

Strengthening Members' Relationships through Cultural Activities in Museums

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Abstract

Museums promote cultural activities related to their main activity in order to bring them closer to their public. The objective of this paper is to analyze how the characteristics of such activities and service quality affect the emotions experienced by participants and the intent to strengthen their relationship. The study of a museum's friends association participating in different activities allows us to show that group composition and interaction impact the emotion felt during the activity as well as the use of new technologies and activities staged outside the museum. Moreover, having modern and visually appealing equipment together with the support of museum staff is crucial by those attending cultural activities as an antecedent of satisfaction and relationship strength.

KEYWORDS: Museums, emotions, satisfaction

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Introduction

Leisure in the lives of the immigrants who have settled in Canada in the past 40 years is the subject of a growing body of literature. In Canada, immigrants and immigration are important because many cities and towns have experienced labor shortages due to declining fertility rates, an increasingly aging population, and a diminishing youth population (Li, 2008). Immigration has become a key strategy for workforce renewal. Since the 1970s, multiculturalism is the philosophy that guides Canadian government policy on immigration. It supports ethnic and cultural diversity and is intended to create diverse and economically sustainable communities throughout the country (Sandercock, 2009). The children of immigrants are of particular interest in Canada because they are part of a growing cohort of young people who were born in Canada to foreign born parents of diverse ethnic backgrounds. The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of a longitudinal, qualitative study of the leisure experience of children of immigrants.

The children, grandchildren, and later generation ethnic minorities are known to express varying degrees of interest and commitment to the cultural tradition of their immigrant ancestors. In some cases, people overtly adapt dominant group traits and behaviors and appear to let go of traditional cultural practices. Some adjustments in behavior are indicative of the attempts made by immigrants to be included in dominant social and community groups. In this paper, the term dominant group refers to the people of British and French ancestry who, until the 1960s, were the numerical majority in Canada (Satzewich, 1993). In the early to mid-twentieth century, Canadianization strategies were initiated to assimilate immigrants into the dominant society. Canadianization, which really meant Anglo-conformity, required all immigrants to adopt the English language and Protestant values and whenever possible to rid themselves of accents that were non-British (Burnet & Palmer, 1988). Adopting group norms when in public provided the opportunity for many people to gain social acceptance, which was much more feasible for white ethnic minority groups than non-whites. The term minority group member is used in this paper even though the authors recognize the problematic nature of the term since the majority of the people in the world are not white. Here it refers to people who do not identify as Caucasian.

Today's immigrants to Canada are not required to assimilate, and many of them retain important aspects of their ethnic identity, such as their religious practices, traditional clothing, and food. Biculturalism, however, refers to situations in which immigrants understand and participate in two cultural traditions (Stroink & Lalonde, 2009)—their own, as well as the cultural practices of Canada. Biculturalism characterizes the experience of immigrants who arrive in Canada from countries where cultural practices are different from those of Canadians.

Leisure in their country of origin may also be different than leisure in Canada. In many cases, these differences were found to enhance leisure by providing people with options and rich experiences (Tirone & Pedlar, 2005). However, differences in leisure practices are also known to lead to conflicts. For example, youth in North American immigrant families are often challenged as they attempt to access and enjoy leisure with their North American peers while balancing the

Introduction

Museums have succeeded in mobilizing millions of people. In 2009, the Louvre was the most visited museum in the world, attracting 8.5 million visitors. The British Museum in London drew almost 5.6 million, the National Gallery of Art in Washington attracted 5 million, and the National Museum of El Prado in Madrid almost 3 million visitors (www.artsjournal.com; *The Art Newspaper*, 2009). In addition to regular museum visits, many people are also involved in complementary educational, cultural, and leisure activities organized by museums striving to reach a broader section of the public. These activities may include courses and lectures, cinema meetings, music or theatre, festivals, private visits, and trips, amongst others. This type of activity is normally aimed at local community visitors and members, unlike regular visits that mainly attract tourists. For some authors (Prats, 2003), the success of museums is due to their ability to combine educational experiences with visits that provide pleasure and entertainment. In this line, the current work analyzes how perceived experience in complementary museum activities influences visitor pleasure and satisfaction. According to Bouchet (2004), the consumer experience results from the interaction between one or more individuals, a place, and a consumer practice. An experience occurs when the service is performed in a unique, memorable way that involves the customer as a participant. The word "experience," as a generic term covering a wide range of subjective meanings such as emotions or feelings, is widely used in leisure scholarship (Morgan, 2006). Pine and Gilmore (1999) indicate that memorable experiences rather than product or service quality create sustainable competitive advantage. What visitors or participants in a cultural activity really seek is an all-round experience, embracing leisure, culture, education, and social interaction (Camarero & Garrido, 2004). Recently, experiences have become a central focus in the understanding of visitor satisfaction (Vitterso, 2000). A pleasing, relaxing, and exciting experience is more likely to result in visitor satisfaction (Kotler & Kotler, 2001). Therefore, the relevant question is to know how museums and cultural organizations can achieve positive visitor experiences. For this reason, such organizations are currently seeking insight into visitor responses to different activities, how visitors value their experience and how this is reflected in terms of satisfaction.

Due to their pleasurable nature, and because they are consumer experiences of a hedonic nature (Joy & Sherry, 2003), museum activities have been seen as generating emotions (Gnoth et al., 2000; McClung, 2000). Otto and Ritchie (1996) point to the enormous potential that museums offer for studying visitors' emotional reactions. Goulding (1999b) also states that, due to their hedonic nature, museums are cultural and leisure services that arouse emotions in visitors. Goulding (1999a) advocates the suitability of exploring visitors' emotions (service consumer) and their satisfaction with the experience of the service (visit, trip, lecture, involvement with the museum). Other previous studies of a similar nature exploring the same concepts based on theories of emotions and satisfaction have been conducted into hedonic services (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Peck & Wiggins, 2006; Luo & Homburg, 2007).

However, little research has been carried out into the nature of the experience in complementary cultural activities organized by museums (such as seminars, courses, educational workshops, trips, concerts, private visits, etc.). Most research focuses on the motivations for visiting a particular area (Chhetri et al., 2004), measuring visitor behavior (Boisvert & Slez, 1995) or conducting quantitative surveys of visitor satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988; among others). Likewise, in the area of cultural services, scant research has been performed on the various characteristics of cultural activities and their impact on visitor experience. To the best of our knowledge, previous research on visitor experience in the cultural sector has focused on the following concrete aspects: (a) assessing the impact of social interaction on visitor experience (e.g., Morgan, 2006; Debenedetti, 2003; Goulding, 1999a; McManus, 1989, 1994); (b) exploring the impact of interactive activities on visitor experience (e.g., Medved & Oatley, 2000, Delaney, 1992); (c) examining the impact of new technologies on the quality of the museum experience (e.g., Collin-Lachaud & Passebois, 2008); and (d) investigating active/passive involvement in the cultural activity and its link to the experience (Voase, 2002). Exploring other facets such as the duration of the activity, visitor control over the activity and its impact on the experience (pleasurable or not) has mainly been undertaken in the pedagogical-educational sector (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998a and 1998b).

