Cultural capital and destination image: Insights from the Opera House tourist

ABSTRACT

Purpose
This research aims to identify the factors that foster an interest in opera and Opera Houses as a specific form of cultural capital and how the Opera House tourist constructs images of destinations from the cognitive, affective and conative dimensions.

Research design
A social constructivist methodology was adopted, and data was captured through online qualitative questionnaires from 226 Opera House tourists using a simple random sampling approach. These enquired about the development of their interest in opera and Opera Houses and the influence this exerts on their destination image formation process.

Findings
This form of cultural capital is mainly developed through exposure to art forms through family, social and further reference groups. Opera Houses project cognitive images of cosmopolitanism, affective images of social belonging and conative images of further opportunities to experience culture and leisure fostering destination loyalty and place attachment.

Research limitations/implications
Productions of both opera and ballet are staged at Opera Houses opening avenues for further research on either the opera or ballet tourist markets specifically using case studies across the ample spectrum of Opera Houses around the world.

Practical implications
In addition to the visual appeal and quality of cultural produce, tourism practitioners can use an Opera House's projected affective images of social cohesion and togetherness to attract the Opera House tourist market. An Opera House's role in a destination's visual and cultural landscape cements the need to preserve it and highlight its integration with other elements of its offer towards cultural tourism.

Social implications
The study highlights the need for cultural policy and audience development strategies that foster this type of cultural capital resulting in demand for and supply of cultural products that in turn stimulate the development of this niche cultural tourism market segment.

Originality
This is the first study that has approached the Opera House tourist from the destination image formation context.

Key words: Cultural Capital, Destination Image, Opera Houses

Word count: 10097 (inc. Figure 1)

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INTRODUCTION

Opera Houses and their role in destination development have been approached by tourism studies as place-making elements (Mulryne and Shrewing, 1995), as cultural economic units (Zieba, 2016), as urban regeneration tools (Smith and von Krogh Strand, 2011) and as cultural flagships (Guachalla, 2019). However, their specific role in the tourist's destination image development process is an area that remains under-researched. Contemporary literature proposes that images of destinations can be understood as cognitive – related to knowledge about a destination; and affective when they relate to emotions and feelings towards a destination (Papadimitriou *et al.*, 2018). A third conative dimension related to images of behavioural patterns and opportunities is also proposed (Woosnam *et al.*, 2020). It is therefore clear that a host of factors may influence perceptions of destinations and how tourists develop images of them. These factors are also subject to each individual's interests and engagement with different attributes and cultural resources that destinations offer to the cultural tourism market (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2016). The role of the performing arts in this process and specifically, engagement with staged opera productions is an area that remains widely under-researched in the context of destination image development. Consequently, an evaluation of how an interest in opera and Opera Houses influences destination image development invites an assessment of the factors that foster the development of this specific type of cultural capital at an individual level. This acquires interesting levels of complexity as 'high arts' of this nature are often associated with perceptions of elitism and exclusivity to market segments that can afford the pursuit of these interests (Clements, 2016). Adding to this, studies on cultural tourism tend to approach an individual's motivation and depth of experience to understand the influence that culture plays in their perceptions and experiences of places (McKercher and du Cros, 2003). However, no research has been conducted to understand specifically how the development of cultural capital results in an interest in opera as an art form or how this capital influences the tourist's perceived images of destinations.

In view of the frameworks above, this study aims to bridge this gap in knowledge by firstly, understanding the factors that influence the development of cultural capital resulting in a tourist's interest in the art of opera and Opera Houses. Secondly, this research aims to evaluate how this interest influences the destination image development process from the cognitive, affective and conative dimensions. Therefore, the overall aim of this research is to evaluate the factors that shape the tourist's interest in opera and Opera Houses and how this cultural capital influences their destination image formation process.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Cultural capital development

The notion of cultural capital, rooted in Bourdeau's (1983, 1984) extensive frameworks, is approached by Honneth (1986) who proposes that this encompasses a set of learnable skills and competencies that both refine and expand an individual's ability to engage with and enjoy a wider range of activities. The factors that influence an individual's likelihood to develop cultural capital remains an area subject to debates and discourse. Upright (2004) notes the influences that an individual's sociodemographic profile exerts on cultural capital development and summarises these factors in early exposure to the arts, level of educational attainment, age, gender, ethnic background and income level. Within the spectrum of what is referred to as "high arts activities" (including opera and ballet), the author (p. 129) notes that this 'is a

preference largely handed down from one generation to the next and class differences largely explain differing consumption patterns' (DiMaggio and Useem, 1978). More recently, Kallunki and Purhonen (2017) reaffirm the process of intergenerational transmission of cultural capital leading an individual to seek certain types of cultural products in a family-induced intergenerational environment. However, Upright (2004) also notes spousal influences suggesting that one generation's appreciation for a particular art form may also be transferred to another family through spousal affiliation. Within a tourism context, these influences are approached by Parker (1976) and Edensor (2001: 60) who concludes that 'culturally coded patterns of tourist behaviour partly emerge out of dispositions that evolve around class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality for instance'.

