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Identifying motivations of archaeological sites visitors

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ABSTRACT

Up until today archaeological sites have been cornered due to custodianship policies. Although archaeological sites were built up thousands of years ago, it is important they now have a commercial perspective that at first identifies consumers' perceptions for after conceiving the commodification process. There has been a lack of customer orientation in the design of their public fitting out even though in the last decade visitor orientation has appeared to be of important relevance for the management of these heritage resources. The purpose of this paper is to recognize the main pull and push factors that induce visits to archaeological

sites. It seeks to reveal how the identification of the motivation factors influences the conceptualization of a future “sustainable global value chain” for archaeological sites. This paper argues that if motivation factors are considered for the commodification process it will enable the sustainability of archaeological sites and therefore visitors’ satisfaction.

Keywords: tourist motivations; push and pull factors; tourism; sustainability; commodification; archaeological sites; heritage products; open-air museums.

La identificación de motivaciones de los visitantes de los sitios arqueológicos

RESUMEN

Hasta la fecha, los sitios arqueológicos han sido arrinconados por las políticas de conservación. Aunque los sitios arqueológicos se crearon hace miles de años, en la actualidad adquieren importancia desde un punto de vista comercial. En el diseño de su instalación pública, con frecuencia ha habido una falta de orientación al cliente a pesar de que la orientación al visitante en la última década ha resultado ser de gran relevancia para la gestión de estos recursos patrimoniales. El propósito de este trabajo es reconocer los principales factores de empuje y arrastre que inducen a las visitas a sitios arqueológicos. Se pretende mostrar cómo la identificación de los factores de motivación influyen en la concepción de una futura “cadena de valor global sostenible” para los sitios arqueológicos. Este trabajo sostiene que si los factores de motivación son considerados para el proceso de mercantilización se permitirá la sostenibilidad de los sitios arqueológicos y por lo tanto una mayor satisfacción de los visitantes.

Palabras clave: motivaciones turísticas; factores de empuje y arrastre; turismo, sostenibilidad; sitios arqueológicos; patrimonio cultural; museos al aire libre.

Summary: 1. Introduction 2. The commodification process 3. Customer satisfaction and motivation factors 4. Push factors. 5. Pull factors 6. Conclusions. References.

1. INTRODUCTION

It was in the 1950s when marketing began to be considered as an academic discipline at the same time that the first evidences of heritage marketing appeared (Tilden, 1957). For the last forty years marketing of culture has faced a deep evolution which started to be developed in a romantic perspective of arts. From this point of view, marketing strategies could not be applied during the moment of commodification because it was considered that the use of marketing tools could manipulate the final product meaning its trivialization in order to reach a broader

audience (Azuela, Sanzo and Fernández, 2010). Contradictorily, strategic objectives of that time were more focused on increasing visitation rather than recognizing the specific limitations of each destination (Buhalis, 1999). Table 1 outlines the most remarkable researches that define the evolution of sustainable heritage tourism.

During the beginning of the 70s, preservation merged as an important goal for all stakeholders and few years after this situation led in ecological and political changes of many countries. It was not until the 90s, when the notion 'heritage product' consolidated, that the challenge of accomplishing sustainable tourism principles was affronted (Eber, 1992). The conservation of heritage assets became fundamental due to their exclusive nature (Buhalis, 1999). Heritage marketing seemed to have risen as a way to educate the audience in conservation policies. In this regard, the uniqueness of these resources materialized as an economic justification for conservation costs (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990; Christou, 2005).

Consequently, all heritage attractions began to analyze all kind of funding systems and accordingly the commodification of these assets turned out to be of significant relevance (Fyall and Garrod, 1998; Willis, 1994). However, the capacity of bringing investments has always depended on the level of consciousness that exists about the value of these resources (Bachiller, 1994). According to relational approaches during the commodification process, Misiura (2006) maintains that the first insights of heritage marketing were only linked to customer loyalty. Boorsma (2006) affirms that it has been recently when customers' involvement is considered for the value creation process. This perspective has changed due to the shift that some museums have made to adapt their preservation objectives to customer orientation (Gürel and Kavak, 2010; Harrison and Shaw, 2004).

