

An Examination Of The Museum Experience Based On Pine And Gilmore's Experience Economy Realms

Laetitia Radder, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa

Xiliang Han, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This study determined whether Pine and Gilmore's four experience economy realms (education, entertainment, escapism and esthetics) were represented by visitors' experiences of three South African heritage museums, evaluated whether their experience expectations associated with the experience realms had been met, and examined the relationship between the latter, satisfaction and behavioral intentions. In addition, the relationship between personal and trip-related factors and the experience realms was investigated. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses identified three experience realms - edutainment, escapism and esthetics. While visitors had positive on-site experiences within all three experience realms, edutainment made the strongest contribution to the prediction of overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Age had a significant effect on respondents' judgment about all three realms. Place of residence (local, national or international) had a significant effect on edutainment and esthetics.

Keywords: Behavioral Intention; Edutainment; Experience Economy Realm; Heritage Museum; Satisfaction; South Africa

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive marketing environment many products and services have become commoditized and no longer serve to differentiate organizations. Neither do they satisfy the needs of consumers who now desire holistic and long-lasting personal experiences that combine affective memories, sensation and symbolism (Hosany & Witham, 2010). These developments require organizations to add value to their offerings and provide customers with memorable and satisfactory experiences that engage them on an emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual level (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Such experiences have become a critical means of embodying the brand, promoting customer advocacy, achieving sustainable competitive advantage, increasing sales revenue and reducing the costs of production interactions (Shaw & Ivens, 2002; Tynan & McKechnie, 2009).

Adding value in the economic advancement from commodities and products to services, and from services to experiences can be explained by the following example of the coffee bean. Consumers typically derive little value from the coffee bean in its raw, unprocessed form (commodity). However, value is added when they can buy a packet of roasted coffee beans (product) to brew a cup of coffee at home. A further progression in value results when consumers are served a cup of freshly brewed coffee at the local coffee shop (service). The satisfaction derived from the coffee, and even from the service, is significantly enhanced when consumers sip coffee in Café Florian on the piazza San Marco in Venice (Boswijk, Peelen & Olthof, 2012). The latter experience is filled with symbolism and sensations, and the consumer is likely to be physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually engaged in the experience.

In the context of a heritage museum, it can be argued that cultural rituals practiced by a specific cultural group offer outsiders little value unless they get to know about these rituals. Value might be added when in their servicing role, museums purposefully collect and exhibit representations of a particular culture. In their traditional

role museums are custodians of culture, a source of information and an avenue for research. However, since consumers increasingly demand products and services that provide them with a sense of feeling, learning, being and doing (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011) and instead of simply *being* “there”, are concerned with *participating, learning and experiencing* the “there” (Trinh & Ryan, 2013:241), it seems reasonable to expect that museums move beyond providing the functions of collection, research and exhibition to engaging in experiential marketing. This implies providing experiences “directed toward the pursuit of fantasies, feelings, and fun”, emphasizing symbolic meanings, hedonic pleasure and subconscious responses, instead of primarily stressing tangible benefits, utilitarian functions and conscious processes (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982:132). Museums should therefore provide visitors with experiences related to an experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

Pine and Gilmore (1998) propose that experiences embody four realms (education, entertainment, escapism and esthetics) that manifest across two continuous dimensions. The first dimension indicates either *active or passive customer participation*. Passive participation implies that the customer does not affect the staged experience, such as someone watching an orchestra performance on television or taking a virtual tour of a heritage museum. Active participation, the other extreme, implies that the customer plays a key role in co-creating the experience, for example, playing the violin in the orchestra performance, or joining in the cultural dancing performed at the museum. *Connection*, the second dimension, comprises two extremes - absorption and immersion. Being absorbed in an experience implies being mentally involved in the experience, such as listening to an orchestra performance, or watching a live cultural dance demonstration, while immersion implies being physically involved in the experience, for example, when participating in the cultural dancing. According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), entertaining experiences lean towards customer absorption and passive participation, while educational experiences involve active participation and absorption. Escapist experiences may include a degree of education, but involve greater customer immersion. Esthetic experiences typically result in higher levels of customer immersion but with low levels of customer participation. The richest experiences are those encompassing aspects of all four realms, forming a “sweet spot” around the area where the spectra meet (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

The development and application of the four experience realms have been examined in a few leisure and tourism contexts such as bed-and-breakfast accommodation (Oh, Fiore & Jeung, 2007), cruising tourism (Hosany & Witham, 2010), wine tourism (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2012), a musical festival (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011) and casino hotels (Wang, Feng & Feng, 2013). With the exception of its application to the hunting experience (Radder, Van Niekerk & Nagel, 2000), research examining the experience realms applied in a South African context remains sparse. Consequently our study had two primary objectives: first, to determine whether the four experience realms are evident in the South African heritage museum context and second, to evaluate museum visitors’ experiences. Two secondary objectives were exploring the impact of the museum experience on visitor satisfaction and behavioral intentions, and examining the impact of personal and trip-related characteristics on the museum experience. The former objective was deemed particularly important for establishing an order of priority for allocating museum resources, while the latter was intended to provide museum managers with insights into the visitor market and inform segmentation decisions.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: first, a short literature review helps conceptualize the experience realms suggested by Pine and Gilmore (1998; 1999) within a museum context. Together with a brief discussion of satisfaction, behavioral intention and personal and trip-related characteristics, the review supports the conceptual framework for the research. This is followed by a description of the research design and methodology with a focus on the questionnaire, study sites and data collection. The empirical findings report the profile of the respondents, descriptive statistics of the experience items, the dimensions of the museum experience identified in the factor analyses, the result of a paired-samples t-test, the impact of the experience dimensions on overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions and the outcome of a series of ANOVAs. The article is concluded by a discussion of the results, conclusions and an acknowledgment of the limitations of the research. Suggestions are also made for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUALIZATION

