios" (Rosenbaum y Massiah, 2011). Esta conceptualización perseguía ayudar a explorar el impacto del entorno físico en el entorno de los servicios, proponiéndose como un marco para examinar las múltiples funciones estratégicas que el entorno físico de servicios ejerce en el consumo de servicios (Bitner, 1992). De esta forma, se demostró que el servicescape influye en las percepciones de los clientes sobre la experiencia del servicio (Reimer y Kuehn, 2005). En este contexto, Hoffman y Turley (2002), de acuerdo con Kotler (1973), definieron el servicescape como "un entorno construido compuesto por elementos tangibles (edificios y mobiliario) e intangibles (temperatura, color, aroma y música) que pueden controlarse y manipularse para facilitar la prestación de servicios a los clientes".

Sin embargo, Baker (1987) contrastó esta visión del entorno construido para incluir el "entorno no construido" cuando definió el entorno de la tienda como un "factor social" que se refiere a los empleados y a otros clientes presentes en el entorno de servicios. Así, el servicescape representa tanto los estímulos animados como los inanimados a los que se expone un consumidor durante un encuentro de servicio. Aunque el término servicescape se ha utilizado cada vez más para referirse al "entorno ", en lugar de incluir sólo los espacios exteriores, también comprende los espacios interiores, los materiales y los elementos con los que interactúan los usuarios. Con

todo, el marco del servicescape se centra principalmente en el aspecto físico, por lo que una de sus principales críticas consiste en no integrar el papel de los elementos humanos o sociales (Harris y Ezeh, 2008; Tombs y McColl-Kennedy, 2003). Los elementos sociales implican a las personas dentro de un entorno de servicios (Baker et al., 1994) y su influencia en el comportamiento del consumidor (Tombs y McColl-Kennedy, 2003; Platania y Moran, 2001).

Desde el trabajo seminal de Bitner, ha habido un flujo constante de investigaciones con el objetivo de seguir investigando los elementos del servicescape y los constructos posteriores al consumo, como la calidad del servicio (Hightower et al., 2002), la satisfacción del cliente (Jen, Lu, Hsieh, Wu y Chan, 2013) y las intenciones de comportamiento (Kearney, Coughlan y Kennedy, 2013). Al respecto, existe un acuerdo general en que el servicescape desempeña un papel importante en la satisfacción del cliente y en la creación de intenciones de comportamiento (Kearney et al., 2013).

Uniendo varias dimensiones, Rosenbaum y Massiah (2011) avanzaron en la investigación sobre el servicescape proponiendo un marco de servicescape ampliado. En concreto, este comprende cuatro dimensiones ambientales: física, social, socialmente simbólica y natural. En otras palabras, aunque reconocen la importancia de la dimensión física (construida, fabricada) del entorno de servicios, manteniendo así el pensamiento central de Bitner (1992) y la dimensión social sugerida por Baker (1987), la conceptualización ampliada del servicescape incluye nuevas dimensiones. En concreto, plantea que un servicescape representa un entorno de consumo definido

por dos dimensiones clave adicionales: la socialmente simbólica y la natural, que afecta tanto a los productores como a los consumidores presentes en el entorno de servicios.

La investigación sobre el servicescape y los servicios culturales es limitada. Uno de los primeros estudios es el de Lee et al. (2008), quienes identificaron siete elementos que representan indicios del entorno de los festivales - conveniencia, personal, información, contenido del programa, instalaciones, recuerdos y calidad de la comida - y examinó cómo estos indicios influyen en las emociones de los clientes, en su satisfacción y, a su vez, en su fidelidad. Además, es escasa la utilización de la dimensión social en el contexto de las actividades culturales. Entre los pocos estudios realizados en el contexto de las artes escénicas se ha identificado cómo, durante la experiencia de los clientes con estos servicios hedónicos, los elementos sociales desempeñan un papel importante y deben gestionarse además del propio producto cultural. Los asistentes evalúan la experiencia en su conjunto, teniendo en cuenta el comportamiento de otros asistentes, así como del personal de la organización (Tubillejas-Andrés, Cervera-Taulet, Calderón-García, 2020). En cuanto al ámbito de los museos, Conti, Vesci, Castellani y Rossato (2020) realizaron una revisión del material bibliográfico con el objetivo tanto de conceptualizar el entorno de los mismos mediante la identificación de sus elementos, como de analizar el efecto de los elementos identificados sobre la fidelidad de los visitantes, en particular, sobre el reconocimiento positivo de los mismos.

El estudio del impacto de los entornos de servicio en los consumidores utilizando el marco del servicescape se ha realizado en gran medida, (entre otros, Kim y Moon, 2009; Morin et al., 2007; Newman, 2007; Hoffman et al., 2003). Sin embargo, la mayoría de estos se han centrado principalmente en sus dimensiones físicas, prestando poca atención a sus dimensiones humanas o sociales (Harris y Ezeh, 2008; Tombs y McColl-Kennedy, 2003). La literatura ha demostrado recientemente que otros actores sociales en los espacios de consumo compartido pueden afectar significativamente al comportamiento de los consumidores, por lo que Tombs y McColl-Kennedy (2003) se refirieron al fenómeno como el servicescape social. Este suele considerarse una extensión de la teoría tradicional de Bitner (1992) sobre el servicescape físico.

El mismo se ha conceptualizado como un examen de la apariencia, el comportamiento y la forma en que se perciben para compartir la similitud con la persona que experimenta el fenómeno (Hanks y Line, 2018; Line y Hanks, 2019; Miao y Mattila, 2013). El estudio del servicescape también ha tenido en cuenta otras dos dimensiones: la natural y la simbólica. A través de estos estudios se ha abordado una amplia gama de contextos de consumo, incluyendo restaurantes y hoteles (Rosenbaum y Massiah, 2011).

Teniendo en cuenta lo anterior, el presente trabajo pretende comprender el impacto del servicescape ampliado sobre la asistencia en el contexto de los museos de arte y las exposiciones. En consecuencia, se ha diseñado un modelo teórico para

estudiar las dimensiones física, social, natural y socialmente simbólica del servicescape ampliado y su impacto en los comportamientos posteriores al consumo, en particular la satisfacción y la fidelidad, con el objetivo final de ser contrastado empíricamente. Este modelo, con sus respectivas hipótesis, se ha construido a partir de la revisión de la literatura y los objetivos de esta tesis doctoral.

Al respecto, las dimensiones físicas, naturales, sociales y simbólicas del paisaje de servicios de ocio se han identificado como importantes predictores de satisfacción (Lin et al., 2020; Line y Hanks, 2017). Además de crear imágenes positivas en la mente de los consumidores potenciales, el paisaje de servicios ampliado puede favorecer la satisfacción del servicio (Morkunas y Rudiené, 2020). En consecuencia, se formula la siguiente hipótesis.

H1: El entorno de servicios ampliado tiene un impacto significativo y positivo en la satisfacción de la visita a un museo/exposición.

Además, en el contexto de las artes y la cultura, la fidelidad de los visitantes está estrechamente relacionada con el deseo de volver y la comunicación boca-oreja (Radder y Han, 2015; Hui, et al., 2007). Los visitantes que se mantienen fieles a una empresa tienen más probabilidades de recomendarla o de volver a ella (Harrison y Shaw, 2004; Anderson et al., 2000). Esto significa que los niveles más altos de satisfacción del cliente afectarán directa y significativamente a la fidelidad de los

visitantes. En consecuencia, se espera que la satisfacción sea un antecedente relevante de la fidelidad, lo que a su vez ha dado lugar a la siguiente hipótesis:

H2: La satisfacción de los visitantes de un museo/exposición tiene un impacto significativo y positivo en su fidelidad.

Por último, se considera una variable moderadora: la orientación sexual. Los estudios relacionados con el sector de las artes y la cultura centrados en la orientación sexual y la asistencia (Hager y Winkler, 2012), han intentado explicar las diferencias entre homosexuales y heterosexuales en esta situación (Hager y Winkler, 2012; Vandecasteele y Geuens, 2009; Lewis y Seaman, 2004). En este contexto, Cuadrado-García y Montoro-Pons (2021) encontraron que la asistencia de personas LGB a espectáculos en vivo está motivada principalmente por razones emocionales, sociales y políticas.

Así, a la luz de esta literatura planteamos la siguiente hipótesis:

H3a: La orientación sexual modera el impacto del entorno de servicios ampliado en la satisfacción de los visitantes.

H3b: La orientación sexual modera el impacto de la satisfacción de los visitantes en la fidelidad de los mismos.

3. Metodología de la investigación

Para contrastar el modelo, se llevó a cabo una investigación cuantitativa en línea a través de cuestionario estructurado. Se dirigió a personas a partir de 18 años de edad residentes en Italia, que hubieran asistido asistido al menos una vez a un museo o exposición en los últimos 24 meses. El trabajo de campo tuvo lugar durante los meses de junio y julio de 2021, recopilándose un total de de 619 cuestionarios válidos.

El cuestionario se organizó en tres partes. La primera, dedicada a los hábitos de asistencia a museos y exposiciones de los encuestados, comenzaba con una pregunta filtro para la selección de los encuestados; la segunda parte se centraba en la medición del servicescape ampliado y las demás variables principales del modelo (satisfacción y lealtad); y la última sección recopilaba información sobre las variables sociodemográficas de los encuestados. Todas las escalas de medición utilizadas se adaptaron a partir de estudios anteriores tras una cuidadosa revisión de la literatura. Para ello, se utilizaron escalas Likert de 7 puntos, de forma que se indicara el nivel de acuerdo-desacuerdo con cada ítem (desde 1: totalmente en desacuerdo, a 7: totalmente de acuerdo). Además, se incluyó una opción de respuesta adicional (no sabe) para aquellos que no podían responder.

La medición del servicescape ampliado se realizó a partir de la escala de Fisk et al. (2011). Las modificaciones de la escala fueron en términos de redacción. Se incluyeron un total de 27 enunciados. Para medir el nivel de satisfacción se consideró

la escala de tres ítems de Westbrook y Oliver (1991), posteriormente adoptada por Hume y Mort (2010) en el contexto de las artes escénicas. Los enunciados fueron de nuevo adaptados al contexto del museo/exposición. La lealtad se midió a través de la intención de volver y el boca-oreja (WOM), utilizando una escala de cuatro ítems a partir de de Zeithmal et al. (1996).

Con el fin de confirmar la estructura factorial y probar las propiedades psicométricas del modelo de medición, se realizó un análisis factorial confirmatorio mediante un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales. Para realizar el análisis se utilizó la librería lavaan (Rosseel, 2012) del entorno de programación R. El modelo incluyó cuatro variables latentes (las cuatro dimensiones del servicescape ampliado: física, social, socialmente simbólica y natural) y las 27 variables observadas o elementos que integran cada factor. El proceso de validación sugirió que se mantuvieran la mayor parte de los elementos, teniendo en cuenta las cargas de los mismos, y el valor del alfa de Cronbach. En este sentido, se optó por mantener todos las variables observadas si bien, en un posterior ejercicio de evaluación de la robustez del modelo, se decartaron aquellas con menor carga. El modelo mostró un buen ajuste.

Además, se ajustó a los datos un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales donde la fidelidad y la satisfacción son variables dependientes de un modelo jerárquico donde las variables latentes (física, social, socialmente simbólica y natural) juegan el papel de regresores independientes. El proceso de estimación incluyó especificaciones

empíricas alternativas que no modificaron los principales resultados cualitativos, lo que confirma la robustez del mismo.

Los resultados de las estimaciones permiten contrastar las hipótesis H1 y H2, sobre las relaciones entre el servicescape ampliado, la satisfacción y la fidelidad. El modelo confirma que la evidencia empírica apoya ambas: así, el servicecape ampliado tiene un impacto positivo en la satisfacción de los visitantes que a su vez tiene un impacto positivo en la fidelidad de los visitantes.

Adicionalmente, al objeto de contratar si la orientación sexual es un moderador potencial del servicescape ampliado (hipótesis H3a) y de la satisfacción (hipótesis H3b), se estimó un modelo multigrupo. En éste, la orientación sexual juega el papel de variable moderadora binaria que toma el valor 1 para individuos que se declaran heterosexuales y 0 en caso contrario. La estimación del modelo no restringido (incluyendo el efecto moderador) no muestra diferencias significativas en los coeficientes de las ecuaciones estructurales para los dos grupos. Ello se confirma con un contraste de la razón de verosimilitud en el que no se rechaza la hipótesis nula (el modelo restringido o sin efecto moderador). En definitiva, la evidencia empírica no respalda el efecto moderador de la orientación sexual (hipótesis H3a y H3b).

4. Conclusiones, implicaciones de gestión, limitaciones y futuras líneas de investigación

Este estudio ha analizado, como parte del comportamiento posterior a la compra, la satisfacción y la fidelidad del visitante, ambas estudiadas en el contexto de los museos pero no en relación con el servicescape ampliado.

La satisfacción en el entorno de los servicios de ocio ha sido ampliamente estudiada.—En particular, Line y Hanks (2019) identificaron la apariencia, los comportamientos y la presencia de los empleados y otros clientes como antecedentes de la satisfacción en los servicios hoteleros. Lin et al. (2020) investigaron también la dimensión social en el contexto de los B&B, al analizar la expectativa de los clientes sobre el comportamiento de los empleados como antecedente de la satisfacción. Otro elemento que ha sido investigado es el espacio personal de los clientes y el impacto negativo que su invasión tiene sobre el nivel de satisfacción (Lin et al., 2020). Asimismo, Jeong y Lee (2006) analizan como los atributos ambientales influyen en la respuesta emocional del visitante de un museo, lo que afecta a su satisfacción.

Por otro lado, la creciente competencia entre las instituciones culturales junto con una oferta que es percibida como similar por los consumidores (Piancatelli et al., 2020), hacen de la fidelidad del visitante un reto a conseguir. Las organizaciones culturales se ven entonces obligadas a elaborar ofertas memorables y únicas para sus clientes, diferenciándose dentro del mercado (Carù y Cova, 2015). La literatura

académica ha mostrado cómo el servicescape social, en el contexto específico de las artes escénicas, tiene un efecto determinante en los comportamientos posteriores al consumo, como son la satisfacción, la fidelidad y el valor percibido (Tubillejas-Andrés et al., 2016). Al mismo tiempo, Kruger y Saayman (2019) identificaron las ofertas distintivas, las características y las experiencias de los festivales como impulsores de la fidelidad.

El constructo fidelidad, en el contexto de las artes y la cultura, puede explicarse mediante el boca-oreja o WOM (Vigolo et al., 2019; Helm y Kuhl, 2006) y la intención de volver (Jobst y Boerner, 2011). Las organizaciones culturales pueden facilitar la propagación del WOM positivo comprometiéndose activamente con los clientes (Radder y Han, 2015), mientras que los clientes que regresan aseguran la rentabilidad a largo plazo para la institución cultural, así como para el sector en general (Jobst y Boerner, 2011).

A través de los resultados de esta investigación, podemos confirmar que el WOM y la intención de volver son elementos que contribuyen a dotar de significado al constructo fidelidad. Además, el modelo muestra que la fidelidad está influída positivamente por la satisfacción, que a su vez está determinada por el servicescape ampliado.

No obstante la investigación no pudo confirmar el efecto moderador de la orientación sexual. Sin embargo, al analizar los motivos de visita, la investigación

identificó una diferencia estadísticamente significativa en los motivos de visita entre los encuestados heterosexuales y los no heterosexuales. El componente social, el hecho de que también sus familiares o amigos disfruten de la exposición, es más relevante para los heterosexuales que para el grupo no heterosexual (Cuadrado-García y Montoro-Pons, 2021; Lewis y Seaman, 2004).

Por último, se han encontrado diferencias estadísticamente significativas en los motivos de visita por sexos (hombres y mujeres). En concreto, las encuestadas están motivadas por el hecho de que disfrutan de cualquier forma de arte y porque ven la participación como una oportunidad de enriquecimiento personal, mientras que a los encuestados masculinos les impulsa la oportunidad de aprender y descubrir otras culturas, escapar de la rutina diaria y visitar un lugar concreto.

Esta investigación es la primera que examina simultáneamente las dimensiones física, social, natural y simbólica del servicescape como motores del comportamiento del consumidor en el contexto de los museos y exposiciones de arte. Los resultados alcanzados sugieren varias implicaciones para la gestión de la experiencia y el comportamiento de los consumidores en los museos. Parece evidente que una experiencia positiva del cliente es un factor clave para repetir dicha experiencia. Tradicionalmente, la mayoría de los gestores de museos han prestado más atención al valor de la oferta cultural en sí misma, sin tener en cuenta cómo el contexto y otros elementos externos pueden afectar al comportamiento posterior al consumo de los visitantes. Los gestores de museos, y en general los gestores de instituciones artísticas

y culturales, deben comprender la relevancia del contexto en el que se produce el consumo o el servicio que se presta y su impacto en el comportamiento postconsumo de los visitantes.

Además, mirando esta cuestión desde un punto de vista educativo, un contexto que permita una mejor experiencia puede generar resultados positivos en términos de valor del propio producto cultural. De hecho, los visitantes que disfrutan de la visita prestan más atención al punto central de la misma: las obras de arte.

Por lo tanto, es importante que los gestores culturales y los directores de museos comprendan mejor las ventajas de gestionar eficazmente el servicescape, teniendo en cuenta las cuatro dimensiones del modelo de servicescape ampliado. El espacio de consumo debe aspirar a convertirse en un entorno confortable para los visitantes, estableciendo un espacio físico atractivo y acogedor. En este sentido, la disposición y los elementos decorativos deben considerarse cuidadosamente al diseñar el espacio, asegurándose de que estén en consonancia con las expectativas de los visitantes y sean capaces de mejorar su experiencia. De igual modo, los niveles de ruido ambiental deben gestionarse adecuadamente para que no tengan un efecto negativo en la experiencia. Además, los servicios adicionales, como cafeterías, comedores, baños y librerías, son parte integrante de la experiencia de los visitantes. Tales mejoras probablemente se traduzcan en una percepción más positiva del entorno físico de los servicios, que, como muestran los resultados, tiene un efecto significativo en la satisfacción de los visitantes.

En cuanto a las otras dimensiones del servicescape ampliado, en primer lugar es también relevante considerar el aspecto social de la visita. Los gestores de los museos deberán tener en cuenta tanto a los demás clientes como a los empleados, ya que los visitantes prefieren relacionarse con personas que se parezcan a ellos, que tengan una apariencia agradable y que se comporten adecuadamente. Si bien puede resultar complejo que los gestores de museos controlen quiénes visitan el museo, sí pueden tener cierto control sobre la dimensión social. Por ejemplo, el personal podría intervenir para garantizar que otros clientes no perturben la visita siendo ruidosos o comportándose de forma inapropiada.

Considerando que las dimensiones natural y socialmente simbólica son las más relevantes en la construcción del entorno de servicios ampliado de los museos, los administradores de museos deben considerar la coherencia entre la oferta artística y el espacio de consumo, en términos de valores, imágenes y símbolos que el espacio de consumo representa y transfiere. En este sentido, es relevante alinear los mensajes y encontrar un sentido coherente para el espacio. Además, crear un ambiente acogedor, que refleje la cultura y los valores del territorio y la comunidad donde se encuentra el museo o que esté en consonancia con la colección del museo, parece una acción relevante a implementar.

Este estudio representa la primera aplicación del servicescape ampliado en el contexto de los museos. Habría que seguir investigando para entender mejor cómo el servicescape ampliado puede afectar a otros comportamientos posteriores a la compra,

así como probar el efecto moderador de otras variables, como se ha hecho en diferentes contextos.

Finalmente podemos mencionar tres limitaciones del presente trabajo. En primer lugar, la muestra recoge información de individuos que visitaron un museo o una exposición de arte en los últimos doce meses. Teniendo en cuenta la situación de la pandemia por COVID19, podría decirse que quienes lo visitaron se encuentran entre los consumidores más motivados y fieles. De ahí que los resultados puedan estar sesgados en ese sentido, lo que a su vez sugiere una línea de investigación futura con la inclusión de una mayor heterogeneidad en la muestra.

Una segunda limitación está relacionada con la administración de la encuesta en línea. Si se hubiera realizado dentro de las instituciones culturales, los encuestados podrían haber tenido diferentes opiniones y sentimientos sobre la visita y algunos de los resultados podrían haber sido diferentes.

Una tercera limitación está relacionada con el modelo teórico. Aunque después de realizar el análisis factorial exploratorio, las dimensiones natural y socialmente simbólica tenían cargas muy bajas en el constructo, decidimos no fusionarlas con el modelo de servicescape ampliado según la literatura. En este sentido, el concepto de entorno de servicios ampliado podría revisarse y la investigación adicional debería analizar un modelo de tres dimensiones frente al modelo actual de cuatro dimensiones.

Finalmente, teniendo en cuenta la naturaleza de este estudio, parece pertinente replicarlo en entornos e instituciones específicas o a un objetivo concreto de visitantes para comprobar los resultados dentro de un museo o exposición de arte concretos. Por último estudios futuros podrían explorar otros factores que pueden tener un efecto moderador sobre el impacto que el entorno de servicios ampliado tiene en los comportamientos posteriores al consumo.

INTRODUCTION

The arts and culture sector in Europe has been contributing greatly to the economic and social well-being of the communities. According to Eurostat (2020), cultural activities accounted for nearly 3.9% of European Union employment in 2018 (8.4 million jobs). Specifically, in the case of Italy, the cultural sector contributes to 1,7% of the national GDP (27 billion euros) with more than 250.000 employees (ISTAT, 2021).

Looking at the demand side, nearly two thirds (63,7%) of the EU population 16 and older participated in a cultural activity in the past twelve months (Eurostat, 2020). In relation to specific activities, the first choice is going to the cinema (45,2%), followed by visiting a museum (42,3%) and attending a live performance (41,7%). In Italy the statistics are in line with the EU average. In fact, 64,9% of its population in 2019 participated in a cultural activity in the previous twelve months (ISTAT, 2020). In terms of specific activities, the first choice of Italian cultural consumer appears to be going to the cinema (37,5%), followed by visiting museums (26,1%) and attending a live performance (25,3%).

In this context, museums play a significant role in supporting the conservation of cultural and historical heritage, the development of critical thinking, as well as the discussion and promotion of existing issues such as human and civil rights and liberties, income inequality, access to services and education (Blake, 2018). In this regard, the European Commission (2020) notes the value and impact of these institutions on individual and collective well-being, as well as the importance of

identifying possible barriers or issues related to the access and participation and the need to further research (Creative Europe, 2020). Moreover, museums contribute to the local economy by offering jobs, being attractive hubs and reactivating the communities where they are located. Museums are therefore vital pieces of our communities (Hein, 2005).

The number of museums around the world has been increasing from 22,000 in 1975 to 95,000 today, according to UNESCO (2022). In Europe, there are 25,033 museums. Specifically, Italy, with 4,812 museums is the second country after Germany (Eurostat, 2020), which represent 32% of the total number of museums (ISTAT, 2019).

In terms of visitors, despite a sharp decrease due to the global pandemic, in 2020 the number of people who visited the 20 most important museums in Europe reached 10 million (Eurostat, 2020). In Italy, between 2013 and 2019 museums saw a rise of almost 41% in the number of visitors, reaching 55 million in 2019.

Traditionally, participation in cultural activities has been studied using socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, income, and education level (Swanson et al., 2008). In this regard, some have aimed to describe the profile of the average art attender, which has been identified as an individual with higher levels of formal education (O'Hagan, 2017; Booth, 2014) and income and likely to be older, Caucasian, and female (de Esteban Curiel et al., 2012; Keneay, 2008). Moreover,

people with occupations related to cultural industries and education tend to be more frequent art attenders (Borgonovi, 2004). Specifically, several studies have drawn on profiling the museum's audience, also using demographics such as age, level of education, residency, and nationality (Harrison and Shaw, 2004) showing a strong correlation between the socio-economic class of a visitor and the likelihood of visiting a museum (Kawashima, 1998). These previous studies on cultural participation (Swanson et al., 2008) mainly focus on demographic explanations. However, museum attendance or participation has been also studied from other standpoints within sociology (Friedman et al., 2015; Hanquinet, 2013), economics (Cuffe, 2018; Cellini and Cuccia, 2013) and marketing (Ruiz-Alba et al., 2019; Forrest, 2013). In relation to the latter, the discussion of museum participation from a service marketing perspective seems relevant (Agostino and Arnaboldi (2021). Specifically, consumers´ experience and immersion have played an important role in the literature in such a context (Carù and Cuadrado-García, 2020; Carù and Cova, 2006) and within it the effects of setting where the service takes place (Forrest, 2013).

Literature in service settings shows how the external context greatly affects behavioral intentions of individuals (Park et al., 2019). Bitner's (1992) servicescape concept focuses on tangible aspect of the experience, such as smells, noises, colors, layout, or signage. However, research have shown how other elements such as the presence of others, the background culture of information and other intangible aspects, may affect the consumers in the consumption space (Line and Hanks, 2019). In this

regard, Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) developed an expanded servicescape model, including more external stimuli that may influence consumers in the service setting. As a result, four dimensions were identified and used to study consumer behavior in service settings: physical, social, natural, and socially symbolic.

The physical refers to controllable, objective, and material stimuli present in the consumption space. The stimuli identified in this dimension have been grouped in three: ambient conditions, space function and signs, symbols, and artefacts. The social dimension refers to the social and human stimuli that may influence the visitor's experience. The stimuli identified in this dimension are four: employees, customers, social density, and displayed emotions of others. The natural dimension refers to the impact that natural and naturalistic elements within the service setting have on the customer. Lastly, the socially symbolic dimension refers to the ability of signs, symbols, and artifacts in communicating and conveying ~~meaning~~ to customers within a service setting. However, despite the relevance of such dimensions, research on the expanded servicescape still presents three main shortcomings.

The first limitation refers to the context where the expanded servicescape has been studied. Although extensive research is present in the fields of sports (Fernandes and Neves, 2014), wine (Bruwer and Gross, 2017), restaurants (Hanks and Line, 2018) and hotels (Line and Hanks, 2019), but also in live performance (Tumbat and Belk, 2013), festivals (Mason and Paggiaro, 2012) and opera (Tubillejas-Andrés et al., 2020), the arts context, and specifically museums, should be more deeply explored in

this regard. To sum up, while these lines of research represent important milestone to strengthen and develop the expanded servicescape construct, there have been calls for additional inquiry into other domains to enhance the generalizability of the established relationships, with particular reference to that of museums (Conti et al. 2020; Line and Hanks, 2019).

Second, although existing research has studied the impact of the servicescape construct on behavioral intentions such as satisfaction, loyalty, word of mouth, return intention and place attachment (Conti et al., 2020; Jang et al., 2015), existing models have not included conceptualizations of this construct considering all the four dimensions in the context of museums. Thus, while traditionally the physical and the social dimensions of the servicescape have been considered in isolation, there is little research that has considered the expanded servicescape model.