Museum and archaeological sites managers have started to consider indispensable visitors' satisfaction because of its influence for repeated visits (Harrison and Shaw, 2004) and consequently, the long-term future for this kind of tourism. Thereupon, visitor satisfaction seems to be nowadays a primary goal in archaeological sites management (Harrison and Shaw, 2004) as it is the only path towards building loyalty (Codina, Fransi and Thorsson, 2004).

Table 1: The evolution of sustainable heritage tourism

AUTHOR	APPLICATION CONTEXT	RELATIONS WITH MARKETING	
1st STAGE: First sustainability worries + marketing tools			
Gilbert (1939)	Product orientation	Destination life cycle theories.	
Tilden (1957)		Definition of interpretation.	
Diggle (1976)		Marketing tools.	
Butler (1980)		Destination life cycle theories.	
2nd STAGE: Organizational management			
Getz (1983)	Product orientation.	Carrying capacity limits.	
O'Reilly (1986)		Conceptualization of experiential cultural tourism.	
Tighe (1986)			
Cohen (1988)			
3rd STAGE: Organizational philosophy			
Ashworth and Tunbridge (1990)	Product orientation.	Definition of heritage products and cultural tourism as an expanding trend.	
Walsh (1992)			
Boniface and Fowler (1993)			
Prentice (1993)			
Willis (1994)			
Shkade and Payne (1994)		Pricing the entrance of heritage sites.	
Moscardo (1996)		Market research plays an important role in the design of the interpretation of the site.	
van der Borg, Costa and Gotti (1996)		Visitor's management	
Agarwal (1997)		Balance between product and market orientation	Destination life cycle theories
Goulding (1999)			Types of behaviours.
Gilmore and Rentschler (2002)	Focus on audience attraction		
Russo (2002)	Destination life cycle theories		
Boorsma (2006)	Market orientation	Consumer participation in the commodification process.	
Fullerton, McGettigan and Stephens (2010)		Management and marketing practices.	
Bashar and Abdelnaser (2011)		Types of motivations.	

2. THE COMMODIFICATION PROCESS

Archaeological sites could be defined as heritage products where managers and marketers create a combination between ecological and cultural features and have a special concern for preservation. Archaeological sites began to be considered as open-air museums in the 70s', in other words, as marketable products (Ashworth, 1994, p.14), when archaeologists started to employ them as a procedure for testing experimental activities and for promoting the development of local communities (Pociovalisteanu and Niculescu, 2010).

The commodification process of archaeological sites is resumed by Pérez-Juez (2006) in two phases: 1) intervention; and 2) interpretation. The intervention stage must start with an analysis of carrying capacity limits before considering if the site is to be restored –consolidated or reconstructed- or safeguarded. Once this phase is accomplished, the next stage is the design of the public fitting-out –called 'interpretation' from a curatorial point of view. For this phase it is necessary the elaboration of a market research to later develop they key differentiation factors that compose the site (Christou, 2005) which are: a) the museum layout; and b) the design of the services and products.

During the commodification process it is essential to be guided by the principle of anticipation (Misiura, 2006). The value creation process is a result of:

Market research as it predicts visitors' behaviours and motivations (Christou, 2005, p.12; Misiura, 2006, p.1; Recuero, Blasco and García de Madariaga, 2011) and permits market segmentation (Misiura, 2006, p.15) and;

Analyzing carrying capacity limits (Chhabra, 2010) as it determines the lifecycle stage the product is experimenting.

As previously mentioned, preservation objectives are the main goal for managers of archaeological sites because it guarantees the sustainability of the archaeological site. Although the lack of universal accepted tools for managing carrying capacity limits, it is a fundamental measure so as to take into account the number of tourists that can visit a site before it is deteriorated (Pociovalisteanu and Niculescu, 2010; Russo, 2002). On this point, popularity is not an indicator of successful heritage tourism as it points to high levels of visitation rather than satisfaction (McKercher, Ho and du Cros, 2005).