The Museum Experience

Museums have several functions as custodians of heritage and culture, and disseminators of knowledge about heritage (Trinh & Ryan, 2013). They offer a diverse range of experiences to visitors (Rentschler, 2007) which might be visual, sensory, esthetic, recreational, sociable, educational, celebrating and enchanting (Kotler & Kotler, 2000). Worldwide, museums face decreasing attendance owing to consumers becoming more demanding in the face of shrinking leisure time and more leisure choices (Kelly, 2004). Many museums also experience growing financial pressure resulting in the need to operate in ways that optimally meet visitors' needs, achieve customer satisfaction, and result in visitors' spreading positive word-of-mouth messages. One way in which to meet their needs is to stage experiences desired by visitors. According to Pine and Gilmore (1998, 1999), such experiences are likely to include some combination of education, entertainment, escapism and esthetics. The next few sections briefly consider these realms within a general museum context.

Education In The Museum Context

Due to their very nature and regardless of the types of collections they hold, most museums provide opportunities for awareness and learning through offerings such as historical recreations, art exhibits, guided tours and audio guides interpreting the museum offerings (Raajpoot, Koh & Jackson, 2010). According to Boswijk et al. (2012), learning leads to meaningful experiences. However, these experiences might differ depending on the visitor's needs and interests (Packer & Ballantyne, 2002).

Entertainment In The Museum Context

An entertainment experience typically occurs when people passively observe others' activities and/or performances (Manthiou, Lee, Tang & Chiang, 2014). Thyne (2001) and Scott (2007) found that museums are often perceived to be interesting, offering opportunities for entertainment and fun, although at times there may be an overlap between the informative, fun and social aspects of the museum visit, that is, between education and entertainment. When this overlap occurs, it is referred to as edutainment (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Escapism In The Museum Context

Research by Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987) and Slater (2007) found that escapism is the core motivation for visiting a museum, followed by learning and social/family interaction. Individuals might visit a museum to get away from home or work and to experience a different time or place (Chauhan, 2006; Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009). Resources are used to actively engage the visitor in the escapist experience, for example, interpretation can immerse visitors in the experience and influence their perspectives through physical, mental and sensory triggers (Crozier, 2012).

Esthetics In The Museum Context

The esthetic experience refers to the overall atmospherics and mood of the physical environment (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). According to Crozier (2012), the esthetic elements in a heritage context stem from the heritage infrastructure and location as well as intangible elements that engage the imagination of visitors using sensory triggers. These elements might include the museum's physical space, color, lighting, means of directing the visitor, and methods of stimulating interest (Rentschler & Gilmore, 2002). Increased competition for visitors' time and money and the fact that the physical environment plays an important role in determining visitors' attitudes, future patronage intentions and willingness to recommend (Bonn, Joseph-Mathews, Dai, Hayes & Cave, 2007), have prompted many museums to invest in renovations.

Inspired by the services marketing literature (e.g. Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2009), we adopted a disconfirmation-based approach to conceptualizing and measuring the museum experience, and a perception-based approach to determining the impact of the museum experience on visitor satisfaction and behavioral intentions. It is

argued that the former approach has higher context-specific diagnostic value, while the latter is more effective in explaining variance in dependent variables (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1994). According to the disconfirmation-based approach, experience is the discrepancy between perception and expectation; positive disconfirmation (perception > expectation) leads to a positive experience, while negative disconfirmation (perception < expectation) results in a negative experience.

Satisfaction And Behavioral Intention

In addition to contemplating the dimensions of an experience, researchers are interested in knowing how these experience dimensions relate to certain outcome variables (Schmitt, 2010), such as satisfaction and behavioral intention. Satisfaction can be conceptualized at two different levels – attribute level and overall level. Attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction are distinct yet related concepts. The former is “the consumer’s subjective satisfaction judgment resulting from observations of attribute performance” (Oliver, 1993:421), while the latter is “based on the overall experience, not just the individual attributes” (Spreng, MacKenzie & Olshavsky, 1996:17). “Attribute satisfaction has significant, positive, and direct effects on overall satisfaction; and it [captures] a significant amount of variation in overall satisfaction” (Chi & Qu, 2008:626). Considering the focus of our study, and given that the overall-satisfaction approach is often used in a tourism context (Weaver, Weber & McCleary, 2007) and in museum-related studies (Harrison & Shaw, 2004; Huo & Miller, 2007; Simpson, 2000), we chose to measure visitor satisfaction with the museum experience at an overall level.

Some researchers (Chi & Qu, 2008; Žabkar, Brenčič & Dmitrović, 2010) regard behavioral intention as a better predictor of business performance than satisfaction. Behavioral intention refers to the customer’s anticipation of the likelihood of acting in a certain way (Lam & Hsu, 2006). Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996) identify five favorable behavioral intentions: to say positive things about the provider, recommend the provider to other customers, remain loyal to the provider, spend more with the provider, and pay premium prices. Since many studies on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) proved that behavioral intention is the most immediate and important determinant of actual behavior, investigating favorable behavioral intentions is useful in predicting visitors’ action loyalty (Chen & Chen, 2010; Oliver, 1999). Intention to revisit and word-of-mouth publicity are particularly relevant to the museum context (Harrison & Shaw, 2004; Hume, 2011; Huo & Miller, 2007; Simpson, 2000; Yucelt, 2000) and therefore served as the measures of behavioral intention in our research.

