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Opera as personal heritage in tourism

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I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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This is an original manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in Journal of Leisure Research. available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00222216.2023.2193185>
DOI number 10.1080/00222216.2023.2193185 Published.”

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Abstract

The role of music in personal heritage development and its influence on tourism activity is an area that remains under-researched by leisure and tourism studies. The case of opera in this context is complex given the genre's reputation as elitist and that its consumption is more widespread within certain regions of the world. This study evaluated the factors that stimulate the development of this type of personal musical heritage and its role in the Opera House tourist's engagement with cultural provisions at the destinations they visit. To this end, written qualitative data was captured from 226 Opera House tourists. Findings indicated that family members, age, income, level of education and origin play conditioning roles that position opera as an element of these tourists' personal heritage. This heritage in turn may act as an instrumental gateway to experience specific destination attributes associated with the consumption of opera as a leisurely pursuit.

Keywords: Personal heritage, Music tourism, Opera houses

Figure 1

Graphical abstract – see page 39

Figure 2

Sample structure (226 respondents) – See page 39

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Topic guide – See page 40

Opera as personal heritage in tourism.

A tourist's engagement with specific types of leisure activities may elicit a range of emotional responses and actively structure memorable experiences as these pursuits may be founded upon each person's attachments to family connections, social practices and further legacies (Bond & Falk, 2013; Fortuna, 2013; Prayag & del Chiapa, 2021). Music can play a salient role in this process as musical resources might carry personal and social connotations; and acquire affective qualities that can position them as an important component of an individual's personal heritage (Garrido & Davidson, 2019). Specifically, opera as a musical genre developed over the course of many centuries, particularly in certain regions of the world, and is generally categorised within the classical musical spectrum of cultural resources. However, research on leisure and tourism has not yet focused on this genre's specific role in personal heritage development or the factors that influence it. The study of this subject area acquires levels of complexity since cultural consumption of opera productions tends to be associated with the genre's perceived elitist reputation as accessible only to those who can afford to pursue a costly cultural interest (Benzecry, 2009; Prior, 2013). In addition, engagement with this type of music and its associated practices may not only speak of deeply entrenched personal heritage (Timoney, 2020). It can also result in travel patterns that take individuals to opera productions that they connect and feel a sense of attachment with from a wider cultural perspective (Marschall, 2015). Hence, a person's musical taste may not only be rooted in family bonds and traditions, but also in national identities and civic values (Falk et al., 2011; Mallach, 2007).

This study aimed to bring these notions on personal heritage development, cultural distance and tourism together and bridge the gap in knowledge on the role of opera in

personal heritage development and how this heritage influences an individual's engagement with the genre through tourism. These objectives were achieved by firstly, evaluating the factors that influence a person's exposure to the art form to the extent that it becomes part of their personal heritage. As this research was conducted within a tourism context and opera is more widespread in specific regions of the world, this study also set out to assess the role of cultural distance with opera as a cultural resource in personal heritage development. Finally, this study aimed to evaluate how cultural tourism and a destination's cultural attributes associated with the production and consumption of opera assist individuals in engaging with this personal heritage.

Literature review

Given the research objectives established above, the conceptual framework developed to inform the study from a theoretical perspective drew from literature that reflects the subject areas of enquiry. As the first objective focused on influential factors that facilitate the development of opera as personal musical heritage, the first section of the literature review discusses personal heritage development with a specific focus on opera as a cultural resource. The second objective sought to evaluate the significance of cultural affinity and cultural distance on the tourist's engagement with the art form and the literature review explores this in the context of engagement with this type of cultural consumption and the factors that influence it. The last section of the conceptual framework informs how a destination's cultural portfolio may attract tourists that seek to engage with their personal musical heritage in line with the third objective established for this study.