Gilmore and Rentschler (2002) assert that all the staff is responsible of the implementation and delivery of the service package. To that end, the development of the competitive skills is necessary as well as the communication and cooperation between stakeholders (Gilmore and Rentschler, 2002). In addition, community involvement and participation of all stakeholders in the decision making process is crucial for achieving sustainability (Pociovalisteanu and Niculescu, 2010).

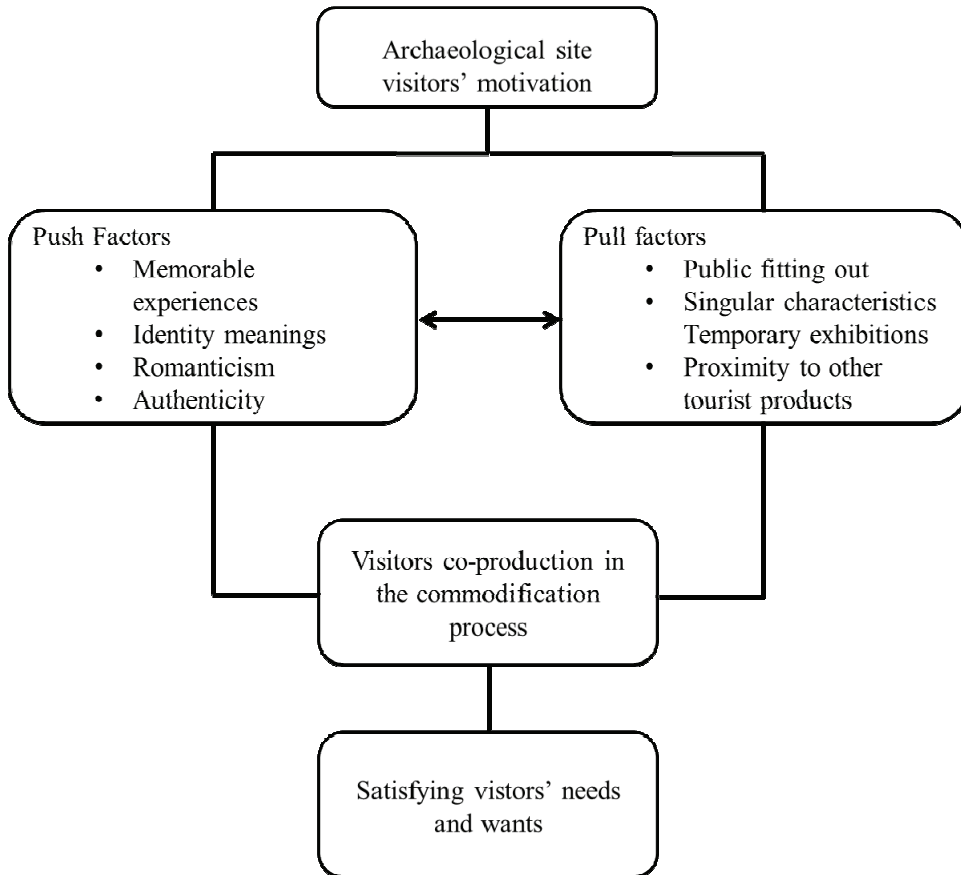
3. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND MOTIVATION FACTORS

Visitors' satisfaction relies not only in the cost- benefit trade-off but, in the key elements that compound the service package. Furthermore, satisfaction should be considered as an evaluative state that implies a cumulative process (Harrison and Shaw, 2004). Customers' satisfaction of archaeological sites is directly related to the artistic experience. Tourists' experiences in museums started to be studied in 90s (Goulding, 1999; McLean, 1994) as a result of the search of interactive, multisensory and memorable experiences (Lehn, 2006).