Personal And Trip-Related Characteristics

The effect of personal and trip-related characteristics on the tourist experience has been debated in the literature. According to Walls, Okumus, Wang and Kwun (2011), situational factors and personal characteristics that are usually out of the control of tourism businesses, impact the tourist’s willingness or ability to recognize the staged experience. Situational factors include such trip-related characteristics as the purpose of the trip, the nature of the destination and travel companions, while individual characteristics typically include personality type and demographic factors. Wang et al. (2013) examined the relationships between tourist experiences in a casino hotel and six demographic factors (i.e. gender, age, occupation, education level, place of residence and income level). They found that casino hotel tourists’ educational experience varied significantly based on place of residence; the entertainment experience varied significantly based on gender, occupation and place of residence; the esthetic experience varied significantly based on occupation; and the escapist experience was not significantly affected by any demographic factor.

Our study sought to examine the relationship between the four experience realms within a museum setting and selected personal and trip-related characteristics, namely, gender, age, education, income, place of residence and travel party.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the above review and the objectives of the current research, we developed a conceptual framework (see Figure 1) and subjected it to empirical verification. First, we expected that museum visitors’ experiences could be represented in terms of Pine and Gilmore’s (1998) four realms of an experience, namely,

education, entertainment, escapism and esthetics. Second, we anticipated that the museum experience could be affected by the personal and trip-related characteristics of visitors. Third, relationships were proposed to exist between the museum experience and overall satisfaction/behavioral intentions.

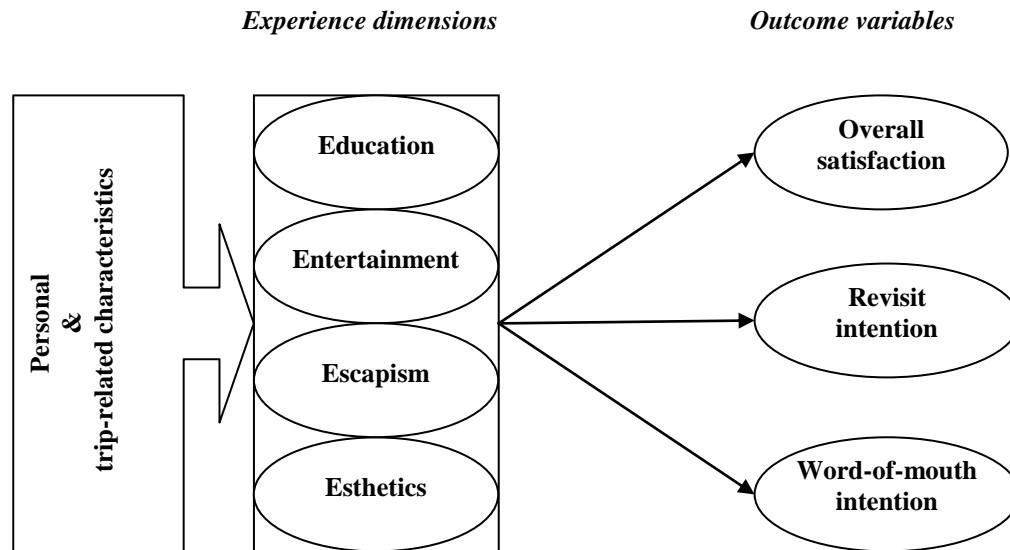


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire Design

A self-administered questionnaire with three sections relevant to the current study was used for primary research purposes. The first section sought to capture the experiences of visitors to South African heritage museums. The four proposed experience realms were described by 20 statements. Most of these statements were adapted from Oh et al. (2007) and Pine and Gilmore (1999), while the remainder originated from promotional material in the museum industry, so-called ‘critical’ literature (e.g. media reports and guidebooks), personal experience and interviews with several museum managers and visitors. A multidisciplinary panel of three judges served as gatekeepers to ensure the face validity of the 20 museum experience items, which respondents had to rate on two parallel five-point semantic scales anchored by ‘low’ and ‘high’ for expectations and ‘bad’ and ‘good’ for perceptions, respectively.

Another section was intended to measure museum visitors’ overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Overall satisfaction was measured by a single item on a five-point semantic scale anchored by ‘dissatisfied’ and ‘satisfied’. Behavioral intentions were measured from two aspects - revisit in the next few years and word-of-mouth publicity to relatives/friends. Respondents were asked to rate their anticipated future behavior on a five-point Likert scale anchored by ‘disagree’ and ‘agree’. In addition, respondents’ personal and trip-related characteristics were recorded on a categorical scale.

Study Sites And Data Collection

Three heritage museums served as the sites for primary data collection. One museum was originally constructed as a family dwelling by the early British settlers in 1827 but now is a reflection of the history and specific lifestyle enjoyed by middle-class English families in the mid-19th century. A second museum was established to provide a reproduction of daily life in the South End area when it was still inhabited by colored, Indian, black and Chinese South Africans, and to commemorate the key figures fighting against the 1948 forced

removal of these groups and their relocation to other areas in the city. The third museum is one of the two anti-apartheid museums nationwide and portrays the workers’ unions and industrial unrest which was instrumental in bringing down the Apartheid government (Nelson Mandela Bay Arts Journey, 2011; Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism, 2011). A number of communities are thus represented by the three sample museums.