The third limitation of the existing servicescape research is in line with the scarce analysis of the moderating effects by different variables, specifically in the context of museums. Line and Hanks (2019) studied the moderating effect of crowding on the impact of the servicescape in restaurants. In the performing arts sector (Tubillejas-Andrés et al., 2020) examined how emotions mediate the impact the servicescape - physical and social- on post-consumption behaviors. Understanding whether the expanded servicescape's impacts on consumer behavior is affected by different demographic variables of visitors is relevant. Specifically, due to the importance that diversity has acquired in many contexts (Eisend and Hermann, 2020),

including the cultural arena, sexual orientation is the moderating variable to be considered in this thesis.

In light of the above, the current work aims at better understanding the impact of the expanded servicescape on attendance in the art museum and exhibition contexts. Accordingly, a theoretical model to study the physical, social, natural and socially symbolic dimensions of the expanded servicescape and their impact on post-consumption behaviors, in particular satisfaction and loyalty, is designed to be empirically tested.

The specific objectives to be pursued in this thesis are the following:

1. Review the literature on consumer behavior and experience in the art context, with specific reference to museums.

2. Investigate the expanded servicescape concept and adapt it, from previous studies, into the context of art museums and exhibitions, setting a theoretical model.

3. Undertake empirical research to test the expanded servicescape theoretical model suggested, specifically its relationships.

4. Evaluate the relationship between the expanded servicescape (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011) and visitor satisfaction, as the former is commonly considered an antecedent to the latter (Park et al., 2019).

5. Analyze and assess how loyalty and satisfaction are related. The satisfaction of a visitor has been found to be a relevant antecedent of loyalty in museums (Harrison and Shaw, 2004).

6. Verify the moderating effect of sexual orientation on the relationship of the variables of the model as there has been little research on this issue in arts contexts (Henderson and Rank-Christman, 2016).

7. Provide practical insights to improve the management of museums in light of the analysis and results obtained.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 "Museums and Cultural Consumption" approaches the arts and culture sector, with particular attention to museums. Moving from the definition of museums and its categorization, it discusses the main numbers related to museum attendance. The chapter continues with the discussion of the experience concept and its application to the arts sector. Moreover, LGB's consumption patterns in this context are also considered.

Chapter 2 "The servicescape in cultural consumption" introduces the concept of servicescape and its evolution over the years, from Bitner's seminal work to the most recent contributions, the expanded servicescape concept and dimensions. The chapter also describes the application of the servicescape in experiential services, including the arts context.

Chapter 3 "A model of expanded servicescape in the museum context" deals with the design and justification of the theoretical model of study. To do so, the expanded servicescape in the museum context is conceptualized. Next, satisfaction and loyalty are discussed, both from the general literature and the arts and culture standpoint. Then sexual orientation is explained as a moderating variable. Finally, the research model and its hypotheses are proposed.

Chapter 4 "Empirical study and validation of the model" describes the empirical research that has been undertaken to test the proposed theoretical model. In doing so the methodology applied is detailed. In particular, it is presented the research and questionnaire design, the adapted scales of measurement of the different constructs considered, the data collection and preparation process, and the statistical analysis strategy undertaken. Lastly, a descriptive analysis of the sample profile as well as the different constructs involved in the proposed theoretical model is performed. Then, results derived from testing our model are described.

Chapter 5 "Conclusions and managerial implications" presents and discusses the obtained results. This chapter includes the conclusions and managerial implications derived from this study, including some limitations and potential further research.

CHAPTER 1: MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL CONSUMPTION

1.1. Museums: concepts, typology and challenges

1.1.1. Conceptualization of museum

The definition of museum has evolved over the years and can be tracked back to the ancient Greek times (Sandahl, 2019). The evolution of societies and communities has contributed to the development of new approaches and discussions around what museums are and what they do, of their purposes, functions, and responsibilities. This section will move from the classical conception of museum to its modern definition and contribution based on the information provided by the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

In antiquity a museum (*mouseion*) was an institution dedicated to the development of literature and learning and included a regular cult with priests and ritual for the worship of the Muses (Moore, 2000). Museums served as centers for scholars and poets, philosophers, and scientists (mathematicians and astronomers) and until the emperor Caracalla times, they were supported by public endowment. At the heart of such an institution there were the library and the observatory (Lewis, 2011). The most famous museum of antiquity was the literary academy founded at Alexandria in the first half of the third century B.C. by Ptolemy Philadelphus, which survived for several centuries, until the time of Aurelian in the third century A.D. There was no Muse of painting and sculpture but, as in other shrines, the works of figurative art which the museums contained were there primarily in an ex-voto capacity.

The modern conception of a museum or gallery devoted to the assembly and preservation of famous works of the past and intended primarily for the edification and delectation of the general public was foreign to antiquity (Lewis, 2011). The beginning of private collecting, at least in the West, dates back to the third century B.C. when the Hellenistic rulers of Pergamum and Alexandria bought and commissioned works decoration of their palaces (Moore, 2000).

Works began to be collected for aesthetic reasons as well during the sixteenth century, first in Italy and later, about the middle of the century, also in the northern European countries (Lewis, 2011; Simmons, 2016). Many of these private collections devolved, according to Simmons (2016), into public ownership and became the nuclei of such historical and ethnological collections as those to be found in the most prominent national museums around the globe.

The public collections of today are a result of the French Revolution and the subsequent the spread of democratic ideas. Gradually, a cultural revolution happened, and the products of the fine arts were viewed as a public heritage by right rather than an aristocratic privilege: many Church collections were secularized, and treasures of dispossessed royal houses and aristocratic families were transferred to public ownership (Simmons, 2016).

Today museums represent more than simple places where objects are collected, stored, exhibited and conserved. Since the 1970s, the number of museums around the

world has increased from 22,000 in 1975 to 95,000 today, mainly due the dramatic rise in cultural tourism but also thanks to the increasing awareness and sensitivity by public authorities and private actors (UNESCO, 2020). According to the ICOM Statutes, adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, on 24 August 2007, the current definition is as follows:

"A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment."

In this regard, museums promote an integrated approach to cultural heritage, being able to support the links between creation and heritage. Moreover, they also empower local communities and disadvantaged groups to rediscover their roots and learn about other cultures, while playing a significant role in people's leisure activities and constitute important tourist attractions (Alexander and Decker, 2017; Simmons, 2016; Sandell, 2007).

1.1.2. The mission of museums

Museums are cultural and educational organizations pursuing three main goals: to preserve aesthetic integrity and excellence of cultural proposal; to increase and acculturate visitors; and to achieve economic and financial balance and social

consensus (Boylan, 2006; Chong, 2009; Kotler and Kotler, 2000). In other words, the mission of museums includes preserving cultural heritage over time, revealing aesthetic values and protecting community interests (Zan, 2003).

Museums are recognized the critical and challenging role in the protection and transmission of cultural heritage and cultural values (Cimoli, 2020; Ulvay and Ozkul, 2017). Museums developed in the time of nation building, supporting the process of creation of national identities, generating vast discussion and contested results (Bertacchini et al., 2018). In fact, these institutions gathered and displayed what was and still is regarded as cultural heritage, as well as expressed national identity by exhibiting what was declared a common and shared culture of a nation (Newman and McLean, 2006).

However, museums do not only display and transmit what is considered as national culture, but also objects and artifacts coming from other nations and representative of different culture, with the aim of showcasing the power of the exhibiting nation (Poulot, 2013). The differentiation between the national and foreign collections was made clear thanks to the special arrangement of the space, with different rooms or special section within the museum (Macdonald, 2003).

These institutions are also crucial as "keepers of the collective memory" and represent the evolution and change of cultural values (Ambrose and Paine, 2012). This purpose of museums allows individuals to relate to their region or community and to

effectively represent all groups and identities forming the community, including the most vulnerable groups (Davis, 2011). This goal can be successfully achieved when museums are open to identify challenges and observe societal changes, adapting and innovating in the interpretation, exhibition, and cultural mediation of the heritage (Bertacchini et al., 2018).

In addition, museums in Europe play a pivotal role in the society while fostering and protecting a European cultural heritage (European Commission, 2019). They are able to represent and adapt to the multidimensionality of the European context, supporting the development of a common identity in a multi-cultural society. Also, the European Union itself considers the participation and activation of the visitor together with social integration of the most vulnerable part of the society as an important opportunity for present and future museum work (Kaiser, 2011). This opens to the idea that so-called welcome culture is much more than the display and organization of artifacts but passes through the role of visitors ans co-creators of the museum (Cimoli, 2020; Burton and Scott, 2003).

Finally, museums are institutions able to maintain the vibrancy of societies through the support their cultural assets. Traditionally, having the primary objective of spreading the knowledge, they focus on activities related to collection and research and oversee the conservation of artifacts (e.g.: historical or archeological ones) (Bifulco and Ilario, 2007). Considering the strict connections between museums and the context where they are located, societal changes impact their need to evolve and

develop. Thus, these institutions are supposed to keep and display cultural heritage, to make it accessible and to transmit its meaning over the decades (Ulvay and Ozkul, 2017).

1.1.3. Type of museums

Museums may be classified according to different criteria. Among them and focused on those more relevant for managerial implications: a) the character of their contents (Kotler and Kotler, 2000); b) the purpose for which they were founded (Freedman, 2000; Vom Lehn et al., 2001); and c) the aim to be achieved by these institutions (International Council of Museums, ICOM, 2007). The subsequent classifications by using these criteria are next discussed.

a) Based on the nature of their contents (Kotler and Kotler, 2000) the following six different types of museums emerge:

1. *Museums of Art*: specialized in works of art ranging from paintings, drawings, sculptures, photographs, and others;

2. *Historical Museums*: in which collections are organized and presented to give a chronological perspective;

3. *Anthropological Museums*: whose collections typically are originated from non-Western and often by small-scale communities from around

the world, prioritizing the cultural and historical contexts of the collection itself;

4. *Natural History Museums*: institutions with natural history collections that include current and historical records of plants, natural resources, animals and more;

5. *Technological Museums*: those dedicated to one or several exact sciences or technologies such as astronomy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, medical science and others;

6. *Commercial Museums*: whose collection is characterized by commercial products, often connected to a company who founded the museum.

b) The purpose for which museums were founded (Freedman, 2000; Vom Lehn et al., 2001) leads to the following taxonomy:

1. *National Museums:* founded by National authorities and holding collections and reputations of national or international value;

2. *Local or City Museums*: founded by local or city authorities and holding collections representative of the local history and community;

3. *University and School Museums:* founded by schools or museums, representing the history and the values of the founding institutions through their collection.

4. *Research Museums*: founded for the purpose of deepening and increasing the knowledge through specific research activities around its collection.

c) Based on the purpose museums aim to achieve with their collections (ICOM, 2007), a nine-type classification is described below:

1. *Archaeology and History Museums*: those illustrating the historical evolution of a specific area, a territory, or a city in given periods of time. This group—covers museums with collections of historical relevance, memorials, military museums, archive museums, museums dedicated to historical figures, archaeology museums, etc.;

2. *Art Museums*: institutions exhibiting works of art and applied art; this group includes sculpture museums, picture galleries, photographic and film museums, architecture museums and the permanent galleries of libraries and archives;

3. *Ethnography and Anthropology Museums*: places conserving works and artefacts on beliefs, customs, traditional and folk arts, non-European cultures, colonial legacies, etc.;

4. *General Museums*: those possessing general collections that cannot be identified within a main theme;

5. *Natural History and Natural Science Museums*: organizations housing collections linked to one or more scientific subjects such as biology, botany, ecology, geology, zoology, and paleontology;

6. *Regional Museums*: those illustrating the evolution of an area large or small that constitutes a clearly identifiable historic and cultural entity, and sometimes an ethnic, economic or social entity, with collections that are linked more to a specific area than a specific theme or subject;

7. *Science and Technology Museums*: spaces linked to one or more exact sciences such as astronomy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, medicine, etc. or to specific technologies, such as building, electrical, metallurgy, etc.; these include planetariums and museums of the history of industry and science centers;

8. *Specialized Museums*: institutions given over to a single theme or subject, not in the above-mentioned categories;

9. *Other Museums*: Those not in any of the previous categories.

1.1.4. Current challenges in the museum sector

The twenty-first century has brought many challenges for museums, as Cimoli (2020) and Burton and Scott (2003) state. Among the most relevant ones: demographics; management skills; digital media; and the social experience. To support

museums at large develop and be fully supportive to the society, Samaroudi, Echavarria and Perry (2020) claim the need of investigating these challenges. They will be next addressed together with the recent impact of COVID-19 pandemic in each of the challenge.

a) Demographics

Demographic changes represent a critical warning for museums to react (Jung, 2015). In particular, the European society is experiencing important changes represented by an increasing number of elderly people which is followed by a diminishing group of younger people (Jung, 2015; Gans and Schmitz-Veltin, 2010), which has come together with the effects of mobility and migration on society (Farrell and Medvedeva, 2010).

Not only in Europe but also in the United States, for instance, population is shifting rapidly and by 2050, the group that has historically constituted the core audience for museums – whites with higher level of educational attainment - will be a minority of the population (Farrell and Medvedeva, 2010). These numbers forecast a dramatic change in museum audiences, with the concrete risk of a misalignment between the cultural offer of museums and the needs of its public (Gans and Schmitz-Veltin, 2010).

This brings numerous societal challenges already discussed in different context, for example with reference to the economy and to pension schemes, but also

relevant for museums as young people represent the audience of the future (Farrell and Medvedeva, 2010). The changing demographics of society implies different needs for products and services due to different backgrounds with regards to culture, identity and values (Murphy, 2005). Hence, for museums the task is to identify these changes and be able to represent different communities instead of concentrating only on the more traditional and conservative part of the society (Kaiser, 2011; Farrell and Medvedeva, 2010).

b) Management skills

Museums' new business models and measures of success, as well as new approaches and ideas to connect to their audiences and provide access to their collections in a meaningful way have gained in importance for last years, due to the considerable drop of visitors´ levels (Pennisi, 2020; Samaroudi et al., 2020), a phenomenon that has increased as for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under this new situation, the effects on museums across the globe have been visible on operational and structural levels (NEMO, 2020). Continuous closings and reopens along with strict and safe hygiene protocols to keep both visitors and staff safe, have represented and put a lot of stress on museums, magnifying the discussion aroung their role, structure, and functioning (Pennisi, 2020).

A research on European museums carried out by the Network of European Museum Organizations (NEMO, 2020) showed that the COVID-19 pandemic has

increased the existing gaps and differences in the museum world. Specifically, it has showed how the risk of decreasing or deleting activities or even permanent closure of museums is directly related to the lack of skills, knowledge, flexibility, and agile structures, as well as diverse sources of income. On the other hand, other museums have reacted to the situation joining their community in the effort to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, through the engagement in digital activities and offering alternative forms of learning (Pennisi, 2020; Samaroudi et al., 2020).

Thus, the lack of management skills in cultural institutions and museums is not new for the sector and has been discussed for many years (Decker-Lange, 2018). However, a time of global crisis has highlighted the limitations, particularly in terms of digital strategy and core competences of the internal staff (Pennisi, 2020). According to Pennisi (2020), who has studied the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on museums with particular attention to the need of managerial skills and competences, 80% of museums need further support with the digitalization process and transition. Of those museums, the most urgent support is needed in building a digital strategy (44.6%), followed by the need for new digital infrastructure (23.2%) and training of staff (18.7%).

c) Digital media

Since the early 2000, museums have begun to build their digital presence, first through websites to learn about activities and exhibitions and then through the

digitalization of collections (Pop and Borza, 2016). In other words, the internet provides an opportunity for virtual visitors to interact with the museum and gain further information, and for museums to collaborate and share collections through the adoption of technology (Lisney et al., 2013). In this regard, digitization of museums' collections represents one of the most common actions in this context together with offering open access to museums' resources (NEMO, 2020). These efforts have proven to bring great value to the work of professionals, academics, and artists. These efforts have generated a global digital culture platform freely accessible and inclusive (Moreno, 2019; Pop and Borza, 2016).

In addition, the development of IT and digital platforms has led to a lower rate of face-to-face communication since many of these processes are now run digitally (Keller, 2013), opening to the opportunity of experimenting new ways to engage with the audience, sharing information but also creating online experiences (e.g. exploring collections, viewing exhibitions and video presentations as well as planning onsite visits) (Moreno, 2019).

All this has been boosted by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to an international study undertaken with 961 museums all over the world (NEMO, 2020), 93% of them have increased or started online services during the pandemic. In terms of social media, more than 75% said they have either increased their existing social media activities or started new social media activities, and 53% increased or started creating video content. Additionally, 35% reported that they have added budget and/or

resources to increase their online presence or communication in the pandemic. Only 7% of the respondents declared that they were able to hire new staff to manage the increased online activity of the museums (NEMO, 2020). On the other hand, over 40% reported that they have changed staff tasks of existing staff to managing online activities of their museum. In addition, looking at larger museums, due to the pandemic, 81% was able to increase their digital capacities compared to only 47% of smaller museums.

This is in line with Samaroudi, Echavarria and Perry´s (2020) research. It shows that museums concentrated their efforts in providing new and diverse offerings but to audiences who already have an interest on the institutions' collection and activities. In particular, museums have increased their communication with their existing audiences through the adoption of new strategies and tools, while trying to attract further audiences online. Many of the communication offerings have used collections as prompt for events, activities, discussions and more (Pennisi, 2020). However, the online presence of museums represents a great opportunity not only to explore new ways of communication and valorization of their collection but also to identify new narratives to make them more relevant to the society (Samaroudi et al., 2020).

d) Social dimension

Individualization and privatizing seem to be notorious trends in the European society, which seems to have a negative effect on democratic participation (Giesen, 2007; Beck, 1986). Moreover, public space is reducing, with a consequence limitation to the most vulnerable or underrepresented component of the society (Leggewie, 2015). In this context, museums can become place of aggregation and offer meaningful and engaging social experiences (Farrell and Medvedeva, 2010). Additionally, museums may open their premises not only for institutional purposes (e.g. exhibitions) but turning them into modern *agora,* where everybody is welcome and taken into consideration (Murphy, 2005).

Although the debate around social exclusion has thrived in recent years amongst academics and policy makers, particularly within the fields of social policy and economic development, in the cultural field it seems to be still less relevant (Brown and Mairesse, 2018; Su and Teng, 2018). Museums are being asked to prove their social role and purpose by developing new ways of interacting, working, and engaging, becoming new agents of social inclusion (Antón et al., 2018).

e) Diverse audiences

In recent years, museums have extensively discussed about the opportunities and challenges related to the inclusion of individuals and social groups such as personnel, visitors but also trustees, and other stakeholders (Kinsley, 2016; Dodd and

Sandell, 2001). This discussion has turned on the specific practices and decisions that involve the management of a museum; what artifact are collected and how they are displayed, the presence or absence of specific interpretations and how those interpretations are framed, the way underserved communities and potential visitors are involved, and the organization of the space (Coffee, 2008; Shore, 2005; Delin 2002; Young 2002; Sandell 2002).

Within this trend, researchers and managers have paid increasing attention to issues of access, representation, and participation, often defined as audience development strategies (Deeth, 2012; Hayes and Slater, 2002), to engage and involve groups that are traditionally under-represented in their visitor profiles (Easson and Leask, 2020). Based on the evidence brought by the academic research with regard to the barriers which exclude different audiences, museums have started to work on projects aimed at increasing accessibility and broadening audiences (Easson and Leask, 2020).

In this way, museums are attempting to overcome their legacy of institutionalized exclusion, to become more inclusive, and to promote cultural equality and democratization by addressing issues of representation, participation, and access, (Waltl, 2006). For example, the inclusive museum, in representing the history and culture of a minority group, will seek to increase its relevance to that audience and, in doing so, help to create access to its services (Gilmore et al., 2009). Although the declared objective is related to cultural inclusion and increased access to the museum,

such initiatives might have positive spillover effects in alleviating the causes and symptoms of social exclusion (Waltl, 2006).

In this context, some museums are rethinking their role in society as well as the way they cooperate with other stakeholders, identifying new goals and challenges related to the construction of a more inclusive and equal society (Sandell and Nightingale, 2013). Hence, museums do not limit their goals to cultural inclusion but aim at tackling the causes or symptoms of exclusion within the social, political, or economic, as well as cultural, dimensions (McKenna and Farrell, 2006).

On the one hand, museums are vehicles of social regeneration thanks to the direct contact established with those groups considered to be disadvantaged, socially excluded, or living in poverty (Sandell and Nightingale, 2013). On the other hand, museums may act as agents of social change by leveraging on their leading role in educating, communicating, and influencing societies and public opinion (Chynoweth et al., 2020). This might involve some controversial actions, taking a clear position in a public debate to advocate for social equality and justice.

Although the two approaches involve different methodologies, both share a common vision: the unique role of the museum in fighting the causes and symptoms of social exclusion and not the simple access to a particular audience (Chynoweth et al., 2020).

1.2. Museums and participation

1.2.1. Cultural participation

Research shows how the participation in creative and cultural activities may have a relevant impact on an individual's quality of life, contributing to the development of a sense of belonging and promoting an overall well-being in individuals (Freedman, 2000). This participation has been collected, for the European context, in an official study (European Union, 2016). Specifically, it presents people's involvement in different cultural activities (cinema, live performances, cultural sites and artistic activities).

Among the main results, almost two thirds of the EU population with more than 16 years old participated in at least one cultural activity in the previous twelve months. Specifically, 63.7% reported that they went to the cinema, attended a live performance (theatre, concert, organized cultural event outdoors and so on) or visited a cultural site (museum, historical monument, art gallery or archaeological site). By countries (Table 1), the Nordic European countries recorded the highest levels of cultural participation - Denmark (85.3%), Sweden (85%), Finland (83.7%) and the Netherlands (also 83.7%) – while less than half of the respondents of Greece, Italy (both 46.9%), Croatia (36.6%), Bulgaria (28.6%) and Romania (27.4%) reported that they took part in any cultural activity.

Table 1 - Percentage of population participating in cultural activities

Country	% population	Country	% population
Switzerland	86.3%	**Portugal**	62.7%
Norway	85.9%	**Slovakia**	59.4%
Denmark	85.3%	**Spain**	58.5%
Netherlands	83.7%	**Poland**	53.7%
Finland	83.7%	**Cyprus**	52.6%
Luxembourg	79.3%	**Malta**	50.5%
France	77.7%	**Greece**	46.9%
United Kingdom	74.6%	**Italy**	46.9%
Austria	73.6%	**Croatia**	36.6%
Germany	73.3%	**Serbia**	29.8%
Czech Republic	70.2%	**Bulgaria**	28.6%
Slovenia	70.1%	**Romania**	27.4%
Estonia	69.8%	**Iceland**	90%
Ireland	69.1%	**Sweden**	85%
Belgium	68.1%	**Lithuania**	62%
Latvia	63.3%	**Hungary**	50%

Source: European Union (2016)

By activities, according to Eurostat (2020), going to the cinema is the most relevant cultural activity, with 45.9% of the European adult population (with more than 16 years old) reporting going to the cinema in the previous twelve months, while a slightly lower share of the population visited a cultural site (43.4%) or attended a live performance (42.8%). All these figures show the overall relevance of arts participation among European citizens.

1.2.2. Museums attendance in Europe

Focusing on museums, in Europe there are 25,033 museums (Eurostat, 2020), also including the United Kingdom and Switzerland (Table 2). Although there are some difficulties in collecting comparable statistical data across European countries (EGMUS, 2020), the country with the highest number of museums is Germany (6,741) followed by Italy (4,812), United Kingdom (1,732), Spain (1,461), France (1,224) and Switzerland (1,129). The other countries present a lower number of museums, mainly related with their population size.

Table 2 - Number of museums per country in Europe

Country	Number of museums	Country	Number of museums
Germany	6,741	Estonia	250
Italy	4,812	Ireland	230
United Kingdom	1,732	Denmark	209
Spain	1,461	Bulgaria	191
France	1,224	Greece	176
Switzerland	1,129	Belgium	162
Poland	949	Slovakia	159
Romania	787	Belarus	155
Hungary	735	Latvia	153
Netherlands	694	Serbia	149
Portugal	680	Norway	127
Austria	549	Lithuania	107
Sweden	370	Slovenia	93
Finland	327	Luxembourg	54
Czech Republic	286	Bosnia and Herzegovina	35
Croatia	284	Macedonia	23

Source: Eurostat (2020)

Regarding participation, on average 43.1% of the European population (16 years and older) has visited at least one museum in 2019 (Eurostat, 2020). Table 3 shows the percentage of adult population who visited at least one museum in 2019. The three countries within the European Union with the highest percentage of adult population visiting a museum are Sweden (67.2%), Finland (61.4%) and Denmark (61.4%). On the contrary, the countries with the lowest percentage are Serbia (12.6%), Bulgaria (14.6%) and Greece (16.9%).

Table 3 - Percentage of population visiting at least one museum in 2019 (per country)

Country	% population	Country	% population
Sweden	67.2%	**Belgium**	43%
Switzerland	62.1%	**Ireland**	39.8%
Denmark	61.4%	**Poland**	37.8%
Finland	61.4%	**Portugal**	37.5%
Netherlands	61.4%	**Hungary**	34.8%
Luxembourg	55.6%	**Spain**	34.2%
Norway	54.9%	**Slovakia**	33.7%
United Kingdom	54.7%	**Lithuania**	31.2%
France	53.7%	**Malta**	26.4%
Iceland	53.7%	**Italy**	26.1%
Czech Republic	52.1%	**Cyprus**	20.5%
Germany	49.8%	**Croatia**	19.2%
Estonia	44.2%	**Romania**	18.3%
Latvia	44.2%	**Greece**	16.9%
Austria	44.1%	**Bulgaria**	14.6%
Slovenia	43.8%	**Serbia**	12.6%

Source: Eurostat (2020)

Regarding age intervals, 82.8% of people aged from 16 to 29 years across Europe reported that they visited at least one museum, compared with the 52.8 % of people aged from 65 to 74 years (Eurostat, 2020). This situation, namely, participation is higher among younger (rather than older) people is similar for almost all European countries. However, the northern European countries show higher levels of participation in museums activities among the older population, specifically, Finland (77.8%), Sweden (78.8%) and Denmark (80%).

In relation to gender and level of education according to a report on cultural participation (European Union, 2016), around 60% of museum visitors are women and only 40% are men, while people with a tertiary level of educational attainment are much more likely to visit a museum than people with lower levels. The latest data by Eurostat (2020) confirm that the higher the level of education the more likely a person is to visit a museum. In fact, 86.2% of those with a tertiary level of educational attainment reported that they visited a museum at least once in 2019 versus 66.5% of those with an upper secondary and post-secondary level and 42.4% of those people with no more than a lower secondary level of education attainment.