In the area of services, including emotions in the concept of satisfaction is particularly important since most services are based on consumer experience or participation (Gronroos, 2000). The intangible nature of services requires a need to gain a deeper understanding of consumers' internal variables, such as their emotions. In the case of museums, it seems logical to assume that the emotional aspect will carry significant weight in satisfaction as it is precisely a hedonic experience in which the visitor seeks leisure, entertainment, curiosity, surprise, imagination, pleasure, or motivation to learn in a fun way (Joy & Sherry, 2003). Experience is thus evaluated through the emotions aroused, or in the words of Campbell (1987), through patterns of sensation. In this sense, previous studies (Szymanski & Henard, 2001; Bigné, et al., 2004; Bigné et al., 2005, 2008; De Rojas & Camarero, 2008) have explored the role of emotions as an antecedent of satisfaction in these kinds of services.

The goal of our work is to assess how the nature of the activities conducted by museums and the services they provide may impact visitors' feelings. We also aim to explore how these feelings may impact satisfaction and we seek to enrich our understanding of both by extending the analysis to the consequences these two variables have on the future intentions of those taking part in these activities. Our objective is to widen the thus far scant knowledge of certain aspects of cultural activities and perceived service quality that generate visitor emotions and satisfaction. This study intends to address the following research questions:

- 1) What features of museum activities influence visitor emotion and satisfaction?
- 2) Do the characteristics of the activity and the service quality impact visitor emotion and satisfaction?
- 3) Do pleasure and satisfaction influence visitors' desire to maintain their participation in museum activities?

The findings that emerged from our studies provided us with insights regarding the most appropriate kind of complementary cultural activities offered by museums. If positive reactions can be facilitated in consumers through the activities proposed and the quality of the service, it may be possible to generate satisfaction and strengthen visitor relations, which will ultimately benefit the museum.

The paper is structured as follows. Emotions are first presented as the central goal of the complementary activities offered by museums. We then explore the characteristics of the complementary activities in two aspects: the nature of the activity and the quality of the service, and we analyze the link between the two and the emotions felt by those taking part in a cultural activity. We then detail the link between emotions, satisfaction, and future intentions. These relationships shape the model we aim to verify through specific application to the cultural activities of members of a friends association of a contemporary art museum. The analysis and discussion of the findings are presented together with the relevant conclusions. Results show that group composition and interaction impact the emotion felt during the activity as well as the use of new technologies and activities staged outside the museum. Moreover, service quality is a relevant antecedent of satisfaction and the intent to strengthen the relationship.

Emotions in Cultural Activities

Numerous wide-ranging definitions of the term "emotion" exist. The most prominent is by Bagozzi et al. (1999, p. 185), who consider emotion to be "a mental state of preparation which manifests itself through cognitive valuations of events or thoughts." In the context of museums, emotions are considered an aspect of visitor experience. Kotler and Kotler (2001) propose a range of recreational experiences that may be offered to the visitor such as: a) emotion (enthusiasm, adventure, fantasy, an immersion experience), b) entertainment (joy, play, pleasure, laughter, sociability, and relaxation), c) contemplation (reflection, meditation, fantasy, abstraction, aesthetic experience) and d) learning (curiosity and discovery, observation, experimentation, etc.).

Emotions have been studied through numerous theoretical currents based on their dimensions or components (Bigné & Andreu, 2004a). In our research, we adopt the cognitive approach to emotions, the strongest proponents of which include Arnold (1960), Frijda (1986) and Scherer (1984, 1997). From a cognitive viewpoint, emotions result from an individual's subjective evaluation of a situation or event. This evaluation is the consequence of a series of cognitive processes. Based on this approach, the need arises to understand the structure of emotions in order to analyze them (Bigné et al., 2005). Mehrabian & Russell's (1974) PAD (Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance) model has been the most widely used in marketing. Numerous authors (Feldman, 1998, Bigné & Andreu, 2005) defend the proposal put forward by Russell in 1980, reducing the three variables from the original PAD explaining the structure of emotions to only two independent dimensions: pleasure and arousal. Pleasure (liking or enjoyment) is a positive attitude toward a situation that leads to people feeling joyful. Arousal refers to a receptive and alert state leading people to feel stimulated and active. In our study, we focus on plea-

sure, the first of these two dimensions. In the case we analyze, cultural activities proposed by museums, arousal does not therefore prove relevant since stimulating visitors does not form part of most museums' objectives in these activities. Rather, the aim is to awaken visitor interest and increase their knowledge of a specific matter so that they will experience pleasure (De Rojas & Camarero, 2008).

In the case of cultural activities organized by museums, we distinguish two paths leading to emotions: the features of the activity and the service quality provided by the organization. The features of the activity involve group composition, group interaction, participation, duration, venue, and the use of new technologies. Service quality alludes to technical and human resources devoted to the activity.

Features of the Activity

As pointed out earlier, museums are now much more than just a cultural manifestation, and currently provide a wide variety of services including temporary exhibitions, educational activities, bookshops and stores, libraries and documentation centers, and more. Our analysis focuses on activities of a cultural and educational nature (such as seminars, trips, exhibitions, concerts or private visits) aimed at adults and, we assess their characteristics from the perspective of visitor experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998a; Russel, 1995; Tunnicliffe, 1996), starting from the theoretical basis of the most common and relevant features explored in the literature addressing museums. Since the literature dealing with this issue is scarce, we propose a set of exploratory hypotheses, (H1a to H1i), which suggest that the level of emotion experienced by the participant will depend on the features of the museums' activities.

Group composition. One key aspect of a cultural activity is the target audience. Although we are dealing in all cases with group activities, in certain instances subjects seek an individual experience, whereas in other cases the experience is sought at a group level. Debenedetti (2003) carried out a qualitative study of an art museum to examine the role of accompaniment, evidencing that the advantages of affiliation are mutual enrichment, recreation, reassurance, prestige, and the transmission of knowledge, the advantages of having no companions being autonomy and a personal relationship with the artworks.

Museums also offer activities of an educational nature designed specifically for families. In activities aimed at all kinds of audiences, visitors may also attend as a group of friends who wish to share a common experience. In both cases, this chance to share a cultural or leisure experience with close friends will have a positive impact on the emotions and feelings experienced. In his study of visitors to a folk festival, Morgan (2006) indicated that the festival was important as an opportunity to meet old friends, make new ones and to share experiences with the family. That is, the main event is often the pretext for the real purpose, which is to enjoy the company of friends. This confirms previous research (Kim et al., 2001; Thyne, 2001; amongst others) highlighting the importance of socializing as a motive to attend events and other leisure experiences.