Since no complete sampling frame of visitor populations was available, a quota-and-convenience mixed sampling method was used to identify potential respondents. Questionnaires were distributed to 3% of the average annual number of visitors to each museum, yielding a sample size of 267. Two hundred and twelve useable questionnaires (a response rate of 79.4%) were received and analyzed. SPSS 15 and AMOS 7 software packages were utilized to perform descriptive analysis, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA), a paired-samples t-test, and one-way between-groups ANalysis Of VAriance (ANOVA). The following section presents and discusses the analytical results.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Profile Of Respondents

Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents. In summary, 56.6% were female; 58.5% were younger than 35 years and 26.9% were 35-54; 65.6% received higher education; 38.7% earned a monthly gross income of R10, 000 or more; and 52.8% resided within the Nelson Mandela Bay area, 24.5% elsewhere in South Africa and 22.7% in other countries. Almost 60% of the respondents were visiting the museums with relatives and/or friends and 28.3% were part of tour groups. Word-of-mouth publicity (76.9%) was the key information source about the museums.

Table 1: Profile Of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	120	56.6%
Male	92	43.4%
<i>Age</i>		
Up to 24	70	33.0%
25 – 34	54	25.5%
35 – 44	27	12.7%
45 – 54	30	14.2%
55 and older	31	14.6%
<i>Education</i>		
High school	73	34.4%
College/University	111	52.4%
Postgraduate	28	13.2%
<i>Monthly Income</i>		
Less than R5,000 (Less than US\$500)	66	31.1%
R5,000 – R9,999 (US\$500 – US\$999)	64	30.2%
R10,000 – R19,999 (US\$1,000 – US\$1,999)	49	23.1%
R20,000 and above (US\$2,000 and above)	33	15.6%
<i>Place Of Residence</i>		
Local (Nelson Mandela Bay)	112	52.8%
National (South Africa)	52	24.5%
International	48	22.7%
<i>Travel Party</i>		
Alone	28	13.2%
Relatives/Friends	124	58.5%
Tour group	60	28.3%
<i>Information Source</i>		
TV/Newspaper/Magazine	13	6.1%
Internet	17	8.0%
Word-of-mouth	163	76.9%
Other	19	9.0%

Descriptive Statistics Of The Experience Items

The questionnaire used in this study included 20 items proposed to represent Pine and Gilmore’s four experience realms, namely, education (four items), entertainment (five items), escapism (six items) and esthetics (five items). A descriptive analysis was carried out to describe the respondents’ responses to these items. Table 2 shows the skewness, kurtosis, mean and standard deviation of each item as well as Cronbach’s (1951) alpha for each proposed factor (realm). Since we used the disconfirmation-based approach in assessing the museum experience, the characteristics of both expectation and perception scales were considered.

Table 2: Results Of Descriptive Analysis

Proposed Factor Structure	Expectation Scale					Perception Scale				
	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	SD	Alpha	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	SD	Alpha
<i>Education</i>					0.934					0.833
Q1: Stimulate my curiosity	-0.367	-0.852	4.01	0.95		-1.642	2.814	4.57	0.67	
Q2: Increase my knowledge	-0.436	-0.977	4.09	0.92		-2.249	7.609	4.66	0.60	
Q3: Enhance my philosophy of living	-0.285	-0.800	3.90	0.96		-1.446	1.911	4.38	0.86	
Q4: Share my experience with family and friends	-0.367	-0.975	3.98	1.00		-2.045	4.658	4.51	0.84	
<i>Entertainment</i>					0.930					0.787
Q5: Interact with others in the museum	-0.090	-0.689	3.65	1.02		-0.636	-0.041	3.88	1.02	
Q6: Relax physically	-0.019	-1.118	3.82	0.90		-1.048	0.794	4.11	0.94	
Q7: Feel emotionally stimulated	-0.139	-1.284	3.92	0.93		-1.664	3.903	4.38	0.79	
Q8: Have fun	-0.169	-1.104	3.94	0.92		-1.704	3.546	4.39	0.85	
Q9: Have an unusual experience	-0.301	-0.880	3.97	0.95		-1.605	3.609	4.48	0.73	
<i>Escapism</i>					0.916					0.866
Q10: Be someone else while in the museum	-0.128	-0.358	3.65	0.96		-0.763	0.257	3.99	0.98	
Q11: Imagine living in a different time and place	-0.043	-1.270	3.85	0.94		-0.801	-0.430	4.32	0.80	
Q12: Avoid interactions with others	0.002	-0.180	3.50	0.97		-0.583	-0.147	4.01	0.93	
Q13: Escape from reality	-0.229	-0.310	3.61	1.04		-1.092	0.610	4.10	1.06	
Q14: Get away from crowds of people	-0.269	-0.400	3.66	1.04		-1.115	0.854	4.18	0.96	
Q15: Get away from a stressful social environment	-0.385	-0.167	3.75	1.02		-1.467	1.914	4.29	0.98	
<i>Esthetics</i>					0.934					0.806
Q16: A sense of harmony with my surroundings	-0.292	-0.274	3.78	0.95		-1.714	3.171	4.42	0.87	
Q17: Pleasing physical environment	-0.393	-0.382	3.89	0.95		-1.832	3.896	4.48	0.81	
Q18: Pleasing exhibitions	-0.493	-0.232	3.95	0.94		-2.150	5.658	4.57	0.76	
Q19: Appreciating diverse cultures	-0.495	-0.393	4.00	0.92		-1.908	4.358	4.56	0.74	
Q20: Pleasing interior ambience	-0.413	-0.556	3.99	0.92		-2.189	6.044	4.64	0.66	