1.2.3. Museums attendance in Italy

In 2018, Italy counted more than 3,800 museums, galleries, and archives (MiBACT, 2019). Moreover, the country registered 630 monuments or monumental

complexes, and over 300 archaeological parks or sites. Overall, there were 4,812 museums and similar cultural institutions (ISTAT, 2020). Most of the museums are managed by private or local public institutions, while only 198 can be considered National Museums, institutions managed by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities (MiBACT, 2019). According to a study by ISTAT (2020), nearly one Italian city out of three features at least one museum. It's a widespread heritage, counting one and a half museums (or similar institutions) every 100km^2, and about one every 13,000 inhabitants.

Table 4 - Number of visitors in Italian museums

Year	Number of visitors	% of foreigners	% increase (*vs* previous period)
2013	38,413,289	43,8%	+4,5%
2014	40,744,763	44,1%	+5,5%
2015	43,288,366	43,2%	+6,5%
2016	45,383,873	44,9%	+5%
2017	50,103,996	44,5%	+11%
2018	55,312,386	47,9%	+11%
2019	54,814,589	47,2%	-1%

Source: MiBACT (2020)

In relation to the number of visitors to museums and heritage sites in Italy, it increased significantly between 2013 and 2019 (ISTAT, 2019). In 2013, Italian museums recorded roughly 38.5 million visitors (Table 4), but this figure rose to approximately 54.8 million in 2019, which means a great increase of 41%. Between 2013 and 2016 the number of visitors increased on average by 5% per year, while from

2017 until 2019 the increase reached 11% compared to the previous period (Table 4). However, the number of visitors peaked in 2018, when it reached 55.3 million (MiBACT, 2020). In terms of spread of the visitors, the highest numbers are concentrated in museums located in the cities of Rome, Venice, Florence, Naples, Milan, Turin, Pisa, Pompeii, Siena, and Verona, where over half (55%) of the visitors are concentrated according to the same source.

This increasing number of visitors to museums in Italy is partially explained by foreign people. For instance, 25.6 million foreigners visited Italian museums (47.2% of the total) in 2019. In addition, in terms of gender, museum visitors in Italy are mainly female (62,2%) in comparison to male (37,8%). Regarding tickets, 67% of the visitors entered for free while 33% paid an entry ticket (ISTAT, 2019).

Within this context, it seems interesting to show the ranking of the most visited museums and heritage sites in Italy. In this regard, the archaeological park of the Colosseum was the Italian museum with the highest number of visitors (7.6 million people) in 2019. Moreover, the Uffizi Galleries in Florence and the archaeological site of Pompeii are the second and third most visited sites in Italy, respectively (Table 5).

To conclude this part, and regarding non visitors, in 2019 approximately 70% of Italians aged between 35 and 44 years did not visit any museums or exhibitions (ISTAT, 2019). However, this magnitude was about 48% for those between 15 and 17 years old (Table 6). This means that the share of Italians not visiting museums was

lower among younger people. Finally, these results seem to be consequence of the high number of programs and projects that museums are doing with elementary, middle, and high school students, in other words, for younger people (ISTAT, 2019).

Table 5 - Most visited museums in Italy (2019)

Museum	Number of visitors
Colosseum Archaeological Park (Rome)	7,617,649
Uffizi Galleries (Florence)	4,391,861
Archaeological site of Pompeii (Pompeii)	3,933,079
Gallery of the Academy (Florence)	1,704,776
Mausoleum of Hadrian - Castel Sant'Angelo (Rome)	1,207,091
Egyptian Museum (Turin)	853,320
Palace of Venaria (Venaria Reale)	837,093
Royal Palace of Caserta (Caserta)	728,231
Hadrian's Villa and Villa d'Este (Tivoli)	721,574
National Archaeological Museum (Naples)	670,594
National Museum of Bargello (Florence)	644,569
Borghese Gallery (Rome)	572,976
Herculaneum (Ercolano)	558,962
Royal Museums (Turin)	492,049
The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci (Milan)	445,728
Archaeological site of Paestum (Paestum)	443,743
Brera Art Gallery (Milan)	417,976
Ducal Palace (Mantua)	346,462

Source: MiBACT (2020)

Table 6 - Individuals not visiting any museums or exhibitions, by age group in 2019

Age group	% non visitors
6-10 years	49.9%
11-14 years	45.2%
15-17 years	47.7%
18-19 years	49%
20-24 years	53.7%
25-34 years	61.9%
35-44 years	68.2%
45-54 years	65.3%
55-59 years	66.4%
60-64 years	67.9%
65-74 years	73.9%
75 years and older	86.7%

Source: MiBACT (2020)

1.3. Consumer, experience, diversity and museums

1.3.1. Consumer behavior and experience

One of the most characteristic changes of modern museums is the interest on audiences. Visitors stand in the center of the museum experience today (Gentile et al., 2007; Kotler et al., 1999). Therefore, studies about museum visitors have been undertaken from management and marketing standpoints (Kurtz and Boone, 2010), and specifically from consumer behavior studies.

In relation to the latter, literature shows that consumers do not only seek functional benefits but relate to products owing to the feelings they have towards them

(Walmsley, 2011; Slater, 2007; Schmitt, 1999). Museum visitors can benefit from a variety of experiences such as aesthetic appreciation (Venkatesh and Meamber, 2008; Goulding, 1999), escapism (Slater and Armstrong, 2010; Slater, 2007), education (Falk and Storksdieck, 2010; Slater and Armstrong, 2010), identity projects (Sandell and Janes, 2007; Goulding, 2000), and recreation (Slater and Armstrong, 2010; Zwick and Dholakia, 2004).

Such experiences are affected by different factors, including the physical environment (Leinhardt and Crowley, 2002; Falk and Dierking, 1997); visitors' personal characteristics (Pattakos, 2010; Slater, 2007); and social context (Black, 2009; Debenedetti, 2003). In this respect, several studies draw on profiling the museum's audience, using demographics such as age, level of education, residency, and nationality (Harrison and Shaw, 2004) showing a strong correlation between the socio-economic class of a visitor and the likelihood of visiting a museum (Kawashima, 1998).

Furthermore, research on museum consumer behavior reveals that visits are no longer simple informative and cultural happenings, but proper experiences (Slater, 2007; De Rojas and Camarrero, 2006; Hume et al., 2006; Bollo, 2004; Goulding, 1999; Kawashima, 1998; Falk and Dierking, 1992). In other words, consumers pursue a full experience, whereby culture and education are brought together with leisure and social interaction (De Rojas and Camarrero, 2006).

Thus, experience, a key concept in consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson, 2005), has become the basis not only for experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1998) but also for experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999). In this regard, experiential marketing focuses on emotional aspects as an additional competitive advantage to the audience's rational reasoning, striving to create positive and memorable consumer experiences (Dirsehan, 2010; McCarthy and Ciolfi, 2008; Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Shaw, 2007; Schmitt, 1999). Experiential marketing, moving from the consumers' attraction for a positive experience, investigates their rational and emotional features (Schmitt, 1999). This is in line with studies focused on experiential marketing strategies to attract visitors. (Carù and Cova, 2015) and those focused on analyzing the relationship of experience with other variables. Specifically, Harrison and Shaw (2004) investigated the impact of service elements (facilities, staff services and experience) on satisfaction and intentions (to return and to recommend) in a museum.

1.3.2. Aesthetic experience and immersion

The aesthetic experience, one of the major components of any consumer´s experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1999), has been described as "immediate, dynamic, unified, meaningful, pleasant and vivid felt, emerging from the perception of an aesthetic object" (Wagner, 1999). The possibility of living an enriching and even

transformative experience has been at the center of several academic studies, acknowledging its complexity (Pencarelli, 2017; Carù and Cova, 2015). In this line, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) drew attention to the individuality and subjectivity of an aesthetic experience and concluded that such an experience is not natural nor immediate and does not simply happen. It depends on the objectives and expectations of individuals and is caused by a process of discovery; such process is subject to the individual's knowledge of the work of art and the feeling of control of the relation (Andajani, 2015; Carù and Cova, 2003, 2007). Every aspect of aesthetic understanding depends on the experiences accumulated, where reiteration is critical in the aesthetic elaboration process (Carù and Cova, 2007; Valverde, 2001).

Narrowing down to museums, visiting one should generate a positive and noble sentiment (Slater 2007; Goulding, 1999), generating an opportunity to escape from the reality of daily life (Slater and Armstrong, 2010; Slater, 2007). Visitors do not expect the organizer to offer a fixed package of experiences, but rather an opportunity to use their imagination (Slater, 2007). Indeed, imagination became the source of escape and was largely affected the freedom of the individual, the atmosphere of the place and the way the experience was set up (Goulding, 2000).

Therefore, to involve visitors, museums must replicate the conditions in which they feel stimulated (Slater and Armstrong, 2010). That is, museums need to understand the needs, motivations, expectations, and nature of both traditional visitors and the broader audience of potential visitors, sensing people's needs and reacting to

them. (Slater, 2007; Black, 2005; Goulding, 1999). Concurrently, they ought to take account of the fact that today's museum visitors tend to be authors more than they are spectators, engaging in meaning and content creation (Slater and Armstrong, 2010). Hence, changes to the organizational architecture often need to be enforced, following a framework that accounts for several aspects (Wind and Hays, 2016), including culture and values, governance and business models, structure and processes, value creation processes, people, mind-sets, competences, physical and virtual facilities, resources, technology infrastructure (Lehn and Heath 2005), incentives, and performance measurements.

Traditionally, museums have used written texts as the main means of conveying messages and meaning. Still, research convincingly demonstrates that even if no one reads all the texts in the museum, written or spoken texts remain one of the most efficient ways for humans to learn new things and facts, and museums and similar institutions pervasively reduce the distance between visitors and art. From the moment visitors arrive, the museum (its designers, educators, and curators) supports their experience helping them understanding and elaborating new information, giving them a direction to better understand the story of the pieces of art or simply guiding them in the space (Slater and Armstrong, 2010; Slater, 2007; Goulding 2000).

Restructuring and the use of digital devices facilitate this appropriation process and thus reduce the distance and enhance the immersion. For example, the increase in the use mobile devices and smartphones with high quality built-in cameras has

facilitated the documentation and sharing of their museum experiences (Weilenmann et al., 2013). Other mediation devices, such as digital screens, are also useful in history museums since they can provide the contextual elements needed to experience the past (Pallud and Monod, 2010) and thus become involved in the aesthetic experience. Audio guides and interactive terminals offer a learning experience by providing basic contextual components to increase visitors' understanding (Deshayes, 2004). Museum websites function as a virtual stage that can integrate the experience. These approximate "internet presence" sites (Hoffman et al., 1995) designed to promote the institution and attract visitors to the physical museum.

In addition, the museum space was, for years, the safe place for curators and educators who were solely responsible for the museum's content (Tallon and Walker, 1981). Recently, the notion of visitors contributing to the museum environment thanks to technological devices has increasingly affirmed (Jarrier and Bourgeon-Renault, 2012). However, technological devices adopted after reorganization do not necessarily facilitate visitor immersion. At times, museum managers seek to optimize their contributions to the customer experience by defining new approaches or strategies, but unfortunately, they often lose sight of what customers want. Sometimes consumers appreciate the effect of technological devices, but they can also reject them. It is important to understand the complementarity of the different devices: amidst devices aimed at facilitating learning and those that offer more interaction and entertaining

opportunities (e.g.: augmented reality, etc.), and between devices that restrict social interaction and those that promote it (Jarrier and Bourgeon-Renault, 2012).

Understanding and improving positive interactions between visitors and the organization are core challenges in the experience design. These interactions come together in a "visitor journey", which is the representation of the several touchpoints between the visitor and the organization, considering the times and place in which they happen. Each touchpoint is seen as an opportunity to gain visitors' feedback and to improve their experience (Devine and Tarr, 2019). The visitor's journey begins before entering the museum, and continues after the visitor left, influencing the overall customer experience. Each touchpoint between a visitor and the museum, both physical and digital, is a key interaction (Devine and Tarr, 2019). In this sense, understanding the customer journey can lead to understanding experiences in aesthetics contexts. A counterargument is given by Rawson et al. (2013), whose study shows that the planning of visitor experience based on the map of the visitor journey should focus on the whole customer experience and not only on the single touchpoints.

1.3.3. Consumption behavior and LGBs

When considering the recent uprising of certain minorities and groups from social exclusion, the considerable increase in the visibility of and positive public opinion toward homosexuality in society (Ghaziani et al., 2016) is of indispensable

relevance and has triggered marketers and researchers' interest in understanding homosexual consumers' consumption patterns (Eisend and Hermann, 2020).

Over the past decades, western countries have promoted legislation in support of LGBs citizens. This, together with their spending power - estimated at nearly $1 trillion in the U.S. in 2017 (Chesney et al., 2017) - have captured marketers' attention. Marketer, with the aim of serving homosexual consumers and addressing their needs, have investigated their behaviors, characteristics, and preferences (Rondeau, 2001). However, research on whether homosexual consumers behave differently from heterosexual consumers has yielded mixed results (Eisend and Hermann, 2020).

a) Differences in consumption

According to conventional wisdom and lay theories (Ginder and Byun, 2015), the LGB community members would be more prosperous than others and, thence, exhibit a more vigorous consumption with regards to heterosexuals. Nevertheless, considering the only partial representation of LGBs, such an interpretation has not gone unchallenged (Eisend and Hermann, 2020; Ginder and Byun, 2015). The main train of thought revolved around the collected data being limited to lesbian, gay and bisexual people who are proud and extroverted towards their sexual orientation and generally affluent (Ginder and Byun, 2015; Badgett, 2001).

Be that as it may, this assumption has been the starting point for further research on LGBs distinctive behavior, such as social identity building, meaning

making, or particular products and brands which would lead to political empowerment (Ginder and Byun, 2015; Kates, 2002). Available findings are not uniform: while some (Strubel and Petrie, 2016; Vandecasteele and Geuens, 2009) estimated different behavioral patterns in the analyzed groups, there are some counterarguments based on the subordination of such differences to gender, which would make them not broad-based (Negrusa and Oreffice, 2011; Hershberger and Bogaert, 2005).

Demographic factors, such as earnings or urbanization by means of example, have also been taken into consideration when trying to explain differences in consumption behaviour between heterosexuals and LGBs. (Vandecasteele and Geuens, 2009). Sociological and psychological methods, on the other hand, have only been tackled by few (Hildebrand et al., 2013; Angelini and Bradley, 2010). To account for potential differences in consumers' consumption, some other moderating variables have been overlooked as researchers have – so far – rejected any other interpretation, thus excluding biology and evolutionary theory. Moreover, conventional wisdom and lay theories about the role of demographic factors are frequently conflicted with by the outcomes produced by the achieved academic constructs. (Eisend and Hermann, 2020).

Carpenter and Eppink (2017) stated that – as anticipated by other studies on the matter (Braun et al., 2015) – homosexual consumers are more prone on consuming with reference to their heterosexual equivalents. All the same, the cliched link between

homosexuals and an affluent, lavish, and trendy lifestyles has been negated as the proved behavioral effects are very modest (Braun et al., 2015).

At large, no considerable discrepancies between homosexual, heterosexual and LGB consumers have been proved by researchers to date (Hattingh and Spencer, 2020). Moreover, a clear discrimination of what such differences are, as well as the elements accounting for how and under which circumstances they would be discernible does not yet exist, and still serves as breeding ground for uncertainties (Hattingh and Spencer, 2020). Eisend and Hermann (2020) examined the divergence between heterosexual and homosexual consumers and between gay and lesbian consumers in terms of evaluations and consumption behaviors and features. Their work was aimed at overcoming limits and incongruities of the existing research results, and to outline a more truthful description of LGBs as consumers. They managed to do so (Eisend and Hermann, 2020) and their matter-of-fact depiction of the average LGB consumer should lead future investigations.

b) The influence of age and society

Biological theories indicate that differences in consumption between homosexuals and heterosexuals decrease as the individual's age increases (Bailey and Oberschneider, 1997). That is, disparities would be more evident in older homosexuals than in younger ones. Biologically speaking, age is a substantial moderator for differences between homosexual and heterosexual people. In the same context, a

correlation of antenatal hormones, genetic aspects, and brain structure seem to explain differences in somatic, cognitive, and behavioral qualities. Accordingly, various results point out a relation between sexual orientation and genetics.

However, the understanding of economic data leads to a popular belief of adult homosexual consumers – except for the youngest – being generally wealthier than heterosexuals, hence able to further widen and articulate their consumption (Carpenter and Eppink, 2017).

What is more, homosexuality has known an increase in terms of visibility and of positive view from the public in many occidental nations (Ghaziani et al., 2016). Consequently, homosexuals are more and more enabled to fulfill better careers, gain higher incomes and feel free to express their sexual identity by means of consumption. This would allow differences in consumption between homosexuals and heterosexuals to be more ordinary in countries and communities in which homosexuality is looked at positively or with impartiality.

Additionally, and reinforced by the social prospect, differentiation in consumption-favoring behavior and others associated with the identification with a specific sexual orientation are expectedly and more probably measured in a social and cultural environment that is welcoming towards same-sex behaviors (Eisend and Hermann, 2020). This might include, for example, a higher proportion of investments in identity-defining clothing or cultural activities.

1.3.4. Arts consumption and LGBs

Literature analyzing the relationship between sexual orientation and the arts can be divided into three streams: a) sexual orientation and creativity (Gautam, 2001); b) sexual orientation and innovation (Vandecasteele and Geuens, 2009); and c) sexual orientation and arts participation (Cuadrado-García and Montoro-Pons, 2021; Lewis and Seaman, 2004), as described next:

a) Sexual orientation and creativity

In the study of the relationship of sexual orientation and the arts, researchers have first addressed the link between sexual orientation and the development of creativity. An increasing number of studies have been conducted on the subject of creativity in relation to gender and sexual orientation (Stoltzfus et al., 2011; Charyton et al., 2008), personality (Lippa, 2005; Norlander et al., 2000), ethnicity (Kaufman et al., 2010; Kaufman, 2006), social identity (Adarves-Yorno et al., 2006), environmental impact (Hennessey, 2003) as well as academic achievement (Habibollah et al., 2010; Palaniappan, 2007)

Moving from the general belief of the overrepresentation of homosexuals in the artistic and creative industry such as in the field of writing, acting, music, painting, and the like, previous researchers have advanced the idea that homosexual individuals could be more artistically inclined, therefore creative (Gautam, 2001). Nonetheless, research focusing on sexual orientation and its relation to creativity has been limited

and proved that homosexual individuals do not show neither higher innate creativity in the amateur production of art (Lewis and Seaman, 2004) nor higher performing arts attendance level (Cuadrado-García and Montoro-Pons, 2021).

On the other hand, considering differences in consumer behavior by gender, research has found gender differences in creativity with girls being more creative than boys (Noor et al., 2013; Cheung and Lau, 2010). Research proved that creativity is influenced by the conditions under which individuals work and live (Hennessey, 2003), identifying social-environmental factors as main influencers. In this context, sexual orientation is not a factor influencing creativity. In particular, both homosexuals and heterosexual individuals, are similarly exposed to the ideal of masculinity during their life (Lippa, 2005).

b) Sexual orientation and innovation

Another aspect that has been studied in the literature regarding the impact of sexual orientation in consumer behavior is that related to innovation. Moving from the stereotypical view that homosexual consumers introduce a new style or novelty to the public at large more frequently than heterosexual consumers, a study by Vandecasteele and Geuens (2009) looked at the differences in purchasing fashion products between young homosexuals and heterosexuals. Although the study does not find any evidence in support of a higher degree of innovativeness of homosexual consumers, it shows how homosexual consumers are more likely to buy products or experiences that radiate

uniqueness as a product feature. In general, the expression of the homosexual subculture appears to be a characteristic of the homosexual consumers (Dewaele et al., 2013), thus creating common paths in consumption habits and choices.

c) Sexual orientation and arts participation

The study on the effect of sexual orientation on arts participation has been originally carried out by Lewis and Seaman (2004). They showed how homosexuals' higher education and probability of being single and living in a metropolitan area explain one-third of the substantial attendance differences with heterosexual attenders. Recently, Cuadrado-García and Montoro-Pons (2021) investigated the relationship between sexual orientation and performing arts participation confirming that attendance is not influenced by sexual orientation. In addition, it was proven how gender and sexual orientation may affect the motives of attendance in the performing art context. This research opens for the opportunity of further investigating the link between sexual orientation and the arts, looking also at different settings such as museums.

In fact, homosexual attenders are considered to be the "ideal consumer", given the fact that they have higher levels of formal education, they generally live in urban areas and are more likely to be childless than heterosexuals (Black et al., 2003; Berg and Lien, 2002; Badgett, 1995). In terms of income, homosexuals have lower income compared to their heterosexual peers, but looking specifically at gay male couples have

higher average household incomes than married couples. On the other hand, heterosexual married couples who have higher incomes than lesbian couples (Lewis and Seaman, 2004; Klawitter and Flatt, 1998). Lewis and Seaman (2004) stated that sexual minorities are much more likely to attend the arts than demographically similar heterosexuals but found little support for conventional explanations.

Finally, as stated above, the relationship between homosexuality and the arts has been addressed by several authors, but a common conclusion on the reasons behind the greater involvement in the arts has not been found. None of the above-mentioned studies have looked at the relationship between consumer behavior and sexual orientation in the context of museums. Hence, it is interesting to address this gap and look if any relationship exists in this domain.

CHAPTER 2: THE SERVICESCAPE IN CULTURAL CONSUMPTION

2.1. Consumer behavior and servicescape

Human behavior is affected by the physical setting in which it occurs (Bitner, 1992). The significance of the built environment, as named by Wakefield and Blodgett (1994), upon participants' behavior in service settings has been also considered by several authors (Zeithaml et al., 1985; Booms and Bitner, 1982; Shostack, 1977). Furthermore, within a consumption setting or servicescape, as termed by Bitner (1992), both customers and employees may have cognitive, emotional, and physiological reactions to such physical elements (Bitner, 1999). Those internal reactions have an impact on the individual behavior of customers and employees in the service setting, influencing also the social interactions between and among them; as a result, customers and employees' behavior may be of approach or avoidance (Mari and Poggesi, 2013; Booms and Bitner, 1982). Thus, the servicescape framework is relevant to understand and explain what behaviors are influenced and why, as well as to effectively plan and design a service setting with the aim of achieving specific objectives (Bitner, 1992).

2.1.1. The S-O-R model

Previous research has examined how the servicescape influences consumer behavior across a wide range of settings, including leisure settings (Hanks and Line, 2017). A study of servicescapes and the influence of servicescapes on consumers'

behavior within a service setting is supported by the marketing literature. A high number of environmental psychologists have examined and explained how the physical environment influences human behavior (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011; Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003; Turley and Milliman, 2000; Bitner, 1992).

Although the studies in the domain of environmental psychology describe the direct impact of the environment on human emotions and behaviors (Bell et al., 2001; Bitner, 1992; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982), development of theories was not until the 1970s (Holahan and Moos, 1982). Mehrabian and Russell (1974) are among the earliest environmental psychologists to study how external stimuli are influencing individuals' behavior, proposing a theory that physical or social stimuli in the environment directly affect the emotional state of a person.

This theory is included in Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) widely referenced Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Model (Figure 1), which suggests that individuals reaction toward and within environments may be of avoidance or approach behavior. Avoidance behaviors refer to behaviors showing lack of attention and interest for the external environment, while approach behaviors refer to those showing attraction for and involvement in the environment. The SOR Model effectively explains how stimuli (S) from the environment may arouse emotions in the organism (O) that as a consequence will influence behavior response (R) in individuals.

Figure 1 - The SOR Model
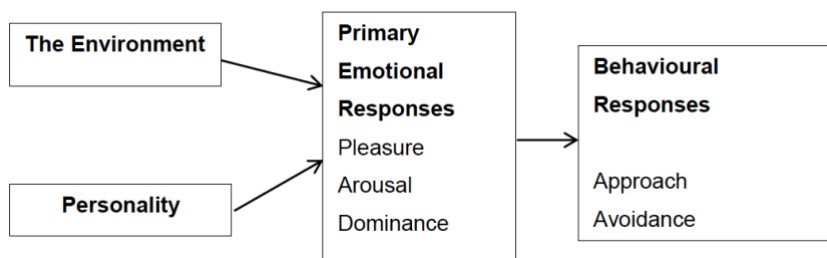
Source: Mehrabian and Russell (1974)

Since the late '70s, the SOR Model has been widely studied, discussed and adapted to suit the marketing environment (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Turley and Milliman, 2000; Hoffman and Turley, 2002; Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003).

2.1.2. The holistic approach

Researchers have expanded the application of the servicescape theory to different contexts, including cyber (Williams and Dargel, 2004), virtual service (Vilnai-Yavetz and Rafaeli, 2006), dine (Ryu and Jang, 2007), ship (Kwortnik, 2008), consumption (Venkatraman and Nelson, 2008), e-service (Hopkins et al., 2009), and design (Hall, 2008). Furthermore, Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) developed an improved servicescape framework that employs a multi-disciplinary approach to expand upon the well-established physical consumption setting and include the less tangible aspects (Gilmore and Carson, 1993). It illustrates how various environmental

stimuli influence consumer behavior and social interaction holistically, illustrating the interaction between several elements that influence the setting in which consumption takes place.

According to Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) servicescapes do not merely entail the objective, measurable and controllable stimuli, and instead, also include other stimuli, which are less subject to measurement and control because of their social, symbolic and natural elements, which exert substantial influence over the behavior, decisions and actions of the customers; similarly, the responses of customers to the social, symbolic and natural servicescape components function as the triggers for crucial connections between the visitor and the place.

The holistic servicescape supports the assumptions of Bitner (1992) pertaining to servicescapes, with the aim of facilitating researchers and managers to contribute to their comprehension of the complexity of environmental stimuli (beyond the physical ones) and their influence over the responses and behaviors of the service participants, along with potential moderators that might be applicable to the respective service setting (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011). Critically, the expanded servicescape focuses on the holistic perceived servicescape (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011; Zeithaml et al, 2009), as entailing multiple perceived servicescapes affected by the intention of place usage of a customer (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011).