With regard to the number of participants, the smaller the group, the greater the prominence of each of the participants and the more intense their experience. In small groups, individuals can intensify their participation, become the centre

of the activity and, in short, have a meaningful experience. In fact, certain authors (Silverman, 1995; Rasse, 1999; amongst others) highlight that the absence of companions (anonymity) is a criterion for any successful meeting with a work of art. The authors consider anonymity itself as a source of motivation and satisfaction concerning the visit. A large group, in contrast, widens the possibilities for interaction amongst the members and the chance to share experiences, visions, and contrasting opinions, which has a positive impact on the quality of the experience (Faber & Hall, 2007). Muñoz (2004) states that feelings and emotions seek an outlet through pleasure in the individual, for which the group serves as a reflection, in most cases amplifying such emotions that would not be the same if the individual were alone. Arnould and Price (1993) and Hopkinson and Pujari (1999) assert the importance of meetings with other clients with whom there is camaraderie and with whom certain rituals of recognition and status are formed. Said camaraderie is key to the continuity of the experience and the pleasure derived from it. We adopt this perspective and, therefore, posit the following hypotheses:

H1a: The larger the group, the greater the pleasure experienced in the activity.

H1b: The pleasure experienced in the activity is greater when participants know each other (friends, relatives).

Group interaction and participation. The interaction between individual processes and the social situation is of prime importance when considering the service encounter and the nature of the experience (Goulding, 1999a, 1999b). Researchers have demonstrated that social interaction and talk is critical for travelers' intentions (Shim & Gehrt, 2005) and visitor experience of exhibits (Debenedetti, 2003; Goulding, 1999a). From the socialization theory perspective, Shim and Gehrt (2005) find that socialization agents explain attitude, behavior, and intentions regarding pleasure travel and future travel intentions. McManus (1989), in her research into communications with visitors to the British Museum, concluded that visitors in groups attend museum communications as a social unit. The social unit focuses on an exhibition, selectively activating contributions from the text to build conversations. In such cases, group pressures are given priority over more individually based satisfactions. McManus (1994) argues that the social aspect of visiting a museum is not "simply a varnish adding pleasure to the experience" but is "at the very heart of the experience, constituting a fundamental source of satisfaction" (in Debenedetti, 2003). Therefore, we posit the following hypothesis:

H1c: The pleasure experienced is greater when the participants interact during the activity.

The chance to interact, participate, and feel active during the activity is another element that may contribute to its success. Activeness and passiveness in visitor experience have been explored from the point of view of organizations, where future consumers are seen as would-be "added-value seekers," interested in active rather than passive leisure pursuits (Martin & Mason, 1993). The level of

visitor participation in exhibitions has also been examined from the standpoint of museums (Boisvert & Slez, 1995; Blud, 1990; Moscardo, 1996). Martin and Mason (1993, pp. 34-37) posited "a shift in emphasis from passive fun to active learning" and postulated the emergence of the "thoughtful consumer," that is, visitors who construct their own "immersive cultural experience." Uzzell (1989) and Moscardo (1996) propose that interpretation should produce mindful visitors who are active, interested, and capable of questioning and reassessing the situation. It seems reasonable to assume that individuals who participate actively will feel more enthusiastic, and it thus seems plausible to posit the following hypothesis:

H1d: The pleasure experienced is greater during active participation than when the role is passive.

Duration. There is wider variety regarding the duration of activities, since some are conducted sporadically, following no kind of pattern, whereas others are planned more carefully and are staged routinely. An analysis of the mean duration of activities reveals that they tend to require differing time intervals. Works such as those of Tunnicliffe et al. (2004) and Csikszentmihalyi (1998a, 1998b) state that a pleasurable experience is one in which time does not seem to elapse as it normally does. In other words, the notion of the duration of time changes, visitors losing the "notion of time." From a more quantitative perspective of time, it is necessary to apply a period of time that manages to keep visitors interested in the activity. Holbrook and Gardner (1998) suggest under intrinsic motivation, that is, consumption geared toward obtaining pleasure (for instance, participation in a museum's activities), consumer behavior should tend to continue for a longer period the more it brings pleasure, thereby maximizing the duration of an enjoyable consumption experience. By contrast, under extrinsic motivation (consumption serves as the means to an end), consumption should tend to cease as soon as the task is finished or the objective is attained, thereby minimizing the duration of consumption. Since participation in a museum's activities may principally be understood as an intrinsically motivated behavior, we postulate that visitors prefer to extend the duration of such activities. Long activities (those lasting more than a session) thus achieve more visitor involvement and therefore more pleasure than those that are shorter. Moreover, the works of Csikszentmihalyi (1998a and 1998b) propose that when we undertake tasks which we have the chance to complete the experience is better than when the task is not completed. Therefore,

H1e: The pleasure experienced in the activity is greater for long activities than for shorter ones.

H1f: The pleasure experienced in the activity is greater for completed activities than for those not completed.

Venue. A further feature of activities relates to where they are held. Activities tend to be held in the museum itself, although there is an increasing trend toward taking the museum outside by conducting activities elsewhere (i.e., off-site) rather than having visitors go to the museum. Locations where activities of this kind may be staged include schools and associations.

Activities are usually enjoyed more when they are held in a suitable setting that has all the necessary facilities. Screven (1986) points to how the physical design affects the motivational, perceptual, affective, and learning potentials of visitors. The works of Shields (1992), Zukin (1991), and Delaney (1992) provide an interesting perspective on the spatial/interaction relationship between the visitor and the museum environment. Delaney (1992) uses the example of the Canadian Museum of Civilization to illustrate the spatial/interaction relationship. The museum offers the experience of "Infotainment" with the "History Hall" designed to function as a space for the leisurely consumption of Canadian history and culture. Space is formed largely through social action and controls the activities that take place within it, and how the objects are understood.

In addition to the spatial appropriateness of the museum, the latter also represents a space that the visitor is familiar with and thus feels more at ease in, an idea for which place attachment literature provides support. Place attachment is described as the bonds humans form with places, and results from the meanings associated with places (Altman & Low, 1992). Such meanings are derived from an interplay of affect and emotion, knowledge and beliefs, as well as behaviors and actions associated with that place (Budruk, 2010). This place attachment determines an individual's preference for a specific venue. Based on our review, we posit the following hypothesis:

H1g: The pleasure experienced is greater when participating at the museum compared to participating off-site.

Theme of the activity. The theme of the activity is typically closely linked to the theme of the museum, although it may reflect the whole content of the museum or just focus on one particular work, author, or section thereof. The works of Drake (2003), and Fernández and Pastor (2008) highlight the fact that for visitors to enjoy an activity more they must feel they have control over it and that there is a clear goal involved. In order to support this affirmation, we refer to the work of Rothschild and Houston (1980), who argued that high levels of enduring involvement—showing personal and ongoing individual interest regarding an object—arise from the experience of dealing with it. A similar idea is defended by Bennett et al. (2005), who suggest that enduring involvement is often the consequence of an individual's prior experience. It means that, in general terms, people tend to feel happier and more motivated when they have a clearly defined and accessible goal, as a result of which they prefer to engage in activities that focus on a topic they are familiar with or have some previous knowledge of. Merging these ideas entails the need to limit the theme of the activity, leading us to posit the following hypothesis:

H1h: When the activity focuses on a topic the individual has previous knowledge of the pleasure experienced is greater than when the topic of the activity is unknown.