Given these frameworks, it becomes clear that a range of sociodemographic indicators need to be considered to understand the conditioning factors involved in cultural capital acquisition (Crotts and McKercher, 2006). Specifically, an assessment of the role of opera in a destination's cultural portfolio is inevitably linked to this art form's reputation as elitist and exclusive only to those who can afford it (Clements, 2016). In this respect, Prieur and Savage (2015) evidence the direct link between economic capital and cultural capital acquisition as Guachalla (2017) asserts that high-quality opera and ballet performances delivered by the finest pool of talent may require higher levels of disposable income. Thus, the reciprocal relationship between cultural and economic capital is evident, as the development of the former requires availability of the latter (Jarness, 2017). Building from DiMaggio's (1982) approach on the development of cultural capital within the high arts context, DiMaggio and Mukhtar (2004) reinforce that exposure to the arts is a critical tool to develop this type of cultural capital. The authors propose that art appreciation is trained and the context in which culture is consumed (performing arts venues for example) will play active roles in cultural capital acquisition which can ultimately result in stronger class cohesion. Karlsson (2005) highlights that the links between social and cultural capital do strengthen bonds between reference groups and foster more cohesive communities and solidarity among their members. Hence, cultural capital fosters feelings of belonging to specific communities of arts consumption (Jeannotte, 2003).

Cultural capital and tourism
Igarashi and Saito (2014: 225) link the acquisition of cultural capital with an increased sense of cosmopolitanism and define it as 'both dispositions of openness to foreign others and cultures and competencies to enact such openness with ease' (Prieur and Savage, 2015). This suggests that cultural capital is developed by exposure to and engagement with a wider set of cultural products and both domestic and international tourism could act as an essential driver to acquire this knowledge and competences (Salazar, 2010; Johnson, 2014; Carvalho, 2014). Zhang *et al.* (2015) propose that cultural capital exerts a critical influence in the image development process of international destinations known for the richness of its cultural produce. In addition, Quinn (2010) identifies the mutually beneficial relationship between cultural tourism and cultural capital acquisition, as high numbers of visitors attracted to a destination's cultural offer enhance the sense of cosmopolitanism that tourists themselves seek (Swain, 2009). This in turn leads to the development of social capital that sustains demand for cultural products and activities, contributing to the economic sustainability of a destination's cultural landscape (Moscardo *et al.*, 2017; Upright, 2004). The OECD (2001:41) defines the notion of social capital as 'networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups'. This indicates that as individuals are provided with the platforms and resources to pursue interests rooted in their cultural capital; bonds, bridges and linkages are created among groups that share a common sense of cultural identity (Karlsson, 2005). As a result, sustained demand for specific cultural products is

warranted and as a response, supply for these cultural resources is also sustained. In the context of opera, Van der Ark and Richards (2006) note that these phenomena is particularly visible within the European setting which offers a densely concentrated contrast of Opera Houses rich in history, heritage, visual appeal and repertoire (Beauvert and Moatti, 1996).

Mulryne and Shewring (1995) identify three specific areas on which Opera Houses contribute to a destination's cultural offer. These relate to the visual impact that grandiose Opera Houses may add to the urban landscape (Sklair, 2017; Smith and von Krogh Strand, 2011). Secondly, the attraction of a mixed variety of visitors contributing to a sense of cosmopolitanism and vibrancy (Zieba, 2016) noted above as catalysts of social and cultural capital acquisition. And thirdly, the artistic dimension where consumption of high-quality cultural products enhances a visitor's perception of place (Chen and Rahman, 2018). Opera Houses are typically set in central precincts within urban destinations which allows them to integrate with the rest of the destination's central urban landscape and cultural consumption opportunities as is the case of the Palais Garnier in Paris and Vienna's State Opera. More recent developments such as the Sydney and Oslo Opera Houses achieve something similar from the visual perspective through modern architecture as free-standing buildings that resulted in urban regeneration and the development of further popular tourism precincts (Smith and von Krogh Strand, 2011).

In regards to the role that cultural consumption plays in the tourist's motivation to visit destinations, McKercher and du Cros (2003) link the centrality of culture as a purpose to visit with the depth of experiences attained. In this respect, it should be noted that the experience of attending a theatre performance can be understood as a passive one given its spectator-based nature from the audience's perspective (Reason, 2010). However, Van der Zande (2016) notes a range of activities attached to attending a performance that involves the tourists more actively, such as an Opera House's added facilities like bars, restaurants, shops and exhibitions. Similarly, Zheng and Ritchie (2020) make reference to Hughes' (2000) categorisation of performing arts tourists, classifying them as either arts-core or arts-peripheral. They can be either primary arts-core tourists when the sole purpose for visiting a destination is to attend a performance; or multi-primary arts-core when cultural experiences are complemented by other leisure activities.

Destination image: the threefold approach
The study of destination image and the factors that influence it appears to have developed from Gunn's (1972) approach on primary and secondary images towards a contemporary framework rooted in the cognitive, affective and conative dimensions (Chen and Phou, 2013; Tasci and Gartner, 2007; Pike and Ryan, 2004; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993). In the task of unraveling the network of elements that shape the process of destination image formation, Papadimitriou *et al.* (2018) firstly highlight two core components. The first refers to the cognitive element that encompasses the tourist's existing knowledge of a destination and their beliefs in regards to its attributes (Ceylan and Çizel, 2018). Kim (2018: 858) notes that cognitive images are 'directly observable, descriptive, and measurable and therefore they provide more concrete and interpretive information regarding the uniqueness of a destination'. This suggests that cognitive images are less complex to measure and enquire about as they often link to physical and environmental place-making elements. A second component is set within the emotional/affective dimension relating to feelings that tourists develop towards a destination (Hernández-Mogollón *et al.*, 2018). As this perspective relates to feelings and emotional responses (such as nostalgia, acceptance and diversity) it can be construed as more difficult to evaluate and understand (Marine-Roig and Anton Clave, 2016).