Personal heritage development

The notion of personal heritage was approached by Bond & Falk (2013) who framed this concept as an individual's distinct set of traditions and cultural values. These are typically inherited through family relations and social reference groups, and they catalyse feelings of belonging and attachment to specific sites, artefacts, communities and practices. Marschall (2012) noted that engagement with heritage resources often derives from firmly ingrained memories of valuable family connections and life experiences. The author asserted that “personal heritage tourism can perhaps best be described as a search for roots and identity and is centred upon sites associated with one's family or community heritage” (p. 329) (Park et al., 2019). Given the central significance of social influences in an individual's engagement with different forms of culture (Fortuna, 2013), it becomes clear that the person's family upbringing and settings play an instrumental part as an individual's most readily available and immediate social reference group (Bond & Falk, 2013; McDonald, 2011; Prayag & del Chiapa, 2021).

Prince (2021) highlighted the catalyst role that cultural tourism may play in stimulating memories of family traditions and practices, ranging from the rigid and formal to the ordinary and mundane, as these practices may be assigned significant values by each individual (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Rodzi et al., 2013). The consumption of specific types of music may be linked to these family practices. Hence, Gustafsson et al. (2020) concluded that tourist experiences can strengthen bonds across family members (Hilbrecht et al., 2008) as Bojanic (2011) evidenced the direct link between family influences and tourist behaviours as reflected in their spending patterns, choice of destinations and leisurely pursuits (Bond & Falk, 2013). McDonald (2011) also identified the critical importance of family legacies in the development of personal heritage that manifests itself through tourism activity and leisure

activities associated with cultural consumption (Marschall, 2012, 2015; Timoney, 2020). In turn, tourism activity may present opportunities to rekindle and better understand family values which either consciously or unconsciously do exert an influence on an individual's preferences as materialised in the leisure experiences they seek as tourists (Gustafsson et al., 2020; Hilbrecht et al., 2008). The notion that this personal heritage may actively influence an individual's travel preferences was also supported by Prince (2021) who highlighted the affective connotations that engagement with cultural resources and tourist experiences unravel as these serve as gateways to an individual's past including their family legacies (Timoney, 2020). These affective elements can be rooted in the appreciation of certain genres of music such as opera (Garrido & Davidson, 2019), as discussed below.

Opera as personal heritage

The assessment of factors that engender an individual's interest in opera inevitably invites an evaluation of the socio-demographic indicators that may act as conditioning elements for the development of this type of personal musical heritage (Kotnik, 2019). To this end, Seaman (2016) asserted that studies on the economic aspects of arts consumption indicate that performing arts categorised in the "high culture" spectrum tend to fall within the more privileged social strata in terms of educational achievement. In return, higher levels of education positively influence and individual's professional practice resulting in improved income levels (Kim et al., 2007; Upright, 2004). The role of income in this context was approached by Liu et al. (2018) who assert that "people from more affluent economic backgrounds have more opportunities to visit cultural institutions and events such as museums, concerts, and theatres, and thus tend to have more knowledge and appreciation of highbrow culture" (p. 3). The notion that individuals with higher incomes are more likely to engage with these cultural pursuits was also discussed by Prior (2013). The author identified

and evaluated stark contrasts between social class and engagement with different types of culture resulting in class divisions stemming from cultural habits, where both mutually influence each other (Montgomery & Robinson, 2006). Therefore, this type of arts consumption seems to be facilitated and normalised by those in the upper tiers of income levels. However, Kotnik (2017) concluded that this is not exclusive to upbringing or belonging to especially affluent communities from childhood. Engagement with opera can also derive from higher levels of educational achievement which exposes individuals to those who can afford to pursue this interest and to the environments associated with its consumption (Benzecry, 2009; Kotnik, 2019; Liu et al., 2018).

Adding to the above, the role of family influence across different levels is also a critical element to consider (Prior, 2013; Seaman, 2016). Kotnik (2013) framed family references and influences as the most intimate set of social agents shaping an individual's tastes and cultural inclinations from the early stages in life in the context of opera specifically. The tangible influence that family reference groups exert on the process of developing cultural interests was also supported by De Graaf et al. (2000) who highlighted the instrumental role of parental influence on cultural capital development. As a result, personal musical heritage is developed as parents provide early exposure and normalise cultural consumption of this form of art in the family home (Benzecry, 2011; Kotnik, 2017). Exposure to these cultural resources resulting in shared family experiences in turn strengthens attachments among familial reference groups (Kotnik, 2019). In addition, this exposure may enable the development of social capital and social cohesion across communities with similar patterns of arts consumption (Kallunki & Purhonen, 2017). Upright (2004) also evaluated the influential part that spousal affiliation may play in providing exposure and engagement with particular art forms applicable to opera. The author concluded that spouses and partners may play an