New technologies. Numerous studies have linked museums to new technologies (Aoki et al., 2002; Fleck et al., 2002; Lehn & Heath, 2005; among others), the most relevant to our context being those that have explored technologies for communicating heritage and the relevance of interactivity (Varela & Stengler, 2004), such as computers, projection screens, virtual visits, environmental scenography, etc. This importance entails the need to examine whether, in a cultural environment, users prefer innovation or more traditional activities.

The museum visit is a complex experience encompassing multiple cognitive and emotional aspects. Visitors have different ways of elaborating background and new knowledge, and display different interests and preferences. Designing interactive technologies to support such an experience requires effort in a number of aspects: the graphical interface and its usability, the adaptation mechanism and its effectiveness, and overall visitor satisfaction. Moreover, technology designers need to consider the intrusiveness of the devices they propose for supporting visits (Stock et al., 2007). Museum managers hope that new technology will enhance the quality of the museum experience. Collin-Lachaud and Passebois (2008) indicate that information and communication technologies (ICT) add value to the visitor experience, facilitating the museum visit, providing visitors with more information, and allowing them to travel virtually in time and space (immersion experience). ICT is often described as a "ludo-educational" tool.

Due to the importance of these new technologies, it seems reasonable to assume that visitors will be more enthused when using them, leading us to propose the following hypothesis:

H1i: The pleasure experienced is greater when activities include the use of new technologies.

Service quality

As was clearly stated in the Strategic Plan for the State Museum Network (2004-2008) drawn up by the Office of Fine Arts and Cultural Assets at the Spanish Ministry of Culture, the goal of which was to posit management formulas to ensure maximum quality in the service provide by museums, it is essential to have the necessary technical and human resources suited to the goals that museums pursue. More specifically, professionals who serve both the public as well as the museum itself are required. Indeed, one of the cornerstones of museum management is felt to be sufficient, competent, and motivated staff.

The relationship between service quality and emotions has been revealed by services marketing literature (Oliver et al., 1997). Users experience various feelings (mutual understanding, extra attention) when attended by staff (Bigné & Andreu, 2004a). Further, the perception of service quality and other external variables may also impact emotional states (Gilboa & Rafaeli, 2003; Martin et al., 2008). This approach also proves valid for other kinds of services. In the case of performing, arts Hume (2008) related core and peripheral service quality with the emotions experienced by individuals.

Although the tangible elements of service quality (museum infrastructure such as exhibition rooms, projectors, touch screens, and so on) are important,

several authors suggest that human resources are a key element in eliciting positive emotions. Van Dolen et al., (2004) have examined the effect of contact employee performance in creating encounter and relationship satisfaction. A contact employee who creates mutual understanding with the customer responds to special requests, and if competent increases customer encounters as well as relationship satisfaction. In the case of service encounters, such as hotel checkouts in which the transaction is brief, public, and mundane, Mattila and Enz (2002) suggest that customer mood state, measured immediately after the service encounter and displayed emotions during the interaction, correlate strongly with customer assessment of the service encounter. Kraiger et al. (1989) suggested that contact personnel can impact customer mood state through their presence, message content, attractiveness, status, and interpersonal relationships with customers. In the leisure sector, Lee et al. (2006) found that emotions are one result of external perceptions. In their study, carried out at a music festival, they evidenced that inadequate staffing coupled with the actual venue of the festival had a negative effect on emotions. Along a similar line, Pugh (2001) found that worker interaction with clients in the service sector is a key factor in determining customer assessment of service quality. De Rojas and Camarero (2006) also found evidence of a positive and significant link between quality and pleasure in museum visits.

We thus propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Quality of service (suitable technical and human resources for conducting the activities) impacts the pleasure experienced in the activity.

Pleasure, Satisfaction, and Relationship Strengthening

Pleasure and satisfaction

Research into satisfaction has provided two theoretical perspectives—the cognitive and the emotional approach. In following a cognitive approach to explain satisfaction formation, the most widely recognized model is the disconfirmation model of expectations (Oliver, 1980; Oliver & Swan, 1989), whereby satisfaction is a function of disconfirmation and disconfirmation is a function of expectations and fulfillment (Oliver, 1997).

Current thinking, however, tends toward the belief that emotions experienced by consumers are a determinant of satisfaction (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Bigné, et al., 2005, 2008; amongst others). The affective approach, which maintains that satisfaction is determined by an accumulation of emotions experienced by the individual, is one that has received much attention (Ruth et al., 2002), as it addresses certain issues (such as the role of mood and emotion) that cognitive models of consumer satisfaction are unable to resolve (Bagozzi, 1997).

The role of emotions in leisure experiences and the influence of the environment in these emotions have also been emphasized by wilderness experience literature. In wilderness experiences, recreation experiences are not evaluated cognitively as a linear sequence of events beginning with expectations and ending with outcomes (experience quality), but as an emergent experience motivated by a not very well-defined goal (Patterson et al., 1998). According to Borrie and Roggen-

buck (2001), researchers of the lived experience have measured emotion, mood, attention states, feelings of connection with others and nature, attitudes, and cognitions. Moreover, it has been suggested that changes in leisure states of mind during the on-site experience are partly due to such contextual variables as level of personal activity, type of environment encountered, and time in the experience.

Adopting an emotional approach, satisfaction becomes an emotional state that may be measured and which emerges from comparing expectations to outcomes, emotion playing a key role and exerting great influence on satisfaction (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991). The idea of satisfaction as an emotional response is defended by Giese and Cote (2000). These authors reviewed satisfaction literature from 1969 to 1997 and found that the satisfaction construct consisted of three basic elements, namely: response, focus and time. Consumer satisfaction is a response (emotional or cognitive), the response pertaining to a particular focus (expectations, product, consumption experience, etc.) and occurring at a particular time (after consumption, after choice, based on accumulated experience, etc). The authors conclude that satisfaction was an "affective summary response" towards the product or service consumed.

In the case of museums, and in the general sphere of tourist and cultural experiences, there is a clear need to integrate cognitive and emotional concepts to explain satisfaction intentions and behavior (Zins, 2002). The emotional aspect is particularly relevant in hedonic experiences, in other words, those facets of consumer behavior that are linked to multisensory aspects, fantasy and emotion in the experience with the products and services (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). A visit to a museum would form part of these hedonic experiences (Joy & Sherry, 2003).

Bigné and Andreu (2004a) found that emotions, and particularly the pleasure aspect, have a direct impact on satisfaction. In a later work, Bigné et al. (2005) also found evidence to support the added value of emotions (pleasure and arousal) in consumer leisure experience, specifically on their satisfaction. For the case of visitors to a cultural centre, De Rojas and Camarero (2008) also found that satisfaction responds to the enjoyment or pleasure that certain stimuli (interaction quality, environmental factors) arouse in the visitor.