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Hernández-Mogollón *et al.* (2018) approach destination image formation within the context of cultural events. The authors find useful links between a destination's spectrum of components (tourism suppliers), a destination's brand (Souiden *et al.*, 2017) and engagement with cultural products and services that result in the development of both cognitive and affective images (Akgün *et al.*, 2019). Some of the elements to have been found playing significant roles in the development of these include 'cultural attractions, nightlife, gastronomy and history' (Todorović *et al.*, 2018: 119), some of which can be linked to the Opera House settings. Thus, culture and the tourism suppliers attached to it may play central roles in the tourists' perception and images of places in line with their specific set of cultural capital and the experiences they seek as a result (Crotts and McKercher, 2006). From the affective dimension, Akgün *et al.* (2019) make a useful contribution to understanding the role of positive emotions towards a destination's attributes and cultural resources by linking this to a sense of nostalgia (Cho *et al.*, 2019). These positive emotional responses result in behavioural intentions (Verma and Rajendran, 2017) and in destination loyalty through repeat visits (Anil and Rajendran, 2017; Gao *et al.*, 2020; Tan and Wu, 2016) as tourists seek to replicate positive experiences.

Pike and Ryan (2004) advocate for a third layer to the destination image formation process referred to as conative destination images, which is a notion applied to behavioural opportunities at the destination. Woosnam *et al.* (2020) contextualise behavioural patterns such as loyalty within the 'emotional solidarity' framework. The authors (p. 918) define this as 'the affective bonds individuals experience with one another, often characterized by a degree of closeness. Such perceived closeness is expressed as the sentiment of togetherness' (Moghavvemi *et al.*, 2017). Hence, positive images and knowledge acquisition that derive in tourist loyalty strengthen the social bond between tourists and resident communities in what can be understood as social capital development (Moscardo *et al.*, 2017) as defined by the OECD (2001). Ribeiro *et al.* (2018) propose that this sense of 'togetherness' has the potential of bridging gaps between tourists' and local residents' interests (Bertella *et al.*, 2018; Yang, 2016) leading to a more harmonious and socially sustainable tourism development (Erul *et al.*, 2020). Kim and Kerstetter (2016) discuss the importance of multisensory stimulation in destination image formation rooted in different levels of exposure to sounds, sights and other differential attributes of a destination. From the cultural dimension, it should be noted that Opera Houses may project powerful visual images shaping a destination's landscape (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2016). In addition, staged opera productions also stimulate from the visual perspective but it could be argued that an essential sensorial component is aural (music) (Guachalla, 2019). Adding to the network of sensorial stimulation shaping different types of destination images, attending staged performances is a social activity that may carry emotional solidarity connotations projecting images of togetherness and cohesion (Bertella *et al.*, 2018).

Destination image and the tourist's experience
Zhang *et al.* (2018) assess the influence of destination images on what a tourist may conclude was a memorable experience because of the positive or negative affective responses that these experiences stimulate. Kim (2018) also notes the salient role of destination image formation on the development of positively memorable tourist experiences resulting in competitive tourist destinations (Guzman-Parra *et al.*, 2016). Chen and Rahman (2018) highlight memorable experience development and destination loyalty as a conative outcome of positive destination images specifically in the context of cultural tourism. Adding to this, Yan (2016: 53) cites Ahmed (1991) in asserting that 'tourists develop an image of everything at a destination but also form selected impressions because they attend to the information that is most closely tied to their own personal interests'. In this sense, it is important to consider the elements of the

destination that are likely to engender a stronger engagement with the tourist in line with their specific set of cultural capital. Shankar (2019) concludes that a tourist's socio-demographic indicators such as age, income level, occupation and education are core to destination attributes that actively build a tourist's destination image (Rafael and Almeida, 2017). Hence, Crotts and McKercher's (2006) framework on cultural distance evaluation becomes highly relevant as the authors propose that tourists assess the destinations they visit in line with how culturally proximate or distant they feel to them. Cultural proximity may yield positive feelings of affinity, familiarity and comfort. However, cultural distance may foster feelings of curiosity, building intriguing destination images that spark a tourist's inquisitive approach to exploring and learning from its cultural attributes and resources (McKercher and Chow So-Ming, 2001; Kim *et al.*, 2019). These frameworks, in turn, highlight the need to use a flexible and non-foundational approach to enquiring about these subject areas as discussed below.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK
Research approach
The conceptual framework above indicates that a host of factors may influence the process of cultural capital acquisition whilst each tourist constructs cognitive, affective and conative images of destinations in line with how they subjectively see the world and interpret their surroundings. Hence, a flexible and non-foundational methodological stance is needed to approach the subject area. The social constructivist qualitative research paradigm responds to this need as it allows in-depth enquiry of how each individual assigns meanings and values to reality according to their subjective mechanisms of interpretation as influenced by their existing set of cultural capital (Bryman, 2016).

Research setting
As global society was dramatically transformed in 2020 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, performing arts centres were forced to shut their doors and postpone/cancel planned performances. In response, some of the most reputable Opera Houses transferred their performance schedule to the virtual stage and began weekly/daily free online streaming services of their most applauded productions. These included the Royal Opera House in London, New York's Metropolitan Opera and the Vienna State Opera among others. Effective audience engagement with this free-of-charge, global and virtual opera season was evident from its inception as users from across the world checked in to the virtual events on Facebook, hashtagged on Instagram and posted their impressions on Twitter. These settings presented ample opportunities to capture data on the Opera House tourists' cultural capital acquisition and destination image development process.

