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Satisfying experiences: guided tours at cultural heritage sites

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ABSTRACT

Cultural heritage has become a primary means for attracting visitors to cities, and a source of revenue through the design of guided tours that offer satisfying experiences at heritage sites. The aim of this study is to analyse participation, hedonism, knowledge, local culture and nostalgia as determinants of these experiences. A sample of 568 international tourists responded to a survey after taking a guided tour of Barcelona City Hall (Spain) and the data was used to test the proposed guided experience model by means of structural equation modelling. Results suggest the need to design guided tours with strong doses of active participation and local culture.

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Introduction

Visitor satisfaction, the promotional power of word-of-mouth and encouragement of return visits are the main challenges of a tourist destination. As travellers have become more travel savvy, destination marketers need to not only look at the extrinsic side of the destination but also understand the intrinsic factors that lead tourists to travel there (Youell, 1998). The aim of this paper is to identify the keys to making any consumer experience satisfactory.

Many studies have examined the motivations of cultural tourism (Hughes, 2002; McKercher, 2004; Van der Ark & Richards, 2006). Others have focused on tourists' wellbeing or their satisfaction with their tourism experiences (Dolnicar et al., 2012; McCabe & Johnson, 2013; Neal et al., 2004), while few studies have explored the structure and on-site components required to produce a satisfactory visit (Jensen et al., 2017).

Therefore, this paper looks at the current key issues related to tourism satisfaction, focusing on emotion-filled and memorable experiences (Goossens, 2000; Oh et al., 2007), that is, it looks at product design based on participation (Herbert, 2001), hedonism (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010), knowledge (Lee, 2016), local culture (Crespi-Vallbona & Richards, 2007), and nostalgia (Kim, 2005). It seeks to identify the variables that tourists perceive as essential and satisfying elements of their guided tours; that is, a better understanding of the crucial components of memorable, emotion-filled, experience-based activities. As Jensen (2014) asserts, research has mainly been more subject-oriented (psychological) than object-oriented. Investigation of the intrinsic elements that shape guided visits to historical buildings is fundamental in order to acquire accurate data about the significance of these components, as guided tours are one of the factors that influence visitor satisfaction and the intention to make repeat visits (Zhang & Chow, 2004). In addition, of the many tourism professions, it is tour guides that interact most directly with tourists. Research has therefore analysed the direct relationship between tourist satisfaction and tour guide performance (Ap & Wong, 2001; Bowie & Chang, 2005; Chang, 2009; Huang et al., 2010; Huang et al., 2015; Mak et al., 2011). Hence this study's originality lies in its object-oriented approach and its focus on the analysis of the elements

that might shape modern-day guided tours towards providing value to visitors, and even offering a powerful means to boost competitive position (Baker & Cameron, 2008).

This paper makes two major contributions. First, by drawing on existing tourism literature, it advances our understanding of product design and satisfaction with regard to guided visits. We examine the effects of participation, hedonism, knowledge, local culture, and nostalgia as the dimensions of cultural tourism that provide the required context and content for satisfactory visits and emotion-filled experiences. This contribution is significant because it complements most studies of tourism satisfaction by examining activities from the object side. The analysed variables have been studied in isolation by different scholars, but they have not been interconnected together in a single proposal. Second, it analyses guided visits as a means to generate satisfying experiences at heritage sites, which today constitute a major area of interest within the field of tourism research. However, few studies have addressed the impact of guided tours of heritage buildings in terms of the visitor experience. Therefore, cultural tourism, and specifically that which is focused on tangible heritage, is used as an illustrative case to analyse the key components of successful guided visits that contribute to visitor satisfaction. This research uses a survey of cultural tourists to look in depth at the current situation of heritage tourism in Barcelona (Spain), and specifically the guided tours offered inside historic buildings.

Literature review

Previous research of heritage tourism has explored visitor satisfaction, product design and interpretation by tour guides and has shown that these factors positively influence visitor satisfaction and perceived value (Baker & Cameron, 2008; Ham & Weiler, 2007; Hassan & Iankova, 2012; Jensen et al., 2017; Poria et al., 2009).

Tour guides and guided tours

A tour guide is a professional who guides individuals on visits around the buildings, sites and landscapes of a city or region and who interprets the cultural and natural heritage and environment in the language of the visitors' choice (Chang, 2014). Also referred to as coordinators, entertainers, information givers, pathfinders, and sources of knowledge, they consequently play the most vital role in the tourism industry (Ap & Wong, 2001; Song et al., 2013). They help to create a positive first impression of the destination (Huang et al., 2010; Weiler & Ham, 2002) and play a key role in delivering rich and satisfying tour experiences (Chang et al., 2006; Zhang & Chow, 2004), and this satisfaction directly determines whether tourists will revisit, repurchase or recommend the product (Chen et al., 2011; Hall et al., 2011). They create the appropriate atmosphere to engage visitors and ensure they feel immersed in the history of the site. They not only provide information, but also entertain the participants (Yamada, 2011), and generate a sense of playfulness during visits (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003; Moon & Kim, 2001). Playfulness is defined as the experience of emotions such as inspiration, curiosity, and the feeling of being immersed in the historical site, and connected to the location (Kuo et al., 2015; Simoni, 2014). In short, tour guides are the communicational bridge between tourists and the destination (Mancini, 2001). Hence, when tourists evaluate travel products and services, they consider the tour guide's performance to be a key factor (Mak et al., 2011; Munro et al., 2008; Tubbs, 2003).