While findings about servicescape have been extensively studied, the structure of the servicescape has not been well described in previous literature, according to Pizam and Tasci (2018). The researchers emphasized the essential elements of the servicescape - ambient, functional, and social - were well studied, although natural and cultural elements were neglected. According to their research into the hospitality industry, they developed a definition of the hospitality experiencescape that was enhanced with the inclusion of internal and external stakeholders, as well as the organizational culture of hospitality (Pizam and Tasci, 2018)

Moreover, the holistic servicescape model (Rosenbaum and Massiah 2011) received attention from researchers in a variety of fields, resulting in a concept-related literature that expanded its applicability to many different products and services. This includes sportscape (Fernandes and Neves, 2014), winescape (Bruwer and Gross, 2017), performancescape (Tumbat and Belk, 2013), and festivalscape (Mason and Paggiaro, 2012). A review of existing literature reveals that there are missing components from core servicescape elements (Castellani et al., 2019). In their argument, the authors demonstrate the importance of understanding how servicescape theory can be implemented in museum contexts, which are yet to be explored as a setting for application.

2.2. Servicescape: concepts, elements and dimensions

2.2.1. Conceptualization of servicescape

The term servicescape, introduced by Bitner (1992), refers to *"a physical setting in which a marketplace exchange is performed, delivered and consumed within a service organisation"* (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011, p. 471). It provides a conceptual framework for exploring the impact of the physical environment in service settings. It provided an analytical framework for appraising the contribution of physical surroundings to the multiple strategic roles of a service consumption setting (Bitner, 1992).

Fundamentally, Bitner (1992) claims that the environment exerts a powerful influence upon people's internal responses and behaviors by virtue of her acceptance of the environmental psychology perspective, a perspective based on the assumption that people respond to their environments holistically. Other words, individuals perceive discrete components and stimuli that make up the environment, but it is their overall pattern and overall conception of interdependent stimuli that shape their responses to the environment, thereby dictating the perceived servicescape construct (Bitner, 1992; Bell et al., 1978). Customer perceptions of the service landscape are affected by the servicescape (Reimer and Kuehn, 2005). The servicescape bridges marketing and environmental psychology concepts by concentrating on how the

physical environment influences consumers' approach-avoidance choices (Rosenbaum, 2005).

In their definition of servicescape, Ezeh and Harris (2007) considered the physical environment (with or without customer input) that influences the customer to exhibit approaches or avoidances during service encounters. Hoffman and Turley (2002) define Servicescape in harmony with Kotler (1973) as "a construct consisting of intangible (temperature, color, scent and music) and tangible (buildings and furniture) elements which can be controlled and manipulated to facilitate the provision of services to clients".

The built environment model created by Baker (1987) differs from this point of view by also including the "non-built environment" when they define a store's environment as a 'social factor' regarding employees and other customers within the service environment. This is because servicescape encompasses both animate and inanimate sensations that a consumer encounters while interacting with services. Despite being increasingly used to describe "landscapes," the term servicescape includes interiors, materials, and items with which ends users interact, as well as exterior spaces. That is, servicescape entails the exterior (landscape, exterior design, signage, parking, surrounding area) and interior (design, decor, equipment, signage, layout, air quality, temperature, and ambiance) facets of service facility that can evoke emotional and cognitive effects on consumers (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011; Resenbaum, 2005; Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003).

Among its main criticisms, however, is its tendency only to consider the physical aspects of servicescape design, while failing to consider the human or social aspects (Harris and Ezeh, 2008; Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003). The social elements are those that relate to people within our service environment (Baker et al., 1994) and their effects on behavior among consumers (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003; Platania and Moran, 2001). In their study, Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2010) found that the impact of other customers on the focal customer was evident even when no direct interactions or interactions between customers took place. Customers' perceptions of store image and behavioral intentions have been examined as social elements in the service environment. The study by Hu and Jasper (2006) revealed that employees who show genuine interest and respect to the customer have a more favorable perception of the store image, while Butcher (2005) suggested that social regard (genuine interest directed towards the customer) plays an important role during the process of customer loyalty.

2.2.2. Dimensions and elements of the servicescape

Customers' experience is affected not only through their impressions of the physical surrounding but also through the interactions with employees and other customers present in the service settings (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011; Kearney, 2007).

Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) find that studies focusing on a single and unique concept of servicescape lead to fragmented understandings of the servicescape. Therefore, researchers have supported the idea that several components of the servicescape must be explored in the service settings (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011; Ezeh and Harris, 2007; Kearney, 2007; Spangenberg et al., 2006; Baker et al., 1994). After Bitner's seminal work, a constant flow of research was conducted to further investigate the servicescape elements and post-consumption constructs such as service quality (Hightower et al., 2002), customer satisfaction (Jen et al., 2013) and behavioral intentions (Kearney et al., 2013). According to Kearney et al. (2013), the servicescape can influence customer satisfaction and behavior. The following subsections describe the aspects of the servicescape that can be perceived physically and socially, according to the literature.

2.2.2.1. Elements of the physical dimension of the servicescape

The physical servicescape components or characteristics make up the "substantive staging" that was described by Arnould, Price and Tierney (1998) as a physical creation, which marketing managers can manage, by using the objects aligning with the narrative context (Chronis, 2005).

There are three main physical elements of the servicescape identified by Bitner (1992) that influence both the behavior of customers and employees: ambient conditions, layout and design, and signs, symbols, and artifacts.

1. Ambient conditions

There are some obvious and straightforward factors that help us identify physical conditions such as temperature, air quality, noise, and music, as well as visual characteristics such as color. (Bitner, 1992). Specifically, according to the author at hand, when ambient conditions are extreme and are experienced for a prolonged period of time, they affect participants' perceptions of the servicescape. Among other things, extreme temperatures and the 'audible' silence of certain outdoor environments and topographies, or even voice technologies used in certain consumption settings, may make a difference. In particular, Wakefield and Blodgett (1994) used Major League Baseball (MLB) stadiums as their research subjects. They classified these elements into two categories: (1) spatial layout and functionality; and (2) aesthetic appeal. Furthermore, Lee and Kim (2014) found that ambient conditions impact perceived quality of a service, resulting in higher satisfaction.

2. Space and functionality

Physical surroundings play a part in determining the consumption setting, especially in terms of their configuration and functionality. According to Harris and Ezeh (2008), materials and furnishings do affect consumption experiences. Bitner

(1992) argues however that the positioning, size, shape, and spatial arrangement of objects in the environment, together with their relationships among them, support performance and achievement of goals. A particular point of importance is the acknowledgement that spaces and functions are particularly important in environments where consumers are expected to perform tasks on their own without any assistance from service personnel (Kearney et al., 2013; Harris and Ezeh, 2008; Bitner, 1992).

A well-designed layout will ensure that visitors have a good experience, minimizing wait times and crowding (Kwortnik, 2008; Lucas, 2008). Customer involvement and satisfaction are positively influenced by a sophisticated design, and with it, customer loyalty, as measured by repurchase intention (Wakefield and Baker, 1998).

3. Signs, symbols, and artefacts

A display of signs, symbols, and artefacts within a living or working environment has the ability to communicate symbolic meaning, create a strong image, and set rules for behavior, thereby generating an overall aesthetic feel. Bitner (1992) found that this reduced perceived crowding and stress in jail lobby settings.

Bitner (1992) defines explicit communicators as those elements. Aside from being of a basic but necessary nature, signs may serve the function of giving directions and/or identifying physical evidence; however, in sensitive settings, signs may serve an important implied purpose. Thus, signs are particularly important for helping

consumers navigate the servicescape and serving as cognitive cues (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011; Lin, 2004). Bitner (1992) directs attention towards other environmental objects, including the quality of materials used in constructions, artwork, floor coverings and personal objects demonstrated in the environment, equipped with the ability to translate symbolic value associated with the nature, characteristics, and the specific objects origin, and, similarly, of the meaning of the place, norms, and expectations for behavior in the place.

Lastly, signs and symbols can be associated with the intended meaning from the perspective of the marketer or site manager, and the personal meaning interpreted subjectively, by consumers (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011; Rosenbaum 2005; Masberg and Silverman, 1996). Customers perceive the servicescape positively when they see effective signage, which influences their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Cockrill et al., 2008; Newman, 2007).

2.2.2.2. Elements of the social dimension of servicescape

Following Baker's (1987) study, which examined the role of social cues as indicators of the overall service environment, research into the role of other customers in the service experience gained significant traction. In most service settings, customers and the service employees and other customers share the consumption space (Jani and Han, 2013), and various facets of these others, including their appearance,

characteristics, and behaviors, which add to the overall assessment of the experience of the customer (Rosenbaum and Montoya, 2007; Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003). While physical elements of the servicescape impact the customer experience even in the absence of direct interaction (Bitner, 1992), the simple presence of other customers or employees in the shared consumption space can influence perceptions and behaviors (Miao and Mattila, 2013; Kim and Lee, 2012).

It has also been shown that the density and number of other people can impact several outcomes on a variety of occasions. They influence both emotions and satisfaction, for instance, in the airport environment (Mattila and Hanks, 2012). There is evidence that the density of other patrons in restaurants and bars can influence perceptions of and satisfaction with the quality of service (Hanks et al., 2017).

The following paragraphs will take into consideration two groups of social elements affecting the servicescape, namely other people's characteristics, behaviors and appearance and social density.

1. Other people characteristics, behaviors and appearance

Several theories, including inference theory, suggest that people in a service environment provide cues, which the focal customer is then able to use to assess quality (Baker et al., 2002; Huber and McCann, 1982). However, they are not passive objects within an environment, but rather people who deliver services and exhibit emotions (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003; Jakobs et al., 1997; Hatfield et al.,

1993). Their activities and emotions may impact the focal customers' service evaluations.

Several studies have examined how characteristics of others in the servicescape influence customer perceptions in a service setting (Line and Hanks, 2017; Kim and Lee, 2012). According to Line, Hanks and Kim (2018), perceived similarities in psychographic and demographic characteristics had a significant effect on identification with the company and attachment to the place. Line and Hanks (2017) concluded that the characteristics of others, such as similarity, behavior, and appearance, affected self-image, place commitment, loyalty, and word-of-mouth. Additionally, Zhang and Hanks (2018) discovered that similarity to others affects customers' attitudes toward companies and their desire to buy from them. Further, Lovelock (1996) suggested that customers' appearances, behaviors, and ages could contribute to improving comfort among others when well-managed. The extent to which the customer's age influences outcome variables, such as repurchase intentions, is also well established (Thakor et al., 2008; Day and Stafford, 1997).

In terms of behavior, Baker et al. (2002) reported that observing customers interacting with other customers increased the perception that interpersonal service quality is high. The social interaction with a service employee in a service setting can produce cues of social comfort, which can lead to customers feeling relaxed (Butcher, 2005). Furthermore, Wu and Liang (2009) found that customers' satisfaction increased when service employees engaged with their customers in positive ways. Furthermore,

several studies have denoted that the friendship-like association between employees and customers augments service outcomes (Keng et al., 2007; Hartline and Farrell, 1996) and repurchase intentions (Gounaris and Venetis, 2002; Nicholson et al., 2001).

According to Line and Hanks (2017), the appearance directly impacts customer satisfaction and evaluation of the service experience. Studies have shown that dressing code influences customers' perceptions of the service itself (Kim and Lee, 2012; Shao et al., 2005).

2. Social density

In a given physical space, the density of a society depends on how many people are present (Stokols et al., 1973). A number of consumer perceptions can be negatively impacted by social density in an environment, depending on the type of venue and what the customer expects from that venue. Crowding has been found to improve customer perceptions and evaluations, particularly at events that anticipate large numbers of attendees (Pons et al., 2006; Mowen et al., 2003). The presence of crowds enhances the experience of attendees at major league sporting events, such as football or baseball games, or at large outdoor music festivals. People may experience negative emotions, however, if they are in a crowded or densely populated environment that they did not expect (Whiting and Donthu, 2009), like anger, distrust, or contempt (Eroglu et al., 2005).

The focal customer may perceive that crowding and density adversely affect his ability to reach goals or provide good service if he perceives the crowds negatively. Density has been shown to have a negative impact on customer experiences in several contexts such as banks (Hui and Bateson, 1991), bars (Robson et al., 2011), and airports (Mattila and Hanks, 2012). In addition to influencing emotions, densely populated contexts have been demonstrated to impact other aspects of the consumer experience, including decision-making, variety seeking, and purchase decisions (Levav and Zhu, 2009). Such level of crowds may impact duration of stay (Eroglu et al., 2005, Hui and Bateson, 1991), avoidance behaviors, revisit intentions, satisfaction, and the levels of spending (Noone and Mattila, 2009; Eroglu et al., 2005, Machleit and Eroglu, 2000).

2.2.3. The expanded servicescape model

Joining several dimensions, Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) advanced the research on servicescape proposing an expanded servicescape framework (Figure 2). This consists of four dimensions: physical, social, socially symbolic, and natural. As a result, Bitner's core philosophy (1992) and Baker's (1987) social dimensions are kept with the expanded servicescape conceptualization, while considering the significance of the physical (built, manufactured) dimension. In particular, it proposes that a servicescape can be thought of as a consumption setting characterized by two

additional dimensions: socially symbolic, and natural dimensions of the service environment that affect both producers and consumers.

Figure 2 – The expanded servicescape model
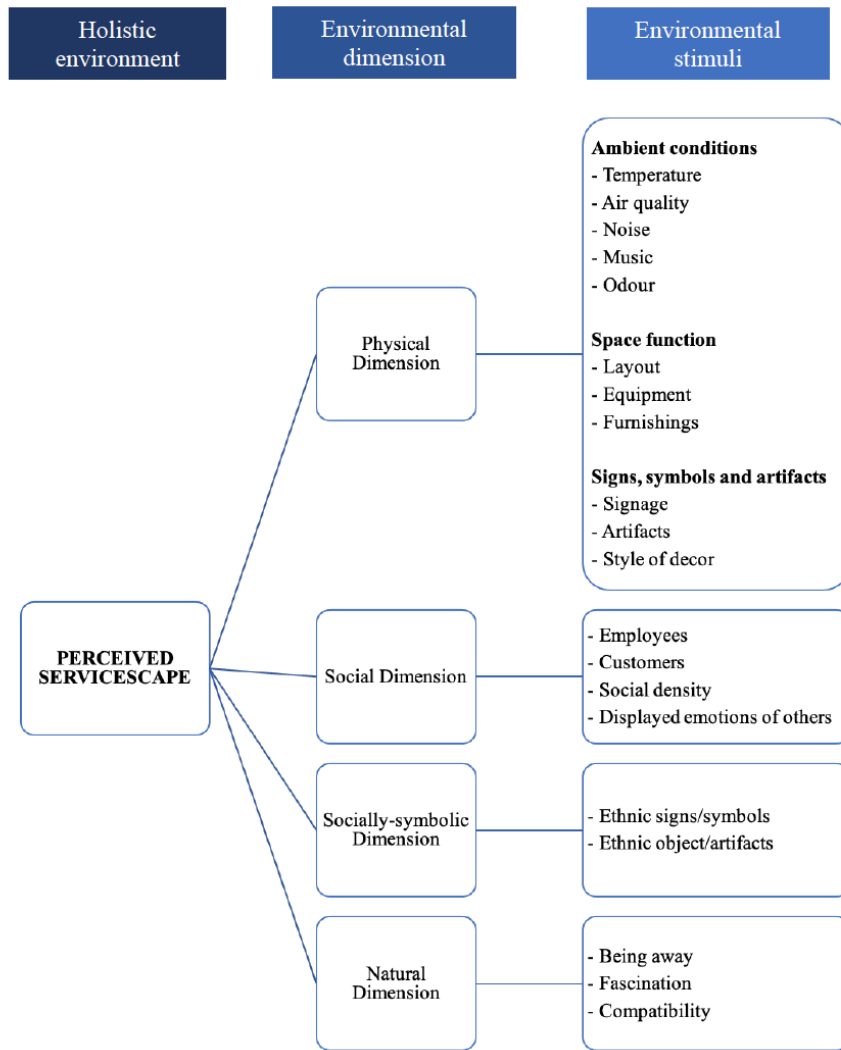
Source: Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011)

In the following subsections the four dimensions and the related elements will be discussed.

2.2.3.1. Physical dimension

The physical dimension explains that all consumption settings are comprised of controllable, objective, and material stimuli (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011) and it is characterized by nonverbal and nonvisible environmental stimuli (Kim and Moon, 2009). According to D'Astous (2000), ambience can be defined as background elements that are present in an environment and are influencing individuals' experiences. Examples of ambient conditions include temperature, lighting, noise, music, and scent, which influence customers' five senses (Jani and Han, 2015). In addition, ambience is an important environmental cue in the cultural sector (Castellani et al., 2019) and the stimuli identified in this dimension have been grouped in three, in line with Bitner (1992): ambient conditions, space function and signs, symbols and artefacts (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011).

1. Ambient conditions

Ambient conditions include temperature, air quality, noise, music, and odor in the consumption space. Such cue, greatly influence the perception of the place and the overall experience (Lin and Hanks, 2017; Bitner, 1992).

2. Space function

This includes layout, equipment, furnishings within the consumption space. Customers are greatly impacted by the way the space is organized around them and further studies have shown how a more linear and spacious space allow for a better

experience (Kearney et al., 2013). The presence of adequate furniture is also considered an important cue to increase customer satisfaction in the service settings (Lee and Kim, 2014).

3. Signs, symbols, and artefacts

This last group of physical stimuli includes signage, artifacts, and style of décor. In addition to what has been mentioned above and introduced by Bitner (1992), Rosenbaum and Massiah identified the aesthetics of the place as a critical cue influencing individuals' perception of the space surrounding them. Aesthetics has the power to change how people perceive the world around them and therefore the service environments. In this sense, aesthetics includes pictures/paintings, architectural style, interior design, color scheme, decorations, and ornaments; consumers, through the adoption of the five senses, make an evaluation of such environment and of the quality of the servicescape (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994).

2.2.3.2. Social dimension

Customer's approach or avoidance decisions are not solely influenced by physical stimuli; they are also affected by social, humanistic stimuli (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011). The social servicescape can be conceptualized as affecting the service setting and consumption experience from both the perspective of the customers and

employees (Rosenbaum and Montoya, 2007). According to Edvardsson et al. (2010), social stimuli can impact a customer's experience. As proposed by Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2003), the service experience is not limited to external cues and restrictions, like atmospherics, and instead, entails social factors, whereby 'the social aspects of the customer's environment [can] act to facilitate or hinder the customer's enjoyment of their service experience' (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003, p. 449). Additionally, a key factor in influencing customers' service experiences is their patronage decisions. This is explained through their conceptual model. In particular, Edvardsson et al. (2010) identified four stimuli - employees, customers, social density, and displayed emotions of others – as the ones characterizing the servicescape social dimension and adopted by Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011).

According to Edvardsson et al. (2010), four stimuli are central to defining the servicescape social dimension. Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) adopted these stimuli as the ones defined by the servicescape social dimension.

1. Employees

In research studies, social relationships with focal employees are seen as a relational benefit impacting both consumers' perceptions of the firm's overall quality (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011; Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003; Baker et al., 1992) in tandem with their behavioral intentions, with respect to future patronage and word of mouth (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Gwinner et al., 1998).

Employees therefore should be considered when understanding the factors in the environment that influence consumers in the service setting (Rosenbaum and Montoya, 2007). The employees do not influence all the customers at any given time, but employee-customer relationships are effective when desired by customers (Rosenbaum and Wong, 2009) and are useless when forced on them (Danaher et al., 2008).

2. *Customers*

Considering that a service setting is one in which one may be always surrounded by others (Hanks and Line 2018), knowledge of how the presence of others impacts that setting is crucial. In the hedonic services context, the presence of other consumers in the same environment might prove significant to the focal consumer as an evaluation point (Kim and Hardin, 2010). As an example, when consumers engage in shared consumption activities (even without any direct interaction with other customers), they develop a strong sense of place attachment and loyalty to the place (Johnstone, 2012). A place can be made more meaningful with the mere presence of others. In certain cases, this effect transcends the fulfillment of practical needs and serves as a motivation for the visit (Johnstone, 2012). It is noteworthy that Nguyen et al. (2012) found that this effect varied across contexts, depending on the reason for the customer's visit. In the study of utilitarian retail environments and hedonic concert experiences, the social servicescape was found to have a differentiated effect, with the social aspects of the experience being more relevant in the hedonic setting.

3. Social density

Consumers are influenced by perceived social density in servicescapes as well as by true social actors (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011; Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003). Both the internal behavior and the outward behavior of a customer may be affected by a social environment.

In store environments where there are more social cues, the perception of crowding and arousal are higher (Baker et al., 1992). Accordingly, crowded retail environments can contribute to feelings of loss of control (Harris and Ezeh, 2008), and behavioral responses including less time spent in the environment (Daunt and Harris, 2011) or reduced amount purchased (Line et al., 2018). Individuals may also conform to the standard behavior of the group even if others observe their behavior (as with a customer in a service environment). (Line et al., 2018).

4. Displayed emotions of others

Consumers respond differently to cues from customers and employees in service settings. Management can control these stimuli, but less capable of controlling yet another social stimulus - the emotional contagion of the servicescape. Within a servicescape, this concept refers to the displayed emotions of others. It was proposed, by Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2003), that customers' consumption experiences, whether personal or social, influence their willingness to react to other people's displayed emotions.

In other words, consumers engaging in private consumption processes, such as self-service technologies, are unlikely to interpret or even care about other people's emotions displayed in servicescapes. Consumers may respond positively or negatively to emotions that are displayed in the servicescape when they engage in group consumption activities, such as exercising, dining, or shopping.

2.2.3.3. Symbolic dimension

The concept of a socially symbolic dimension is conceptualized by Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011), building on Bitner's (1992) thinking about the general quality of signs, symbols, and artifacts in communicating and conveying meaning to customers within a service setting. This study suggested that things like signs, artifacts, and symbols could impact a customer's internal response. Furthermore, Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) suggest that service providers' use objects (signs, symbols, artifacts) to influence consumers' behavior and experiences.

A service organization might intentionally use signs, symbols, and artifacts that have symbolic meanings for ethnic, subcultural, or marginalized societal groups to influence approach behaviors (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011). In this way, organizations can effectively influence approach and/or avoidance behaviors of their customers by strategically using socially symbolic, physical stimuli (Rosenbaum, 2005).

The social symbols serve to remind customers that they belong to a similar group, that they share something in common, and that this is what makes the place familiar. Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) found that the rainbow pride flag and pink triangle evoked familiarity and emotional connections among gay men and lesbians. Socially symbolic symbols, therefore, create a sense of comfort and inclusiveness that encourages approach behaviors (Rosenbaum, 2005).

2.2.3.4. Natural dimension

Humans have innate relationships with nature and animals (Wilson, 1984). The impact of natural stimuli on human health is being examined through research on natural stimuli in customer-environmental behaviors (Pizam and Tasci, 2019). The impact of hospital gardens on patient well-being was explored by health researchers (Whitehouse et al., 2001). As part of the natural dimension, Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) recognized three factors: being away, fascination, and compatibility.

1. Being away

It gives people a break from their daily concerns by making them feel like they've escaped to another place, albeit for a short time. It is often suggested that natural settings are the best places for extended restorative activities; the seaside, botanical gardens, the mountains, lakes, grassy areas, and parks all provide ideal settings for "getting away" (Kaplan, 1995). In order to experience the sensation of

being away, one must feel as if they are temporarily at a distance from the physical environment (Williams, 2014; Mencarelli et al., 2010).

2. Fascination

The second stimulus is fascination, whereby a setting can hold the attention of a person with ease; the individual wishes to be present in that setting because it grabs his or her attention easily (Kaplan, 1995). People can meet different people who are "all in the same boat" at Gilda's Club, for example (Glover and Parry, 2009), or senior citizens gather regularly at McDonald's to engage in ever-changing light-hearted banter (Cheang, 2002). Those who enjoy fascinating servicescapes can escape into the noise and banter of others or, if they choose, join others.

3. Compatibility

Lastly, settings must provide a sense of belonging for a person to feel compatible (Rosenbaum and Massiah., 2007) or congruency between the place and the person (Morrin and Chebat, 2005). Compatibility is when people can perform their tasks smoothly, without struggle, and without embarrassment (Kaplan, 1995). It is not unnatural for humans to engage in sociability if their environments are compatible, since this allows them to engage in social interaction when they do not have to contend with the limitations imposed by their occupational roles or socio-economic status (Oldenburg, 1999). Hence, it is possible for cancer patients to find solace when they socialize at Gilda's Club as they do not feel conscious about their hair loss (Glover

and Parry, 2009), and Jews may find kosher delicatessens compatible when it is possible to partake in loud conversations that may not be the norm at non-Jewish-oriented restaurants (Rosenbaum, 2005).

2.3. Servicescape in experiential services

The analysis of the servicescape and its influence on consumer behavior has produced much research and provided relevant results when applied to the retail sector (Dedeoglu et al., 2018; Hightower et al., 2002; Turley and Milliman, 2000). However, research on servicescapes in non-retail settings has received relatively less attention from service scholars (Conti et al. 2020; Hightower et al., 2002). In doing so, they have developed research not only on sports stadiums (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1999), casinos (Lucas, 2008), banks (Reimer and Kuehn, 2005), airport terminals, universities, hospitals (Newman, 2007), restaurants, bars (Kim and Moon, 2009), hospitality companies (Kim and Hardin, 2010), hotels (Lockwood and Pyun, 2019) but also festivals (Vesci and Botti, 2019), theatres (Jobst and Boerner, 2015) and museums (Conti et al., 2020).

The attention for the cultural sector, museums in particular, is only recent; hence it appears relevant to replicate and improve these studies in other areas where the role of the service environment may also play a critical role in the behavior of the consumer, including the museum sector (Conti et al., 2020; Hooper et al, 2013; Mari

and Poggesi, 2013), studying the influence of the servicescape on consumer behavior, decision making, and service evaluations (Conti et al., 2020; Zeithaml et al., 2006).

Furthermore, considering the relevance and attention dedicated to customer experience and the influence by the servicescape, some authors have investigated this stream. Looking at previous studies, and specifically in the hospitality and tourism literature, Bonn et al. (2007) noted that researchers had focused on the effects of environmental factors on destination image. Grayson and McNeill (2009) considered the need to jointly address the physical dimensions – exterior and interior elements – and social, which is developed by Uhrich and Benkenstein (2012). In hedonic services of sporting events, the social dimension of the servicescape has been demonstrated more relevant than the physical dimension (Uhrich and Benkenstein, 2012)– unlike utilitarian services, for which the other way around holds true (Lin and Liang, 2011). Other authors conclude that the appraisal of the social dimension moderates the evaluations of the quality of service and that its importance is higher in hedonic services than in utilitarian services (Nguyen et al, 2012). In this sense, the work of Harris and Ezeh (2008) delves into the analysis of the moderating effect of personal and situational variables, verifying their partially negative effect on the different elements of the servicescape in restaurants.