Note: Standard error of skewness is 0.167; standard error of kurtosis is 0.333

Table 2 shows that the skewness values ranged from -0.495 (Q19) to 0.002 (Q12) on the expectation scale and from -2.249 (Q2) to -0.583 (Q12) on the perception scale; the kurtosis values varied from -1.284 (Q7) to -0.167 (Q15) on the expectation scale and from -0.430 (Q11) to 7.609 (Q2) on the perception scale. According to Kline (2011) there is generally no cause for alarm if the absolute values of skewness and kurtosis are less than three and eight, respectively. Given our research objectives, we opted for the use of parametric techniques (e.g. t-test and ANOVA) rather than non-parametric techniques.

Table 2 also shows that the item mean scores for the expectation scale ranged from 3.50 (Q12) to 4.09 (Q2), and from 3.88 (Q5) to 4.66 (Q2) for the perception scale. The standard deviations on the expectation scale varied from 0.90 (Q6) to 1.04 (Q13 and Q14), while the standard deviations on the perception scale varied from 0.60 (Q2) to 1.06 (Q13).

Dimensions Of The Museum Experience

Following the method used by earlier research (e.g. Gagliano & Hathcote, 1994), EFA was conducted to identify the underlying dimensions of museum visitors' experiences, using the gap (perception-expectation) scores of the 20 experience items. Principal components analysis was used at the extraction stage and the oblique technique at the rotation stage. Kaiser's (1960) eigenvalue rule (i.e. retention of factors with eigenvalues greater than one) was primarily consulted to determine the appropriate number of factors. Three eigenvalues (10.185, 1.517 and 1.041, respectively) were greater than one, suggesting the existence of three latent factors. The three factors together explained 67.1% of the total variance (53.6%, 8.0% and 5.5%, respectively), meeting the rule of thumb in the social sciences that a factor solution accounting for 60% or more of the total variance is satisfactory and a single factor accounting for 5% or more of the total variance is meaningful (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010). Consequently, a three-factor framework was deemed acceptable.

Three criteria, namely, a high factor loading (>0.5), low cross-loading (<0.5) and high communality (>0.4) (Costello & Osborne, 2005) were taken into account in deciding to retain an item. One item (i.e. Q15) did not meet these criteria and therefore only 19 items were ultimately retained to fill in the three-factor framework (see Table 3). Based on the nature of the associated items, the three factors were labeled *edutainment*, *escapism* and *aesthetics*. Cronbach's alphas for the three factors were 0.923, 0.855 and 0.915, respectively, exceeding the threshold of 0.7 for good internal consistency reliability (Pallant, 2011).

CFA was followed, using the maximum likelihood estimation method to verify the factor structure identified by the EFA. Given the sensitivity of chi-square to sample size and model complexity, this study employed normed chi-square (i.e. χ^2/df) to evaluate model fit, yielding a cut-off ratio of 3:1 (Hair et al., 2010). In addition, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) were selected for assessment purposes, subject to cut-off values of 0.10 and 0.90, respectively (Byrne, 2010). The initial measurement model did not fit the data well and hence required modification. The AMOS Modification Indices (MIs) revealed that the model fit would be substantially improved if four pairs of error terms were allowed to correlate: between Q1 and Q2 (MI=51.674), between Q8 and Q9 (MI=30.402), between Q7 and Q8 (MI=22.556) and between Q6 and Q7 (MI=17.803). As a result, the modified measurement model showed adequate fit to the data ($\chi^2/df=2.723$; RMSEA=0.090; CFI=0.915).

Table 3: Results Of Exploratory And Confirmatory Factor Analyses (Using Gap Scores)

Actual Factor Structure	EFA				CFA			
	Factor Loading	Communality	Alpha If Item Deleted	Alpha	Standardized Loading	Critical Value	CR	AVE
<i>Edutainment</i>				0.923			0.920	0.561
Q4: Share my experience with family and friends	0.891	0.644	0.916		0.709	10.640		
Q1: Stimulate my curiosity	0.850	0.756	0.909		0.823	12.563		
Q2: Increase my knowledge	0.754	0.690	0.912		0.794	12.062		
Q7: Feel emotionally stimulated	0.684	0.652	0.911		0.772	11.807		
Q3: Enhance my philosophy of living	0.663	0.602	0.915		0.761	11.385		
Q8: Have fun	0.649	0.597	0.915		0.702	13.850		
Q5: Interact with others in the museum	0.624	0.514	0.920		0.673	10.109		
Q9: Have an unusual experience	0.552	0.650	0.913		0.773	Fixed		
Q6: Relax physically	0.510	0.574	0.916		0.723	10.834		
<i>Escapism</i>				0.855			0.857	0.547
Q12: Avoid interactions with others	0.857	0.653	0.846		0.621	8.768		
Q13: Escape from reality	0.757	0.716	0.805		0.805	11.981		
Q11: Imagine living in a different time and place	0.703	0.682	0.816		0.778	11.185		
Q10: Be someone else while in the museum	0.660	0.650	0.832		0.710	10.060		
Q14: Get away from crowds of people	0.621	0.631	0.823		0.768	Fixed		
<i>Esthetics</i>				0.915			0.917	0.689
Q18: Pleasing exhibitions	-0.884	0.806	0.890		0.848	14.487		
Q17: Pleasing physical environment	-0.826	0.781	0.892		0.848	14.495		
Q16: A sense of harmony with my surroundings	-0.735	0.744	0.894		0.838	14.097		
Q20: Pleasing interior ambience	-0.682	0.702	0.900		0.813	Fixed		
Q19: Appreciating diverse cultures	-0.605	0.697	0.905		0.803	13.387		