Method and fieldwork design
In line with the social constructivist approach adopted, a qualitative method was needed to allow respondents to develop their views in length and elaborate specific points of interest on how they developed an interest in opera and how this influences their perceptions of destinations. This is often achieved through interviews. However, and given the restrictions posed by the pandemic, this study aimed to test how the use of qualitative questionnaires may also yield qualitative data rich in length and content. Durbarry (2017) notes that questionnaires provide participants with the benefit of answering questions at their own pace and reflecting on how they wish to respond without personal interface with the researcher that could result in awkwardness, researcher bias or a low recruitment rate (Veal, 2017). Therefore, a qualitative open-ended questionnaire was structured in three sections. The first captured the sample's socio-demographic profile including gender, age, origin, level of education, (perceived) income level and occupation – this being the only section that used quantitative measures (see
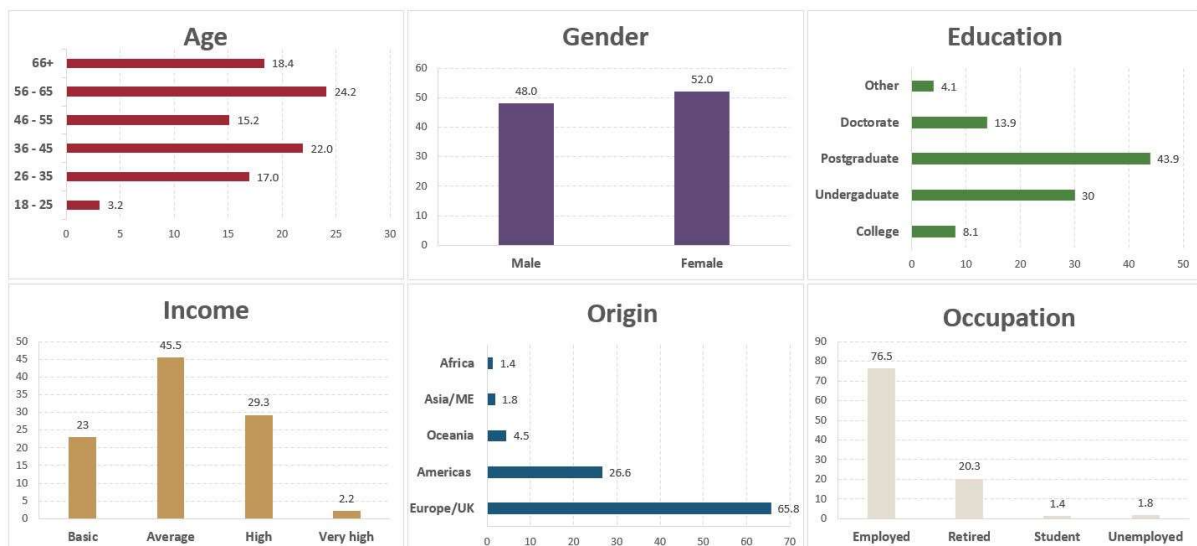
Figure 1). The second section asked how they were introduced to opera and how they came to appreciate the art form followed by open questions capturing perceptions on whether an individual's age, income, occupation, origin, level of education and family structure exert an influence in their interest in Opera Houses. The third section enquired about their favourite Opera Houses and the reasons for this followed by questions regarding cognitive, affective and conative images of destinations that these venues stimulate (what do you learn/feel about/do at destinations because of these Opera Houses? Summarise what you believe Opera Houses add to a destination's image). The effectiveness of the questionnaire's wording and structure was pilot tested on five individuals.

As free opera performances were streamed online, hashtags and pictures were used on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter inviting the global audience's views on them as a gateway to the online questionnaire which was designed and hosted by Google Forms. It should be noted though that respondents' engagement with streamed performances was used as a recruitment tool. However, the questionnaires did not focus specifically on the Opera Houses where these performances were broadcast from and respondents were not asked to answer in regards to those providers in particular. Instead, they were invited to provide answers on Opera Houses that they have visited as tourists and whose work they have personally engaged with.

Sampling and data analysis

This study adopted a non-foundational approach and therefore a simple random sampling strategy was implemented to allow equal opportunity of inclusion to the widest possible audience (Brunt *et al.*, 2017). The questionnaire was specifically framed within a tourism context and was aimed at individuals whose enthusiasm for opera as a specific form of cultural capital drives them to visit Opera Houses and attend opera performances as tourists either domestically or internationally. At 226 completed questionnaires, the recruitment rate was successful for a qualitative project but as discussed below, not all of these yielded substantial qualitative data. Responses were also received by people who attend ballet performances at Opera Houses as both art forms are often performed interchangeably in the same venues and Opera Houses often host their own opera and ballet companies. This is commented on in the conclusions section. The sample structure is presented in Figure 1 below and its main messages are commented on in the evidence analysis although this is a qualitative study and its main focus is not placed on this quantitative element:

Figure 1. Sample socio-demographic profile

The level of detail in answers to open-ended questions varied in depth and content. The data captured evidenced that some respondents took time to provide detailed answers resulting in robust qualitative material used to support the evidence analysis, but this was not the case across all responses received. As this is a qualitative study, this research has focused specifically on the quality of these responses and does not seek to quantify the relative significance of findings as the open-ended nature of the questionnaire did not allow for this. However, the response rate at 226 completed questionnaires which is significant for a qualitative project has served the purpose of determining the sample's socio-demographic structure which has in turn complemented analyses of this data.