2.3.1. The role of servicescape in customers´ experience

The concept of a service experience has been described previously (Grace and O'Cass, 2004), but the results remain highly subjective. Customers' service experiences represent their individual attitudes regarding the communication components in the servicescape. Customer evaluations include their sense of satisfaction and memories about their experience with service (Dong and Siu, 2013). Several studies have indicated that the service experience affects behavioral intentions, including Klaus, Edvardsson and Maklan (2012) and Jin, Lee, and Lee (2015). Poor service experiences discourage visitors from coming back, while positive experiences result in repeat visits and higher visitor satisfaction (Ali et al., 2016; Dong and Siu, 2013).

Multiple visible and invisible touchpoints are often present in service experiences, such as pre-purchase information collection, service personnel onsite, and product experience during consumption (Verhoef et al., 2009). Customers are more likely to extend loyalty if they have a positive service experience that generates positive memories and a sense of fun (Dong and Siu, 2013).

According to Tucker (1991), there are several factors that may affect a customer's perception of the service experience, including speed and convenience of the service delivery, lifestyle implications, value adding, the availability of new technology, and quality of the service. In their study, Grewal, Levy, and Kumar (2009)

illustrated how consumer service experiences are influenced by firm control and other factors. As Zomerdijk and Voss (2010) argue, firms increasingly manage customer experiences in order to differentiate and retain customers.

In references to the role of the servicescape, Dong and Siu (2013) confirm that the surrounding environment can influence visitors' perceptions of a service. The experience of the service is influenced, as well, by both symbolic elements within the space and more traditional physical cues (ambient conditions, spatial layout and functionality, and signs, symbols, and artifacts) in terms of how the customer perceives it. Furthermore, due to the centrality of the customer in experiential settings, it is crucial to note the fact that participants' predisposition to actively participate as well as their imaginative orientation substantially affect the quality of the service experience (Campos et al., 2018).

We will briefly discuss the relevance of the servicescape to a holistic customer experience in the following sub-sections. We will discuss active versus passive customer experiences and compare these elements to those that influence customer satisfaction in hedonic service contexts to gain a better understanding of the context of experiential services.

2.3.1.1. Hedonic *versus* retail contexts

Studying the influence of servicescapes on consumers in retail contexts may be valuable for understanding the process of servicescape influence on consumers, but recent research suggests there are several reasons why the research cannot be generalized to experiential product contexts. A retail encounter (such as banking, dry cleaning, and grocery) will typically last shorter than an experiential encounter (such as fine dining, theme parks, sports, or cruises). Servicescapes that extend beyond the initial point of contact with a customer give customers more opportunities to interact with and be influenced by them (Wall and Berry, 2007; Wakefield et al., 1994).

As a consequence, except for retail contexts that are themed (e.g. Niketown), consumers tend to seek out experiential products rather than retail contexts (Wall and Berry, 2007). Furthermore, the nature and importance of goals consumers drive in retail settings are different from those in experiential settings (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994). Retail settings, for instance, focus more on functional and utilitarian goals (e.g. convenience and problem solving), whereas experiential settings focus more on hedonic and symbolic goals (e.g. stimulation, challenge, and self-worth) (Kwortnik and Ross, 2007). Therefore, underlying factors expected to influence behavioral and attitude outcomes of consumption will diverge (Dong and Siu, 2013).

There is a significant difference between retail products and experiential products in that experiential products can combine tangible (sensory) and intangible

(symbolic) attributes that can be co-produced by consumers and marketers. (Kwortnik and Ross, 2007) The servicescape describes the environment in which services are provided (Pullman and Gross, 2004; Bitner, 1992) and where tangible and intangible factors affect the attitudes, behaviors, and experiences of consumers (Dong and Siu, 2013). By designating the servicescape to be analogous to a theater stage, Grove, et al. (1992) mention that service scenery and props serve to set the expectations of the audience as well as enable better performance by actors (service employees). Taking note of themes, cues, and evoked feelings can elevate services to experiences, according to Pine and Gilmore (1999).

2.3.1.2. Active *versus* passive service experience

A consumer can either actively participate in or passively engage with an experience (Baron and Warnaby, 2011). Consumers participating in active immersion interact, participate, and engage with objects, surroundings, and other users of the servicescape. As an alternate to active immersion, passive immersion involves merely being surrounded by the elements of the environment without being actively engaged (Baron and Warnaby, 2011).

Through this passive immersion in the servicescape (as well as the impact the other people in the environment have on the focal consumer's experience), it can be demonstrated that the mere presence of other people impacts the focal consumer's

experience fundamentally. Several studies have demonstrated that simply having others around impacts shopping behavior, such as satisfaction, brand evaluation and purchase intention (Naylor et al., 2012; Argo et al., 2005). This research line is based on the core concept that it is not necessary for there to be social interactions between a focal customer and a certain group of social others for such effects to occur. These others may other employees or consumers distant from the individual, but they are nevertheless part of the context of the consumer experience, like lighting, music, scent, furniture, and design of the space (Bitner, 1992).

Engagement of visitors has been shown to be important for a positive visitor experience and higher satisfaction in the museum context (Voase, 2002). Thus, both active and passive interactions within the service environment can be critical to facilitating interactions with the built environment for further engagement of consumers as well as relevant for facilitating interaction with their social environment surrounding them. Creating interactions such as these ensures satisfaction and loyalty (Dong and Siu, 2013; Morgan, 2008).

2.3.2. Servicescape dimensions in leisure and cultural services

Studies on the servicescape carried out in the experiential and creative services (Table 7) can be grouped in those focusing on general leisure services and those related to the arts and culture services, in particular museums and festivals, as described next.

Table 7 – Servicescape in experiential and creative services

Authors	Service context and scale name	Elements
Kwortnik (2008)	Cruise context *Shipscape*	(1) Natural environment (2) Ambient conditions (3) Design factors (4) Social factors
Thomas et al. (2010) **Quintal et al. (2015)**	Wine tourism context *Winescape*	(1) Setting (2) Atmospherics (3) Wine quality (4) Wine value (5) Availability (6) Signage (7) Service staff quality
Lockwood and Pyun (2019)	Hotels context *Hotel Serviscescape*	(1) Aesthetic quality (2) Functionality (3) Atmosphere (4) Spaciousness (5) Physiological conditions
Conti et al. (2020)	Museums context *Museumscape*	(1) Ambient conditions (2) Staff behavior (3) Facilities and convenience (4) Art gallery quality (5) Exhibition space aesthetics (6) Signs and signage
Lee et al. (2008)	Festival context *Festivalscape*	(1) Program content (2) Staff interactions (3) Facilities of the festival (4) Food (5) Souvenirs (6) Convenience (7) Information

Source: Author's elaboration

a) General leisure services

The quality of the servicescape is important for the perception of leisure services by consumers. For example, Wakefield and Blodgett (1994) identified a variety of factors in leisure services, including layout accessibility, aesthetics, electronic equipment, comfort levels, and cleanliness. Lucas (2003) examined five

elements of the casino environment, including the appearance of the gaming floor, the ambience, the interior design, and the cleanliness and layout. Ryu (2005) created the Dinescape scale that consists of six factors including atmosphere, aesthetics, lighting, product, layout, and social factors in posh restaurants. Shopping malls have general interiors, social dimensions, interior displays, and exterior features determined by Tripathi and Siddiqui (2008).

The different elements of the servicescape studied in these specific contexts make it interesting to focus on three in particular: wine tourism (Quintal et al., 2015), cruises (Kwortnik, 2008) and hotels (Lockwood and Pyun, 2019). Quintal et al. (2015) found that winescape service staff and complementary products affected tourism attitudes and ultimately led to wine tourist decisions. Thomas et al. (2010) found that wine landscape setting and wine quality were also important factors that influenced wine tourist attitude.

Additionally, Kwortnik's (2008) study conceptualizes the shipscape as a context-specific type of servicescape that includes the environmental conditions of the ship (physical and social), as well as the natural environment (the ocean) that provides a broader contextual setting. The social dimension of cruising shows that cruisers are adversely affected by other travelers who interfere with their desired experiences (such as escape and sophistication) by smoking, making too much noise, crowding, and dressing too casually. The lack of care and hospitality from crew members weakens the exceptional experience that is expected from them (Kwontrik, 2008). Additionally,

crew members who use their hospitality skills to craft special cruise moments for cruisers – and in the process develop meaningful, or even symbolic relationships with cruisers – facilitate outcomes that are not investigated in the retail and servicescape literature (Kwontrik, 2008).

The hotel servicescape was d–veloped by Lockwood and Pyun (2019), with five components: aesthetic quality, functionality, atmosphere, spaciousness, and physiological conditions. The findings show that both emotional and behavioral responses are affected by the hotel servicescape. For example, out of the five hotel servicescape dimensions, four of them – spaciousness, atmosphere, aesthetic quality, and physiological conditions – are predictive of both satisfaction and arousal (Lockwood and Pyun, 2019). Furthermore, Line and Hanks (2019) have discussed the social dimension of the servicescape in the same context. The researchers found that customer satisfaction levels are affected by the appearance of others, their perceived similarity to the focal customer, and the appropriateness of their behaviors (Line and Hanks, 2019).

b) Arts and culture services

Studies of cultural service landscapes and servicescapes are scarce. Among the first studies in this field was that of Lee, Lee, Lee and Babin (2008) that identified seven festivalscape cues from convenience, staff, information, program content,

facilities, souvenirs, and food quality) and examined how these impact patron emotions, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Results of this study indicate content of festival programs plays a large role in driving positive emotion and patron satisfaction, which contributes to patron loyalty. As a result, festival planners and managers should develop unique programs, experiences, and contests that are culturally relevant and interesting (Lee et al., 2008). Quality of the facility also influences emotions and satisfaction, although it is a much weaker effect. Various factors, such as the food, the program content, and the quality of the facility in a festivalscape, contribute to creating an experience infused with specific feelings, ultimately leading to improved outcomes.

Very little is said with reference to the social dimension in the context of cultural activities. Further studies have been conducted in the performing arts context and identified how during customers' experience in hedonic services, social elements play an important role and should be managed in addition to the cultural product itself. In the performing arts, attendees evaluate the whole experience, considering the behavior of other attendees as well as of the organization's staff (Tubillejas-Andrés, et al., 2020).

As per the museum sector, Conti, Vesci, Castellani, and Rossato (2020) carried out a review of the literature in the museum context with the aim of both 128rtscape128nt128ing the museumscape by identifying its elements and to analyse

the effect of the identified elements on visitor loyalty, in particular on their positive word of mouth. Directing the attention toward the possibility of managing and measuring supply-related elements, brough to the identification of six different elements: ambient conditions, staff behavior, facilities and convenience, art gallery quality, exhibition space aesthetics, signs, and signage.

The findings highlighted the museumscape attributes that most strongly influenced the museum visitors' positive word of mouth. Exhibition space aesthetics and art gallery quality had significant positive effects and the highest path coefficient for positive word of mouth. In this sense, this study identifies these as the two most critical museumscape attributes (followed by staff behavior) influencing museum visitors' intention to recommend. Conversely, facilities and convenience, ambient conditions and signs and signage did not appear to have a significant influence on museum visitors' positive word of mouth. This is in contrast with the literature on service marketing that demonstrates a direct influence of ambient conditions, facilities and convenience and signs and signage on satisfaction or behaviors (Quintal et al., 2015; Ryu et al., 2012; Yoon et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2008) and identifies a peculiarity of the museum context.

2.3.3. The dimensions and elements of the museumscape

The servicescape in museums, also defined as museumscape, represents the physical space and the general atmosphere experienced by museum visitors during their whole visiting experience (Conti et al., 2020). The literature emphasizes that the relevance and perception of environmental cues may vary across types of service organization (Baker, 1986), hence based on a review of the literature in the museum context, the most relevant attributes used to assess a museum's service 130rtscape130ntt will be defined. It is possible to identify three critical elements: a) the physical environment; b) the quality of the collection; c) the social dimension (Conti et al., 2020).

a) Physical environment in museums

Goulding (2000) highlights how even the museum product is delivered in a physical environment which includes the land or building area, shape, lighting, means of orienting the visitor, queues, waiting, crowding and methods of stimulating interest and engagement. In the same vein, literature recognizes the relevance of interior elements of the environment such as temperature, interior colors, cleanliness of the building, flooring, lighting, ambient scents and sounds, to experiencing a museum (Forrest, 2013; Kottasz, 2006).

Other investigations assessing quality in the museum context consider facilities and collateral services such as an efficient ticket office and audio guides, tour guides,

rest areas and cloakrooms (Geissler et al., 2006). It is recognized that this kind of service delivery option influences the level of satisfaction (Phaswana-Mafuya and Haydam, 2005), contributing to improve the visitors' experience and their perception of a museum space and functionality.

b) Quality of the exhibition

In the exhibition industry, many scholars have investigated the quality of exhibition service (Lee and Cheng, 2018; Lin and Lin, 2013; Chen and Mo, 2012). Rust and Oliver (1994) identified three dimensions related to the quality of exhibition services: service product, service environment and service delivery. These three dimensions are similar to the service quality dimensions that reflect the common characteristics of various exhibitions (Yun and Lee, 2016).

In this context, in terms of service product, program contents are considered the most important element to evaluate quality (Jung, 2005). On the other hand, service delivery refers to employee–customer interaction; such interaction, together with the provision of professional information, has the effect on service quality perceptions (Lee and Cheng, 2018; Lin and Lin, 2013; Wall and Berry, 2007) and on the overall evaluation of the exhibition.

Previous studies underline the relevance, when assessing the museum service environment, of the reputation of exhibited artworks (and more generally, the quality of the museum's permanent collection) and the aesthetic aspects of exhibition spaces

(Loureiro, 2019; Zhang et al., 2018; Forrest, 2013; Goulding, 2000). The quality of a permanent collection contributes to an art museum's brand image (Cheng and Wan, 2012; Geissler et al., 2006). Conti et al. (2020) confirmed the relevance of the quality of the exhibited artwork as, together with space aesthetics, the triggers for positive word of mouth in museums. Similarly, the nature of a museum's physical environment in terms of the pleasure or harmony offered by its interior ambience can either improve the experience generate a negative impact on the consumer (Conti et al., 2020; Goulding, 2000).

c) Social dimension

Until recently, the studies on servicescapes that focus their gaze on the servicescape as a global concept (Yuksel, 2007; Hightower et al., 2002) or as a specific study of its elements (Harris and Ezeh, 2008; Kwortnik, 2008; Wakefield and Baker, 1998), make an effort to explain the physical dimension (Harris and Ezeh, 2008), to the detriment of the social dimension (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003). The latter has been little considered (Mari and Poggesi, 2013; Bonnin, 2006; Tombs, and McColl-Kennedy, 2003) although it also has consequences on consumer response (Chris and Liang, 2011; Uhrich and Benkenstein, 2012). There is little research that analyzes the servicescape jointly and from a holistic perspective (Hanks and Line 2017, 2018; Mari and Poggesi, 2013; Harris and Ezeh, 2008; Rosenbaum, 2011; Mattila and Wirtz, 2001), this being the perspective more suitable to address the

artscape analysis according to the reviewed authors (Mari and Poggesi, 2013; Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011; Wakefield and Blodget, 1996).

In the context of museums, relevant elements are represented by staff quality and employee behavior (Quintal et al., 2015; Bruwer, 2014; Grappi and Montanari, 2011; Harris and Ezeh, 2008). In fact, it is noted that the knowledge and courteousness of staff (Forrest, 2013), staff service (Zhang et al., 2018), employees' interaction with visitors (Cheng and Wan, 2012), staff personal appearance, friendliness, and empathy (Loureiro, 2019) all contribute to customer satisfaction (Yucelt, 2001), the provision of positive word of mouth and the loyalty intention (Hsieh et al., 2015).

CHAPTER 3: A MODEL OF EXPANDED SERVICESCAPE IN THE MUSEUM CONTEXT

3.1. Objectives of the research

Many studies have been conducted on the impact of service environments on consumers using the servicescape framework (e.g. Kim and Moon, 2009; Morin et al., 2007; Newman, 2007; Hoffman et al., 2003). Since the consumption space has been examined in the previous chapter, most studies have focused primarily on its physical dimensions, focusing little attention on its human or social dimensions (Harris and Ezeh, 2008; Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003).

The literature has recently shown that other social actors in shared consumption spaces can significantly affect consumer behavior, so Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2003) referred to the phenomenon as the social servicescape. The social servicescape is often referred to as an extension of Bitner's (1992) traditional theory of physical servicescapes. It is conceptualized as an examination of the appearance, behavior, and how they are perceived to share similarity with the person experiencing the phenomenon (Hanks and Line, 2018; Line and Hanks, 2019; Miao and Mattila, 2013).

The study of the servicescape has also taken into account two other dimensions: the natural and symbolic ones. A wide range of consumption contexts, including restaurants and hotels, have been addressed through these studies (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011).

As customers' perception and evaluation of their experiences are greatly impacted by the expanded servicescape (Line and Hanks, 2019), it makes sense to

study the role of social interactions in museum visits. An important topic in the marketing literature is understanding how natural, social, and symbolic stimuli affect consumer behavior in the museum context (Conti et al., 2020). This thesis attempts to fulfill the following objectives based on the expanded servicescape in museums:

1) An investigation of the expanded servicescape concept in the context of art museums and exhibitions.

2) An evaluation of the relationship between the expanded servicescape (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011) and visitor satisfaction, as the former is commonly considered an antecedent to the latter (Park et al., 2019).

3) Analyzing and assessing how loyalty and satisfaction are related. The satisfaction of a visitor has been found to be a relevant antecedent of loyalty in museums (Harrison and Shaw, 2004).

4) Assessing and analyzing the moderating effects of sexual orientation on satisfaction and loyalty, as well as servicescape and satisfaction. There has been little research on sexual orientation in arts contexts (Henderson and Rank-Christman, 2016), which means that further research is needed.

3.2. The expanded servicescape

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the servicescape concept has been extensively studied over the years in the hospitality and restaurant industries, proving its influence on customers' emotions (Lin and Mattila, 2010), loyalty (Jani and Han, 2015), satisfaction (Choi and Kandampully, 2019; Namasivayam and Mattila, 2007), behavioral and word-of-mouth intentions (Hanks and Line, 2018). Taking into account different research carried out on the benefits of an expanded servicescape is important for understanding the importance of extending Bitner's (1992) work on physical servicescapes to that of an expanded servicescape.

There has been a great deal of research on social factors in the service environment, focusing mostly on restaurants (Jang et al., 2015; Hanks et al., 2017), hotels (Hanks and Line, 2018; Line and Hanks, 2019) and operas (Tubillejas- Andrés et al., 2016).

A study by Jang et al. in the context of the restaurant examined how social factors (e.g., employees, other customers, social crowding, and rapport) impact customers' behavior and restaurant's image. Researchers Line and Hanks (2019) examined the emergence of social servicescapes within the hotel sector, particularly focusing on how social interaction between guests can influence consumption behavior. Customers tend to focus on social aspects of an organization rather than the physical appearances. Tubillejas-Andrés et al. (2016) found that there was a significant

relationship between social servicescape and consumer satisfaction, loyalty, and satisfaction of value in the context of opera. The relationship between social servicescape and perceived value is intensified by positive emotions as a moderating variable.

Kirillova and Lehto (2016) studied the impact of the expanded servicescape in the hotel industry in light of its natural dimension. A study performed by the authors confirmed the relevance of the natural environment on consumers' behaviors, health, and subjective well-being in a leisure context, that of vacation. In addition to studying the influence of natural stimuli on individual behavior, Purani and Kumar (2018) also examined the impact of natural stimuli on people's mood, attention, and service preferences.

As a final step, the symbolic stimuli have been investigated and incorporated in the expanded servicescape (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011). Customers' perceptions of services and organizations are significantly influenced by symbolic stimuli in the hospitality industry (Line and Hanks, 2019). The authenticity perceptions of customers are positively related to their brand equity and brand choice intentions for ethnic restaurants, for example, according to Lu et al. (2015). As well as brand authenticity, Mody and Hanks (2020) emphasized the importance of client loyalty in the context of hotels.

3.3. Expanded servicescape and satisfaction

3.3.1. Satisfaction in service environments

Satisfaction has been traditionally considered to be influenced by cognitive antecedents and a result of the comparison between a subjective experience and a prior base of reference (Oliver, 1980). The level of customer satisfaction relates to how happy and delighted customers are with the products and services that businesses provide (Oliver, 1980). A satisfied person experiences the state of mind when their expectations have been met by the performance of a product or service. As a result, a person's satisfaction is dictated by both their expectations and their perception of the performance (Bahia et al., 2000; Churchill and Surprenant, 1982).

According to Moran et al. (2014), the most important factors defining satisfaction in the service environment are "moments of truth," which are also responsible for the negative experience resulting from incompetent or rude personnel as well as antipathetic customers. Due to its close connection to service quality, satisfaction influences future behavior directly (de Oliveira Santini et al., 2018).

Research findings (Halvorsrud et al., 2016) indicate that building consumer loyalty induces a tangible financial benefit for businesses through high quality customer experience. Its components have even been studied for their influence on repurchase decisions or even loyalty (Harris and Ezeh, 2008). Studies from more recent times add to this chain of logic (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003). Customer

satisfaction is typically included in such a relationship (Daunt and Harris, 2012). Studies have found that the direct effect of customer satisfaction is more important to behavior intentions than the direct effect of service quality, which leads directly to repeat purchases (Tubillejas et al., 2016).

As Park et al. (2016) highlighted, intangibles affect customer satisfaction, which is affected by unique characteristics of a service. Therefore, organizations should focus more on intangible factors (i.e. social servicescape) of customer satisfaction in order to ensure greater customer satisfaction by overcoming the difficulty of copying them. In addition, there is evidence that the layout and design of the environment have a positive influence on customer satisfaction (Seiders et al., 2000). The design of a building's space may especially affect the convenience of services and, as a result, the experience of individual customers (Nguyen et al., 2012).

As an influencer of customer satisfaction, Jang et al. (2015) examined other's behaviors in the service setting. Based on the results, individuals are more likely to be satisfied when they perceive others' behavior to be appropriate. Hanks et al. (2017), who explored the impact of a social servicescape on the satisfaction of restaurant customers, found that perceived similarity in demographics and psychology is an element of the social servicescape that improves customers' satisfaction and experiences.

According to Line and Hanks (2019), hotel guests' satisfaction is directly related to the appearance, behaviors, and presence of employees and other customers. Specifically, the results suggest that appearance, similarity to the focal customer, and the appropriateness of their actions contribute to the satisfaction levels of other customers (Line and Hanks, 2019).

Further, Lin, Zhang, and Gursoy (2020) suggest that B&B clients tend to have different expectations from employees versus other customers regarding nonverbal interaction. Compared with their interactions with other customers, customers have higher expectations when they interact with employees. Customers' personal space can be invaded by other customers, causing them dissatisfaction, whereas keeping a proper distance from other customers is unlikely to impact satisfaction. As is the case with other customers, the presence of customers who are improperly groomed can generate negative emotions in customers, while the presence of properly groomed and attractive customers will not generate negative emotions in customers. Due to the expected norms reflected in these nonverbal cues, their absence will not produce positive emotions, while their presence will probably generate negative emotions. Customers' satisfaction with these nonverbals is positively impacted in the hospitality context (Lin et al., 2020).

3.3.2. Customer satisfaction in the arts

The definition of customer satisfaction in the arts context is complex and multidimensional (Leversen et al. 2012). Whenever attending arts events, customers are always looking for a pleasant experience (Caldwell 2001). They hope the experience will bring them satisfaction and help them fulfill their psychological needs. Participants may enjoy the event by actively participating or by simply engaging with other people and the performance. Involvement should be voluntary, self-motivated, and based on the interests of the customer (Leversen et al. 2012).

Customers' satisfaction in experiential services can be attributed to autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Reis et al. 2000; Deci and Ryan, 1991). The importance of autonomy and relatedness needs outweighs competence when it comes to achieving satisfaction (Stylianou-Lambert 2011). A consumer's participation is typically self-directed, and the perception of freedom is central to such autonomous behavior (Iso-Ahola 1979). If people choose to attend an arts event and leave satisfied, they are likely to feel free from control - in other words, autonomous (Reis et al. 2000).

The social aspect of cultural activities is considered important when evaluating customer satisfaction (Lam and So, 2013), taking into account the opportunity for socializing during such activities (Jeannotte, 2003). As a result, customers can share feelings and a common experience with friends, performers, and members of the audience, promoting friendly relationships. Through emotional connections with the

artists or with other people, this fulfills the consumer's need for relatedness (Lam and So, 2013). As consumers consume culture, they can gain new experiences and form relationships with the organizations and with other people who share their interests (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

In the context of exhibitions, emotional factors have been identified as important antecedents, since museum services are based on consumer participation and experiences (De Rojas and Camarero, 2008). Researchers have found that the emotional, cognitive, and social values associated with the product itself as well as the technical aspect enhance the visitor's experience at an attraction, such as a museum (Martín-Ruiz et al., 2010; Caldwell, 2002; Rowley, 1999). As in the study by Martín-Ruiz et al. (2010), Gil and Ritchie (2009) discovered that the affective and emotional aspects of a visitor's museum experience (being with people, enjoying social interaction, etc.) are more influential than the cognitive aspects (quality, appearance, museum shop, etc.), thus affecting their satisfaction.

Based on findings from the specific context of museums, Jeong and Lee (2006) found that a consumer's emotional response to the museum is mediated by its environmental attributes. In some cases, the museum's environmental attributes, along with visitor characteristics, can create what is known as "museum fatigue," thereby lowering the visitor's interest in the exhibits and, in turn, affecting their satisfaction (Davey, 2005).

Therefore, the physical, natural, social, and symbolic dimensions of the leisure servicescape have been identified as important predictors of satisfaction (Lin et al., 2020; Line and Hanks, 2017). In addition to creating positive images in potential consumers' minds, the expanded servicescape can lead to service satisfaction (Morkunas and Rudiené, 2020).

Accordingly, the following hypothesis can be formulated.

H1: ***The expanded servicescape has a significant and positive impact on satisfaction with the museum/exhibition experience.***

3.4. Satisfaction and loyalty

3.4.1. Loyalty in the service setting

The concept of customer loyalty is central to marketing studies and qualifies as one of the most enduring assets possessed by a company (Toufaily et al., 2013). It has been noted that there are a number of definitions of loyalty in the literature and no consensus has been reached (Lai, 2019; Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2003). Our research defines loyalty specifically as long-term positive relationships between a service provider and a customer (Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2003).

Throughout the development of loyalty, Oliver (1999) distinguishes four stages. The first stage of customer loyalty is an information-driven cognitive loyalty,

which later develops into a feeling of positive loyalty towards the offering or provider. Conscious loyalty, the third stage, is based on the behavior of customers, culminating in action loyalty - the fourth stage.

Companies are able to develop long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with customers by creating and maintaining customer loyalty (Pan et al., 2012). Loyal customers show attachment and commitment to the organization and do not consider alternatives (So et al., 2016). Additionally, loyal customers are more likely to pay more, to express higher buying intentions, as well as resisted switching (Evanschitzky et al., 2012). For this reason, organizations and companies need loyal customers in order to succeed.