Many previous studies have suggested that tour guides' service attitudes and interpretative skills are useful for building strong relationships with tourists, and are predictors of tourist satisfaction (Bowie & Chang, 2005; Chang, 2009; Heung, 2008). Huang et al. (2010) suggest four dimensions required of tour guides: professional competence, interpersonal and organizational skills, problem-solving, and empathy. Professional competence refers to a tour guide's knowledge of a destination's culture, awareness of customer needs, and knowledge of tourist attractions. Interpersonal and organizational skills include the ability to communicate with customers and build relationships

with them. Empathy refers to a tour guide's ability to meet tourists' psychological needs. These dimensions contribute to interpretation quality and are important (de Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Hu & Wall, 2013) because sufficient knowledge, effective communication, and a good relationship with tourists increase the likelihood of a tour guide's performance being positively assessed (Kuo et al., 2018).

A major part of a tour guide's job is to interpret the environments that tourists visit, which can be viewed as a means to educate, inform and entertain. According to Tilden (1977, p. 8), 'interpretation is an educational activity, which aims to reveal meanings and relationships to people about the places they visit and the things they see with the use of original objects, by first-hand experience.' This interpretation may be delivered through a variety of methods, such as guided interpretation, audio-guided interpretation, and interpretive exhibits or self-guided interpretation. Guided interpretation occurs through face-to-face contact with an interpreter, while both self-guided and audio-guided interpretation rely on the use of non-personal media such as exhibits and signs. A number of studies connect high visitor satisfaction with a guided experience (Morgan & Dong, 2008) due to the role of tour guides in 'mediating understanding' (Beattie & Schneider, 2018; Huang et al., 2015).

There are different ways to get an audience involved and to hold their interest and attention during the hour to an hour-and-a-half of a guided visit. Although technological tools and games can be used to generate active, dynamic consumption, the traditional spoken method can use personal anecdotes and real or fictional stories about epic characters or historical events to complement what is being explained. Another way to keep visitors motivated from start to finish is to ask them for their personal opinions about what they see, or simply ask them to sum up in a single word the emotion that a certain artefact elicits in them, or to describe the memories that a certain work of art evokes in them. Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) are a useful method for getting tourists immersed in a guided visit. These involve devising ways to provide an experience that is eminently participative and active, and seek to teach about the aesthetic meaning of a work of art. The concept co-developed by Abigail Housen, a cognitive psychologist, and Philip Yenawine, an art teacher, in the 1990s, offers all visitors the (voluntarily) opportunity to express their opinions and appreciate how works of art usually have multiple meanings. Consequently, VTS fosters interaction between people while contemplating a work of art.

The determinants of tourist satisfaction in cultural heritage visits

Visitor satisfaction is a recurring issue for the managers and developers of tourism products. Marketing departments put huge efforts into creating customer loyalty and incentivizing repeat visits. As Sharpley (2014) argues, tourism experiences affect satisfaction, wellbeing and the future behaviour of travellers. Most researchers have focused on the motivations and interests that visitors look to satisfy through travel. Fewer academics have analysed the structure and components of the tourism products that determine that perception of satisfaction. Smith (1994) was one of the first researchers to deconstruct the tourism product into its basic elements, emphasizing its essence by acknowledging the role of the human experience. Jewell and Crotts (2002) explored the motives and needs of visitors to heritage sites, Bowie and Chang (2005) examined the significance of tour guides in the success of package tours, Chan (2009) studied the value of museum experiences, Xu (2010) analysed perceptions of tourism products such as festivals, hotels and restaurants, Ben-Dalia et al. (2013) focused on the tourist city, Tsai (2016) analysed oenological tourist products, Dimitrovski and Crespi (2017) investigated motivational devices in urban food markets, and McNicol and Rettie (2018) analysed variables of satisfaction with visits to national parks.

All these studies state that tourist consumption is characterized by expectations of various types of benefits, such as hedonistic moments, cognitive pleasure, memorable and nostalgic experiences, authentic activities and participative visits. These are defined by Sheth et al. (1991) as the perceived consumer value, which the existing literature clearly identifies as an important prerequisite for

satisfaction with experiential consumption of such products as culture, heritage, leisure, sports, and tourism (Bowie & Chang, 2005; Cronin et al., 2000; Gallarza & Saura, 2006). Leisure activities like tourism need to draw on fantasies, feelings and emotions to encourage purchasing behaviour (Sanchez et al., 2006). This entails being different from the competition and guaranteeing experience-based activities and emotion-filled moments, as has been demonstrated in the contexts of heritage tourism (Ababneh, 2018; Su & Hsu, 2013), festival tourism (Yang et al., 2011), the restaurant sector (Namkung & Jang, 2010) and oenological tourist products (Crespi-Vallbona et al., 2017). The Cognition–Affect–Behaviour paradigm offers conceptual support for these experiential views. The Cognition level corresponds to information-processing activities and is the rational component of consumption decisions. Cognitive responses relate to the mental structures and processes involved in thinking about, understanding and interpreting the stimuli and events of the environment. Affect implies emotions such as love, hate, joy, boredom, anxiety, pride, anger, disgust, stupidity, sympathy, lust, ecstasy, greed, guilt, elation, shame and awe. Finally, the experiences of purchasing and consumption occur at the Behaviour level. The consequences of consumption are manifested in the fun and enjoyment that a consumer gets out of a product, and the resulting feeling of pleasure that it evokes personally and in his or her milieu (Sanchez et al., 2006).