The data analysis process used open and axial coding to identify common patterns and themes among substantial participant responses (Babbie, 2015). This consisted in two analytical stages: the first organised the data around codes that the questionnaire structure facilitated. These codes referred to the factors that influence the development of cultural capital in the context of opera and Opera Houses in the first instance (such as age, income and origin for example). The questionnaire then captured data regarding cognitive, affective and conative destination images that this cultural capital stimulates, and these dimensions were also used as general codes initially. These were then revisited leading to the identification of specific themes. For example, the influence of age in the development of cultural capital was an initial code. Further analysis of this resulted in themes indicating that some respondents were introduced to opera at a young age whereas others believe that engagement with the art form may be better focused at more mature stages in life. Hence, a contrasting set of perspectives were identified supporting the evidence analysis presented and discussed below.

EVIDENCE ANALYSIS
The first research objective underpinning this study sets out to understand the factors that influence the development of cultural capital resulting in an interest in opera and Opera Houses. The second research objective focuses on the influence that this type of cultural capital exerts on tourists' perceived destination images from the cognitive, affective and conative dimensions. Therefore, the evidence analysis is structured around this research framework. The first section below presents findings on the role of family and further reference groups, age, level of education, income and origin as salient factors influencing the development of this cultural capital. These are then discussed in line with the conceptual framework on these topics developed in the literature review. The second section of this evidence analysis presents findings on affective images of social belonging, cognitive images of cosmopolitanism and conative images of destination loyalty and engagement with further leisure opportunities that this cultural capital stimulates. These specific findings on destination images influenced by this type of cultural capital are then also discussed and evaluated in line with relevant conceptual frameworks below.

Cultural capital acquisition
In general, respondents mostly agreed that anyone has the capacity to engage with the art of opera as it may harmonise with a range of human emotions and conditions. However, an overarching theme resulting from the evidence analysis was the influence that family members can exert in this engagement: *"I was introduced to opera through my grandmother, whose father was a tenor in the first few decades of the last century. Opera serves as a way to connect to those ancestors of mine, yet also serves as a means of exploring my own humanity"*. The intergenerational transmission of this interest was consistently noted as a cornerstone of the development of this type of cultural capital: *"My grandfather used to sing opera for fun, and then later my father would take me to the opera to learn and enjoy it as he and his dad did"*.

In addition, partners/spouses were also noted as an important influence to consider: *"My partner introduced me to both opera and ballet. I enjoyed both so now it's a central part of our travels"*.

In terms of lifecycle stage, some participants noted that an early introduction can help shape a person's cultural inclinations from childhood which can then be carried into adulthood: *"Careful introduction at a young age sows the seeds of interest, and normalises the art form"*. However, other participants believe that the interest may develop in more mature lifecycle stages as a result of a person's educational background for example*: "Not that people with a higher level of education are naturally more inclined to the genre, but that wider educational opportunities and exposure to high culture means the interest in the genres is more likely to develop"*. Interestingly, a participant highlighted social interactions with a more diverse set of people in Higher Education which may result in the development of the interest: *"Given the lack of importance given to opera and classical music at schools, it becomes more likely to get an interest due to the exposure to people from other backgrounds at University"*. Consequently, with increased levels of education that may lead to a higher income level, opportunities to engage with the art forms are also enhanced: *"As an expensive art form, you gotta have the Bucks to pursue it"*.

The relationship between an individual's cultural background and nationality also surfaced as a factor in the development of cultural capital: *"Germany, Italy and Austria have opera in their cultural DNA more than others. Composers like Beethoven, Verdi or Mozart are national treasures so the average Italian or Austrian probably knows a little more about opera (...) the higher your exposure to classical music, the higher the chance of liking it"*. As noted, many participants associated these cultural settings with the European context. However, this may not necessarily hinder an individual's engagement with these art forms in an increasingly diverse and better-connected global stage: *"It is a primarily Western art form (...) but an appreciation of the art forms is not necessarily a Western one. Opera audiences are becoming more diverse. I think, as with educational background, it is more an issue of exposure and opportunities to experience the art forms, which may be more readily available to Western, educated and more affluent communities"*.

The personal tone adopted by many participants to explain how they acquired their interest in opera spoke of deeply entrenched and cherished family values that ripple through generations strengthening bonds across family members of different ages (DiMaggio, 1982; DiMaggio and Mukhtar, 2004). Hence, this data supports Karlsson's (2005) and Guachalla's (2017) proposed framework on cultural capital enhancing class cohesion as this appears to begin at the family home as the most intimate and readily available reference group (Jeannotte, 2003). This pattern of cultural consumption can indeed be conceptualised as a learnable 'skill' (Honneth, 1986) that parents (and/or grandparents) engender in younger generations as illustrated by the findings above. This can then result in Upright's (2004) positive correlation between cultural capital acquisition and early exposure to cultural produce (Kallunki and Purhonen, 2017). These findings also indicate that this shared interest across family members as primary reference groups influences their cultural consumption patterns as cultural tourists (Parker, 1976; Edensor, 2001). Adding to family influences beyond parents and grandparents, partners and spouses may as well play instrumental roles in this process as noted by some respondents (Upright, 2004), which is more likely to occur in in adulthood. Therefore, early exposure during childhood may derive in a more seamless acquisition of cultural capital (DiMaggio and Mukhtarr, 2004; Kallunki and Purhonen, 2017). However, this evidence highlights that later lifecycle stages may actually provide a better-focused mindset and conscious consumption of

the arts. This is because in adulthood, it can be argued that an individual's decision to engage with cultural products may be more voluntary in nature rather than family induced. This is supported by the sample structure as the least significant age bracket was the youngest (18 to 25 years of age) whereas the majority of respondents belonged to older age groups. These findings, then, indicate that the shared experiences among members of these reference groups result in social cohesion and the development of social capital (Jeannotte, 2003; Guachalla, 2017). Hence, social bonds are strengthened resulting in the development of networks among individuals with shared cultural consumption patterns which produce the demand needed to sustain the staging of opera productions and the operation of the venues that house them (Moscardo *et al.*, 2017; 2001).