Amidst the fierce competition in global markets, customer loyalty has become increasingly important as a way to ensure long-term competitive advantages (Aksoy, 2013). To gain the trust and loyalty of their existing customers, managers must continue to adopt innovative strategies (Dominici and Guzzo, 2010) that will encourage them to spread positive word-of-mouth (WOM) (Zeithaml, 2000; Reichheld and Sasser, 1990). Companies recognize that it is crucial to build good relationships with their existing customers in the face of increasing competition (Morgan and Rego, 2006).

According to Seiders et al. (2005), satisfaction is a relevant antecedent to loyalty, although limited evidence supports this claim (Jones and Reynolds, 2006).

Based on the characteristics of the product/service, Pan et al. (2012) found that customer satisfaction might affect loyalty differently. In B2C contexts, satisfaction is more relevant to loyalty than in B2B contexts based on factors such as the regularity of the purchase cycle and length of the purchase cycle (Pan et al., 2012).

According to Rai and Medha (2013), customer satisfaction is related to loyalty. The authors looked at the influence of loyalty on customer satisfaction in the financial services industry, confirming the relationship between trust and commitment. The topic of loyalty in the service environment was also examined by Harris and Ezeh (2008) and Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011). While their research examined general service settings, others (Hanks and Line 2018; Tubillejas-Andrés et al., 2016) examined the relationship between social servicescape, loyalty, and satisfaction in restaurants and opera theaters. As an antecedent of loyalty, customer satisfaction has been confirmed.

There are two dimensions to loyalty: behavioral and attitude (Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2003; Julander et al., 1997). Attitudinal refers to the desire of an individual, such as recommending, and behavioral refers to the behavior of the consumer (such as repurchasing) toward a particular product or service (Xu and Li, 2016; Gremler and Brown, 1999). Thus, loyalty in the service setting is defined as repurchasing goods or services from the same provider consistently (Lai, 2019) and recommending them to others (Liat et al., 2014). We will discuss these two dimensions next. The first is word of mouth, and the second is return intention.

3.4.1.1. Word of mouth (WOM)

The influence of word of mouth (WOM) on consumer behavior is well recognized (Daugherty and Hoffman, 2014). Especially with intangible products, such as tourism or hospitality, which are difficult to assess prior to consumption, there is a huge influence on the final purchase decision. Due to this, word-of-mouth is considered the most important source of information in consumer buying decisions and intended behavior (Litvin et al., 2008; Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012). A destination that is overall satisfying has the potential to be revisited and recommended (Sotiriadis and Van Zyl, 2013).

Studies on consumer behavior have demonstrated (Huete-Alcocer, 2017; Park and Lee, 2009) that consumers pay more attention to negative information over positive information (Filieri and McLeay, 2014; Cheung and Thadani, 2012).

For example, satisfied customers tend to become highly effective representatives of a product or service via positive word of mouth (Royo-Vela and Casamassima, 2011), creating highly competitive advantages for small businesses and establishments. According to some studies, small businesses most commonly utilize traditional word-of-mouth marketing (Huete-Alcocer, 2017; Park and Lee, 2009).

Dick and Basu (1994) first proposed a connection between customer satisfaction and WOM. The relationship has only been investigated a few times since then (Sichtmann, 2007). As a measure of customer satisfaction towards a product or

service, word-of-mouth has been operationalized in the service industry literature (Brown et al., 2005). A similar study by De Matos and Rossi (2008) examined the relationship between customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth marketing. Researchers found that satisfied customers are more likely to recommend a service provider to their peers. Customer who switch service providers, on the other hand, are more likely to speak negatively about the company.

As such, previous research has indicated that customer satisfaction plays a role in positive word-of-mouth. According to Choi and Choi (2014), this relationship has been empirically established, demonstrating the importance of satisfaction on the opportunity to speak positively about a service. According to Yen and Tang (2019), customer satisfaction and loyalty are antecedents of positive word-of-mouth in the hotel sector.

3.4.1.2. Return intention

As per the second variable, according to Peyrot and Van Doren (1994), return intention is an individual's real behavior which results in purchasing the same products or services more than once. It is also known as retention (Zineldin, 2006; Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Narayandas, 1998) and is considered one of the most influential marketing variables in the relationship between consumers (Fullerton, 2005; Morgan

and Hunt, 1994). It is used as a term to highlight the customer's decision to repurchase the same product or service in the future (Hume et al., 2007).

The construct of customer loyalty In restaurants was defined by Fu and Parks (2001) as return intention. Part of the reason for customer loyalty to a given restaurant can be attributed to their willingness to return. Recent studies of loyalty in casinos have been performed by Biligihan et al. (2016). The willingness of users to re-patronize has been explained in part by positive emotions, ambience, and behavior. It has consistently been found that loyalty in retail settings is correlated with patronage intentions (Hanks and Line, 2018). As Andreu et al. (2006) showed, loyalty can also be explained by positive emotions and patronage intentions.

3.4.2. Customer loyalty in the arts

There are many challenges associated with the achievement of loyalty in the arts sector (Piancatelli et al., 2020; Hume, 2011; Harrison and Shaw, 2004). Although arts organizations have the opportunity to establish cultural value for their customers and communicate their unique attributes, today many organizations offer similar or comparable products and services, which come across as mere commodities to customers and the market (Piancatelli et al., 2020; Victorino et al., 2005). Creating unique, memorable, and positive experiences for customers is key to arts organizations' sustainability and growth (Walls et al., 2011).

The social serviceescape construct was examined by Tubillejas-Andrés et al. (2016) in the context of performing arts to determine its impact on post-consumption behavior (loyalty in particular). Social servicescape positively affects loyalty, satisfaction, and perceived value, according to the study. Additionally, Kruger and Saayman (2019) studied the drivers of loyalty in the context of arts festivals. Their findings identified distinctive offerings, festival features, and festival experiences as critical decision-making factors.

Next, we will discuss WOM and return intention in the arts context.

3.4.2.1. WOM and return intention in the arts

WOM can be managed passively or actively by arts organizations (Helm, 2000; Bayus, 1992). Arts organizations passive behavior is manifested in the fact that visitor recommendations are simply considered as a source of visitors' loyalty (Helm and Kuhl, 2006) and no action is taken, while active behavior of an arts organizations entails actively engaging visitors to increase their word of mouth (Vigolo et al., 2019).

In the arts and culture context, visitor loyalty is closely tied to a desire to return and word-of-mouth advertising (Radder and Han, 2015; Hui, et al., 2007). Visitors who remain loyal to a company are more likely to refer it or return to it (Harrison and Shaw, 2004; Anderson et al., 2000).

In the context of cultural institutions, loyal consumers enhance profitability and positively affect revisit intentions (Hume et al., 2007). Certainly, cultural institutions have an interest in attracting new visitors. However, the key to long-term profitability and a strong brand identity is the maintenance of existing visitors and creating revisit intentions (Jobst and Boerner, 2011).

Moreover, it is vital that arts organizations consistently deliver a high-quality experience at every contact point with visitors (Hausmann, 2007); this can lead to positive recommendations (Kotler, Kotler and Kotler, 2008; Helm and Kuhl, 2006; Helm and Klar, 1997).

A return intention is driven by factors such as socio-demographics and loyalty toward an institution, according to Brida et al. (2012). Based on a survey conducted in an Italian modern art museum, loyalty is also explained by the decision to re-patronize a cultural institution (Brida et al., 2016).

This means that higher levels of customer satisfaction will directly and significantly affect the loyalty of visitors. As a result, satisfaction is expected to be a relevant antecedent of loyalty, which in turn can lead to the following hypothesis:

H2: ***Visitors' satisfaction has a significant and positive impact on the visitors' loyalty***

3.5. Sexual orientation

As discussed in Chapter 1, sexual orientation has become a relevant topic of discussion at both social and academic level. Several factors affect consumption behavior, and sexual orientation exerts only a minor impact, according to Eisend and Hermann (2020). Specifically, the authors of the study reported small differences in restaurant consumption variables between homosexuals and heterosexuals but not between gay and lesbian consumers. A meta-analysis of 45 papers reveals that, on average, less than 1% of dietary variation is attributed to sexual preference.

Researchers Ginder and Byun (2015) examined homosexual consumer research from an integrated, interdisciplinary perspective. They identified four broad areas of research based on an in-depth literature review: the viability of the gay and lesbian market, the nature of gay/lesbian-specific media and advertising, the consumer response to gay/lesbian-specific advertising and consumer behavior among gays and lesbians (Ginder and Byun, 2015).

Studies relating to the arts and cultural sector have focused on sexual orientation and attendance (Hager and Winkler, 2012), attempting to explain the differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals based on demographic attributes (Hager and Winkler, 2012; Vandecasteele and Geuens, 2009, Lewis and Seaman, 2004). Further, Cuadrado-García and Montoro-Pons (2021) found that LGB people's

attendance at live performances is mainly motivated by emotional, social and political reasons, and not by their sexual orientation.

In parallel, Gavrielides (2008) studied the relationship of human rights (including sexual orientation) with customer satisfaction in the context of public services. The results showed that institutions paying more attention to protecting such rights were better able to satisfy customers. In the context of universities, Carvey (2012) reported that homosexual students were significantly more satisfied with faculty and staff interactions than their heterosexual peers.

Jian (2017) examined the moderating effects of sexual orientation and physical appearance on satisfaction and found that it is positive. According to Quach et al. (2017), sexual orientation, age, gender, and ethnicity have an impact on consumers' decision-making and WOM within retail stores, demonstrating how these variables influence customer satisfaction and return intention.

Furthermore, Ramirez-Correa et al. (2019) studied how behaviors (in particular WOM) may be affected by personal traits of consumers, thereby modifying such behavior according to the consumer's specific personality or psychographic characteristics.

Thus, in light of this literature and the importance this variable has, we can state the following hypothesis:

H3a: ***Sexual orientation moderates the impact of the servicescape on visitors' satisfaction.***

H3b: ***Sexual orientation moderates the impact of visitors' satisfaction on visitors' loyalty***

3.6. The theoretical model

The figure below (Figure 3) exemplifies the theoretical model that has been built based on the literature review and the objectives of this doctoral thesis.

Figure 3 – Theoretical Model
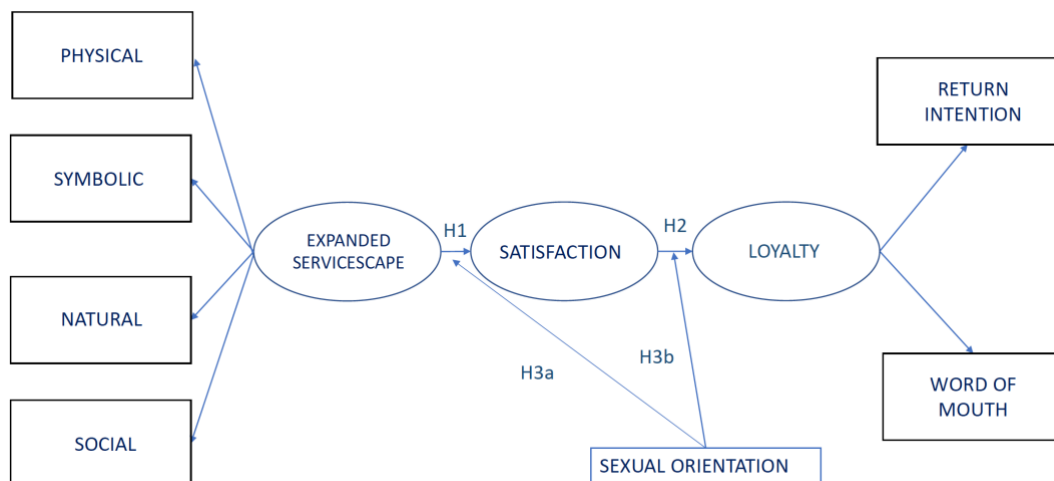
Source: Author's elaboration

The current research aims at adopting the four dimensions proposed by Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) – physical, natural, symbolic, and social – as reflective dimensions forming the expanded servicescape concept and investigating its impact on satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, loyalty is also a second order reflective construct, formed by WOM and return intention. Lastly, a moderating variable is considered: sexual orientation.

Accordingly, all the hypotheses that will be tested in this research are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8 – Summary of the hypothesis

Hypotesis

|	
H1	The expanded servicescape has a significant and positive impact on satisfaction with the museum/exhibition experience.
H2	Visitors' satisfaction has a significant and positive impact on the visitors' loyalty.
H3a	Sexual orientation moderates the impact of the servicescape on visitors' satisfaction.
H3b	Sexual orientation moderates the impact of visitors' satisfaction on the visitors' loyalty

CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL STUDY AND VALIDATION OF THE MODEL

4.1. Research design

In order to test the model, an online, survey-based research was undertaken. It aimed at individuals from 18 years old living in Italy who had attended a museum at least once in the previous 24 months, and was carried out in the months of June and July 2021. A structured questionnaire was then designed in order to gather participant´s responses.

4.1.1. The questionnaire: main scales of measurement

To screen those target respondents, a filter question was placed right after the introduction with the general aim of the research. The questionnaire was organized in three parts. The first one was dedicated to art museums and exhibitions attendance habits of the respondents; the second part was focused on the measurement of the extended servicescape and the other main variables of the model; and the last section collected information on respondent´s socio-demographics.

First, survey-takers were asked about habits regarding cultural participation. In this respect, they were asked about, the type of the last exhibition they visited, how they had heard about the art museum/exhibition, and who they went with. In addition, respondents were asked how often they usually visited art museums/exhibitions and their attendance motivations.

Secondly, the survey continued with two set of questions aiming at measuring the main variables of the model: expanded servicescape, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Respondents were asked questions related to the four dimensions of the expanded servicescape model (physical, social, symbolic and natural) as well as questions related to post consumption behavior, specifically satisfaction and loyalty.

Lastly, socio-demographics information was collected. Respondents were asked to provide information about their age, gender, sexual orientation, occupation, personal status, level of education and nationality.

All the measurement scales used were adapted from previous studies after a careful review of the literature. Furthermore, 7-point Likert scales were adopted for respondents to indicate the level of agreement-disagreement with statement (from 1: strongly disagree to 7: strongly agree).

4.1.2.1. Expanded servicescape

The expanded servicescape was modeled as a second-order factor reflective of four underlying dimensions. A scale from Fisk et al. (2011) was adapted to measure this construct. These authors proposed four dimensions: physical, social, socially symbolic, and natural environment. Modifications of the scale were in terms of wordings as the reference to the specific arts museum or exhibition context (Table 9). A total of 27 items were included. An additional response-option (do not know) was considered for those unable to answer.

Table 9 – Scale of measurement of the expanded servicescape

Construct	Items	Variable name
Physical	1. Smells were pleasing.	Smell
	2. Background sounds were nice.	Background
	3. Colors of the premises were in harmony.	Colors
	4. The temperature was comfortable.	Temperature
	5. The place was spacious.	Spacious
	6. The interior design of the place was attractive.	Design
	7. The premises were clean.	Clean
	8. Lighting was pleasant.	Lightning
	9. The informative panels were clear and visible.	Panels
	10. The signs used were helpful to me.	Signs
Social	11. The crowd level was comfortable.	Crowd
	12. People seemed to be enjoying themselves.	Enjoy
	13. People were interacting with each other.	Interact
	14. I could identify myself with the other visitors.	Identify
	15. I liked the appearance of the other visitors.	Appearance
	16. The other visitors were dressed appropriately.	Dress
	17. The behavior of the other visitors was appropriate for the setting.	Behavior
	18. The other visitors were friendly towards me.	Friendly
	19. I could identify with the employees of the museum/exhibition.	Identify_em
	20. I liked the appearance of the employees of the museum/exhibition.	Appearance_em
	21. The employees of the museum/exhibition were dressed appropriately.	Dress_em
	22. The employees of the museum/exhibition were friendly towards me.	Friendly_em
Socially symbolic	23. The space was familiar to me.	Space
	24. Symbols and exhibits were familiar to me.	Exhibits
	25. The overall place seemed welcoming to me.	Welcome
Natural	26. The overall place was engaging.	Engaging
	27. The overall place made me feel comfortable.	Comfortable

Source: adapted from Fisk et al. (2011)

4.1.2.2. Satisfaction

To measure the level of satisfaction a three-item scale was considered from Westbrook and Oliver´s (1991) and later adopted by Hume and Mort (2010) in the performing arts context. Table 10 includes the items used to measure the construct. These have been adapted to the museum/exhibition context from the original scale.

Table 10 – Scale of measurement of satisfaction

Construct	Items	Variable name
Satisfaction	I was happy with the experience I had at that art museum/exhibition.	Happy
	I was satisfied with my experience at that art museum/exhibition.	Satisfied
	I truly enjoyed going to that art museum/exhibition.	Enjoy

Source: adapted from Hume and Mort´s (2010)

4.1.2.3. Loyalty

Loyalty was measured through return intention and WOM, which were assessed using a four-item scale adapted from Zeithmal et al´s. (1996). Table 11 shows the items used to measure the variable loyalty as a formative construct composed by WOM and return intention.

Table 11 – Scale of measurement of WOM and return intention

Construct	Items	Variable name
Loyalty	I have said positive things about visiting the art museum/exhibition to other people	Wom_said
	I have recommended visiting that art museum/exhibition to someone who sought my advice	Wom_recom
	I have encouraged family and friends to visit that museum exhibition	Wom_enc
	I will visit an art/exhibition over the few months	Return_int

Source: adapted from Zeithmal et al. (1996)

4.2. Sample and fieldwork

To select sample units a non-probabilistic sampling method was used, specifically, snowball sampling. The survey was sent out to more than 1000 people via email and through a formalized text message. The initial list of people (800) were personal and professional contacts, and each person was invited to circulate the survey among its networks. The survey was also published on the researcher profile in Facebook and LinkedIn.

The data collection took place from 28 June 2021 until 22 July 2021. A total of 984 questionnaires were collected but 364 were incomplete. Hence 619 valid questionnaires were considered.

Table 12 summarizes the most relevant information with reference to the sociodemographic of the respondents. In particular, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, level of education and age are tabulated. The largest share of respondents was Italian (88.85%) while only 11.15% were international. In terms of gender, almost 55% of the sample were female, 44.5% were male and only less than 0.5% declared to be non-binary. Out of the 619 respondents, more than 80% declared to be heterosexual while 12% homosexual and only nearly 3% bisexual.

Looking at the age of the respondents, the mean is 42.56 years. This must be taken into consideration also in light of the tool used for the collection of the results (an online survey, with perhaps limited accessibility for the elderly). Most respondents are between 31 and 45 years old (41.68%), while only 7.3% is 61 or older. The remaining is equally distributed between 46 and 60 years old (25.52%) and 18 and 30 years old (25.5%).

On the other hand, the educational level of the respondents characterizes highly educated attenders. In fact, more than 75% of the sample has obtained at least a bachelor's degree, while nearly 23% has a high school diploma and only 1% a primary school certificate. Such a high level of educational attainment may be connected to the young mean of the age on the sample, especially considering the data of the Italian Institute of Statistics (2021) that shows how 46% of those age 25-45 have at least a university degree, versus the 22% of those above 45 years old. Moreover – as discussed

in the previous literature review – art attenders usually have higher level of educational

attainment (Seaman, 2006).

Table 12 – Profile of survey-takers

Criteria	Characteristics	# of responses	%
Nationality	Italian	550	88.85
	Foreign	69	11.15
Gender	Male	277	44.75
	Female	340	54.93
	Non-binary	2	0.32
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	499	80.60
	Homosexual	73	11.80
	Bisexual	17	2.75
	Other	0	0
	No answer	30	4.85
Level of education	Primary School	7	1.15%
	Highschool	141	22.77%
	University degree	235	37.96%
	Master	190	30.69%
	PhD	46	7.43%
Age	18-30	156	25.5%
	31-45	258	41.68%
	46-60	158	25.52%
	>61	47	7.3%

Source: author's elaboration

4.3. Descriptive statistics

4.3.1. Descriptive analysis of the sample

Looking at the type of art museum or exhibition that was visited last (Table 13), most of the sample attended one with paintings (39.1%) while 29.4% of the sample attended a combined one. The least visited type of art museum or exhibition is the audiovisual one, with 1.6%.

Table 13 – Type of art museum or exhibition visited

Type	Number of respondets	Percentage
Paintings	242	39.1%
Combined	182	29.4%
Photography	59	9.5%
Installations	55	8.9%
Sculpture	44	7.1%
Others	27	4.4%
Audiovisual	10	1.6%

Source: author's elaboration

Table 14 cross-tabulates the type of art museum or exhibition visited last by gender. 'Sculpture' is the one that attracts the largest percentage of male visitors, while female visitors are overrepresented in 'paintings'. On the other hand, looking at the distribution across type of exhibition/museum (Table 14, column, bottom cell), we see that 'paintings' is the type of exhibition with the highest preference for both male

(35.4%) and female (42%) respondents, while 'audiovisual' is the one least visited last by both male (2.17%) and female (1.18%) respondents. A chi-squared test for independence of gender and type of exhibition returns a marginally significant result (p = 0.0846, chi-square = 19.17, df = 12).

Table 14 – Type of art museum or exhibition visited by gender. Cells display row percentages (on top) and column percentages (on bottom)

Type	Gender	
	Male	**Female**
Paintings	40.50%	59.09%
	35.38%	42.05%
Combined	47.73%	52.27%
	27.80%	30.88%
Photography	57.63%	42.37%
	12.27%	7.35%
Installations	49.09%	50.92%
	9.75%	8.24%
Sculpture	60%	40%
	7.58%	6.76%
Others	42.31%	57.69%
	5.05%	3.53%
Audiovisual	51.85%	44.45%
	2.17%	1.18%
All types	**44.75%**	**54.93%**

Source: author's elaboration

In terms of source of information for their visit, 23.9% of the respondents said that they gathered the information from their friends while 22.8% from social media (like Instagram and Facebook). The official website of the institution represented a source of information of nearly 20% of the respondents, while only 12.1% relied on relatives to gather information on their visit.

Table 15 – Source of information for the visit

Source	Number of respondents	Percentage
Friends	148	23.9%
Social Network (Instagram, Facebook, etc.)	141	22.8%
Museum / Art center website	123	19.9%
Traditional media (TV, radio, press)	91	14.7%
Relatives	75	12.1%
Others	41	6.6%

4.3.2. Motivation

Moving to the motives of attendance, as shown in Table 17, opportunity for personal enrichment (mean value 6.26), learning something new (mean value 5.76), the enjoyment of their beauty (mean value 5.74) and learning about other cultures (mean value 5.74) are found to be the main drivers of participation of the sample. On the other hand, the motives with the lowest mean value are avoid the boredom (4.14) and escape from life's problems (4.13), resulting as weak drivers of attendance. The reliability test performed for the question related to the motives of attendance, has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.712, meeting therefore the normally desired values.

Table 16 – Motives of attendance – reliability test

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.712	.718	10

Table 17 – Motives of attendance

Motivation	Mean	Std. deviation
Opportunity for personal enrichment	6.26	1.039
Learn something new	5.76	1.246
I enjoy their beauty	5.74	1.193
Learn about other cultures	5.74	1.123
Relax	5.52	1.285
I enjoy any form of art	5.20	1.422
Visit a specific exhibit / see a specific work of art	5.13	1.386
Escape daily routine	5.05	1.488
When I am with other people	4.58	1.733
Forget about my problems	4.48	1.564
To be with friends and/or family	4.44	1.683
My friends and/or family also enjoy them	4.42	1.165
Avoid boredom	4.14	1.677
Escape from life's problems	4.13	1.787

The data in Table 18 was also stratified by gender (male vs female only) and sexual orientation (heterosexual vs non-heterosexual) to assess any possible effect of these variables on the response choices. This is shown in the table below.

171

Table 18 – Motives of attendance, stratified by gender and sexual orientation

Motivation	Mean (Std. Deviation)			Mean (Std. Deviation)		
	Male	**Female**	**P value**	**Heterosexual**	**Non-hetero**	**P value**
Opportunity for personal enrichment	6.08 (1.13)	6.41 (0.91)	**0.000****	6.24 (1.03)	6.34 (1.09)	0.074
Learn something new	5.76 (1.17)	5.77 (1.29)	0.516	5.78 (1.20)	5.68 (1.42)	0.891
I enjoy their beauty	5.58 (1.27)	5.86 (1.11)	0.005*	5.74 (1.19)	5.71 (1.22)	0.829
Learn about other cultures	5.62 (1.18)	5.84 (1.07)	0.024*	5.77 (1.11)	5.61 (1.16)	0.145
Relax	5.38 (1.38)	5.63 (1.20)	0.043*	5.54 (1.25)	5.44 (1.42)	0.749
I enjoy any form of art	4.94 (1.56)	5.43 (1.25)	**0.000****	5.21 (1.43)	5.21 (1.40)	0.954
Visit a specific exhibit / see a specific work of art	4.98 (1.49)	5.26 (1.29)	0.039*	5.17 (1.40)	4.96 (1.31)	0.066
Escape daily routine	4.90 (1.49)	5.19 (1.46)	0.009*	5.10 (1.47)	4.87 (1.57)	0.183
When I am with other people	4.59 (1.81)	4.58 (1.67)	0.838	4.63 (1.69)	4.41 (1.87)	0.278
Forget about my problems	4.35 (1.54)	4.58 (1.58)	**0.041***	4.49 (1.58)	4.42 (1.50)	0.690
To be with friends and/or family	4.52 (1.73)	4.37 (1.65)	0.278	4.51 (1.67)	4.17 (1.71)	0.058
My friends and/or family also enjoy them	4.48 (1.69)	4.37 (1.64)	0.414	4.50 (1.65)	4.10 (1.67)	0.015*
Avoid boredom	4.22 (1.73)	4.06 (1.64)	0.247	4.16 (1.68)	4.05 (1.68)	0.470
Escape from life's problems	4.03 (1.79)	4.22 (1.79)	0.175	4.14 (1.81)	4.10 (1.71)	0.888

*p<0.05 **p<0.01

A Mann-Whitney test (the non-parametric equivalent of an unpaired t-test, used in view of data non-normality) was used to test the statistical significance of the observed differences between males vs. females; and heterosexual vs. non-heterosexual subjects, respectively, for each of the 14 motivations. The resulting p-values from this test are listed in Table 18 under the p-value heading, showing statistically significant differences between males and females for the following 7 items: 'Opportunity for personal enrichment'; 'I enjoy their beauty'; 'Learn about other cultures'; 'Relax'; 'I enjoy any form of art'; 'Visit a specific exhibit / see a specific work of art'; 'Escape daily routine'; and 'Forget about my problems'. In all these women scored significantly higher than men. As per the heterosexual vs non-heterosexual, statistically significant differences are observed only for the 'My friends and/or family also enjoy them' category where heterosexuals score higher.