active role in the development of personal musical heritage. Therefore this type of cultural competences (Lin et al., 2021) are granted with further transferable attributes as an individual's educational achievement, income level and family cultural cues may actively sow the seeds of a couple's musical tastes and preferences. The affective qualities assigned to these were noted by Garrido & Davidson (2019) as significant catalysts of the personal memories and sense of nostalgia that in turn stimulate the pursuit of tourist experiences rooted in this type of personal heritage (Prior, 2013).

Cultural affinity/cultural distance

Another significant sociodemographic indicator that may exert an influence on the development of this specific type of personal musical heritage is a person's cultural background in terms of where they are from (Timoney, 2020). The influence that an individual's cultural references exerts in the development of cultural affinities relates to the fact that a tourist's place of origin may provide them with more or less exposure to this type of culture. Consequently, these references make them more likely to engage in cultural consumption that results in opera becoming an element of their personal heritage which they may value because of its links to their own specific local cultures and national identities (Yu Park, 2010). Leisure activity and tourism provide opportunities for individuals to engage with what literature refers to as 'nationhood,' which is a notion associated with emotional attachments and affective responses linked to a person's sense of identity in terms of their place of origin (Bhandari, 2014; Edensor, 2002; Yu Park, 2010). Hence, the level of connectivity that tourists experience with cultural resources is not only stimulated and conditioned by their personal heritage stemming from family structures and influences, but also by where they are from (Tomka et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2015). The influential role of nationality and place of origin in this process is contextualised as 'cultural affinity' which has

been linked to the tourist's decision-making processes (Bi & Lehto, 2018), perceptions of service quality (Lee et al., 2018; Sharma et al., 2016) and specific travel behaviours (Crotts, 2004). Two perspectives arise on the role of cultural distance in these areas: the first argues that individuals tend to seek the comfort and familiarity of what they consider aligns with their own set of cultural values (Cheung & Saha, 2015; Yang et al., 2019). However, **other** perspectives note that cultural distance may catalyse feelings of curiosity and motivate tourists to experience and learn from the unfamiliar and unknown (Seongseop Kim & McKercher, 2011). Liu et al. (2018) linked **cultural distance as a positive catalyst for travel** to the individual's degree of cultural motivations in line with their openness to undertake such journeys beyond their typical reference framework (Bi & Gu, 2019). Lin et al. (2021) **interpreted** this disposition as an energiser for the development of cultural competence which can result in cultural capital acquisition (Mansfield, 2018). **As a result of the development of these cultural competencies**, tourists **may also develop** an increased sense of cosmopolitanism as noted in their openness to engage with a wider set of cultural resources at the destinations they visit (Johnson, 2014).

In terms of the production and consumption of opera, the geographical spread and historical development of the genre are important points to consider. Firstly, opera as a musical genre, although influenced by a variety of earlier schools of music, evolved and flourished within the European context (Edwards, 2019). This is evidenced by the fact that many of the best known and most celebrated opera composers were of European origin and their works are established as cornerstones of the musical cultural fabric of their places of birth. For example, the musical legacies of Verdi, Puccini and Donizetti are considered distinctive staples of Italian culture as they provide generous insights into the societies and politics of their times (Mallach, 2007). The same is true with Wagner's patrimony to

Germany's cultural landscapes (Garratt, 2010) and Mozart's abundant contributions to Austrian musical heritage. This **cultural heritage** is reflected in the dense concentration of a rich and contrasting set of Opera Houses across the European continent (Breckman, 2008). Consequently, individuals **who** are both physically and culturally proximate to this part of the world may benefit from a more normalised exposure to opera as a cultural resource, which may engender a stronger sense of cultural affinity with the genre (Falk et al., 2011). However, human mobilities and globalisation result in a more diverse market of cultural consumption of opera as evidenced in the cultivation of high-profile talent and the operations of major Opera Houses outside of the European setting. Such are the notable cases of New York's Metropolitan Opera and the Sydney Opera House among many others (Pecqueur, 2013).