Similarly, opportunities to acquire cultural capital in adulthood and exposure to social networks akin to this can occur in Higher Education as indicated by this evidence (Shankar, 2019). Interestingly, the sample structure highlights that the educational attainment by the majority of respondents falls within the Higher Education category at undergraduate, postgraduate and Doctoral levels. This may also derive in a more conscious and better-focused engagement with specific types of cultural products and individuals that are already existing members of the social base sharing this type of cultural capital (Karlsson, 2005). Consequently, these findings suggest that higher educational achievement can result in improved levels of disposable income which may optimise an individual's prospects of accessing opera productions given the parallel relationship between the development of economic and cultural capital (Jarness, 2017). The majority of respondents reported being in employment or retired but this is not a pre-requisite as the contemporary focus of cultural producers (Opera Houses) is to make their productions available to the widest range of individuals through social inclusion and audience development initiatives (Clements, 2016; Guachalla, 2017). This also relates to the sample's structure as the majority of respondents described their disposable income as 'average' and only a small proportion of this sample described it as 'very high'. In spite of this, the finest quality of productions and the optimal experience of these often require higher levels of investment (Prieur and Savage, 2015; Jarness, 2017) as noted by some respondents. This data also highlighted that the 'Western World' and more specifically the European setting provides a richer landscape conducive of these opportunities (Van der Ark and Richards, 2006; Beauvert and Moatti, 1996). Hence, Crotts and McKercher's (2006) framework of cultural appraisal based on cultural proximity is relevant to understanding why the consumption and production of this type of culture is more widespread in certain parts of Europe (Rafael and Almeida, 2017; Tan and Wu, 2016; Kim *et al.*, 2019). Supporting this, the majority of respondents were from within the European/UK context. Hence, the presence of a well-established local market for high-arts products speaks about a destination's focus on developing this type of cultural capital across members of its local population. This evidence highlights that this occurs at an individual's different lifecycle stages and encouraged by different social settings as noted above.

Destination image and Opera Houses

From the affective images perspective, feelings of acceptance and social cohesion between Opera House tourists and local communities that share their appreciation of these art forms is evident*: "Connectivity - I think that it allows you to connect to a city and the people in a new way. Each opera house reflects its location in one way or another"*. This provides exposure to what can be construed as an authentic platform to experience locality within the specific Opera House setting and the local people/tourists it attracts: *"(I feel) At home! I am among a generally like-minded set of people and a stimulating atmosphere". "Community feel. Lots of people coming together at the same time, in the same place, with the same interest"*. Hence, Opera

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Houses appear to provide opportunities to experience a specific aspect of a destination's cultural/social fabric leading to positive images of cohesion enhancing the level of satisfaction with the travel experience: *"Every city has its own unique flavour and Opera Houses exemplify the city's "feeling" in a very palpable way. Although everywhere is different, the genre is the same so I believe people will always have a feeling of comfort (within it)"*.

From the cognitive dimension, some participants noted that Opera Houses lead tourists to shape images of cosmopolitanism and cultural vibrancy both from the Opera House's visual perspective and because of the quality of its cultural produce: *"The legacy and quality of the Opera House compounds the history of the city and its place as a major cosmopolitan and cultural city in the world". "They frequently provide a sense of history for those who are aware of the great performers that previously graced the stage there"*. Opera Houses are perceived by some as signifiers of the destination's cultural landscape and speak to its visitors about the richness of its cultural offer: *"I think it marks London out, together with its many other cultural venues, as a city of high culture and world-class art. It contributes to its image as a centre for culture and music. I don't think the Royal Opera House does this alone, but along with its numerous world-class venues"*. As noted, the role of the UK's leading Opera House blends with wider elements of London's rich portfolio as a destination for cultural consumption.

From the conative (behavioural) perspective, an interest in opera appears to motivate tourists to visit a destination that they may not have otherwise considered: *"I've been to a number of cities that I'd never have visited otherwise just to see performances - Stuttgart, Munich, Moscow and St Petersburg, even Milton Keynes and Southampton"*. The interest also provides opportunities to explore and experience a destination through this specific looking glass: *"They explore Bayreuth from the standpoint of Wagner's engagement with the city and find attractions such as the Opera House or the beautiful surroundings"*. Further images of behavioural opportunities integrate visits to the Opera House with wider consumption and leisure: *"We'll usually have dinner beforehand on a close restaurant (bonus points if it has an operatic name, like Nabucco in Milan or Zarastro in Salzburg)". "I visit museums/exhibitions, go to spoken drama theatre, try other attractions nearby"*. These may result in feelings of loyalty to destinations as tourists seek to repeat positive memorable experiences derived in their cultural interests and their personal memories of the Opera Houses these have taken them to: *"They can provide a real sense of affection and loyalty to a place. They can also make you want to return if you have particularly fond memories of a place"*.