Based on this review, the following hypothesis is posited:

H3: Emotion reflected as pleasure has a positive impact on participants' satisfaction in museum activities.

As stated, researchers have begun to realize that the two approaches (cognitive and affective) should prove complementary (De Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Oliver, et al., 1997; Phillips & Baumgartner, 2002). For this reason, Bigné and Andreu (2004a) define consumer satisfaction as "a cognitive-affective state resulting from cognitive evaluations, as well as emotions caused in turn by cognitive evaluations, all of which trigger behavioral responses." Following on from this proposal, we include service quality as a direct determinant of satisfaction. It has been empirically confirmed that satisfaction is preceded by perceived quality, especially when quality is formulated as a specific evaluative belief and satisfaction as a more general evaluation (Oliver, 1997; Olsen, 2002). Therefore, we propose the following:

H4: Perceived service quality has a positive impact on participants' satisfaction in museum activities.

Relationship Strengthening: Word of Mouth and Repurchase Intentions

Intention to maintain a link with the museum, to participate again in the activities it organizes and to recommend it to others, demonstrate that the activity has been a success and that the participant is ready to strengthen the relationship.

With regard to these relationship-strengthening behavioral intentions on the part of the visitor, the literature has already linked emotions with consumer trends and behavior (Huang, 2001), such that emotion is a driving factor in future intention to repeat the experience or at least to recommend it to others (word of mouth). Several works (Babin & Babin, 2001; Machleit & Mantel, 2001) have indicated that positive emotions (excitement, romance, pride) tend to be associated with positive outcomes (purchase success, patronage intentions, utilitarian and hedonic value, WOM) and negative emotions (shame, guilt, regret, anger) with negative outcomes (purchase failure). Inman et al. (1997) suggest that negative emotions have a stronger impact on post-choice evaluation compared to positive emotions. Future intention is therefore conditioned by the emotion that shapes and determines behavior (Oliver, 1997; Derbaix & Phan, 1998; Bagozzi et al., 1999; Peter & Olson, 1999). Bellman et al. (1999) even go as far as to state that consumers manifesting a favorable emotional state towards the organization analyzed show greater purchase intent. Based on this information, we posit the following hypothesis:

H5: Emotion reflected as pleasure leads to positive word of mouth (H5a) and participant intent to repeat the experience (H5b).

The link between satisfaction and behavior has been widely evidenced by marketing literature. Numerous authors (Anderson, 1994; Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Fornell, 1992; Keaveney, 1995; Oliver, 1980; Oliver & Swan, 1989; White & Yu, 2005; Zeithaml, et al., 1996) have explored the impact of satisfaction on behavioral intention in the service sector. Robust findings indicate that satisfaction is highly correlated with behavioral responses such as complaining behavior, negative/positive word of mouth, and repurchase intentions (Athanasopoulos et al., 2001; Szymansky & Henard, 2001). This influence is based on the idea that a satisfied consumer will display greater interest and will be more motivated to repeat the experience. Bolton (1998) states that satisfied consumers are more likely to exhibit a behavioral response in harmony with such satisfaction. In the case of museums, De Rojas and Camarero (2008) found evidence that satisfaction exerts a direct and positive impact on future intention to visit the museum. Bigné et al. (2008) examined the effects of satisfaction on behavioral intentions (loyalty and willingness to pay more) using two types of hedonic services (interactive museum, and theme park) and found that satisfaction was directly linked to loyalty and willingness to pay more. In the light of this research we postulate that:

H6: Satisfaction leads to a positive word of mouth (H6a) and impacts participant intention to repeat the experience (H6b).

Figure 1 sums up the hypotheses posited.

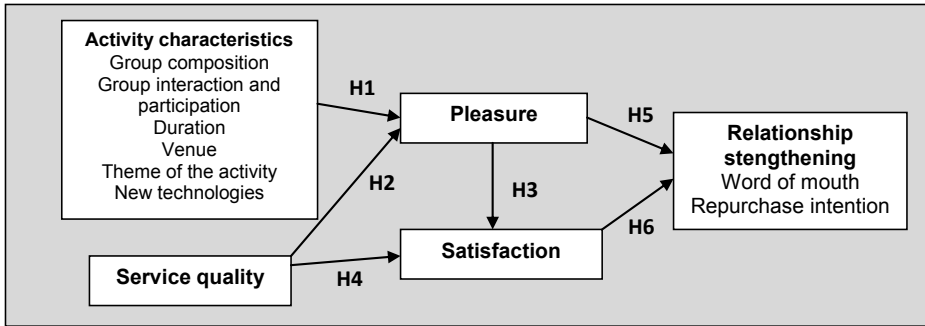


Figure 1. Proposed Model

Methodology

Sample

Since our research focuses on visitor experience during a museum-based cultural and leisure service, to verify the posited hypotheses we conducted a case study of visitors to one museum. We gathered information through a questionnaire sent to the Friends of the Patio Herreriano Contemporary Spanish Art Museum located in the city of Valladolid (Spain). This museum, which receives some 60,000 visits a year, offers residents, firms and institutions the chance to be “friends” and to enjoy a range of benefits such as free admission, invitations to openings, activities, visits and organized trips exclusively for the friends, information, involvement in educational programs, access to the documentation centre or discounts on publications, amongst other advantages.

Staging complementary cultural activities is one way in which museums have opted to expand the services they offer in an effort to reach a wider audience. The survey conducted by the Ministry of Culture into all museums and Spanish museographic collections clearly reflects that the main activities undertaken are educational, courses or seminars, lectures and concerts. Table 1 shows the results of the study between 2000 and the last year the study was conducted in 2006. The table shows the number of museums engaging in each type of activity. As can be seen, the range of available activities is ever growing.

Information was gathered between October and December 2008. First, a pre-test was performed through a personal survey conducted amongst the friends of the museum who had attended a private opening of an exhibition. This pre-test (20 surveys) enabled us to filter and amend the scales proposed. With the help of the museum management, we mailed a survey to the friends of the museum (n =

Table 1*Museums and Museographic Collections by Activities Carried Out*

	Absolute values (Percentage of the total)			
	2000	2002	2004	2006
Educational activities	543 (48.3%)	523 (46%)	514 (41.5%)	620 (46.2%)
Courses or seminars	325 (28.9%)	323 (28.4%)	296 (23.9%)	351 (26.1%)
Lectures	485 (43.1%)	428 (37.6%)	375 (30.3%)	444 (33.1%)
Concerts	255 (22.4%)	255 (22.4%)	260 (21.0%)	287 (21.4%)

Source: Adapted from the Statistics of Museums and Museographic Collections (2006)

800) (institutional friends were not included). To increase the number of responses, by way of a reminder, the museum staff telephoned some of the friends who usually took part in the activities. We obtained 137 responses which, after filtering to remove void or incomplete responses, left a final sample of 133 surveys. Since the museum's communication manager informed us that most friends are somewhat inactive and scarcely participate in complementary activities, we considered the response rate acceptable (17%). We analyzed the possibility of nonresponse bias, comparing those who had answered in the two first weeks of the survey with those answering in the final weeks, no significant differences emerging.