4.3.3. Satisfaction and loyalty

Satisfaction and loyalty data were stratified by gender (male vs female only) and sexual orientation (heterosexual vs non-heterosexual) to assess any possible effect of these variables on the response choices. This is shown in the tables below.

The tables below show these items stratified by gender and sexual orientation, and a Mann-Whitney test was used to test the significance of any difference between the two groups. We found that stratification of satisfaction by sexual orientation does

173

not result in any statistically significant difference between items, whereas gender only had a statistically significant effect on two items within the Satisfaction factor, namely 'happy' and 'satisfied' (Table 19). This indicates that there is probably some difference in satisfaction between male and female subjects, especially with regard with how happy and satisfied they are, but not between hetero vs non-heterosexual subjects.

Table 19 – Satisfaction, stratified by gender and sexual orientation

Satisfaction	Mean (Std. Deviation)			Mean (Std. Deviation)		
	Male	Female	P value	Heterosexual	Non-hetero	P value
Happy	5.39	5.67	0.001*	5.55	5.51	0.744
Satisfied	5.49	5.73	0.007*	5.64	5.55	0.778
Enjoy	5.31	5.51	0.094	5.43	5.39	0.747

We also found that stratification of loyalty by sexual orientation or gender does not result in any statistically significant difference between items (Table 20), with the exception of wom_said, where non-heterosexual respondents score higher than heterosexual (p = 0.041).

Table 20 – Loyalty, stratified by gender and sexual orientation

Loyalty	Mean (Std. Deviation)			Mean (Std. Deviation)		
	Male	Female	P value	Heterosexual	Non-hetero	P value
Wom_said	5.12	5.30	0.074	5.18	5.38	0.041*
Wom_recom	5.04	5.23	0.068	5.13	5.20	0.407
Wom_enc	5.03	5.18	0.192	5.11	5.12	0.958
Return_int	5.64	5.83	0.331	5.76	5.68	0.844

4.4. Analysis procedures and techniques

4.4.1. Confirmatory factor analysis

In order to confirm the factor structure and test the psychometric properties of the measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed using structural equation modeling. To perform the analysis the software R version 3.6.2., library "lavaan" version 0.6-9 were used (Rosseel, 2012). The model included four latent variables (the four dimensions of the expanded servicescape: physical, social, socially symbolic, and natural) and the 27 observed variables or items integrating each factor. Figure 4 shows a diagram of the model used for confirmatory factor analysis.

Figure 4 – Schematic the baseline model used for CFA
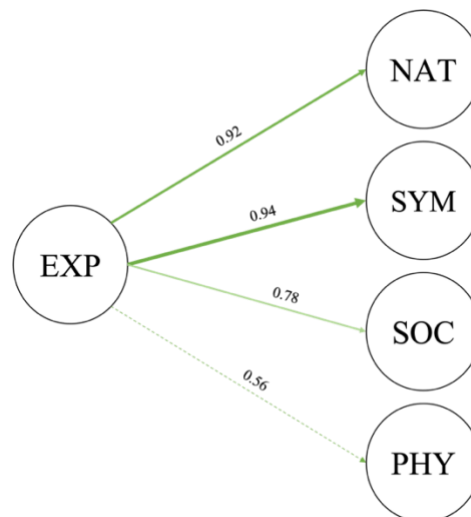
The validation process suggested that all items be kept, by considering the items' loadings, and the value of the Cronbach's alpha. The model showed a good fit (RMSEA = 0.090: TLI= 0.899; CFI= 0.908).

Furthermore, the psychometric properties of the four-factor model were analyzed. The Cronbach's alpha and the average variance extracted for each dimension were calculated in order to test the validity. Table 21 shows the results. For all of the four dimensions, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients reached the recommended value of 0.7 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). With reference to the average variance extracted (AVE), only the socially symbolic and natural factors reached the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981), while the social dimension AVE approaches this threshold (0.43). The physical dimension is well below, with an AVE of 0.27. Despite these results, considering the small size of the sample analyzed, we included the physical dimension as well. We assumed that including all the four dimensions would strengthen the content validity of the model.

Moreover, to strengthen the validity of the model, several measures were considered. First, content validity was checked. We verified the degree to which the content of the items is consistent with the definition of the construct (Malhotra and Birks, 2007). Second, convergent validity was checked by verifying the significance and values of the loadings, which have to be close to or higher than 0.7, and the average loading in each factor, which should be higher than 0.7 (Hair et al. 2005). Table 21 shows that the average loading of the physical dimension (0.560 ± 0.039) does not reach the minimum recommended threshold. However, we opted for keeping the physical dimension and assessing the robustness of the results by removing items with low loadings from this construct (see section 4.5.).

Table 21 – Confirmatory factor analysis: psychometric properties

Factor	Item	Convergent validity				Reliability	
		Factor Loading (standard error)	P-value	R^2	Loading average (standard error)	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
Physical dimension	Smell	0.416 (0.047)	0.000	0.173	0.560 (0.039)	0.75	0.27
	Background	0.474 (0.045)	0.000	0.225			
	Colors	0.601 (0.038)	0.000	0.361			
	Temperature	0.441 (0.047)	0.000	0.194			
	Spacious	0.471 (0.045)	0.000	0.222			
	Design	0.607 (0.039)	0.000	0.368			
	Clean	0.576 (0.040)	0.000	0.332			
	Lightning	0.549 (0.039)	0.000	0.301			
	Panels	0.527 (0.042)	0.000	0.278			
	Signs	0.532 (0.041)	0.000	0.283			
Social dimension	Crowd	0.217 (0.044)	0.000	0.047	0.785 (0.024)	0.85	0.43
	Enjoy	0.313 (0.040)	0.000	0.098			
	Interact	0.181 (0.043)	0.000	0.033			
	Identify	0.279 (0.038)	0.000	0.078			
	Appearance	0.745 (0.021)	0.000	0.555			
	Dress	0.705 (0.023)	0.000	0.496			
	Behavior	0.753 (0.019)	0.000	0.566			
	Friendly	0.792 (0.016)	0.000	0.627			
	Identify_em	0.728 (0.020)	0.000	0.53			
	Appearance_em	0.886 (0.012)	0.000	0.785			
	Dress_em	0.859 (0.014)	0.000	0.738			
	Friendly_em	0.786 (0.018)	0.000	0.618			
Socially symbolic dimension	Space	0.776 (0.026)	0.000	0.603	0.942 (0.025)	0.76	0.57
	Exhibits	0.620 (0.030)	0.000	0.384			
	Welcome	0.849 (0.023)	0.000	0.721			
Natural dimension	Engaging	0.860 (0.023)	0.000	0.74	0.918 (0.023)	0.71	0.63
	Comfortable	0.719 (0.027)	0.000	0.518			

Lastly, to test discriminant validity we adopted two procedures. First, as suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we verified that the confidence interval did not include 1. Since the data was not normally distributed, as checked by visual inspection of the histogram and by means of QQ plots and Shapiro-Wilk tests ($p < 0.05$ for all factors except 'natural'), we used the Spearman correlation coefficient to calculate the confidence intervals. Then we checked that the square of the correlations between factors was lower than the average variance extracted for each of the factors (Table 21).

The latter was generally true, with the significant exception of the (socially symbolic x natural) pair, where the square of the correlation was 0.748, larger than the AVE values for both the socially symbolic (0.569) and natural dimensions (0.629). In view of this, we considered merging the socially symbolic and natural dimensions into a single factor, but decided against this in order to maintain separated the dimensions of the expanded servicescape as per the literature. Table 22 shows the results of the analyses.

Table 22 – Discriminant validity

	Physical	Social	Socially symbolic	Natural
Physical	**0.274**	0.193	0.278	0.264
Social	[0.46, 0.59]	**0.431**	0.547	0.519
Socially symbolic	[0.52, 0.66]	[0.75, 0.83]	**0.569**	0.748
Natural	[0.57, 0.69]	[0.74, 0.82]	[0.93, 0.96]	**0.629**

Under the diagonal: 95% confidence interval for the Spearman correlation between each pair of factors Diagonal (in bold): average variance extracted

Above the diagonal: the square of the correlation between each pair of factors

4.4.2. Scale validation

Given the second order factor structure of the model, the Omega coefficients were calculated. The Omega coefficients (Table 23) are considered better choices than Cronbach's Alpha for assessing internal reliability by correcting the underestimation bias of α when the assumption of tau-equivalence (i.e. equal factor loadings of all test items) is violated (Dunn et al., 2014). Hence, omega provides more realistic estimates of true reliability of a scale. In this specific case, omegaL1 is 0.726, whereas omegaL2 was 0.920, and partialOmegaL1 was 0.902, all of them reaching the recommended value of 0.7. This strengthens the validity of the model, confirming a highly reliable scale.

Table 23 – Omega coefficients

Coefficient	Value
omegaL1	0.726
omegaL2	0.920
partialOmegaL1	0.902

4.4.3. Structural equation modelling: methodology and validation

A baseline SEM model was fit to the data using the 4 latent variables (physical, social, socially symbolic, and natural) as independent variables, and satisfaction and loyalty in a hierarchical model as dependent variables, as outlined in Chapter 3, Figure 3.

The validation process, considering the value of the Cronbach's alpha and the items' loadings, suggests that all items be kept. The model showed a good fit (RMSEA = 0.071: TLI = 0.822; CFI= 0.834).

Table 24 reports that the Cronbach's alpha values were satisfactory, that is greater than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1967). Since all of the alpha scores are above 0.7 (and in the case of the social dimension, as well as the satisfaction and loyalty latent variables, above 0.8), this indicates good reliability of the scale. The Omega coefficients, which are more relevant to hierarchically structured models such the one in this study, were also satisfactory (>0.7) and in the case of the social dimension, satisfaction, and loyalty, very high (>0.85).

We then tested the relationships between the expanded servicescape, satisfaction and loyalty as per H1 and H2. The estimated model (Table 25) confirms that the two hypotheses are supported; thus, the expanded servicescape positively impacts visitor's satisfaction and visitor's satisfaction has a positive impact on visitor's loyalty.

Table 24 – Baseline model

Factor	Item	Convergent validity			Reliability	
		Factor Loading (standard error)	P-value	Loading average (standard error)	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
Physical dimension	Smell	0.308 (0.050)	0.000	0.513 (0.046)	0.751	0.237
	Background	0.417 (0.046)	0.000			
	Colors	0.565 (0.040)	0.000			
	Temperature	0.456 (0.044)	0.000			
	Spacious	0.463 (0.044)	0.000			
	Design	0.581 (0.039)	0.000			
	Clean	0.504 (0.042)	0.000			
	Lightning	0.537 (0.041)	0.000			
	Panels	0.486 (0.044)	0.000			
	Signs	0.526 (0.042)	0.000			
Social dimension	Crowd	0.139 (0.048)	0.004	0.807 (0.024)	0.855	0.414
	Enjoy	0.252 (0.046)	0.000			
	Interact	0.099 (0.048)	0.040			
	Identify	0.188 (0.047)	0.000			
	Appearance	0.683 (0.027)	0.000			
	Dress	0.648 (0.029)	0.000			
	Behavior	0.731 (0.024)	0.000			
	Friendly	0.773 (0.021)	0.000			
	Identify_em	0.718 (0.025)	0.000			
	Appearance_em	0.842 (0.016)	0.000			
	Dress_em	0.824 (0.018)	0.000			
	Friendly_em	0.786 (0.020)	0.000			
Socially symbolic dimension	Space	0.720 (0.028)	0.000	0.952 (0.022)	0.757	0.505
	Exhibits	0.571 (0.037)	0.000			
	Welcome	0.811 (0.023)	0.000			
Natural dimension	Engaging	0.804 (0.027)	0.000	0.923 (0.029)	0.712	0.566
	Comfortable	0.689 (0.031)	0.000			
Satisfaction	Happy	0.860 (0.016)	0.000	0.683 (0.033)	0.880	0.705
	Satisfied	0.878 (0.015)	0.000			
	Enjoy	0.790 (0.021)	0.000			
Loyalty	Wom_said	0.865 (0.014)	0.000	0.660 (0.032)	0.845	0.644
	Wom_recom	0.944 (0.010)	0.000			
	Wom_enc	0.854 (0.015)	0.000			
	Return_int	0.410 (0.041)	0.000			

Table 25 – Causal relationship analysis

	Structural relationship	β (standard error)	P-value
H1	EXPANDED -> SAT	3.838 (0.791)	0.000
H2	SAT -> LOY	0.752 (0.056)	0.000

Figure 5 shows a diagram of the baseline model with the standardized coefficients of the structural model.

Figure 5- Schematic of the baseline structural equation model
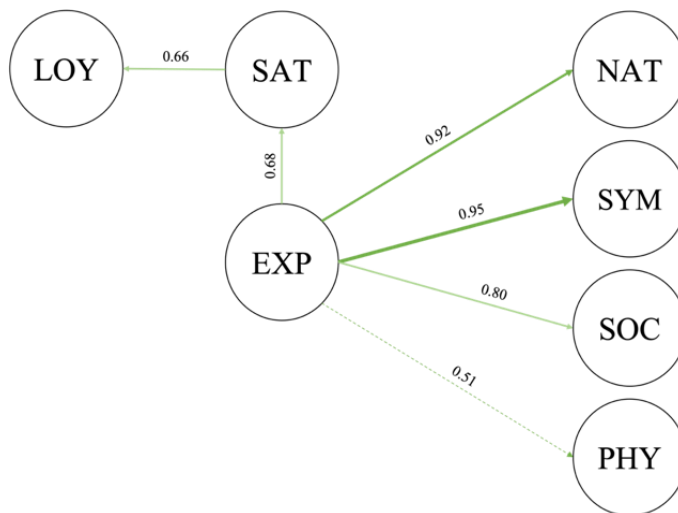
4.4.4. Structural equation modelling: moderation by sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is a potential moderator of EXPANDED (hypothesis H3a) and satisfaction (hypothesis H3b). This was tested by adding a moderator variable to the baseline SEM model described above, which was a dummy variable (0/1) taking the value 1 if the respondents reported heterosexual orientation, and 0 otherwise. Since

both EXPANDED and satisfaction are latent variables, we have performed a multigroup analysis.

Table 26 shows the estimation results of the unconstrained model, where structural parameters are assumed to differ across sexual orientation. As seen in Table 27, the moderating effect by sexual orientation (hypotheses H3a or H3b) is not supported by the data, as confirmed by the likelihood ratio test (Wilks test), which compares both models and returns a p-value of 0.3214. Overall, the data does not provide evidence against the simplest model (constrained model which we should favor.

Table 26 – Moderator effect (unconstrained model)

	Structural relationship	Heterosexual group		Non-heterosexual group	
		β (standard error)	P-value (z-score)	β (standard error)	P-value (z-score)
H3a	EXPANDED -> SAT	3.920 (0.828)	0.000 (4.731)	3.843 (0.940)	0.000 (4.089)
H3b	SAT -> LOY	0.714 (0.060)	0.000 (11.978)	0.892 (0.114)	0.000 (7.849)

Table 27 – Comparison of constrained and unconstrained models

Model type	Degrees of freedom	AIC	BIC	χ^2	$Pr(>\chi^2)$
Unconstrained	1080	46942	47677	2509.0	0.3214
Constrained	1082	46941	47667	2511.3	

Figure 6 shows a diagram of the unconstrained model (for both the heterosexual group and non-heterosexual group).

Figure 6 – Schematic of the unconstrained model (heterosexual and non-heterosexual group)

Heterosexual group.	*Non-heterosexual group*
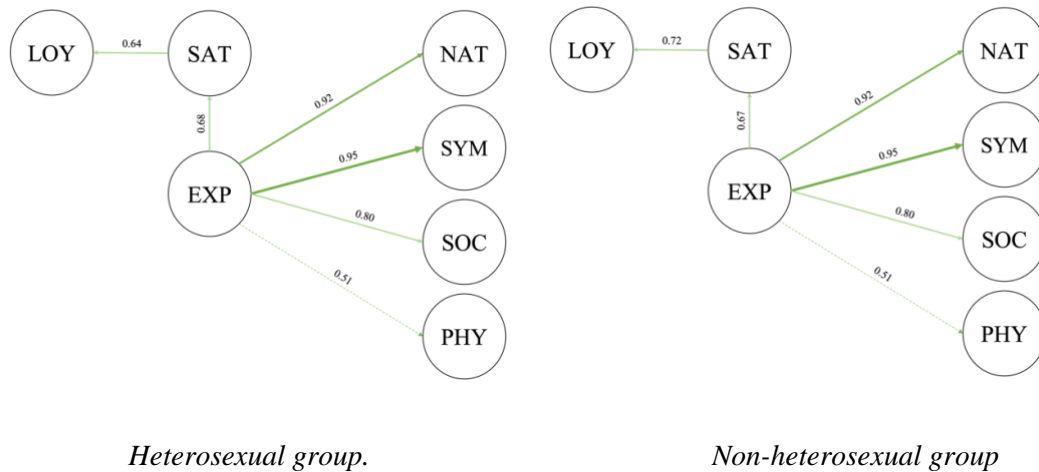
4.4.5. Structural equation modelling: adding controls

Several control variables were also added as additional explanatory variables to the SAT -> LOY regression to the SEM model with moderation described above. These are gender, education, and age. The latter was log-transformed to reduce variability, whereas the former were transformed into dummy variables (for education, this is to university level or above vs no university education).

The effect of sexual orientation as moderator remains unchanged relative to the case where controls were not included, as seen in Tables 28 and 29. The likelihood ratio test (Wilks test), comparing the two models: unconstrained vs constrained returns a p-value of 0.3318. Therefore, the constrained model (or if you prefer the simpler model) is supported by data even when accounting for the control variables.

Table 28 – Moderator effect (unconstrained model with controls)

	Structural relationship	Heterosexual group		Non-heterosexual group	
		β (standard error)	P-value (z-score)	β (standard error)	P-value (z-score)
H3a	EXPANDED -> SAT	3.920 (0.829)	0.000 (4.731)	3.848 (0.941)	0.000 (4.091)
H3b	SAT -> LOY	0.708 (0.060)	0.000 (11.725)	0.887 (0.116)	0.000 (7.658)

Table 29 – Comparison of constrained and unconstrained models

Model type	Degrees of freedom	AIC	BIC	χ^2	$Pr(>\chi^2)$
Unconstrained	1278	46949	47709	2845.2	0.3318
Constrained	1280	46948	47699	2847.4	

Figure 7 shows a diagram of the unconstrained model (both heterosexual and non-heterosexual groups).

Figure 7 – Schematic of the unconstrained model (heterosexual and non-heterosexual group)

Heterosexual group   *Non-heterosexual group*
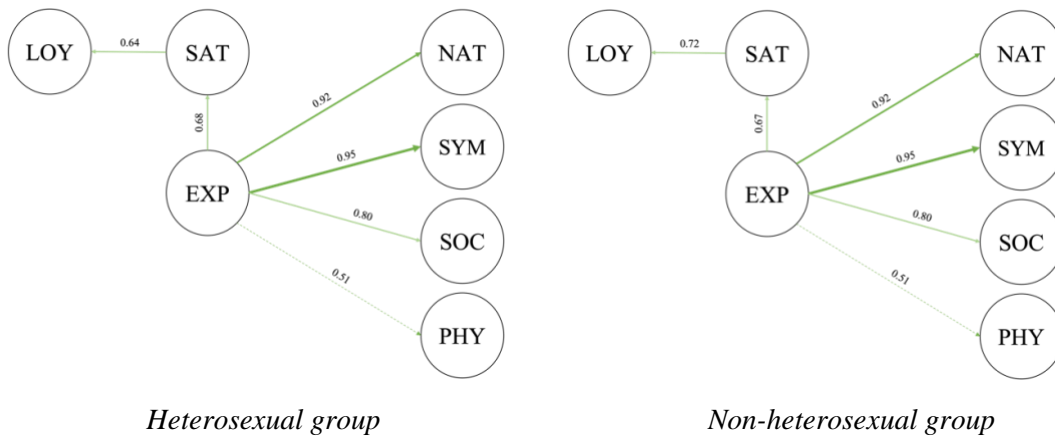
4.5. Robustness checks

As a robustness check, we have also re-run all the models described above by removing all the factors whose loadings were less than 0.5. These were smell, background, temperature, spacious (physical dimension); and crowd, enjoy, interact, identify (social), as shown in table 21. Following exclusion of these factors from the confirmatory factor analysis, the new factor loadings were all greater than 0.5 as shown in Table 30. The model showed a good fit (RMSEA = 0.082: TLI= 0.983; CFI= 0.985). With reference to the average variance extracted (AVE), three out of four reached the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981), with the social dimension showing an improvement. The physical dimension, although it shows some marginal improvement, remains well below, with an AVE of 0.33.

Discriminant validity was checked in a similar manner to section 4.4.1., by confirming that the 95% confidence interval of the Spearman correlation coefficients did not include 1, and that the square of the correlations between factors was lower than the average variance extracted for each of the factors. The results are listed in Table 31 and although the specific values have changed slightly relative to those listed in Table 22 (before excluding the factors with low loadings), the overall conclusions remain the same.

Table 30 – Confirmatory factor analysis: psychometric properties

Factor	Item	Convergent validity		Reliability	
		Factor Loading (standard error)	P-value	Loading average (standard error)	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
Physical dimension	Colors	0.527 (0.047)	0.000	0.537 (0.043)	0.71	0.33
	Design	0.620 (0.043)	0.000			
	Clean	0.613 (0.043)	0.000			
	Lightning	0.578 (0.042)	0.000			
	Panels	0.561 (0.045)	0.000			
	Signs	0.538 (0.043)	0.000			
Social dimension	Appearance	0.737 (0.021)	0.000	0.770 (0.024)	0.91	0.62
	Dress	0.706 (0.023)	0.000			
	Behavior	0.757 (0.019)	0.000			
	Friendly	0.796 (0.016)	0.000			
	Identify_em	0.727 (0.020)	0.000			
	Appearance_em	0.892 (0.012)	0.000			
	Dress_em	0.865 (0.014)	0.000			
	Friendly_em	0.794 (0.018)	0.000			
Socially symbolic dimension	Space	0.782 (0.026)	0.000	0.956 (0.025)	0.76	0.57
	Exhibits	0.611 (0.030)	0.000			
	Welcome	0.851 (0.023)	0.000			
Natural dimension	Engaging	0.862 (0.023)	0.000	0.918 (0.023)	0.71	0.63
	Comfortable	0.718 (0.027)	0.000			

Table 31 – Discriminant validity

	Physical	Social	Socially symbolic	Natural
Physical	**0.329**	0.171	0.263	0.242
Social	[0.42, 0.56]	**0.619**	0.542	0.499
Socially symbolic	[0.55, 0.67]	[0.78, 0.85]	**0.569**	0.770
Natural	[0.59, 0.70]	[0.75, 0.82]	[0.95, 0.96]	**0.629**

Under the diagonal: 95% confidence interval for the Spearman correlation between each pair of factors Diagonal (in bold): average variance extracted
Above the diagonal: the square of the correlation between each pair of factors

The results of the baseline model including only the higher-loading factors is shown in Tables 32 and 33. The return_int factor in the Loyalty variable was also excluded because it has a low loading (0.410) in the original model (Table 24). The model showed a good fit (RMSEA = 0.074: TLI= 0.881; CFI= 0.894).

Although quantitative results change compared to those with the model with all the items, the estimated coefficients agree with the hypothesis.

The structural equation model was also redone using the higher-loading factors by adding moderation by sexual orientation (as in Section 4.4.4) and further introducing the control variables (as in Section 4.4.5).

Table 32 – Baseline model

Factor	Item	Convergent validity			Reliability	
		Factor Loading (standard error)	P-value	Loading average (standard error)	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
Physical dimension	Colors	0.474 (0.045)	0.000	0.508 (0.049)	0.712	0.298
	Design	0.593 (0.042)	0.000			
	Clean	0.535 (0.044)	0.000			
	Lightning	0.551 (0.042)	0.000			
	Panels	0.545 (0.045)	0.000			
	Signs	0.551 (0.044)	0.000			
Social dimension	Appearance	0.673 (0.028)	0.000	0.804 (0.025)	0.913	0.573
	Dress	0.644 (0.030)	0.000			
	Behavior	0.728 (0.024)	0.000			
	Friendly	0.770 (0.021)	0.000			
	Identify_em	0.716 (0.025)	0.000			
	Appearance_em	0.849 (0.016)	0.000			
	Dress_em	0.831 (0.017)	0.000			
	Friendly_em	0.789 (0.020)	0.000			
Socially symbolic dimension	Space	0.720 (0.028)	0.000	0.950 (0.022)	0.757	0.505
	Exhibits	0.569 (0.037)	0.000			
	Welcome	0.812 (0.023)	0.000			
Natural dimension	Engaging	0.803 (0.027)	0.000	0.922 (0.029)	0.712	0.566
	Comfortable	0.690 (0.031)	0.000			
Satisfaction	Happy	0.860 (0.016)	0.000	0.688 (0.033)	0.880	0.705
	Satisfied	0.877 (0.015)	0.000			
	Enjoy	0.790 (0.021)	0.000			
Loyalty	Wom_said	0.863 (0.015)	0.000	0.657 (0.032)	0.915	0.790
	Wom_recom	0.947 (0.010)	0.000			
	Wom_encouraged	0.854 (0.015)	0.000			

Table 33 – Causal relationship analysis

	Structural relationship	β (standard error)	P-value
H1	EXPANDED -> SAT	2.999 (0.486)	0.000
H2	SAT -> LOY	0.747 (0.056)	0.000

Sexual orientation is a potential moderator of EXPANDED (hypothesis H3a) and satisfaction (hypothesis H3b). This was tested by adding a moderator variable to the baseline SEM model described above and including only the higher-loading factors. As in Section 1.4.4., the moderator was a dummy variable (0/1) taking the value 1 if the respondents reported heterosexual orientation, and 0 otherwise. Since both EXPANDED and satisfaction are latent variables, we have performed a multigroup analysis.

As seen in Tables 34 and 35, the moderating effect by sexual orientation (hypotheses H3a or H3b) is not supported by the data, as confirmed by the likelihood ratio test (Wilks test), which compares the two models: unconstrained vs constrained and returns a p-value of 0.287 which does not allow to reject the null hypothesis (constrained model).