As a shared interest in opera fosters the bonds necessary for the development of social capital (Moscardo *et al.*, 2017), this evidence indicates that Opera House tourists who engage in positive experiences rooted in this interest develop feelings of emotional solidarity. Woosnam *et al.* (2020) contextualise these as affective bonds that result in a sense of togetherness and better integration among members of a particular reference group (Moghavemi *et al.*, 2017) which is in line with what this data communicates. Therefore, this form of cultural capital unravels affective images of destinations rooted in feelings of social belonging and integration among tourists and residents as noted by these findings (Bertella *et al.*, 2018; Erul *et al.*, 2018; Ribeiro *et al.,* 2018). These form the basis of positive and memorable experiences (Akgün *et al.*, 2019; Zhang *et al.*, 2018; Kim, 2018) which can result in feelings of nostalgia that this data indeed suggests (Gao *et al.*, 2020; Cho *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, these settings shape affective images founded upon social cohesion which make Opera House tourists more loyal to these destinations (Anil and Rajendran, 2017; Chen and Rahman, 2018) and the destinations themselves more competitive towards this market (Guzman-Parra *et al.*, 2018; Verma and Rajendran, 2017) as evidenced by the personal tone adopted by some respondents in their

views. Importantly, it should be noted that this evidence builds knowledge on affective images of togetherness and solidarity from the tourist's perspective (Hughes, 2000). However, it is clear that an Opera House provides platforms for the development of social capital and sharing of memorable experiences among members of local audiences in the first instance (Guachalla, 2017). This in turn projects images of how Opera Houses contribute to the destination's cultural activity which primarily benefits local audiences. This leads to the development of the social capital that sustains this type of cultural offer that attracts members of the Opera House tourist market such as the respondents that contributed to this study (Van der Ark and Richards, 2006).

Opera Houses shape cognitive destination images of cosmopolitanism and cultural richness (Swain, 2009) where the Opera House tourist has a wealth of opportunities to consume these art forms which is evident in the messages that this data illustrates (Zhang *et al.*, 2015; Igarashi and Saito, 2014; Prieur and Savage, 2015). They do so through their repertoire and architecture that is often interwoven with the destination's historical development (Beauvert and Moatti, 1996; Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2016). This is noted by some respondents who linked the cultural richness of some destination to their heritage and history in the context of opera. Hence, the evidence suggests that these theatres as tourism suppliers act as platforms for the acquisition of knowledge about the destination's historical development (Hernández-Mogollón *et al.*, 2018; Akgün *et al.*, 2019) as they provide the physical infrastructure required for the production of these art forms (Guachalla, 2017). Importantly, these images of cosmopolitanism catalyse international and domestic tourism flows attracted to performers and performances of the highest quality (Salazar, 2010; Johnson, 2014; Carvalho, 2014). The respondents that informed this study serve as a tangible example of this. As a result, Opera House tourists gather cognitive images (knowledge) about the destination's cultural heritage in the context of opera, the specific cultural flagships where it flourishes from and the talent that drove this development forward (Ceylan and Çizel, 2018; Kim, 2018; Papadimitrou *et al.*, 2018). As noted above, Opera Houses contribute to the destination's visual and cultural landscapes benefitting local audiences and (often) local talent primarily. Therefore, the palpable presence of this type of cultural capital among their local is also fed into the tourist's range of destination images projected by these cultural providers. This is highlighted for example by the respondent who noted the salient and specific role of London's Royal Opera House in the destination's attributes on cultural vibrancy and offer towards a diverse cultural tourism market (Chen and Rahman, 2018).

In terms of conative images, this evidence highlights that the Opera House tourists' interests leads them to integrate their attendance to performances with other forms of cultural/leisure consumption providing further influences on their destination image development process. This may relate to theatres' location in areas that provide these opportunities (Todorović *et al.*, 2018) illustrating Hughes' (2002) framework on arts primary/multi-primary framework on the centrality of a visit to a performing arts event (Zheng and Ritchie, 2020). Therefore, this data can be linked to Quinn's (2010) notion on the positive and mutually beneficial relationship between cultural capital and destination development as these tourists also engage in other conative behaviours related to leisure and consumption. These findings indicate that this interest does indeed exert a significant influence on behavioural intentions rooted in images of opportunities to complement a visit to the theatre with other elements of the travel experience (Van der Zande, 2016). Consequently, these positive affective, cognitive and conative images effectively enhance the tourist's overall perception of the destination as a place where they feel integrated, worldly and at freedom to pursue an interest that may be of an extremely personal and human nature to them (Chen and Rahman, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

This research concludes that an interest in opera is firstly nurtured as cultural capital in the family home as key family members cultivate its appreciation among their young. This may also be driven by spouses/partners suggesting that exposure in more mature stages of life may result in a more conscious and voluntary engagement with this type of cultural resources. The pursuit of Higher Education provides opportunities for socialisation with other individuals that may also play a role in this process. Higher Education may also increase levels of disposable income enhancing experiences of opera as they may require higher levels of financial expenditure. These pursuits result in strengthened bonds and social cohesion founded upon shared positive and memorable experiences among members of reference groups related to an individual's family structure or social class. Opportunities for early exposure and engagement with opera are richer in specific parts of the globe. Certain parts of Europe have these art forms ingrained as part of their cultural lineage as the birthplaces of many world-renowned opera composers whose work are cornerstones of this genre. This legacy is also evidenced in the presence of Opera Houses rich in history and heritage that catalyse social dynamics, nurture talent and provide the spaces needed to stage opera productions of the finest quality. These venues have often developed and aged alongside the destinations where they are set, which enables exposure and normalises cultural consumption among members of these social settings. Hence, cultural proximity also plays a fundamental role in the development of this type of cultural capital. However, appreciation for these arts can also be nurtured and trained beyond the barriers of cultural distance. Major Opera Houses and people that support their work, artists and audiences alike, are also found in different parts of the world which have broadened the reach of a musical genre that primarily originated and flourished within the European context.