Accordingly, this wide body of research, the Cognition–Affect–Behaviour paradigm and positive results about interpretive experiences confirm the factors that have been identified as key influences on visitor satisfaction in cultural tourism: participation, hedonism, knowledge, local culture and nostalgia. When correctly and successfully integrated in a multidimensional approach, these components shape guided visits and tourism products and hence add value to the experience and raise perceptions of satisfaction.

Participation

Herbert (2001) states that contemporary tourists are not passive consumers. In cultural tourism, they become psychologically engaged through such cognitive actions as the learning, collecting, and sharing of information and knowledge with local residents or guides (Larsen & Meged, 2013; Yi & Gong, 2013), and even between visitors themselves as they discuss, reference, observe and highlight sensory and concrete elements during the visit. This is also analysed in the context of museums and heritage buildings (Kidd, 2016), emphasizing the importance of participatory activities, discussion and social interaction during the guided tour. Therefore, visitors to cultural and historic sites demand more interactive, fun experiences. Similarly, Sharpley (2014) argues that interaction between tourists and residents is the essence of tourism. This participation, this involvement, necessarily implies interaction and conversation between individuals from diverse backgrounds, thus fostering social cohesion. Cultural heritage sites and guided tours thereof need to create this affective dimension among visitors, which leads to the hypothesis (H1) that ‘participation’ has a positive influence on the satisfaction derived from guided experiences, and is thus a key component of their structure.

Hedonism

Hedonic consumption has been defined as a multisensory, fun and emotive experience (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Several scholars (Bowie & Chang, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003; Moon & Kim, 2001) reveal the links between pleasurable emotions, excitement factors and satisfying outcomes. Most of these studies are based on the visual senses, such as Urry and Larsen (2011) focusing on the ‘gaze.’ Others centre on the olfactory senses (Dann & Jacobsen, 2002). Nawijn (2011) investigated the links between tourist experience and general happiness, and Sirgy (2010) analysed the levels of positive affect and subjective well-being when people participate in tourism activities. However, destination marketing has long recognized the corporeal and multisensory nature of tourist experiences and has attempted to enrich promotional content with sensory allusions (Pan & Ryan, 2009). Furthermore, other researchers (Barrett et al., 2007; Frijda, 2005; Goossens, 2000;

Malone et al., 2014) have explored emotions, the quest for pleasurable activities, enjoyment and disembodied experiences in the context of tourism. Holbrook (2000) suggests that active and cognitive participation leads to fun, happiness, and contentment. This leads to the hypothesis (H2) that 'hedonism' has a positive influence on the satisfaction derived from guided experiences and is a relevant part thereof.

Knowledge

The essence of any visit to a heritage site requires it to be imbued with significance, i.e. historical meaning. Kerstetter et al. (2001) describe heritage tourists as people interested in seeking knowledge of the past, that is, a sense of connectedness to a place, and its land, traditions, customs and families. So, these tourists are motivated by an intention to acquire new information and knowledge (McKercher & du Cros, 2002). In fact, travel has traditionally been widely viewed as a form of learning, starting with the 'Grand Tour,' undertaken by members of the English aristocracy and upper classes (Alabart Vilà et al., 2015). Falk et al. (2012) also identify the quest for knowledge and understanding, enacted through travel, as a dominant, fashionable theme that has become an integral and satisfying part of the tourist experience. This leads to the hypothesis (H3) that 'knowledge' has a positive influence on the satisfaction derived from guided experiences and that explicit informative content must shape any guided tour.

Local culture

Local culture is that set of tangible and intangible attributes that a destination recognizes and uses as a brand image to be promoted abroad (Crespi-Vallbona & Richards, 2007). Furthermore, as Richards et al. (2001) state, cultural products that are intended to attract tourists should include living and popular culture, to create and support an authentic atmosphere. Peña (2005) defines this local identity as a combination of socially shared traits, ideas and images: awareness (to a greater or lesser degree of involvement) of the feeling of being part of a territory or a group of human beings who live and build their lives within its scope. These images therefore require engagement with local identity and the involvement of residents, and are the most coveted by tourists (Stebbins, 1997). Strategic competition in a globalized world necessarily focuses on local issues, aspects of cultural identity and specific idiosyncrasy. This is the business response to global homogenization and involves the construction or emphasis of differentiation, that is, the glocalization process (Salazar, 2005; Smith, 2007). Local culture and heritage provide customized context and content to tourism products (Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003). As Salazar states (2005, p. 629), 'the "local" not only refers to a spatially limited locality; it is, above all, a space inhabited by people who have a particular sense of place, a specific way of life, and a certain ethos and worldview.' Local heritage is continually increasing in importance as an icon of visitor satisfaction (Edensor, 2008; Modlin et al., 2011), and for many tourists, it is the main factor when choosing to visit a certain destination. This leads to the hypothesis (H4) that 'local culture' has a positive influence on the satisfaction derived from guided experiences and is an essential component thereof.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia has been studied in terms of creative and co-creation activities (Campos et al., 2016; Hung et al., 2016), as a significant feature of satisfactory experiences and intentions to revisit. A memorable cultural activity is one of particularly enduring value; a set of feelings that are a reminder of a specific and personal moment in the past (Willson & McIntosh, 2008). Such reminiscence creates positive attitudes to the heritage site, builds important links between the present and the past and a sense of belonging, and reinforces the experience by generating real emotions and living memories. As Moscardo et al. (2004) state, effective interpretation enables visitors to make connections between

the information being given and their previous knowledge and experiences, and revitalizes the setting, the myth, and the narratives. This coincides with Urry's (2002) postulation that the tourist experience involves a variety of sencescapes, including soundscapes, smellscapes, tastescapes, and touchscapes; or, as Everett (2009) puts it, a plethora of indulgent multisensory experiences, the memory of which connects with the nostalgic dimension. Underpinning the claim that contemporary tourism is a sacred journey or pilgrimage (Timothy & Olsen, 2006), personal nostalgia and the revival of the past appear to be significant motivators. This leads to hypothesis (H5) that 'nostalgia' has a positive influence on the satisfaction derived from guided experiences and should be featured in tour itineraries.