The next CFA step was to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the latent constructs in the modified measurement model. Convergent validity refers to high correlations between the measure of interest and other measures designed to assess the same construct (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2007) and can be evaluated by consulting the standardized loading, Construct Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As can be seen from Table 3, all indicators had fairly high standardized factor loadings (>0.6), suggesting that these indicators were significantly related to their specified constructs. The lowest CR value was 0.857 and the lowest AVE value was 0.547, exceeding the respective threshold values of 0.7 and 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, the convergent validity of each of the three experience constructs was evident. Discriminant validity, on the other hand, refers to low correlations between the measure of interest and measures that are supposedly not measuring the same construct (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2007) and can be established when the AVE values for any two constructs are greater than the squared correlation coefficient between these two constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In the context of the present study, the correlation coefficient between *edutainment* and *esthetics* was 0.860, between *edutainment* and *escapism* it was 0.736, and between *escapism* and *esthetics* it was 0.725. Consequently, the discriminant validity of *escapism* was supported, while the discriminant validity of *edutainment* and *esthetics* was not supported.

In summary, the underlying dimensions of the museum experience identified by the EFA were generally verified through the CFA. These experience dimensions were *edutainment* (nine items), *escapism* (five items) and *esthetics* (five items).

Evaluation Of The Museum Experience

A paired-samples t-test was performed to evaluate museum visitors’ experiences at the factor level. The results which include t-values, significance levels, and perception, expectation and gap mean scores and standard deviations, are shown in Table 4. In addition, eta squared was computed to determine the effect size (i.e. magnitude) of the differences between groups. The following guidelines were used to interpret the eta-squared values: 0.01=small effect, 0.06=medium effect and 0.14=large effect (Cohen, 1988).

Table 4: Results Of Paired-Samples T-Test

Dependent Variable	Perception		Expectation		Gap		T-Value	Eta Squared
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Edutainment	4.37	0.56	3.92	0.82	0.45	0.80	8.229***	0.243
Escapism	4.12	0.75	3.65	0.83	0.47	0.75	8.988***	0.277
Esthetics	4.53	0.58	3.92	0.83	0.61	0.87	10.183***	0.330

Note: ***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05

It is evident that the mean scores for perceptions were consistently higher than those for expectations, resulting in positive gap mean scores across the three experience dimensions. This implies that museum visitors’ expectations of *edutainment*, *escapism* and *esthetics* were positively disconfirmed. In other words, museum managers were successful in meeting visitors’ expectations of *edutainment*, *escapism* and *esthetics*. The t-test showed that there were significant (p<0.001) differences between perceptions and expectations for all three experience dimensions. The eta-squared values ranging from 0.243 to 0.330 indicate that the magnitude of the differences for these dimensions was very large. In summary, it follows that museum visitors had positive *edutainment*, *escapism* and *esthetics* experiences.

The Impact Of Experience Dimensions On Overall Satisfaction And Behavioral Intentions

Three standard-type MRAs were performed to explore the impact of the experience dimensions identified by the factor analysis on overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions (in terms of revisit and word-of-mouth publicity). It is important to note that only the perception scores of the experience data set were used in the regression analysis. Preliminary investigations were conducted to ensure no major violation of the assumptions about the data, including absence of multicollinearity, normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals, independence of errors, and absence of outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). First, multicollinearity was assessed. The VIF values ranged from 1.399 to 2.332 - far below the recommended maximum value of 10 (Pallant, 2011). Second, the assumptions regarding normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals were assessed using graphical methods. In this study, the data points all fell very close to the ‘ideal’ diagonal line from bottom left to top right in the normal probability plot; the data points were roughly rectangularly distributed with most concentrated in the centre in the residuals scatterplot. The two plots’ patterns suggest that the assumptions have not been violated. Third, independence of errors can be examined using the Durbin-Watson (D-W) statistic, which can vary from zero to four with the mid-value (i.e. two) indicating that the error terms are absolutely independent. As a rule of thumb, there is no cause for alarm if the statistic is between one and three (Field, 2009). In the current research, the D-W statistic values ranged from 1.490 to 1.881, suggesting that the assumption had been met. Last, we tested for outliers. The maximum value for Cook’s distance was 0.369 for the overall-satisfaction model, 0.046 for the revisit-intention model, and 0.506 for the word-of-mouth-intention model - far below the cut-off point of one (Pallant, 2011). This implies that none of the cases had an undue influence on any regression model and needed to be deleted. Table 5 summarizes the results of the three MRAs.