The tunes of opera have influenced the visual landscape of many destinations as Opera Houses harmonise messages of cosmopolitanism and enrich the network of elements that shape their destination image as culturally vibrant places. From a cognitive perspective, Opera House tourists learn that these destinations have the resources to enable them to appreciate performances by the finest talent at longstanding venues rich in heritage. Opera Houses, then, speak about the destination's cultural fabric and firmly established traditions on art forms that these tourists highly cherish which primarily benefits local communities. Attending these performances results in affective images of togetherness and social cohesion as tourists share experiences with local audiences and other tourists who place a similar value to the appreciation of these art forms. As cultural capital development is directly influenced by family, social and further reference groups, the value placed on shared experiences with members of these groups cements the significance of these affective images. Hence, images of emotional solidarity also actively feed into their destination image formation as shared experiences result in the development of the social capital needed to sustain the production of these works and the operation of these venues. Conative images of consumption of other forms of culture and engagement with leisure activities that complement visits to the Opera House are also linked to this process with opportunities to engage in further cultural consumption and leisurely pursuits.

Practical implications and recommendations

This study has contributed to literature on urban and city tourism specifically as Opera Houses typically sit within urban settings. It has generated knowledge on the factors that influence the development of cultural capital in the specific context of opera and Opera houses as it has also evaluated how this capital stimulates destination images from the cognitive, affective and conative dimensions. This has also yielded practical implications on cultural policy and tourism business practice. From the cultural capital development perspective, this study confirms the

need for cultural policy and audience development initiatives that provide the support and resources necessary to develop both demand and supply of this type of cultural produce. This is in light of the fact that respondents highlighted a range of conditioning factors that result in the development of this cultural capital. Hence, policy should aim at nurturing an interest in these cultural pursuits among young generations which results in social capital development. In this sense, demand for these cultural products is sustained at destinations from the local perspective which occurs when individuals are granted exposure and familiarity with them, particularly at a young age as noted by the evidence. Hence, if local demand is warranted and catered for, tourism-related benefits would unravel as a result. This study highlights that there clearly is an ample market for these opera productions as evidenced by widespread global engagement with online opera streaming services. Therefore, and in addition to developing future generations of opera and ballet goers, policy should aim at nurturing opera and ballet performers that would succeed in attracting audiences with high expectations and quality thresholds. Naturally, an individual would seek to develop these skills as a result of having developed this type of cultural capital themselves.

A second practical implication refers to the data evidencing that many Opera Houses are set in popular tourism precincts and integrate with a destination's visual and cultural landscapes. As many respondents noted their cultural and historical significance, preservation efforts of these buildings are fundamental. Ensuring that their visual appeal reflects a careful approach to preserving their heritage should remain a priority as this speaks of how important their activity is for the nation's cultural fabric. The development of this specific segment of the cultural tourism market would be a tangible and positive result of this focus. Finally, the high-arts and the venues that house them should continue to be used by tourism practitioners as effective tools to stimulate the positive images that this research has studied. This is rooted in the evidence analysis that strongly cements the social value of engagement with cultural pursuits and shared experiences between tourists and locals. Hence, the enjoyment of celebrated productions of well-known works delivered by the finest talent at world-class venues should be used as culturally vibrant packages to develop this tourist market. But in addition, opportunities for feelings of togetherness, a shared sense of belonging with locals and a socially cohesive experience should also be highlighted as benefits of engaging with these cultural pursuits.

This study has tested the use of questionnaires in qualitative research as rich material was captured about cultural capital and destination image – subjects that may be of a deeply personal nature and therefore complex to study. The substance of the data obtained highlights the benefits of allowing individuals to reflect on the questions asked and respond at their own pace but further probing was not feasible. Hence, the lack of personal rapport with respondents suggests that more could have been drawn from individuals engaging with the research. This methodological limitation was mitigated through the use of an ample pool of 226 completed questionnaires, which constitutes a significant sample for a qualitative study but not all questionnaires yielded substantial qualitative data. This provides opportunities for future studies on cultural capital and destination image to use further qualitative and innovative approaches. For example, photo-elicitation, personal diaries and ethnographies could be applied using a case study approach as this research has not focused on the case of a specific Opera House. It should also be noted that this study has approached the destination image development process from the angle that captures how a specific type of cultural capital influences perceived images of destinations. However, there is also scope for studying this process using the chronological perspective by evaluating images of Opera Houses and the destinations that home them pre-visit, on-site and post-visit. Finally, this research has also

gathered data from ballet enthusiasts as this art form is often interchangeably performed at Opera Houses. But ballet is a distinct art form as such. Therefore, further studies could focus specifically on either the opera or ballet tourist markets and how a deeply held interest in these art forms shape people's perceptions and experiences of destinations that match the requirements of their cultural capital and cultural needs.

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