To summarize, when someone evokes a past moment or tells a moving story, it creates a special atmosphere in which to share, participate in, interact with, learn about, and be immersed in the visited context and bond with the local identity. A satisfying guided experience is achieved when tourist products are designed with all these components in mind, as shown in the research model related to the determinants of heritage tourism experiences (Figure 1).

Case study: guided tours in barcelona

Tourism in European cities rose by 4.2% in 2018 (European Cities Marketing Benchmarking Report, 2019). Barcelona has consolidated its position as one of the most visited cities in Europe (see Figure 2). In 2018, the city received 9,117,474 international visitors and the figure is rising year after year (see Figure 3). The first tourist plan developed by Barcelona City Council (1988–1992)

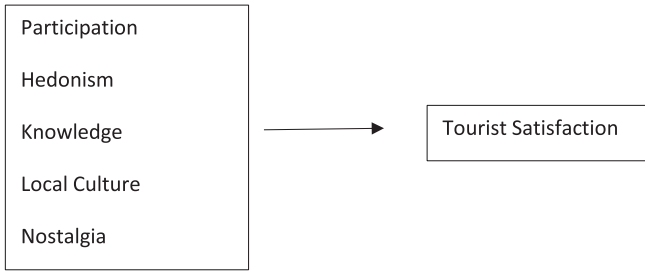


Figure 1. Determinants of heritage tourism experiences.
Source: Own elaboration.

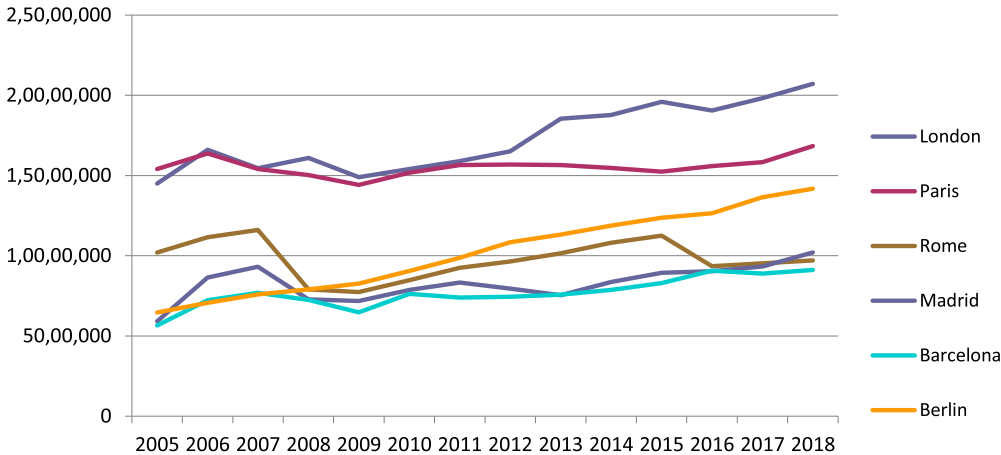


Figure 2. Most visited cities in Europe. International tourism (2005–2018).
Source: Own elaboration from Tourism Statistic Reports (Turisme de Barcelona).

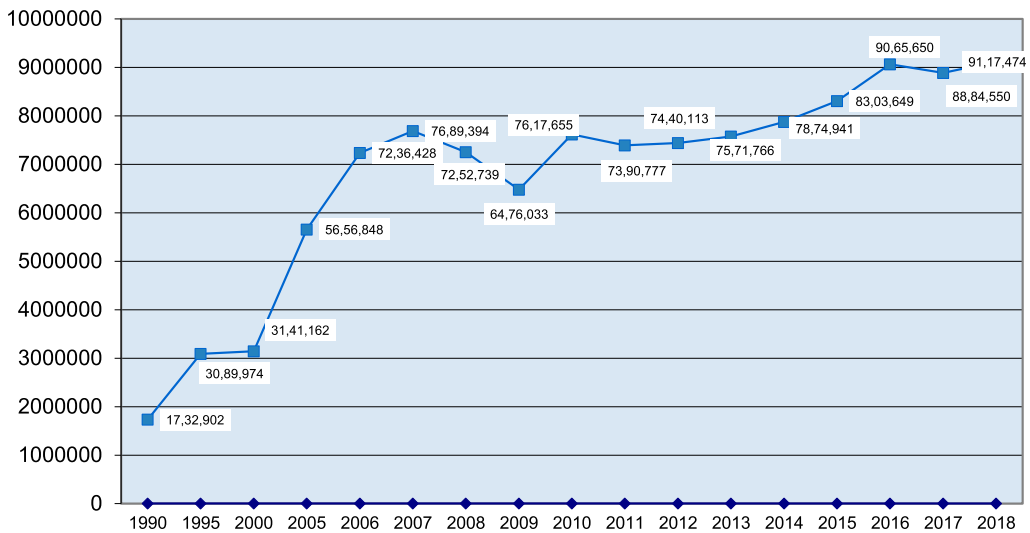


Figure 3. International tourist arrivals to Barcelona (1990–2018).