Operatic destinations

An individual's engagement with opera productions is primarily aural as this is a specific type of music which positions this cultural resource as **an** intangible heritage if evaluated from the heritage perspective (Broclain et al., 2019). However, staged opera productions also stimulate the senses visually, and importantly, the Opera Houses where these are performed grant this type of culture with its tangible dimension. Opera Houses provide the physical environments needed to nurture the talent and deliver cultural products that act as catalysts of this specific type of cultural tourism (Obasi, 2017). But in addition to these essential functions, they often establish themselves as important elements of a destination's cultural portfolio from the visual and social perspectives. **These cultural providers' role in a destination's cultural and visual identity was** noted by Freeman (2017) who **highlighted** the social function that the Sydney Opera House plays adding to its role as an architectural and cultural flagship, as it advances Sydney's position as a hub for

contrasting types of cultural consumption (Hale & Macdonald, 2005). These buildings may speak about a destination's past from the architectural perspective as is the case of Paris' Palais Garnier and Vienna's State Opera, venues whose heritage and images are intertwined with the destinations where they are set and evolved over time. Whilst eliciting the past, their presence as working cultural flagships projects wider messages about the destination's cultural vibrancy in the present day, and they are often located in central precincts facilitating the development of cultural quarters (Guachalla, 2019).

Hence, Opera Houses appear to stimulate synergies and linkages between a destination's visual landscape and its perceived soundscape from the aural and physical perspectives (Breckman, 2008; Broclain et al., 2019). Both dimensions may effectively stimulate a tourist's personal heritage in the process of engaging with sites, cultural products and social practices within this context of cultural consumption (Obasi, 2017). Consequently, Mansfield's (2018) assertions on the significance of cultural capital in place-making become evident as opera as a cultural resource manifests itself as a destination's cultural heritage from the tangible and intangible perspectives. Thus, Opera Houses engender social dynamics and catalyse opportunities for a collective sense of cultural consumption between tourists and local communities that are brought together by their shared interest in this art form, fostering feelings of belonging and togetherness (Guachalla, 2019). The socially cohesive nature of attending these performances was also noted by Quinn (2003) who identified that the communal appreciation of opera performances acquires a symbolic meaning for individuals that connect with this genre and engage in practices associated with their consumption collectively. Therefore, when tourists find that these cultural inclinations are tended to at the destinations they visit, this may result in destination attachment (Vigolo et al., 2019) and the

development of the personal memories that further **reinforce** the significance of this type of personal heritage (Chen & Rahman, 2018).

The literature review conducted to inform this study from a conceptual perspective has focused on the role of socio-demographic indicators in the development of personal musical heritage, the role of cultural distance in this process and how tourism may serve as an effective gateway to engage with this heritage. Given the complexity of these subject areas, a **deeper understanding of them** calls for a flexible and non-foundational approach as many conditioning factors may play a role in these processes. Hence, a social constructivist approach has been adopted to **develop the methodological framework** used to address the **research objectives** as discussed below.

Methodological framework

Research approach and method

The value and significance placed on opera as a cultural resource are clearly influenced by a host of factors that are intrinsic and subjective to each individual (**Benzecry, 2011; De Graaf et al., 2000; Kotnik, 2017; Upright, 2004**). Therefore, this study has adopted a social constructivist methodological approach as this framework allows for in-depth enquiry on how each person engages with the world and constructs their own realities according to their individual filters and mechanisms of interpretation (**Bryman, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011**). The data collection method also required flexibility and a non-foundational approach to unravel the complexities of how opera develops into a specific form of personal heritage **in line with each individual's personal background and life experiences** (**Kumar, 2019**).