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to give their opinion of one activity held by the museum in which they had taken part. They were allowed to choose from amongst an exhibition (in most temporary exhibitions the museum invites the friends to the opening, at which the curator or artist is present), a lecture or a series of lectures, a course or an educational workshop, a trip, and a private visit. 42.9% of respondents chose an exhibition, 20.3% a lecture, 19.6% a course or workshop, 9.8% a trip, and 4.5% a private visit. Four respondents failed to state what kind of activity they were evaluating. It is worth pointing out that, after evaluating the activities currently being staged by the major national museums (the Prado Museum in Madrid, the Guggenheim in Bilbao and the Museum of Arts and Sciences in Valencia, amongst others), we were able to confirm that most of these activities are conducted by the Patio Herreriano Contemporary Spanish Art Museum.

Table 2 shows the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample as well as their link to the museum, type of friends of the museum association to which interviewees belong, number of visits per year, and years participating in the friends of the museum program.

Measures

Table 3 sums up the scales used to measure the proposed variables.

The characteristics of the activity were measured from the perspective of visitor experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998a; Russel, 1995; Tunnicliffe, 1996). To achieve this, we drew up a series of questions all of which were dichotomous or multiple response. The various indicators provided information on the group and

Table 2*Sample Characteristics*

Gender	Age	Educational background	Type of membership	Years of participation in the friends association	Times visited in the last year
Men 56%	18-24 4.7%	Primary school 3.8%	Individual 58.6%	Less than 3 19.8%	0-1 7.8%
Women 44%	25-34 12.4%	(to 14 years old)	Student 7.8%	3-6 59.4%	2-5 38.3%
	35-44 15.8%	Secondary school 11.3%	Pensioner 3.9%	Over 6 20.8%	6-12 39.8%
	45-54 34.6%	(to 18 years old)	Researcher 7.8%		+12 14.1%
	55-64 24.8%	University 80.5%	Family 19.5%		
	+ 65 5.3%		Benefactor 2.3%		

Table 3*Measurement Variables*

Variable	Measures	Item	Loading
Characteristics of the activity	Group composition	Who they attended with (family/friends/alone)	CHA1
		Size of the group (small group/large group)	CHA2
	Group interaction and participation	Participant interaction was encouraged (yes/no)	CHA3
		Type of experience most valued (individual experience individual/group experience)	CHA4
		Type of participation (passive/active)	CHA5
	Duration of the activity	Duration of the activity (one day/more than one day)	CHA6
		Kind of participation (full time/part time)	CHA7
	Venue	Venue (on site/outside the museum)	CHA8
	Theme of the activity	Previous knowledge (topic known/unknown)	CHA9
		Previous participation in similar activities (yes/no)	CHA10
	Use of new technologies	Use of new technologies (yes/no)	CHA11
Quality of service ^a ($\alpha=0.90$, CR=0.92, AVE=0.57)	Those in charge of running the activity proved to be competent professionals	QUA1	0.779
	The technical means used in the activity were suitable	QUA2	0.670
	For the activity in hand, the museum had modern equipment	QUA3	0.790
	The museum's physical services for the activity were visually appealing	QUA4	0.807
	The museum fulfilled the programme and schedule set out for the activity	QUA5	0.768
	The museum failed to provide adequate information concerning the activity	QUA6	-
	Those running the activity were always willing to help the participants	QUA7	0.824
	Those running the activities received the necessary support from the museum to do their job well	QUA8	0.776
	Those running the museum activities provided individual attention	QUA9	0.732
	Those running the activity understood participants' needs and requirements	QUA10	0.606
Pleasure ^b ($\alpha=0.90$, CR=0.93, AVE=0.74)	Angry/Content	PLE1	0.827
	Unhappy/Delighted	PLE2	0.850
	Disappointed/Happy	PLE3	0.889
	Disillusioned/Enthusied	PLE4	0.914
	Bored/Entertained	PLE5	-
	Unimpressed/Impressed	PLE6	0.805
Satisfaction ^a ($\alpha=0.89$, CR=0.92, AVE=0.74)	It is one of the best cultural activities I have ever been involved in	SAT1	0.783
	I do not regret having taken part in the activity	SAT2	0.858
	I am pleased with my decision to take part in the activity	SAT3	0.890
	I really enjoyed taking part in the activity	SAT4	0.900
Word of mouth ^a Repurchase intention ^a	I would recommend taking part in this or other similar activities	INT1	1.000
	Should other similar activities be organized I would be willing to take part	INT2	1.000

(^a) Likert scale using a 1-5 response set (SD to SA).

(^b) Semantic differential scale scale using a 1-5 response set.

level of involvement in the activity, the duration of the activity and the kind of participation, the venue, previous knowledge of the topic and the technological means used.

To assess service quality, the Servqual scale was used, a scale used in all areas of the service sector. Simpson (2000) and Nowacki (2005) each used the Servqual scale in a museum setting, although Caldwell (2002), in his work into service qual-

ity in museums and galleries cautions researchers against using SERVQUAL uncritically. The suitability of using this scale takes into account the two following considerations: 1) we needed to amend certain items so as to distinguish particular features of each service to be analyzed (Carman, 1990; Getty & Thompson, 1994) and 2) following the position of Cronin and Taylor (1992) in our study, we only use the part of the Servqual scale relating to outcome, without taking into account expectations. Given that some time may have elapsed since their participation in the activity held by the museum, we considered that respondents would remember the evaluation (emotions, satisfaction), but would be unlikely to remember with any certainty their expectations before attending it. Although the block of outcomes comprises 22 items, we adapted it to the service provided by the museum, and reduced it to 10 indicators including the five dimensions (items of reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness). The results of the pre-test and the meetings held with the museum management proved extremely helpful in this sense.

As for satisfaction, for the context of museum activities, we used a scale comprising four items adapted from Oliver (1997), including the extent to which the individual enjoyed the activity and did not regret having participated therein. To measure emotion, we focused on the pleasure dimension. This variable was measured using the six-item semantic differential scale proposed by Russell (1980). Finally, behavioral intentions were measured through two indicators (five-point Likert scales) which reflect the intention to participate in a similar activity (repurchase intention) and to recommend it to others (word of mouth).

These scales were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis to test their convergent and discriminant validity. Table 3 shows the factorial weights obtained, as well as the reliability values (Cronbach alpha, composite reliability and extracted variance). Table 4 shows the correlation matrix. Findings evidence that the scales fit reliability requirements. We also verified discriminance amongst variables since the values of the variance extracted from the reflective variables are greater in all cases than the squared correlations with the rest of the variables.