Source: Own elaboration from Tourism Statistic Reports (Turisme de Barcelona).

had the clear objective of putting the city on the world tourism map (highlighting the Gothic Quarter and the work of the well-known modernist artist, Antoni Gaudí) and providing enough hotel capacity to accommodate the participants and spectators of the 1992 Olympic Games, an event that put Barcelona in the minds of potential foreign tourists, together with the idea of cosmopolitanism, modernity, design and tradition, and the open-minded and welcoming character of its residents. However, leisure and cultural tourism are the main motivational factors for visitors to the city (see Figure 4).

Barcelona's most culturally attractive icons are in the historic centre. In our research, Barcelona City Hall (*Ajuntament de Barcelona*) is the selected site on which to obtain primary data. This place

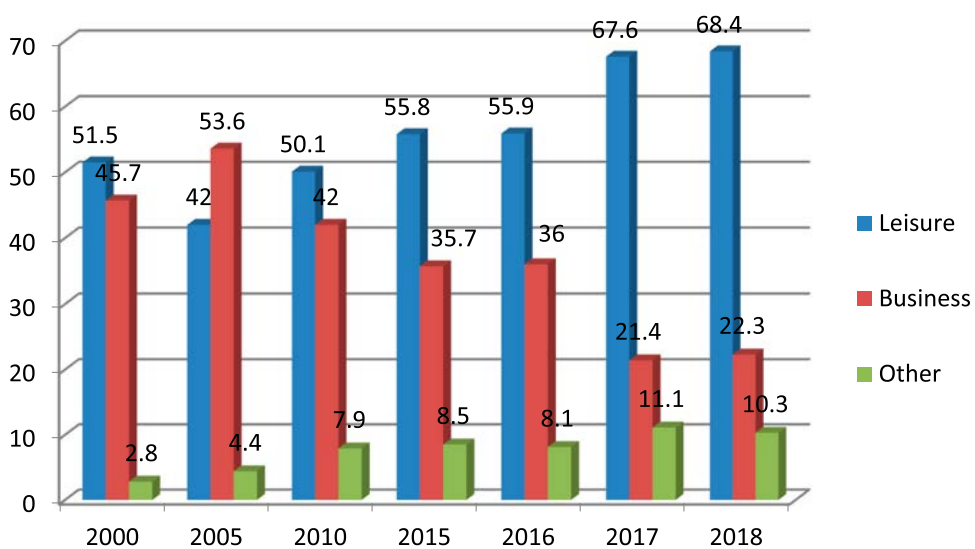


Figure 4. Reasons of tourist visits to Barcelona (2000–2018).

Source: Own elaboration from Tourism Statistic Reports (Turisme de Barcelona).

was chosen because it best represents the city's singularity, and the specific Catalan culture and identity. Historic buildings play an important role in the heritage tourism experience, and when tourists visit them they hear about events and people of the past, and are actively encouraged to become immersed in their history, and to identify with and form emotional bonds with individuals from the past (Modlin et al., 2011). Barcelona City Hall represents the most glorious and unfortunate past and present moments of the city. The guided tour visits the Hall of Chronicles (decorated with characteristically ochre and maroon murals, featuring stocky, big-boned characters, by the well-known Catalan painter Josep Maria Sert) and the fourteenth century hall where the parliament met in ancient times. The guided visit is based on explanations of Barcelonan history and the Catalan local identity, and in practice takes about an hour and a half, with average groups of around 20 people. The tour is provided by staff of the City Hall's protocol department, and is free of charge, but its availability depends on the agenda of government ceremonies and events inside the building.

Methods

Target sample, instrument, and data collection

Guided tours of heritage buildings are the illustrative case with which we tested the proposed model of determinants of heritage tourism experiences. The researchers contacted randomly selected members of international groups that had booked a guided tour of Barcelona City Hall. At the end of the tour, these participants completed a self-administered questionnaire onsite related to their satisfaction with the guided visit. The survey was conducted from 15th September to 19th December 2017. In total there were 600 respondents, with 568 complete and valid responses being collected.

The questionnaire structure and content were based on the previous review of the literature and the 5 analysed factors: participation, hedonism, knowledge, local culture, and nostalgia (Table 1). The results provide information about these key elements, the added value of cultural aspects and the degree of satisfaction regarding the core components of the visit. The questionnaire consisted of 38 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 'almost always untrue,' 2 'often untrue,' 3 'sometimes true/sometimes untrue,' 4 'often true,' 5 'almost always true'). Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was preliminarily tested on a small group of 30 randomly selected respondents in order to formulate questions that would be clear and understandable. By analysing the suggestions obtained from the pilot sample, minor modifications were made to the initially formulated statements, shaping the final version of the questionnaire.

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (version 21.0) and the Analysis of a Moment Structures (AMOS-in) (version 18.0), in order to analyse the research model and to study the relationships between the aforementioned variables and the weight that each of them carried compared to the others. Regression analysis was used to test the main and interaction effects because of the rich information that this technique captures in terms of prediction. In addition, the independent variables were first centred and then multiplied by each other, in order to avoid possible multicollinearity issues when calculating interaction effects.

Results

The sample was slightly dominated by female tourists (55%), with a university education (52%), including masters and post-graduate studies (29%). More than 70% of the interviewees were employed and 50% declared themselves single. 70% of them were residents of European countries (Table 2).