Semi-structured interviews could have been used to capture qualitative data to inform this study and this would have allowed the interviewer to probe respondents. However, there is also evidence that studies that enquire about deeply personal subject areas may experience low recruitment rates when using this method as the personal rapport required between the interviewer and interviewees may result in awkwardness and an uncomfortable data collection setting (Creswell, 2014; Silverman, 2021). In response to this significant challenge, this research aimed to evaluate how substantive qualitative data can be gathered through data collection methods alternative to verbal face-to-face interviews. This focus was adopted with the purpose of avoiding the awkwardness noted above and exploring innovative and alternative approaches in qualitative research. Hence, a structured topic guide technique similar to what would have been used at interviews was developed. However, it was operated entirely in written format through open-ended questions as it was designed via Google Forms and administered online as detailed in further sections. This provided respondents with the benefit of reflecting on the questions asked and responding to these in writing at their own pace without the researcher's interference in the process (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, the qualitative structured set of questions developed to collect data allowed respondents to build their own narratives carefully and produce their answers in written form but from an entirely qualitative perspective (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Veal, 2017).

Having captured the sample's sociodemographic profile, the open-ended questions asked reflected the subject areas that each of the research objectives focused on. The first research objective evaluated the factors that may influence the development of opera as personal musical heritage. The literature review firmly established that these factors may be related to an individual's age, family influences, income and level of education (Liu et al. 2018; Prior, 2013; Seaman, 2016; Yu Park, 2010). Therefore, respondents were asked how

they initially developed this interest, how they were introduced to the genre and whether they consider that their occupation, income levels, family structure and level of education exerted an influence in their interest and engagement with the art form. The second research objective sought to analyse whether cultural distance may play a role in the development of this heritage as the literature reviewed also outlines cultural distance as a significant element to consider in personal heritage development (Bi & Gu, 2019; Lin et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2018; Seongseop Kim & McKercher, 2011). Hence, the following questions focused on the respondents' nationality and whether they considered it played a role in their interest in opera productions. The last set of questions sought to inform how destinations can assist individuals in engaging with the art form through travel in line with the conceptual frameworks reviewed on the role of cultural inclinations and travel behaviours and preferences (Breckman, 2008; Broclain et al., 2019; Guachalla, 2019). To evaluate how an interest in opera may influence travel patterns, respondents were asked about their favourite Opera Houses and the reasons why they consider them their favourites. They were asked how they felt when attending a performance at such venues, whether they learned something else about the destination as a result of their visit and what other activities in addition to opera consumption they engage in when visiting these opera houses as tourists. This last set of questions sought to address the third research objective on Opera House tourism and the full set of questions asked is included in Appendix A.

Data collection and fieldwork design

This study focused on individuals with a strong interest in opera as evidenced by the fact that they travel for the purpose of engaging with the art form, positioning the study within a tourism context. The COVID-19 pandemic forced Opera Houses across the world to cancel/postpone their performance schedules for extended periods of time in 2020 and 2021.

In response, many of them began free streaming services of celebrated opera productions as users globally checked into online events and commented on them in social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. This virtual opera season presented ample participant recruitment opportunities as this engagement was used as a recruitment tool to implement a convenience sampling strategy. Invitations to participate were extended to viewers through social media channels and respondents engaged with the study as it was convenient for them to do so (Brunt et al., 2017; Kumar, 2019; Silverman, 2021). Therefore, users who engaged with online performances from New York's Metropolitan Opera, London's Royal Opera House and Vienna's State Opera among others were invited to participate in the summer and autumn months of the 2020/21 opera season that ran online given the pandemic. Respondents produced substantial qualitative data in written format at their convenience in line with the sampling approach adopted (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

The wording on the data collection instrument ensured that the project is situated within a tourism context by capturing data from people who engage with their interest in opera through travel. Hence, members of these audiences were invited to contribute if they visit Opera Houses in a tourist capacity driven by their interest in the art form and the personal heritage they have developed around its consumption. Invitations to participate were extended using hashtags disseminated in the social media outlets mentioned above (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) as the online productions from different Opera Houses were streamed. These invitations directed the audience to the data collection instrument that was designed and hosted by Google Forms and included open-ended questions on the topics outlined above resulting in 226 completed responses. This is a substantial response rate for a qualitative study which indicated the appropriateness and effectiveness of implementing a convenience sampling strategy in studies of this nature (Kumar, 2019). It must be noted that

respondent answers did not focus on the aforementioned Opera Houses exclusively or specifically, but on their personal history of engagement with the art form and experiences of Opera Houses that they have visited as tourists driven by this interest. Therefore, their engagement with online streaming services was used as a recruitment tool to capture data from tourists who have this personal heritage developed as noted by their answers and the fact that this interest motivates them to travel to destinations to engage with the art form. The sample's sociodemographic profile is found in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Sample structure (226 respondents) – see page 35