It has been evidenced that cultural tourists' motivations are linked to cognitive matters (Apostolakis, 2003; Bashar and Abdelnaser, 2011; Goulding, 2000; Moscardo, 1996). Tourists are increasingly demanding for self-realization (Hayes and MacLeod, 2007). To this effect, Beerli and Martin (2004) define motivation as "a need that drives an individual to act in a certain way to achieve to the desired satisfaction" (p.626). In this sense, tourist motivation can be defined as an internal driving force that induces the search of a travel experience that brings visitors psychological equilibrium (Ashworth, 1994; Bashar and Abdelnaser, 2011). Therefore, psychographic segmentation is required (Fullerton, McGettigan and Stephens, 2010).

Motivations can be distinguished in two influences: push and pull factors. In order to set up a positive image of the destination, matching push and pull factors motives is necessary (Bashar and Abdelnaser, 2011). Push factors are connected to cognitive considerations. In this respect, it has been evidenced that motivations for visiting an archaeological site have been predominantly focused on the search of the following push factors: 1) memorable experiences; 2) identity meanings; 3) romanticism; and 4) authenticity. On the other hand, pull factors are linked to the location's characteristics such as focusing on certain objects or attributes (Apostolakis, 2003; Bashar and Abdelnaser, 2011; Kim and Lee, 2001). In the case of archaeological sites, pull factors have been basically related to: 1) public fitting out; 2) singular characteristics of archaeological nature; 3) temporary exhibitions; and 4) proximity to other tourist products. The most important objective of the present research is to make a contribution by introducing the main push and pull factors of archaeological site visitors (see Figure 1) to the conceptualization of a future "sustainable global value chain" for these open-air museums.

Figure 1: Conforming the sustainable global chain for archaeological sites



4. PUSH FACTORS

4.1. Memorable experiences

Tourists increasingly need the immersion to self-tailored experiences. These experiences are meant to be unique, different, intense and not subject of substitutability (Hayes and MacLeod, 2007; Leighton, 2007; Mihelj, 2010; Pérez-Juez, 2010). Visits to archaeological sites have increased due to tourists desires of rediscovering the past in an interactive way that makes them use their five senses (Pociovalisteanu and Niculescu, 2010; Prideaux and Kinimont, 1999).

In recent years tourists' desires of reviving the past have been used as a major marketing tool (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990; Pociovalisteanu and Niculescu,

2010; Prideaux and Kininmont, 1999). This new hedonist society is expecting a continuous renovation of their vital experiences (Pérez-Juez, 2010).

It has been argued that experiences are composed of four realms: entertainment, escapist, aesthetic and educational (Hayes and MacLeod, 2007). As a consequence, there has been a growing interest in the ‘embodied and multisensory experiences’ of leisure environments. These studies try to reveal how cognitive factors influence the experience but they hardly examine how the tourist is involved and to what extent this body interaction shapes the experience (Lehn, 2006). For that reason, it is recommended an augment on video-recordings researches.

Then again enculturation seems to have influenced the search for the authentic cultural experience (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999). It seems that commodification has shaped the McDonaldization of culture. McIntosh and Prentice (1999) state that heritage products proffer feelings and emotions that configure the experiences. More precise is the notion offered by Hayes and MacLeod (2007, p.45) which affirms that “services are being re-packed and presented as experiences”. However, the positive satisfaction of these experiences will depend on tourists’ personal interests, previous experiences and knowledge. In this connection, it can be affirmed that visitors are co-producers of their own experiences (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999). Hence, experiential learning is crucial as it enrolls tourists actively in the visit (Mihelj, 2010) and it has always been considered by archaeologists as the main aim of these open-air museums.