We conducted a reliability analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. Cronbach's alpha values for all five variables of the proposed model of determinants of heritage tourism experiences are shown in Table 3. All variables have an adequate level of reliability as Cronbach's alpha coefficient is over the required threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). As the results suggest, the highest level of reliability is

Table 1. Determinants of cultural tourist' satisfaction with heritage visit experience.

References	Dimension/component	Questions
Allen (2003) Malcolm-Davies (2004) Kidd (2016) Prebensen et al. (2016)	Participation Active consumption Dynamic activity Social interaction	The tour guide interacted well with tourists during his/her interpretation The manner of interpretation encouraged to participate The tour guide was enthusiastic and caring with his/her interpretation I was comfortable interacting with the tour guide I had a harmonious relationship with the rest of participants in the tour
Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) Csikszentmihalyi and Hunter (2003)	Hedonism Emotional dimension Involvement break Routine escapism	The tour guide stimulate me to interact The length of the interpretation was appropriate and pleasant The content of the tour guided was attractive I'm satisfied with the content of the guided visit The guided visit made me feel relaxed and joyful The content of interpretation was fluent I had curiosity to know more details during the visit
Kerstetter et al. (2001) McKercher and du Cros (2002) Falk et al. (2012)	Knowledge Cognitive value Meaningful product	The guided visit had broad cultural knowledge The content of the guided visit was rich The content of the interpretation made me understand the site The guided visit improved my knowledge The content of the guided tour was entertaining The tour guide got the right concepts and value data to make understandable the visit
Richards et al. (2001) Edensor (2008) Modlin et al. (2011)	Local culture Identity Tangible and intangible heritage	The tour guide helped me understand the local environment The guided visit had deep knowledge of the local culture The guided visit had the knowledge of local people's lifestyle The guided tour showed the destination's history I felt involved in the local history The guided visit based on the local identity
Urry (2002) Moscardo et al. (2004) Willson and McIntosh (2008) Everett (2009)	Nostalgia Memorable moments Multisensory experiences	The content of the interpretation inspired emotions in me The content of the interpretation was related to my living experience I had a warm and nostalgic feeling during the guided visit The guided visit captivated to my past experiences The guided visit brought back memories of my childhood The guided visit brought back emotions of my childhood
Sanchez et al. (2006) Song et al. (2013) Chang (2014) Kuo et al. (2018)	Satisfaction	I was satisfied with the guided visit I was happy with the guided visit I was delighted with the guided visit The guided visit result was as expected The content and interpretation of the guided visit was accurate The tour guide performed a pleasant guided visit I will recommend the guided visit I will do again this visit

Source: Own elaboration.

manifested in the 'local culture' variable (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.928$), whereas in the case of the hedonism variable a slightly lower level of internal consistency of the statements is present (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.857$). Furthermore, the proposed model also has an acceptable level of convergent validity, as the standard deviation (SD) is close to the mean. These results confirm that in such a competitive and saturated field as the global tourism sector, specificity and particularization have added value. Contemporary globalization is strengthening the interest in local culture.

According to the results of the regression analysis, there is a statistically significant relationship between all independent variables of the guided experience and tourists' satisfaction ($F(7,430) = 256.83$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 80.6% of the variability of all variables of the proposed model, which are ranked in order of importance (see Table 4). Regarding the predictive effect of each of the independent variables, it was observed that the satisfaction score was significantly associated with high levels of participation, nostalgia, local culture and knowledge. With respect to the

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the participants ($n = 568$).

		Number of respondents (%)
Gender	Male	256 (45.0%)
	Female	312 (55.0%)
Age groups	18–24	162 (28.5%)
	25–34	176 (31.0%)
	35–44	119 (21.0%)
	45–54	74 (13.0%)
	55–64	28 (5.0%)
	>65	9 (1.5%)
Education	High school graduate	108 (19.0%)
	Bachelor's degree	295 (52.0%)
	Master's degree	165 (29.0%)
Marital status	Married	247 (43.5%)
	Single	290 (51.0%)
	Other	31 (5.5%)
Employment	Employed	415 (73.0%)
	Unemployed	136 (24.0%)
	Retired	17 (3%)
Nationality	Argentina	45 (8.0%)
	UK	114 (20.0%)
	Germany	65 (11.5%)
Nationality	France	119 (21.0%)
	China	34 (6.0%)
	Italy	28 (5.0%)
Nationality	USA	14 (2.5%)
	Colombia	6 (1.0%)
	Belgium	83 (14.6%)
Nationality	Netherlands	34 (6.0%)
	Russia	26 (4.6%)

Source: Own elaboration.

predictive weight of the significant variables (partial r in absolute value), participation is the best predictor of satisfaction (partial $r = 0.373$), followed some way behind by local culture (partial $r = 0.192$), nostalgia (partial $r = 0.179$) and knowledge (partial $r = 0.101$). Hedonism has the least statistically significant effect on heritage tourism satisfaction (partial $r = 0.065$). The tourists' answers therefore reflect their strong interest in participating in dynamic activities. As we observed, these guided visits were carried out in a fun, peaceful way, and included active, participative moments and specific flash-points for remembering past experiences.

Furthermore, these results show that visitors insist on the nostalgia dimension, whereby reminders of memorable personal moments, learning and emotions play a significant role in fostering interaction with the other participants through the sharing of personal experiences. The knowledge and local culture component is also highlighted as a significant variable related to pleasant feelings and satisfaction. Hence, the affect and cognitive dimensions are revealed to be essential factors of a satisfactory guided visit, as is a strong correlation between all of the analysed variables.