Table 34 – Moderator effect using higher-loading factors only (unconstrained model)

	Structural relationship	Heterosexual group		Non-heterosexual group	
		β (standard error)	P-value (z-score)	β (standard error)	P-value (z-score)
H3a	EXPANDED -> SAT	3.014 (0.494)	0.000 (6.105)	2.955 (0.604)	0.000 (4.896)
H3b	SAT -> LOY	0.708 (0.060)	0.000 (11.882)	0.894 (0.114)	0.000 (7.864)

Table 35 – Comparison of constrained and unconstrained models

Model type	Degrees of freedom	AIC	BIC	χ^2	$Pr(>\chi^2)$
Unconstrained	567	33541	34090	1386.9	
Constrained	569	33539	34080	1389.4	0.2870

As in Section 1.4.5., several control variables were also added as additional explanatory variables to the SAT -> LOY regression to the SEM model with moderation described above. These are gender, education, and age. The latter was log-transformed to reduce variability, whereas the former were transformed into dummy variables (for education, this is to university level or above vs no university education).

The effect of sexual orientation as moderator remains unchanged relative to the case where controls were not included, as seen in Tables 36 and 37.

Table 36 – Moderator effect using higher-loading factors only
(unconstrained model with controls)

	Structural relationship	Heterosexual group		Non-heterosexual group	
		β (standard error)	P-value (z-score)	β (standard error)	P-value (z-score)
H3a	EXPANDED -> SAT	3.015 (0.494)	0.000 (6.104)	2.959 (0.604)	0.000 (4.898)
H3b	SAT -> LOY	0.702 (0.060)	0.000 (11.637)	0.889 (0.116)	0.000 (7.679)

Table 37 – Comparison of constrained and unconstrained models

Model type	Degrees of freedom	AIC	BIC	χ^2	$Pr(>\chi^2)$
Unconstrained	711	33548	34121	1620.5	0.2973
Constrained	713	33546	34111	1622.9	

The likelihood ratio test (Wilks test), comparing the two models: unconstrained vs constrained returns a p-value of 0.2973 under the null hypothesis that the constraint is supported by data even when accounting for the control variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that the unconstrained model (moderation by sexual orientation) is not supported by data in the higher-loading factor model as well, even when accounting for the control variables.

Although the various coefficient values change slightly relative to those in Tables 24 to 29, the overall conclusions remain the same. Hence, we conclude that our results are robust to alternative specifications.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Museums are relevant cultural and educational institutions that play a fundamental role in the protection, conservation and transmission of cultural heritage and cultural values (Cimoli, 2020). Over the decades, the role of museums within societies has evolved and changed, moving from being static institutions to the need for a broader involvement of the public (Davis, 2011). In this context, data and research on consumer behavior and participation represent a relevant source of information for museum directors to achieve their institutional goals.

Data on participation in museums in the EU (Eurostat 2020) shows important differences between countries; despite an average of 43.1% of the European population (16 years and older) who visited a museum in 2019, as discussed in Chapter 1, the difference between the country with the highest percentage (Sweden, 67.2%) and the one with the lowest (Greece, 16.9%) is quite relevant.

Looking at Italy, despite a continuous increase in visitors since 2013 (+41%, with 54.8 million visitors), it stands well below the EU average with 26.1% of the population 16 years and older who visited a museum in 2019 (Eurostat, 2020). This can be explained by the fact that the percentage of the foreign visitors accounts for almost 50% of the total number of visitors (ISTAT, 2020).

This, also considering the relevant number of heritage and cultural sites in Italy (almost 5000 institutions between museums, archeological sites and similar),

represents a challenge for its managers and open to the opportunity for better understanding how museums can build long-lasting relationships with their visitors.

The literature on consumer behavior and experience in the museum context confirms that visitors have become the focal point of the activities of museums (Conti et al., 2020; Gentile et al., 2007). Visitors are not seeking simply functional benefits out of their visit, but they relate to the service through the feelings they develop. In other words, the functions of the museums are fulfilled through leisure and social interaction (Rojas and Camarrero, 2006). Hence, the experiential marketing discipline studied the emotional dimension of the experience as a strategic asset to attract and retain visitors (Carù and Cova, 2015).

The visit to a museum should induce a positive reaction in the individual (Slater, 2007), driving the feeling of escaping from the daily life and routine (Slater and Armstrong, 2010). Since visitors are not expecting a predefined experience, museums serve as opportunity to create unique experiences (Slater, 2007) through the atmosphere of the place and the way it was set up (Goulding, 2000).

In this context, and to generate unique experiences, it is fundamental to further understand the motivations that are behind the participation as well as the visitors' expectations (Slater, 2007; Black, 2005; Goulding, 1999) in order promote positive interactions between visitors and the organization. These interactions come together in a "visitor journey", which is the representation of the several touchpoints between

the visitor and the organization, considering the times and place in which they happen. Each touchpoint is seen as an opportunity to gain visitors' feedback and to improve their experience (French, 2017).

Such experiences, may be affected by different factors, including the physical environment (Leinhardt and Crowley, 2002 Falk and Dierking, 1997); visitors' personal characteristics (Pattakos, 2010; Slater, 2007); and social context (Black, 2009; Debenedetti, 2003). Although several studies have profiled museum's audience through demographics such as age, level of education, residency, and nationality (Harrison and Shaw, 2004), no study has investigated the role of physical environment in the context of museums (Conti et al., 2020).

One of the objectives of this thesis is the investigation of the expanded servicescape in the context of art museums and exhibitions. The evolution of the original concept of servicescape, a term coined by Bitner (1992) that refers to the physical setting in which the service is delivered (or the product offered and consumed), has resulted in the identification of the so called expanded servicescape (Rosenbaum and Massiah, 2011). This thesis adapts the concept to the context of art museums and exhibitions. Previous studies on servicescape highlighted the need to look at all the different dimensions that may have an influence on the consumption space, thus on the experience of the customers (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003).

For example, academic researchers studies the role of other customers in the service experience (Lin et al., 2020). Both, other people's characteristics, behaviors, and appearance (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003) as well as the social density (Mowen et al., 2003) in the consumption space may influence individual's experience, hence affecting post-consumption behavior (Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2003).

The presence of other people in the consumption space, actively or passively interacting, increases the perception of service quality (Butcher, 2005) and it positively impacts satisfaction and evaluation of the service experience (Line and Hanks, 2017). On the other hand, the social density – the level of crowd within a place – may positively or negatively impact the experience, depending on the context. While for major events the high crowd density improves customers perception and evaluation (Mowen et al., 2003; Pons et al., 2006), in a context where customers are expecting small number of people, high crowd density may negatively impact customer experience, generating distrust (Whiting and Donthu, 2009).

In addition to the physical and social dimensions, Roesenbaum and Massiah (2011) introduced the so called expanded servicescape, which includes two additional dimensions: socially symbolic and natural.

The first one, refers to the ability that the physical environment has to convey messages to the customers. Such messages reflect the culture and the values of the context where the space is, generating the risks of excluding certain segments or

customers (Roesenbaum and Massiah, 2011). The second one, refers to the natural elements present in the consumption space and their ability to improve the customer experience through fascination, being away and compatibility.

5.1. Theoretical conclusions

5.1.1. The servicescape in the museum context

The servicescape model has been studied and applied to several contexts, both in the general leisure services (Lockwood and Pyun, 2019; Line et al., 2018) as well as in the arts and culture services (Conti et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2008). However, applications in the field of museums are scarce. Only recently Conti et al. (2020) carried out a review of the literature in the museum context that brought to the identification of six different elements of the museumscape: ambient conditions, staff behavior, facilities and convenience, art gallery quality, exhibition space aesthetics, signs and signage.

The study explained how the museumscape, exhibition space aesthetics, art gallery quality and staff behavior in particular, influences visitors' positive word of mouth. On the other hand, convenience, ambient conditions and signs and signage did not appear to have a significant influence on museum visitors' post-purchase behavior. This is specific to the museum field and in contrast with the literature on service

marketing that identifies the physical dimension as a driver of post-purchase behaviors (Quintal et al., 2015; Ryu et al., 2012; Yoon et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2008).

In light of this and considering the importance of the accessibility in museums (Lisney et al., 2013), it seemed relevant to study the expanded servicescape in this specific domain. In fact, despite the physical and social dimensions, the socially symbolic one represents an important driver on inclusion and involvement in the service and should be considered as a relevant dimension within the museum sector as well. As per the natural dimension, the importance of the environment and the attention to its impact on individual's experiences has been studied in the hospitality setting and may be relevant in museums as well (Apaolaza et al., 2020).

5.1.2. Visitor's satisfaction and loyalty

The thesis has studied the impact of the servicescape on visitor's satisfaction and loyalty. Although both variables have been studied in the museum domain (Conti et al., 2020), they have never been studied in relationship with the expanded servicescape.

Satisfaction in the leisure service setting has been broadly studied; in particular, Line and Hanks (2019) identified the appearance, behaviors, and presence of employees and other customers in hotels as its antecedent. Lin et al. (2020) investigated the social dimension in the B&B context as well, with interested results

in terms of expectation of customers in the behavior of employees as antecedents of satisfaction. Another element that has been investigated is the customers' personal space that, when invaded, negatively impacts the level of satisfaction (Lin et al., 2020). Moreover, Jeong and Lee (2006) found that a museum visitor's emotional response to their visit is mediated by its environmental attributes, affecting their satisfaction.

A per the construct of loyalty in the arts context, it can be explained by WOM (Vigolo et al., 2019; Helm and Kuhl, 2006) and return intention (Jobst and Boerner, 2011). Cultural organisations may facilitate the spread of positive WOM by actively engaging with the customers (Radder and Han, 2015) while returning customers ensure long-term profitability to the cultural institution as well as to the sector at large (Jobst and Boerner, 2011). The increasing competition among cultural institutions together with an offer that is perceived as similar by consumers (Piancatelli et al., 2020), forced cultural institutions to identify innovative ways to engage with their visitors and craft unique and memorable experiences (Carù and Cova, 2015).

Building on previous studies, this research studied the impact of the expanded servicescape on visitors' satisfaction. Satisfaction is positively influenced by the expanded servicescape and by the social dimension in particular. In fact, the presence of other visitors and employees as well as their behaviors represent a relevant antecedent of satisfaction.

Results reported that the expanded servicescape in the domain of museums has a positive impact on visitors' satisfaction and loyalty. Hence its application the museum field is a relevant step forward. In particular, it has been found that the most relevant dimension is the socially symbolic one, which shall be further explored in future research, while the one with the least influence is the physical dimension. It is interesting to note that social cues are regarded as relevant influencers of the experience by visitors of art museums and exhibitions. This is in line with the previous literature on the servicescape in leisure settings.

5.1.3. The moderating role of sexual orientation

Sexual orientation has become a relevant demographic variable in consumer behavior studies, although limited evidence has been found (Eisend and Hermann, 2020) regarding its impact on consumer behaviors in the field of arts and culture.

Within the specific domain of art and culture, the research has focused mainly on the relationship between sexual orientation and attendance, with the objective of explaining any difference in consumption. Results are limited and the results show that differences are based on demographic characteristics between homosexuals and heterosexuals and not by sexual orientation itself (Vandecasteele and Geuens, 2009; Lewis and Seaman, 2004). More recently, it was found that motives of attendance are affected by sexual orientation, in particular LGB people's attendance at live

performances is mainly motivated by emotional, social, and political reasons (Cuadrado-García and Montoro-Pons, 2021).

Moreover, the moderating effect of sexual orientation has been studied in other contexts. Results report how it affects customer satisfaction in the context of public services (Gavrielides, 2008) and universities (Carvey, 2012), while WOM in retail stores is positively affected by sexual orientation (Jian, 2017).

In this research, the moderating effect of sexual orientation could not be confirmed. However, looking at the motives of attendance, the research identified a statistically significant difference in the motives of attendance between heterosexual and non-heterosexual respondents. The social component and the fact that also their family or friends enjoyed the exhibition, is more relevant for heterosexuals than for non-heterosexuals.

5.2. Empirical conclusions

The present thesis also provides empirical takeaways with regards to the characteristics of the sample, the model's constructs, and the structural equations model.

5.2.1. Visitors profile and motives of attendance

The respondents in this research were primarily females (almost 55% of the sample were female) and heterosexuals (more than 80%), the average age was around 42 years old.

As for the educational background of the respondents more than 75% of the sample has at least a bachelor's degree. We can then conclude that the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample are in line with previous studies in the arts sector that describe the typical art attender as an individual with higher levels of formal education (Ryans and Weinberg, 1978; Scheff, 1999; Yavas, 1996) and income and likely to be older, Caucasian, and female (Andreasen and Belk, 1980; Clopton et al., 2006; DiMaggio et al., 1978; Scheff 1999).

In addition, the literature offers a wide array of motives for participation in the arts (de Rooij and Bastiaansen, 2015), from aesthetics to relaxation, entertainment, bonding and social duty, but further research can be done to deepen the knowledge on the changing demographics in the performing arts public. Since cultural participation is a process generated through early socialization in the family and in the education system (Willekens and Lievens, 2016), interest and participation in the arts are facilitated by this socialization (Bourdieu, 1973; Willekens and Lievens, 2016) generating a gap with non-attenders who dismiss cultural participation as "not for the likes of us" and have no particular interest in attending these activities (Willekens and

Lievens, 2014). This is also due to the fact that arts attendance is usually identified as a form of symbolic consumption able to generate a higher social status for the attendees (Bourdieu, 1984; Lizardo, 2008), thus fostering the gap within the population.

This study identifies as main motives of attendance the opportunity for personal enrichment, the need to learn something new, the enjoyment of the beauty of the work of art and the willingness to learn about other cultures. On the other hand, the motives with the lowest relevance for the sample are the need to avoid the boredom and the willingness to escape from life's problems, resulting as weak drivers of attendance.

However, it is relevant to note that heterogeneity in motivations are linked to gender effects. In this regard statistically significant differences by gender have been found. In particular female respondents are more motivated than male respondents by their enjoying of any form of art and their participating as an opportunity for personal enrichment. On the other hand, the opportunity to learn and discover other cultures, escaping the daily routine and visiting a specific site is a more important driver of male respondents' behavior.

5.2.2. Empirical analysis of the main constructs

The thesis empirically tests a structural equations model with three constructs: expanded servicescape, satisfaction and loyalty. The former is a second order construct

which loads on four dimensions which are also constructs. Looking at the loadings, we can conclude that the most relevant dimension in the construct is the socially symbolic one (0.94) followed by the natural dimension (0.92). The social dimension is still relevant (0.78) while the one with the least impact is the physical dimension (0.56).

Looking at the specific items that contribute to the meaning of the individual constructs, one sees that the socially symbolic dimension is most correlated to the perception of a welcoming space and the familiarity of the space. On the other hand, the level of engagement of the space influences most the natural dimension. As per the social dimension, the items with the largest impact are those related to the appearance, perceived similarity, and behavior of the employees. Lastly, the physical dimension is most correlated to the item "design of the space".

Satisfaction is a construct that manifests in three items. The one with the highest loading is the satisfaction with the visit (0.87), followed by being happy after the visit (0.86) and having enjoyed it (0.79). Lastly, loyalty, also a second order construct, formed by WOM and intention to return. Looking at the loadings of the items, the most relevant are the intention to recommend the visit (0.94) and saying positive things about the visit itself (0.86).

Additionally, data on satisfaction and loyalty have been stratified by gender (male vs female only) and sexual orientation (heterosexual vs non-heterosexual) to assess any possible effect of these variables on the response choices. As per the sexual

orientation, no statistically significant results have been found. Therefore, no differences are found for the mean level of satisfaction and loyalty across heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals. On the other hand, statistically significant differences were found in the stratification of the satisfaction by gender (male VS female respondents). In particular, in terms of satisfaction, female respondents are happier and more satisfied with the visits to the art museum or exhibition.

5.2.3. Conclusions derived from the SEM: servicescape, post-consumption behavior and sexual orientation

The hypothesis formulated (H1, H2, H3a, and H3b) have all been empirically tested through the estimation of a structural equations model. In this respect, the structural model provides evidence on H1 and H2 but not on H3a and H3b.

The first hypothesis formulated aimed at verifying the positive impact of the expanded servicescape on satisfaction; this hypothesis has been successfully confirmed hence we can state that the expanded servicescape in art museums and exhibitions has a positive impact on visitors' satisfaction.

The second hypothesis which was tested aimed at verifying the impact of satisfaction on loyalty. Also this second hypothesis has been confirmed. On the contrary, the last two hypothesis tested though the SEM, which looked at the moderating role of sexual orientation, could not be confirmed by the analysis. In fact,

the model does not show any evidence in support of the positive moderating effect of sexual orientation on the effect of the servicescape on post-consumption behaviors nor on that of satisfaction on loyalty.

5.3. Managerial implications

This research analyzes in a novel way the physical, social, natural, and symbolic dimensions of the servicescape as drivers of consumer behavior in the realm of museums and exhibitions. Our findings could be useful to set managerial implications concerning consumer experience and behavior in this context. Traditionally, museum managers have mainly paid attention to the value of the cultural offer itself, without considering the effect of the context and other external elements on visitors' experience and post-consumption behavior. These results could help them to understand the relevance of taking into account the context where the consumption takes place in decision making.

Specifically, considering the positive impact that the expanded servicescape has on post-consumption behaviors in art museums and exhibitions, they should effectively manage its four dimensions. That said, for instance, the visiting space should become comfortable for visitors, by setting an attractive and welcoming space. It should also reflect the culture and the values of the territory and the community where the museum is located. In addition, taking into account that the natural and

socially symbolic dimensions are the most relevant ones, museum managers should consider the coherence between the artistic offer and the service space, in terms of values, images and symbols that they represent and transfer. From a socially symbolic point of view, the use of artifacts and symbols that have a meaning for specific ethnic, subcultural, or marginalized societal groups may influence their experience and enhance it. On the other hand, the use of natural elements such as plants or other natural decorations, may support drive visitors' feeling of being away and improve their experience during the visit.

Furthermore, as the social aspect of the visit is also relevant, the role of other visitors and employees should be taken into consideration by museum managers. In relation to other visitors, decisions should consider that consumers prefer to liaise with people who are like them, have a pleasing appearance and behave appropriately. Although it could apparently seem difficult for museum managers to control who visits the museum, they may have some control over this. They could intervene to avoid misbehavior and disturbance as well as to enforce some attendance rules.

In addition, managers should interiorize that employees represent the organization, hence, their appearance, their attitudes and skills will be part of the customer experience. Investing in their training and involvement seems a relevant action to leverage on the impact of the social component of the servicescape. Examples of actions related to the above could be to stablish silent areas, placing signs and

symbols, giving front-desk employees explanations of rules, adopting dress code for employees, among others.

Moreover, avoiding overcrowded space is a fundamental decision to ensure a positive customer experience. This brings museums managers to the dilemma between selling more tickets or ensuring a pleasant, less crowded experience. Solutions may include the proposal of alterative or new routes within the museum or even more extensive opening hours to allow visitors to come at different days and times.

As per the physical dimension, the layout and the decorative elements should be carefully considered when designing the space, ensuring that they are in line with the expectations of the visitors and able to improve their experience. Lighting ambient noise levels have a negative effect on the experience, if not properly managed. Moreover, additional services such as coffee shops, dining space, restrooms, bookstores shall be an integral part of the visitor experience. Such improvements could likely result in a more positive perception of the physical dimension of the servicescape.

Lastly, considering the potential positive impact that an excellent customer experience in a museum may have on post-consumption behaviors, museum managers should carefully craft such experiences while meeting the expectation of the visitors. In this sense, visitors who had an enjoyable experience in a given cultural institution, would have similar expectation when visiting others.

5.4. Limitations and further research

This study represents the first application of the expanded servicescape in the context of museums. Further research should be done to better understand how it may affect other and different behavioral intentions as well as testing the moderating effect of other variables, as it has been done in different contexts.

The first limitation is related to the sample. We involved respondents who visited an art museum or exhibition over the past twelve months. Considering the pandemic situation, it may be appropriate to say that those who visited it are among the most motivated and loyal consumer. Hence the results may be biased in that sense.

A second limitation is related to the administration of the survey online. If it was done inside cultural institutions, the respondents may have had different opinions and feelings about the visit and some of the results may have been different, including for example the involvement of a larger portion of older respondents. A third limitation is related to the theoretical model. In particular, the definition of the expanded servicescape may be revised in the specific context of art museums and exhibitions. When performing the exploratory factor analysis, the natural and socially symbolic dimensions had very low loads on the construct, but we decided not to merge them and maintain them separated as per the literature. In this sense, the concept of expanded servicescape could be revised and further research should look at a 3 dimensions model

vs the current 4 dimensions one. Despite this, the robustness checks applied confirmed the strength of the model and left conclusions unchanged.

Considering the nature of the study, it seems relevant to replicate it in specific settings and institutions or to a particular target of visitors to check the results within a certain art museum or exhibition. Lastly, in terms of moderating effect on the model, future studies may explore how other factor may have a moderating effect on the impact that the expanded servicescape has on post-consumption behaviors.

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ANNEX 1 - Questionnaire

Good morning/afternoon

The following questionnaire aims at collecting information to study museum and exhibitions attendance.

The data collected will be used in conformity with the current legislation and with the sole purpose of this study.

If you have visited an art museum/exhibition in the past 24 months, please answer the following questions regarding your latest visit.

We thank you in advance for your kind collaboration.

PART I: HABITS

1. **Based on your last visit to an art museum/exhibition, what is the type of the exhibition you visited:**

- Paintings (1)
- Sculpture (2)
- Photography (3)
- Installations (4)
- Audiovisual (5)
- Combined (6)
- Others (7)

2. **How did you hear about that art museum/exhibition? Please select all that apply.**

- Museum/arts center website (1)
- Social networks (IG, Facebook, etc.) (2)
- Relatives (3)
- Friends (4)
- Traditional media (press, radio, etc.) (5)
- Others (6)

3. **Who did you go with? Please select just one option.**

- Alone (1)
- With my partner (2)
- With a friend or some friends (3)
- With colleagues (4)

- Others (5)

4. How often do you visit art museums/exhibitions?

- Never or rarely (less than once per year) (1)
- Occasionally (at least 4 times per year) (2)
- Frequently (at least once a month) (3)

5. **Please read the following statements with reference to attendance art museums/exhibitions and select the level of agreement/disagreement with each statement** (1 strongly disagree; 2 somewhat disagree; 3 disagree; 4 neutral; 5 agree; 6 somewhat agree; 7 strongly agree)

FOR THE MOTIVES OF ATTENDANCE, I USED THE SCALE ADOPTED BY Swanson, S. R., Davis, J. C., & Zhao, Y. (2008). Art for art's sake? An examination of motives for arts performance attendance. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 37(2), 300-323.

1. One of the main reasons why I go to an art museum/exhibition is to learn something new.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. To me, going to an art museum/exhibition is an opportunity for personal enrichment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I enjoy visiting an art museum/exhibition because it gives me the opportunity to learn about other cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Going to an art museum/exhibition allows me to forget about my problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I go to an art museum/exhibition to temporarily escape from life's problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Going to an art museum/exhibition takes me away from my daily routine.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. To me, going to an art museum/exhibition is a way to relax.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I go to art museums/exhibitions to avoid boredom.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I usually go to art museums/exhibitions to visit a specific exhibit/see a specific work of art.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I enjoy art museums/exhibitions because I enjoy any form of art.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. One of the main reasons I visit art museums/exhibitions is that I enjoy their beauty.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. One of the main reasons I enjoy art museums/exhibitions is because my friends and/or family also enjoy them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I go to art museums/exhibitions to be with friends and/or family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I enjoy visiting an art museum/exhibition more when I am with other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

PART II

6. **Based on your last art museum/exhibition visit, please share your experience signaling the level of accordance with the following statements.** (1 strongly disagree; 2 somewhat disagree; 3 disagree; 4 neutral; 5 agree; 6 somewhat agree; 7 strongly agree). In case you cannot answer, please select the last column.

Fisk, R. P., Patrício, L., Rosenbaum, M. S., & Massiah, C. (2011). An expanded servicescape perspective. *Journal of Service Management*.

1. Smells were pleasing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
2. Background sounds were nice.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
3. Colors of the premises were in harmony.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
4. The temperature was comfortable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
5. The museum/exhibition was spacious.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
6. The interior design of the place was attractive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
7. The premises were clean.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
8. Lighting was pleasant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
9. The informative panels were clear and visible.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
10. The signs used (i.e., bathroom, enter, exit, smoking) were helpful to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know

11. The crowd level was comfortable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
12. People seemed to be enjoying themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
13. People were interacting with each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
14. I could identify myself with the other visitors in the museum/exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
15. I liked the appearance of the other visitors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
16. The other visitors dressed appropriately.								Do not know
17. The behavior of the other visitors was appropriate for the setting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
18. The other visitors were friendly towards me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
19. I could identify with the employees of the museum/exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
20. I liked the appearance of the employees of the museum/exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
21. The employees of the museum/exhibition dressed appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
22. The employees of the museum/exhibition were friendly towards me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
23. The space of the museum/exhibition was familiar to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
24. Symbols and exhibits in the museum/exhibition were familiar to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
25. The overall place seemed welcoming to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
26. The overall place was engaging.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know
27. The overall place made me feel comfortable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Do not know

7. **Based on your last experience in that art museum/exhibition, please select the level of agreement with the following statements.** (1 strongly disagree; 2 somewhat disagree; 3 disagree; 4 neutral; 5 agree; 6 somewhat agree; 7 strongly agree)

Hume, M., & Sullivan Mort, G. (2010). The consequence of appraisal emotion, service quality, perceived value and customer satisfaction on repurchase intent in the performing arts. Journal of Services Marketing, 24(2), 170–182.

1. I was happy with the experience I had at that art museum/exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I was satisfied with my experience at that art museum/exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I truly enjoyed going to that art museum/exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Visiting that art museum/exhibition was my first choice of entertainment on that day.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I would have paid a higher price to visit that art museum/exhibition than I would have paid to go to other museums.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I liked staying at that art museum/exhibition for long time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I enjoyed spending time at that art museum/exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I stayed at that art museum/exhibition for longer than I planned.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I have said positive things about visiting that art museum/exhibition to other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I have recommended visiting that art museum/exhibition to someone who sought my advice.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I have encouraged family and friends to visit that art museum/exhibition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I will visit an art museum/exhibition over the next few months.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

PART III

Lastly, please answer the following questions.

8. Age:_____ years

9. Gender

Male (1)
Female (2)
Non-binary (3)

10. Sexual orientation

Heterosexual (1)
Homosexual (2)
Bisexual (3)
Other (4)
I prefer not to answer (5)

11. Level of education

Primary School (1)
High School (2)
University Degree (3)
Master (4)
Phd (5)

12. Occupation

Employed (1)
Self-employed (2)
Unemployed (3)
Student (4)
Retired (5)
Housekeeping (6)
Other (7)

13. Personal situation

Partner Yes (1); No (2).
Children Yes (1); No (2).

14. Nationality

Thank you for your collaboration in filling in this questionnaire.