4.2. Identity meanings

The proliferation of identity and symbolic values in heritage contexts has been always regarded as a mean for social cohesion (De Esteban, 2010, p.126; Misiura, 2006, p.14; Pérez-Juez, 2010). The experience economy characterizes for valuing present and past communities’ assets (Hayes and MacLeod, 2007; Misiura, 2006). In this regard, identity meanings have signified the key differentiation factor of many heritage products as these values emphasize the uniqueness of these assets. By contrast, the McDonaldization of culture has led to the standardization of experiences by supplanting cultural identities (Cohen-Hattab and Kerber, 2004). This situation has meant a significant devaluation of tourists’ satisfaction. Furthermore, it has implied in many cases a social disorientation because of the loss of the collective memory (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990, p.17; Cole, 2007) and moreover the no-fulfilment of sustainable tourism principles (Eber, 1992).

Identity and symbolic meanings can bring socio-psychological stability to individuals due to their pedagogic discourse but they can also have dangerous political implications (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990). Therefore, commodification can be used to affirm local identity, adapt it to reinvent the story or shape it to give a higher significance to the tourist experience (Cole, 2007). The commodification of archaeological sites can be manipulated to adjust it to the desired identity values.

However, tourists' presence in archaeological sites stimulates the collective conscientiousness of identity and reinforces local pride (De Esteban, 2010).

4.3. Romanticism

Romanticism as a push factor in archaeological sites, is linked to the nostalgic consumption of the past. The commercialization of nostalgia has become the big business of the actual leisure industry (Goulding, 2001). According to the consumer-behaviour literature, nostalgia is described as a desire that tourists of developed countries feel due to their need of running away from modernity (Pociovalisteanu and Niculescu, 2010). This definition connects to the escapist realm of the tourist experience (Hayes and MacLeod, 2007).

Tourists are searching for reliving the past at least during the time they spend visiting the site (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990, p.10; Chhabra, 2010; Goulding, 2001). In this aspect, nostalgia is related to identity meanings as it connects visitors with their roots and origins (Misiura, 2006, p.17). Also as a consequence of nostalgia motivations, authenticity qualities in archaeological sites are appreciated as one of the main reasons for fulfilling tourists' preferences.

Although tourists' motivations can differ significantly across markets, in general visitors of archaeological sites seek for preserved sites which interpretation can derive them in an educative experience (Pociovalisteanu and Niculescu, 2010). So, as Chhabra, Healy and Sills (2003, p.705) maintain, heritage products are "created and re-created from surviving memories, artefacts and sites of the past to serve contemporary demand".

In the escapist sense where tourists 'return home', nostalgic motivations are related to social, recreational or educational purposes (Goulding, 2001). As nostalgia can be described as an experiential factor that can lead in many manifestations, marketers should focus on generating a positive emotional response in the audience (Misiura, 2006) by analysing the components of the tourists' reactions (Goulding, 2001). Therefore, understanding consumers' preferences relative to nostalgia is essential in order to commodify the heritage product. Otherwise the archaeological site can be so over-interpreted that does not permit anything to imagination or so poorly interpreted that detracts visitors not permitting them an imaginative escape (Goulding, 2001).

4.4. Authenticity

Authenticity refers to the genuineness of the experience and the historical accuracy of interpretation (Chhabra, Healy and Sills, 2003; Prentice, 2001). Authentic experiences can be obtainable in countless means: through learning processes, spectacles, guided tours, exhibits, etc. (Prentice, 2001). In this respect, Waller and Lea (1999) indicate that tourists perceive authentic experiences if: a) there is a direct

contact between tourists and the destination; b) it is not an overcrowded destination; c) they feel independent; and d) the destination conforms the stereotypes of the country. On the other hand, authenticity is a very controversial topic regarding its commodification as many authors consider that the product is no longer authentic once the packaging has altered the nature of the resource no matter to what extent.

During the last years, managers of heritage products have 'borrowed' ideas for the commodification process from their contemporaries leading in the 'homogenisation' of tourists' spaces and the loss of the cultural sign value of the destination (Richards and Wilson, 2006). This practice has been conceptualized as 'staged authenticity' and it has been argued to be the adaptation of heritage products to current times (Chhabra, Healy and Sills, 2003; Richards and Wilson, 2006). Some authors have supported this practice affirming that it creates more appealing and accessible packages (Apostolakis, 2003; Fullerton, McGettigan and Stephens, 2010). However, it can be discussed that these 'serial monotony' can be due to the recent flood of new cultural attractions and the little time spent in their commodification processes.