Table 5: Results Of Multiple Regression Analysis (Using Perception Scores)

Dependent variable	Independent variable	B coefficient	Standard error	Beta coefficient	T-value	VIF
Overall satisfaction (R ² =0.332; F=34.442; p<0.001; D-W=1.881)	(Constant)	(1.760)	(0.301)		(5.838***)	
	Edutainment	0.519	0.095	0.473	5.464***	2.332
	Escapism	-0.059	0.055	-0.072	-1.073	1.399
	Esthetics	0.189	0.087	0.176	2.176*	2.042
Intention to revisit (R ² =0.085; F=6.436; p<0.001; D-W=1.490)	(Constant)	(1.758)	(0.657)		(2.677**)	
	Edutainment	0.802	0.207	0.392	3.873***	2.332
	Escapism	-0.047	0.120	-0.031	-0.392	1.399
	Esthetics	-0.296	0.189	-0.149	-1.569	2.042
Intention to word-of-mouth publicity (R ² =0.356; F=38.277; p<0.001; D-W=1.784)	(Constant)	(1.498)	(0.316)		(4.738***)	
	Edutainment	0.577	0.100	0.492	5.788***	2.332
	Escapism	0.007	0.058	0.008	0.115	1.399
	Esthetics	0.150	0.091	0.131	1.645	2.042

Note: ***p≤0.001; **p≤0.01; *p≤0.05

In the first MRA, the dependent variable was *overall satisfaction* (M=4.64; SD=0.62). At the model level, the linear combination of three experience dimensions explained 33.2% of the variance in *overall satisfaction*. This predictive power was deemed satisfactory because the literature suggests that although a larger R² is always preferred, survey data generally produce R² in the range of 0.3 to 0.5 (Lehmann, 2006). The F-value of 34.442 was significant (p<0.001), implying that the results were extremely unlikely to have occurred by chance. Based on unstandardized (b) coefficients and the intercept, the regression equation was written as: overall satisfaction = 1.760 + 0.519 (edutainment) – 0.059 (escapism) + 0.189 (esthetics). It is clear that when the value of each independent variable is zero, *overall satisfaction* is equal to 1.760; both *edutainment* and *esthetics* have positive b-values indicating positive relationships with *overall satisfaction*; *escapism* has a negative b-value indicating a negative relationship with *overall satisfaction* (albeit insignificant). Finally, and more importantly, judged by standardized (beta) coefficients and t-statistic values, significant contributions to the prediction of *overall satisfaction* were made by *edutainment* (β=0.473; t=5.464; p<0.001) and *esthetics* (β=0.176; t=2.176; p<0.05). Comparatively, the contribution of the former was more than twice that of the latter.

The dependent variable of the second MRA was *revisit intention* (M=3.73; SD=1.15). At the model level, the linear combination of three experience dimensions accounted for 8.5% of the variance in *revisit intention*, with an F-value of 6.436 (p<0.001). A possible reason for this relatively low predictive power is that repeat visits are often deemed less relevant to the museum context (Simpson, 2000; Trinh & Ryan, 2013). The regression equation was written as: revisit intention = 1.758 + 0.802 (edutainment) – 0.047 (escapism) – 0.296 (esthetics). It follows that when each independent variable scores zero, *revisit intention* is equal to 1.758; *edutainment* has a positive b-value representing a positive relationship with *revisit intention*; both *escapism* and *esthetics* have negative b-values representing negative relationships with *revisit intention* (albeit insignificant). Only *edutainment* (β=0.392; t=3.873; p<0.001) made a significant contribution to the prediction of *revisit intention*.

In the third MRA, *word-of-mouth intention* (M=4.73; SD=0.66) served as the dependent variable. On the whole, the linear combination of three experience dimensions explained 35.6% of the variance in *word-of-mouth intention*, subject to an F-value of 38.277 (p<0.001). The regression equation was written as: word-of-mouth intention = 1.498 + 0.577 (edutainment) + 0.007 (escapism) + 0.150 (esthetics). This shows that when all three independent variables score zero, *word-of-mouth intention* is equal to 1.498, and that all three independent variables have positive b-values implying positive relationships with *word-of-mouth intention*. However, only *edutainment* (β=0.492; t=5.788; p<0.001) made a significant contribution to the prediction of *word-of-mouth intention*.

In summary, among the three independent variables, *edutainment* made the strongest contribution to the prediction of *overall satisfaction* and *behavioral intentions*. In other words, for each unit change in *edutainment*, it will produce the most influence on *overall satisfaction* and *behavioral intentions*.

The Effect Of Personal And Trip-Related Characteristics On The Museum Experience

To determine whether visitors’ evaluations of museum experiences could be influenced by their personal characteristics (i.e. gender, age, education, income and place of residence) and trip-related characteristics (i.e. travel party), a series of one-way between-groups ANOVAs was performed using the gap scores of the three experience dimensions. Where the assumption of the homogeneity of variance was violated, Brown and Forsythe’s (1974) F-statistic (rather than the normal F-statistic) was reported.