The study suggests that hedonism is the least relevant factor in influencing visitors' satisfaction. It can be concluded that visitors do not perceive guided cultural tours to be a hedonistic activity, at least

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations and Pearson's correlation of the variables.

Variables	Average (SD)	Cronbach's Alfa	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Satisfaction	4.19 (0.78)	0.889	1	.822**	.876**	.843**	.822**	.829**
2. Knowledge	4.09 (0.72)	0.92	.822**	1	.868**	.893**	.904**	.854**
3. Participation	4.1 (0.75)	0.89	.876**	.868**	1	.879**	.879**	.860**
4. Local culture	4.14 (0.74)	0.928	.843**	.893**	.879**	1	.909**	.860**
5. Hedonism	4.57 (0.76)	0.857	.822**	.904**	.879**	.909**	1	.902**
6. Nostalgia	4.2 (0.74)	0.909	.829**	.854**	.860**	.860**	.902**	1

*** $p < 0.001$.

Table 4. Effect of variables on tourists' satisfaction.

Variable	<i>B</i> (ET)	Beta	IC _{95%} <i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value	Partial <i>r</i>
Knowledge	0.14 (0.07)	0.13	−0.04; 0.08	2.1	0.037	0.101
Participation	0.45 (0.05)	0.43	0.01; 0.27	8.28	<0.001	0.373
Local culture	0.26 (0.06)	0.24	0.34; 0.56	4.01	<0.001	0.192
Hedonism	−0.09 (0.07)	−0.09	0.13; 0.38	−1.34	0.181	−0.065
Nostalgia	0.21 (0.06)	0.21	−0.22; 0.04	3.75	<0.001	0.179
Model summary						
<i>R</i> ² (%)			80.6			
Model			<i>F</i> (7,430) = 256.83, <i>p</i> < 0.001			
Assumptions						
Normality [†]			<i>p</i> = 0.341			
Independence [‡]			1.99			
Homocedasticity ⁺			<i>p</i> = 0.767			

B: non-standardized coefficients. ET: typical error. Beta: standardized coefficients. [†]Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test of residues.

[‡]Durbin-Whatson test + ⁺Levene test between residual and predicted values. **p* < 0.05, ***p* < 0.01, ****p* < 0.001.

on a superficial level. In other words, the pleasure of getting away from the ordinary routine and everyday problems by escaping into a completely different artistic world does not seem to be a significant motivation for going on guided tours of heritage buildings.

Therefore, guided tours of historic buildings should be focused on participation, local culture, nostalgia and knowledge. The last aspect, hedonism, need not necessarily be present, as it is less relevant. In any case, it was specifically found that in order to be satisfying, guided tours should not be a passive experience. They must foster interaction with others, evoke favourite memories, give information and offer an experience of local culture and identity, reinforcing the local, singular and specific rather than global aspects (see Table 5).

Discussion

Relatively little attention has been given to examining the components of guided visits in cultural heritage by analysing all the variables or dimensions that provide satisfaction. The present study expands on the theoretical and practical understanding of guided tours and the role of tour guides by mainly focusing on the factors that are necessary for guided visits to provide visitor satisfaction: participation, hedonism, knowledge, local culture, and nostalgia. The study focuses on the analysis of those elements needed to draft the tourist experience (Jensen, 2014), and design visits that are sustainable, satisfying and that guarantee repeat visits (Sharpley, 2014). In this sense, the most interesting finding is the strong support for four of the five attributes: nostalgia, participation, local culture, and knowledge. Less support was evident for the hedonism dimension, the reasons for which are not clear but may be related to the perception that cultural tourism activities do not necessarily need to be a fun, relaxing experience.

A ranking of these dimensions in order of importance reveals high levels of congruence as well strong recognition of participation as a crucial part of guided tours. As the results suggest, contemplative visits can be extremely boring, and visitors' attention will wane after a few minutes if the guide fails to engage their interest. Tour guides play a key role in the 'participation' variable. They are

Table 5. The test of the hypotheses.

Hypotheses	Result
H1. Participation has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction of holistic visits	Supported
H2. Hedonism has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction of holistic visits	Not supported
H3. Knowledge has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction of holistic visits	Supported
H4. Local culture has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction of holistic visits	Supported
H5. Nostalgia has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction of holistic visits	Supported

knowledgeable about the site, have good communication skills, and their honesty, professionalism and enthusiasm are determinant factors of satisfactory visits (Ap & Wong, 2001; Bowie & Chang, 2005; Chang, 2009; Huang et al., 2015). Their function is to provide visitors with knowledge and understanding. The findings of this research confirm the results of other studies that associate high visitor satisfaction with tour guides that take an active role (Beattie & Schneider, 2018; Morgan & Dong, 2008). As we could observe and as our results show, the guided tour of Barcelona City Hall was designed to stimulate visitors through participatory activities. Tourists highlighted the opportunities to share ideas and connect with each other regarding the visited content. This idea also refers how visitors construct their own meaning from the cultural guided tour, by talking to the professional guide and the rest of the group and through their own social interaction. This last aspect is the most interesting and usually the most underexploited on guided visits, but not on this one. The tour guides use VTS (Housen, 2007) to encourage visitors to take an active role, for instance by being asked to interpret Sert's paintings or by interacting with other tourists while contemplating the works of art. A convivial atmosphere was thus created that encouraged visitor to share information, to interact, and have a good time while visiting the site. The visit therefore achieved both a personal and broader sense of meaning, in line with Falk et al. (2012). As our findings show, a dynamic, participative experience, and interaction with other tourists and the tour guide are positively assessed by respondents. Therefore, any design of heritage interpretation must focus on visitors' participation.