The avoidance of serial reproduction of these 'cathedrals of consumption' can raise their aesthetic value, apart from eluding the McGuggenheimisation of cultural experiences (Richards and Wilson, 2006). Stimulating creative innovation where visitors are considered co-producers of the commodification process based on an accurate interpretation of the sites tends to proffer more suitable interactive, emotional, distinctive, interactive and individual experiences.

5. PULL FACTORS

5.1. Public fitting out

Although the public fitting out is a phase of the commodification process, which has been previously explained as a motivator pull factor, is linked to the appealingness of: a) the museum layout; and b) the services and products that are offered in the site. For this reason, cultural tourists' motivations have to be considered. With the purpose of setting up the basis of the commodification process. As already pointed out this stage is also known as 'interpretation' - a phase where heritage sites are converted into understandable and meaningful products.

During the museum layout the three following components have to be defined:

Facilities: toilets, cafeteria area, rest areas, left-luggage offices, ticket office, above other.

Physical accessibility. Implies the real possibility of visiting, walking around and staying in the archaeological site.

Intelligible information. The information proffered in the archaeological site can be comprehended by all publics (including the information proffered in educative videos, signage, etc.).

At the stage of the design of the services and products, three important issues have to be considered:

Sale of goods and services. The goods that are sold can be handicrafts, merchandising, tourist guides, etc. These commodities can be sold in a shop inside the archaeological, by electronic commerce, among other means. In contrast, the services that can be offered in the heritage product can be spectacles, temporal exhibitions, and recreational workshops, among others.

Types of visits. There are many different types of visits such as night visits, specialized visits, guided visits, repeated visits, visits exclusively guided with an archaeologist, etc.

Visitor management. Include activities such as time management, management of previous booking systems, zoning, imposing a normative for the visit, etc.

The attractiveness of the archaeological sites depends heavily in decisions that where taken during the commodification process. An efficient interpretation relieves pressure on the heritage product as well as educates visitors and provides a positive experience (Moscardo, 1996). The main objective of this phase is to tell effectively and accurately the story and make the experience participatory (McKercher, Ho and du Cros, 2002).

5.2. Singular characteristics of archaeological nature

The desirability of visiting heritage products not only relies on the decisions undertaken during the commodification process, but also on the particular characteristics of the site. Not all archaeological sites distinguish for being of singular nature, but the sites that have a particular feature have a more exclusive appeal. The uniqueness and originality of the characteristics of archaeological nature can be due to:

The structure. The archaeological site can be monumental or have an atypical structure.

The location. The geological environment where the archaeological site is physically located (necropolis, mountain, precipice, etc.) has some peculiarity.

The uniqueness of the site is a combination of the physical resources, the social capital and the knowledge that the site proffers. In this sense, traditions also compose the uniqueness of the heritage product (Richards, 2011). However, this uniqueness as a pull motivation factor only refers to the attractiveness of the physical resources. The exclusivity of the singular characteristics of archaeological nature that some sites may have contradicts the 'serial reproduction' that defines the actual 'cathedrals of consumption'. Furthermore, these resources are to be preserved. As Garrod and Fyall

(2000, p.699) maintain “a unique heritage asset should be conserved at almost any cost”.

5.3. Temporary exhibitions

Temporary exhibitions in archaeological sites are punctual expositions of materials that were found in the place or in similar contexts. Exhibits – either permanent or temporary- are one of the multiple services that an archaeological site offers. These punctual exhibitions tend to re-invent these heritage products and add value to their attractiveness. Interactive exhibitions are preferred to traditional ones as tourists learn more when they participate in the experience (Moscardo, 1996). Even in the case these punctual expositions are not interactive exhibitions they conform part of the effective promotion strategies. Moreover, they are associated to the pedagogical programs of archaeological sites (Gilmore and Rentschler, 2002; Lehn, 2006).