Table 6: Results Of One-Way Analysis Of Variance (Using Gap Scores)

Independent Variable	Edutainment		Escapism		Esthetics	
	F-value	Eta squared	F-value	Eta Squared	F-value	Eta squared
Gender (2 groups)	1.814	0.009	0.841	0.004	0.870	0.004
Age (5 groups)	4.515**	0.080	2.667*	0.049	4.248**	0.076
Education (3 groups)	0.268	0.003	0.656	0.006	1.427	0.014
Monthly income (4 groups)	2.023	0.026	1.739	0.023	2.114	0.030
Place of residence (3 groups)	9.031***	0.080	1.863	0.018	10.559***	0.092
Travel party (3 groups)	0.385	0.004	2.080	0.020	0.068	0.001

Note: ***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05

As shown in Table 6, the differences among the five age groups (i.e. ≤24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54 and ≥55) were significant for *edutainment* (p<0.01), *esthetics* (p<0.01) and *escapism* (p<0.05). The magnitude of the differences among these age groups was medium-to-large for *edutainment* (eta squared=0.080) and *esthetics* (eta squared=0.076), and small-to-medium for *escapism* (eta squared=0.049). In addition, there were significant differences among the three categories of place of residence (i.e. local, national and international) with regard to *edutainment* (p<0.001) and *esthetics* (p<0.001). The magnitude of the differences for these two dimensions (eta squared=0.080 and 0.092, respectively) was medium-to-large.

In summary, age had a significant effect on respondents’ judgments about all three experience realms; place of residence had a significant effect on the *edutainment* and *esthetics* realms; gender, education, income and travel party had no effect on any experience realm.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Experiences may comprise the realms of *education*, *entertainment*, *esthetics* and *escapism* (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). These realms have intuitive conceptual and practical relevance to the tourism industry, since increasingly businesses are treating experiences (instead of products or services) as the core offering. However, with a few exceptions (Hosany & Witham, 2010; Jurowski, 2009; Oh et al., 2007), there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding the reliability and validity of these realms in different types of tourism, particularly the highly experiential settings such as museum visits. In addition, these realms have seldom been examined in a South African setting. Our study therefore first attempted to verify the presence of these experience realms in South African heritage museums, examine visitors’ expectations and perceptions of these realms, and thereafter determine the influence of these realms on satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Our study also investigated the relationship between the experience realms and visitors’ personal and trip-related characteristics.

Important theoretical contributions resulted from the research. Our study produced supportive evidence that the boundaries between the realms are amorphous. Three museum experience realms were found - *edutainment*, *escapism* and *esthetics*. *Edutainment* denotes the combination of education and entertainment - a result also obtained by Virvou (2012) - and fulfills the museum goals of educating and entertaining visitors (Kotler & Kotler, 2000; Sheng & Chen, 2012). A further explanation for integrating *education* and *entertainment* could be that both involve absorption experiences enhanced by the increasing use of multimedia technologies (Lockstone, 2007; Sakamura, 1999). In addition to the dimensionality of the museum experience, it was also established that *edutainment* is the most important experience realm in determining visitors’ satisfaction, revisit intention and word-of-mouth intention. In general, the more positive the visitor’s experience in *edutainment*, the more likely he or she has a high level of satisfaction and favorable behavioral intentions.

Our study also holds a number of important managerial implications. First, the research contributes to a better understanding of experiential marketing in a museum context. In comparison with the traditional marketing approach that focused on museum collections and services, staging desired experiences should better serve the needs of the museum visitor, which in turn will broaden the audience base, and hence enhance the museum's financial performance and competitiveness. The results showed that *edutainment* has the largest effect on satisfaction and behavioral intentions, followed by *aesthetics* and then *escapism*. This will guide museum marketers in allocating limited resources (e.g. budget) and designing appropriate marketing and promotional strategies. Word-of-mouth communication was shown to provide information about the museum to almost 77% of the respondents. Particular attention should therefore be paid to strategies that will contribute to an experience resulting in positive word-of-mouth messages. Second, museum managers and marketers can use the developed measuring instrument to assess visitors' on-site experiences. The outcome of such evaluations has good diagnostic value and could aid in identifying and closing the gaps between visitors' expected and perceived experiences. Lastly, our study found that all three experience realms (*edutainment*, *escapism* and *aesthetics*) differed significantly among age groups. This suggests that management should attempt to satisfy the needs of the different groups to ensure optimum experiences, satisfaction and behavioral intention by all the groups. Our recommendation supports Crozier's (2012:iv) view that heritage attractions "must innovate to meet changing demands at the same time as supplying new, meaningful experiences for each generation".

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The limitations of our study create opportunities for further research. First, the population of the survey was limited to visitors to only three heritage museums in South Africa and therefore the generalizability of the findings may be questioned. Cross-sectional and longitudinal future research will help determine whether different visitor and museum samples yield similar results. Second, EFA with CFA were performed on the same data set. While some researchers (e.g. DeCoster, 1998; Hatcher, 1994; Henson & Roberts, 2006) hold that utilizing the same data set for EFA and CFA in tandem may lead to the acceptance of an unstable measurement model, others (e.g. Lam & Hsu, 2006; Mohamad, Ali, Ghani, Abdullah & Mokhlis, 2013) consider this method acceptable. Further research is thus needed to verify the heritage museum experiential constructs offered. Third, Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Tung and Ritchie (2011) suggest that experiences should be memorable. Future studies should examine the relationships between experience realms and the memorability of the heritage museum experience.

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AUTHOR INFORMATION

Laetitia Radder, D Com, is a Professor of Marketing at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Her research focuses on marketing, consumer behavior, wildlife tourism and the experience economy. E-mail: Laetitia.Radder@nmmu.ac.za (Corresponding author)

Xiliang Han was a PhD student at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, at the time of the research. His research interests include consumer behavior, service marketing and customer experience in the context of travel and tourism. E-mail: Xiliang.Han@hotmail.com

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