Another aspect that makes a difference to guided tours is the particularity of the local culture. This is worthy of more than a mention because travellers often seek the full array of unique, exclusive features that can be found only at that specific destination. It is a fact that globalization and mass production have created a uniform, alike, and even monotonous world. That is why the value of authenticity is on the rise. The local atmosphere warrants a closer look and must be present when designing guided tours (Salazar, 2005). Authenticity is always rooted in local culture, in its identity, its idiosyncrasies, its daily lifestyle, its working days and holidays, its sense of belonging to a distinct community, and its historic moments and heroic deeds. According to Stebbins (1997), Richards et al. (2001) and Edensor (2008), all these elements are included in tourists' expectations when visiting a destination or specific heritage spot. They look for them and pay attention to them. In a broad sense, these are the strategic and competitive aspects that are becoming most attractive for cultural tourism and must shape consumer products. Our findings confirm the need for guided visit designers to make use of aspects of the local identity, culture and history in order to differentiate their products and add value. The importance of preserving local culture and historical sites is also stressed (Kuo et al., 2015).

Additionally, nostalgia or memorable experience should also be part of guided visits. In line with Moscardo et al. (2004) and Willson and McIntosh (2008), visitors to Barcelona City Hall perceived satisfaction when the experience reminded them of nostalgic moments or memorable experiences, as it created a feeling of well-being, emotional comfort and satisfaction with a work of art, and gave sense and meaning to the visit. The conjunction of memories and fresh experiences discovered during a guided visit is a decisive factor for producing satisfaction and one of the key features to be included in the design of this kind of tourist activity. These findings confirm the results of previous studies, such as that of Taiwan's Kinmen Battlefield (Kuo et al., 2015), and highlight the importance of creating connections between tourists' personal backgrounds and the destination.

Knowledge is another key aspect of a satisfactory visit. Guided visits should be more than a mere stroll through random rooms of a building or halls where works of art are exhibited. Superficial, trivial and banal concepts should be left out, and visitors might feel insulted if a certain level of knowledge is not taken for granted, as if their good sense was being called into question. The acquisition of knowledge is hence a leitmotiv for a guided visit (Chang, 2014), even on this one of Barcelona City Hall, where the tourists felt they had learned many things. This vastly improves the quality of the visit. The respondents said they were not overwhelmed by a deluge of information, and instead felt the tour guide kept the focus on the most fundamental knowledge.

Ultimately, the dimension of hedonism is also important for guided visits. Tourists who like to visit heritage buildings also want to experience something new and thus escape from their daily routine, and this makes them more satisfied (Kuo et al., 2015). But despite the relevant connection between cultural experience and satisfaction, hedonism is viewed to hold less value than the other four components. Visitors perceive heritage buildings more as sites of cultural significance than as places for new experiences. Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that the agreeable feelings that emerge when exploring new cultures are not important parts of a cultural guided visit. Emotion is central to the way visits are interpreted (Chang, 2014). Indeed, shifts in such emotions as urgency, disappointment and excitement can have a major effect on visitors' levels of satisfaction. Flow and pleasant experiences soothe emotions, enhance efficiency, and promote feelings of enthusiasm and satisfaction (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003; Moon & Kim, 2001). These last scholars point out that hedonism and playfulness are spontaneous reactions that include three dimensions: concentration, enjoyment, and curiosity. Playfulness is derived from interaction between people and their environment, which leads to enjoyment and cognitive absorption (Ahn et al., 2007; Oh et al., 2013). People feel more active, alert, concentrated, happy, satisfied, and creative when they are engaging in a flow experience, which involves closeness to the location and being immersed in the environment. VTS generated this kind of playfulness and feelings among visitors to Barcelona City Hall.

In short, this model of guided experience establishes local identity, nostalgia, participation and knowledge as the most important components to produce visitor satisfaction at heritage sites. Hedonism, on a superficial level, is the least significant aspect. The real immersion in the visited context and content comes through rich, global experience of these shared personal memories, interaction and participation among visitors, and an interest in knowledge and learning about local identity.

Conclusions

Guided tours of heritage sites are perceived as satisfying experiences. Their design necessarily means taking into account different components: participation, local culture, nostalgia and knowledge. Hedonism is also involved but is not crucial. The focus should be on creating a dynamic activity, filled with emotion, mindfulness, engagement and personal meaning. To facilitate tourist participation, Visual Thinking Strategy is an interesting and recommended approach, whereby the guide balances participation with the contribution of meaning and knowledge of local culture.

Nostalgia intrinsically drives visitors to seek satisfaction, participate, interact, contribute, remember and feel enjoyment during the visit. Extrinsically, it is necessary for the singular, the particular, and the local to abound. On the other hand, if guided tours are not designed to be participative, meaningful and mindful of local identity, many of these spaces will lose visitors and eventually be forced to close down due to lack of interest.

The data was collected at one historic building, specifically a free guided visit that is only available when the agenda of the City Hall so allows. This is a limitation of this study. It would be interesting to conduct this same research at other heritage sites and even with outdoor guided tours of historical town and city centres. Furthermore, the findings revealed strong support for four of the five attributes: nostalgia, participation, local culture, and knowledge. Less support was evident for the hedonism dimension, and the reasons for this are unclear so this research should be complemented with in-depth interviews with tourists who visit this site. Not only hedonism but the other dimensions too should be tested qualitatively.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

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