Furthermore, exhibitions raise awareness between all stakeholders about the relevance of guaranteeing sustainability in archaeological contexts. As Chhabra (2010) holds that the response of heritage product managers to the increasing demand of consumer preferences to meaningful experiences has been to offer exhibits. In this respect, Poria, Butler and Airey (2006) suggest that in order to improve visitors' experiences it rather be studied the relationship between the visitors and the artefacts or spaces.

5.4. Proximity to other tourist products

Another interesting appeal for tourists to visit archaeological sites is when there is a short distance between the archaeological site and other tourist product. It has been proved that the nearness to other tourist products influences the visit to certain heritage products (Poria, Butler and Airey, 2006). Moreover, the closeness of tourist products can enhance sale and promotion of merchandising (Chhabra, 2010). However, if these are located in peripheral areas managers must focus on inducing their uniqueness and differentness and on gaining local community support (Prideaux, 2002).

6. CONCLUSIONS

Today's visitors are demanding for unique self-tailored experiences, in other words, services that suit their needs and preferences (Hayes and MacLeod, 2007). In this respect, De Esteban adds (2010) that the quality of visits depend on the state of preservation of the cultural assets. For that reason, archaeological sites managers must deal with satisfying consumer expectations at the same time that they manage visitors' impacts without compromising the authenticity of the experience (Fyall and

Garrod, 1998). So as to configure the core customer value, the fulfilment of sustainable tourism principles in the management of heritage products is a must (Butler, 1980; Eber, 1992; Recuero, García de Madariaga and Blasco, 2011).

According to Boorsma (2006), value creation is more focused on frequent customers that bring large amounts of revenue rather than broadening scope to all cultural consumers. Codina, Fransi and Thorsson (2004, p.21) identify a lack of education among marketing strategies between museum managers that would signify an important improvement in achieving customers' loyalty. To this effect, the commodification process has to be adapted to both the preferences of tourists with high cultural skills and the expectations of occasional tourists. Furthermore, managers should develop educational programs during the commodification With the intention of satisfying non-specialist consumers and involving them in the process of commodifying the site (Boorsma, 2006). In this respect, social interaction while visiting a temporal exhibition seems to be a key factor to enhance the attractiveness and educational value of the heritage product (Lehn, 2006).

Additionally, Boorsma (2006) considers the consumer as a co-designer of the art product as the interaction between art consumers and the organization maximizes the final product, for example, by the developing new services or by recognizing recent needs of different market segments.

The actual need of satisfying customers has implied a continuous needs-assessment (Gürel and Kavak, 2010). Marketers are constantly looking for strategies that build up loyalty across reassessing the composition of the service package with the aim of improving customers' experiences. However, it is important to point out that there are some artistic productions that cannot be subdued to marketing rules during the commodification process because this could mean the loss of many valuable resources of arts legacy (Azuela, Sanzo and Fernández, 2010). Nevertheless, it is crucial to adopt a customer orientation inspired in relational perspective so that consumers can feedback their satisfaction. So as to improve the competitiveness of the resource package (Azuela, Sanzo and Fernández, 2010).

Moreover, the discourse of these open-air museums is flexible and dynamic and depends on the constant actualization and renovation of the exposed information (Pérez-Juez, 2010, p.33). As Ashworth (1994, p.16) states "heritage is a contemporary commodity purposefully created to satisfy contemporary consumption".

On this matter, Boorsma (2006, p.73) argues that consumers should be viewed as co-producers in the production process and therefore, marketing should concentrate on the core customer value that is the artistic experience. Adopting visitors' preferences, needs, interests and perceptions in order to set the commodification of these open-air museums as well the services offering is essential in their quest for sustainability (Lehn, 2006; Recuero, García de Madariaga and Blasco, 2011).

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