Analysis and Results

To test hypothesis H1, we conducted ANOVA to determine whether the features of the activity impact the emotions experienced by individuals (pleasure). Table 5 shows the frequencies of the various indicators used to measure the characteristics of the museum activities and the ANOVA results. The findings reveal that most subjects attend this kind of cultural activity alone and that most see it through to the end. It should also be stressed that in almost 90% of cases, subjects undertook the activities at the museum itself.

As can be seen, the composition and size of the group determine the degree of emotion experienced by participants in the cultural activities (H1a). The larger the group, the more positive emotions subjects experienced. It can also be seen that emotions are more positive when subjects attend with friends or family members (H1b).

Table 4*Correlation Matrix*

	Service quality	Pleasure	Satisfaction	WOM
Service quality	<i>0.754</i>			
Pleasure	0.552	<i>0.860</i>		
Satisfaction	0.538	0.519	<i>0.860</i>	
Word of mouth	0.409	0.474	0.641	-
Repurchase intention	0.507	0.487	0.741	0.601

(*) The main diagonal shows the square root of the extracted variance (AVE).

Table 5*Activity Characteristics and ANOVA Results*

Item	Variable	Groups	Frequencies	Means of Pleasure	F	Sig
CHA1	Who they attended with	Family	18.8%	0.31	3.034	0.053
		Friends	25.6%	0.29		
		Alone	55.6%	-0.21		
CHA2	Size of the group	Small group	47.7%	-0.23	5.701	0.019
		Large group	52.3%	0.25		
CHA3	Interaction of participants	Yes	63.6%	0.24	15.485	0.000
		No	36.4%	-0.52		
CHA4	Most valued kind of experience	Individual experience	68.3%	-0.27	12.533	0.001
		Group experience	29.3%	0.46		
CHA5	Kind of participation	Passive	55.0%	-0.30	8.619	0.014
		Active	45.0%	0.27		
CHA6	Duration of activity	One day	55.9%	-0.08	0.540	0.464
		More than one day	44.1%	0.07		
CHA7	Time of participation	Complete	85.5%	0.00	0.000	0.991
		Partial participation	14.5%	0.00		
CHA8	Where activity took place	At the museum itself	89.0%	-0.09	3.919	0.051
		Outside the museum	11.0%	0.51		
CHA9	Previous knowledge	A familiar topic	66.9%	0.07	1.398	0.240
		An unknown topic	33.1%	-0.19		
CHA10	Previous participation in similar activities	Yes	68.7%	-0.08	1.198	0.277
		No	31.3%	0.17		
CHA11	Use of new technologies	Yes	45.8%	0.24	7.377	0.008
		No	54.2%	-0.28		

Regarding behavior within the group (interactivity and participation), respondents report higher pleasure scores when they feel active or willing to participate in the activity (H1d) and when interaction amongst the public attending is allowed, and when the experience is at a group level (H1c).

The venue also had a slight impact on emotions. However, contrary to our expectations (H1g), emotions were more intense when the activity was staged outside the museum. This might be because the activities outside the museum were trips. Nevertheless, most activities took place inside the museum itself.

The use of new technologies in the activity is also a feature that helps to heighten the emotions experienced by subjects, and as a result we accept hypothesis H1i.

The duration of the activity or whether or not it was completed by the individual do not appear to be relevant when stirring emotions in the participant, leading us to reject hypotheses H1e and H1f. The same is true of the subject's previous knowledge. Having taken part in similar activities or being familiar with the topic dealt with in the activity do not have any bearing on the level of emotions experienced, leading us to reject H1h.

Having assessed the individual impact of each feature of the cultural activity, the following stage of the analysis involved introducing the variables that proved significant into a model for joint estimation of the remaining hypotheses. These variables were grouped into three categories: group composition (CHA1, CHA2), group interaction and participation (CHA3, CHA4, and CHA5) and new technologies (CHA11). CHA1 was dichotomized, taking a value of 0 when subjects attended alone and 1 when they attended with friends or family. Estimation of the joint model was performed through the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach. This approach allows us to work with variables not normally distributed (as is the case in our research) and is robust for small to moderate sample sizes. The model was estimated using SmartPLS (Ringle et al., 2005). The results are shown in Figure 2.

In light of these findings, we reaffirm the previously obtained conclusions regarding the significant impact which group composition and group dynamics have on the pleasure felt by participants in cultural activities. However, the use of new technologies does not prove significant when introduced in a global model (it can only be accepted at a 90% confidence level).

With respect to service quality, perceived as the presence of professionals, technical means, adequate equipment, and attention provided to participants, findings suggest that service quality helps to heighten the emotions experienced (H2), and emerges as a major determinant in satisfaction (H4). In this sense, it

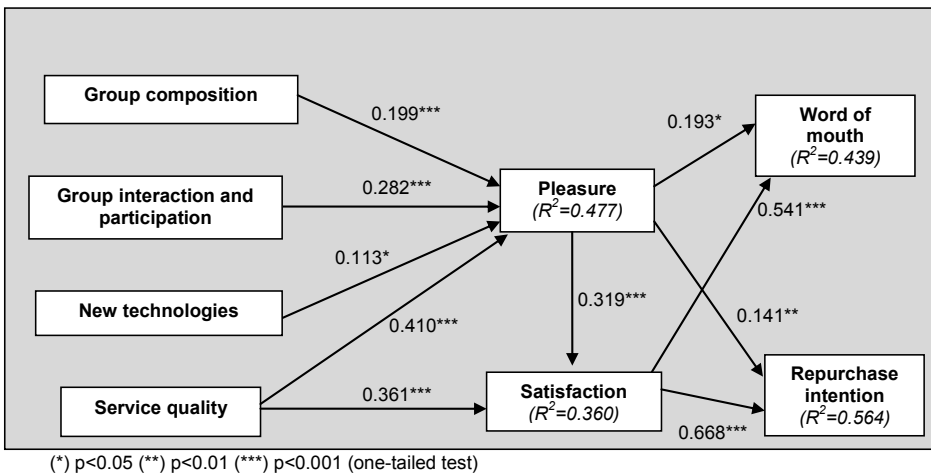


Figure 2. Estimated Model*

is important to stress that although the impact of emotions on satisfaction also proves significant (H3), it has less impact than service quality.

Findings also reflect how both the pleasure experienced as well as the satisfaction determines participant intention to attend further similar activities and to recommend them to others, leading us to accept hypotheses H5 and H6, although H5a only can be accepted at a 90% confidence level. Notwithstanding this finding, we observe that the direct effect of pleasure on future behavior is much lower than the effect of satisfaction. Therefore, the effect of pleasure on future intentions is mainly indirect throughout satisfaction.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

The current work addresses an issue that has thus far received scant attention in the area of visitor experience to a museum (cultural tourist), namely the role that various aspects of the proposed cultural activities play in visitor emotions, satisfaction, and future intentions. The study adopts a cognitive-affective approach to satisfaction and esteems that certain features of the activities conducted by a museum are able to generate greater pleasure and consequently greater satisfaction in the individual. This pleasure is enhanced even further if the quality of the service provided (staff, means, attention, etc.) is appropriate.

The main contribution of this paper is to further the field's understanding of the relationship between service quality, emotion, and satisfaction, and to add clarity to the theoretical debate about the cognitive and emotional perspectives. According to the cognitive approach, the effect of service quality on emotions and on satisfaction proves conclusive. Having professionals, experts, technical means, and the right equipment available together with the support of museum staff is felt to be crucial by those attending cultural activities. Similarly, the emotional approach finds support in our results as having a significant weight on satisfaction. Moreover, we find that both approaches are complementary, as service quality influences satisfaction through emotions. Adding the direct and indirect effects, the impact of service quality on satisfaction thus outweighs the impact of emotions. Here, Homburg et al. (2006) assert that the influence of the affective and cognitive approach varies depending on consumer experience. More specifically, they establish that as experience is accumulated, the impact of affective factors on consumer satisfaction diminishes, whereas for cognitive factors, it increases. When faced with new experiences, affective factors exert a greater influence than cognitive ones. Since our research explores cultural activities that museums have been staging for some time, the affective dimension may become less relevant compared to the cognitive in determining satisfaction.

As pointed out earlier, the effect of pleasure on future intentions is mainly indirect throughout satisfaction. Although in this study we examine a sample of friends of the museum who, by definition, are the public most loyal to the museum, it is true that this loyalty is not always reflected in participation and attendance at the museum (46.1% attend less than five times a year). As a result, we measure future loyalty as subjects' intent to take part in similar activities in future

and to recommend them to other friends. Despite measuring intention and not real behaviors, our research supports the extensive literature that posits satisfaction as the main antecedent of repurchase and WOM (Oliver, 1980; Oliver & Swan, 1989; White & Yu, 2005; Zeithaml, et al., 1996). Even if emotions are an important component of the visitor experience, overall evaluation of the activity—based on both cognitive and emotional elements—is the major reason for individual intent to strengthen the relationship with the museum.

Another contribution made by the work is to evidence that cultural activities may be designed in such a way that the public displays greater pleasure or enthusiasm. The research findings help fill the gap in literature vis-à-vis the relevant features of cultural activities. Findings reveal that group composition and dynamics impact the emotion felt during the activity. Although some authors (such as Silverman, 1995; Rasse, 1999) point to the absence of companions (anonymity) as a source of motivation and satisfaction concerning the visit, our findings indicate that individuals feel greater pleasure in activities with large groups and group-level experiences (as opposed to an experience at an individual level), where they participate actively or interact with other participants. Attending with family or friends is also seen to have a positive impact on the emotions experienced. Hofstede's (1980) individualism dimension of culture can help us to interpret these results. As for individualist cultures, ties between individuals are loose, whereas on the collectivist side, individuals are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents), which continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. In Spain, the degree of individualism is lower than the mean of European countries and is significantly lower than the USA.

Another factor to be highlighted concerns the use of new technologies. When the activities proposed make use of new technologies, the subject experiences greater pleasure (and therefore greater satisfaction) than when they are not used. These technologies are the use of projections, web platforms, and so on. We have also seen that activities staged outside the museum are more highly valued than those conducted on site, although here there were few cases in which the activity had been conducted elsewhere.

There are other factors that do not appear to impact the emotion experienced. Neither the duration of the activity nor having previous knowledge of the topic, or individuals having taken part in similar activities are seen to have any significant effect on emotions. In the present study, duration was measured in days (one day or more), and it would no doubt prove necessary to determine whether what really impacts emotions is the number of hours each session lasts.

Managerial Implications

Our research springs from a desire to contribute findings that may be applied to the management of cultural, didactic, and leisure activities proposed by museums. When individuals feel they are an active part in the learning or entertainment process, they experience greater emotions than when participating in activities in which they are merely supplied with information. In this respect, organizers must encourage interaction amongst participants. Visitors also seek more interac-

tion with other visitors. Museums should foster more exchange either at the site during the visit or on its website after the visit. To achieve this, activities should not be held in groups that are so small that they restrict the possibilities of interaction amongst the subjects.

As the proposed activities lose active participation and interaction amongst individuals, the affective factor (emotion) wanes in importance as a determinant of satisfaction. Fresh and novel activities that can surprise must be added, the element of surprise proving crucial if participants' emotions are to be stirred and if satisfaction is subsequently to be achieved.

The relevant role of emotions in activities might provide the base for potential segmentation using emotional techniques (Bigné & Andreu, 2004b). Understanding how consumers experience emotions in the service process could give rise to implications for the design of museum activities.

One further aspect that must not be neglected is the need to stress quality of service. Visitors or participants in activities need the support through which leisure, entertainment, or culture are received to be the best possible. Museums must make every effort to improve the facilities and technical means they have available (projectors, exhibition rooms, touch screens, and so on). The presence of experts in management and providing activities does not go unnoticed by individuals. It should not be forgotten that the profile of the participant in this kind of activity is a subject with an average to high educational background and qualifications and one who almost always has a previous knowledge or understanding of the topic dealt with in the activity.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study described has some limitations. The group surveyed was a relatively homogeneous group of museum friends. Although we analysed the participation of members in museum activities, selecting a larger sample of participants to include nonmembers or sporadic visitors would be suitable. A more representative group of participants might be surveyed to give a wider picture of visitor experience.

The results also suggest the possibility of exploring the different types of participants in terms of age, gender, and type of studies (those from arts and those from science and technical studies). Further research should also explore features of the activity in greater depth. Since our research has broached this subject from an exploratory point of view, some questions have remained unanswered, for example: How large does the group need to be for group members to experience the greatest pleasure? Would interaction in oversized groups impact experience quality? How long does the activity have to be for customers to experience the greatest pleasure? Further inquiry might show different reactions and emotions toward the elements of the activities and toward service quality. Emotions may differ across the type of studies in that certain individuals are prone to be moved by artistic experiences. Considering the elements of service quality (physical quality of the elements employed in the activity, interaction quality and human resources quality) separately would be recommendable in order to analyze the effect each has on participant emotions.

All of these possibilities should be linked to exploring return on marketing (Rust et al., 2004) for museums. Marketing activities are viewed as an investment that produces an improvement in a driver (e.g., advertising awareness, service quality, price, loyalty program) of customer equity. This leads to improved customer perception, resulting in increased customer attraction and retention.

A further line of research to emerge in the analysis of museum activities is the influence of the online word-of-mouth (eWOM). Litvin et al. (2008) indicate that the use of online interpersonal influence may provide important competitive advantages for early adopters as it plays an increasingly important role in the consumer decision-making process. eWOM offers multiple opportunities (low access and information exchange costs, broader scope and increased anonymity) and there is a wide range of eWOM channels (blogs and virtual communities, websites, emails, chatrooms, instant messaging, among others).

In addition, to take the research further, a comparison of visitor behavior at different museums and at museums located in different cities would allow extrapolation of the findings. Moreover, using other means of data collection, such as observation of behavior and experiments might broaden our knowledge of visitor experience in cultural activities.

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