As seen above, the sample's age range was varied but the most limited age bracket was the youngest (18 to 25). The gender distribution was nearly even, and more than half of respondents pursued postgraduate and doctoral studies. A very limited amount of responses was received by tourists who described their income as very high. The majority of them reported being employed and were of European/U.K. origin. This sociodemographic structure is the only quantitative element that was captured and although this study remains purely qualitative, this data has been used to complement and further evaluate the findings presented in the evidence analysis.

Data analysis

Although the recruitment rate was high for a qualitative study at 226 respondents, this research remains entirely qualitative in nature and has specifically focused on the quality of the answers provided to the questions asked. Quantitative data from the sample structure is used to complement the findings, but the project's main focus was on answers given to the open-ended questions presented in Appendix A. These responses varied significantly in depth

and length but yielded extensive qualitative data to inform the research objectives. This data was analysed using open and axial coding (Babbie, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) where responses were organised in initial codes around the role of origin, income, education, age and occupation in the development of this type of personal heritage; and how this heritage links to cultural distance and tourist experiences associated with opera. These codes were then revisited to identify specific themes in line with Bryman's (2016) guidance on detailed qualitative data analysis. For example, the role of age was an initial general code. Yet some respondents reported that engagement with opera was induced by family during childhood, whereas others noted contrasting views; and both were treated as specific themes. Hence, varied perspectives and life experiences resulting in this niche type of heritage tourism were captured resulting in the evidence presented and discussed below.

Findings and discussion

Opera in the family home

The literature reviewed to inform this study leading to its conceptual framework firmly highlighted the transferable nature of the development of this specific type of personal heritage and cultural capital (Bond & Falk, 2013; Hilbrecht et al., 2008; McDonald, 2011; Prince, 2021). Therefore, the factors that facilitate the development of this specific interest among respondents were enquired about. After capturing the respondents' sociodemographic profile, they were asked about the factors that influenced the development of their interest in opera, the first of which was identified as the family home setting playing an instrumental role in this process. Family members across different levels were consistently noted within the evidence analysis as central elements of the respondents' engagement with the art form: "My parents loved opera and I grew up listening to it and other forms of classical music. Opera has always been very important to me and a part of my identity" (response 64).

“I do think that the value placed on the arts by parental figures influences the likelihood of you attending or accessing opera. My parents greatly value their place and encouraged me to attend, but this is not always the case with everyone” (response 86).

This data evidenced the intergenerational nature of the development of this type of personal heritage as parents and grandparents cultivate this interest among younger generations and provide them with exposure to the musical genre, making musical works available at the family home and normalising their consumption from an early age. In turn, individuals appear to replicate the process with further succeeding generations, thereby strengthening the cultural links and bonds across different levels of the family structure: “My great grandfather was a fairly accomplished baritone and I grew up hearing stories about it from my grandmother who played operas at home as I was growing up” (response 209). In addition to parents and grandparents, spouses and partners also may play a significant role as this data confirmed: “I usually attend performances with my boyfriend and every time we watch something great together that adds to our memories” (response 226).

“The Royal Opera House is where I have named the seats my wife and I loved. We’d expected to do this for a special anniversary but sadly my wife died so I arranged to name our seats in her memory, so I feel even more of a sense of place when attending” (response 157).

“I always make it a point to go to the local Opera House when I travel with my husband. It is always the highlight of my holiday. I feel part of an elite, in a good way. And I like to share the experience with my partner” (response 23).

This evidence highlighted the instrumental role that family members can play in nurturing an interest in opera among their young (McDonald, 2011). As primary social agents, they catalyse the engagement process with this type of heritage (Kotnik, 2013) as a shared interest in opera may lead to the strengthening of bonds across members of family units (Gustafsson et al., 2020; Kotnik, 2019; Timoney, 2020). Specifically, these findings confirmed that parents may exert a significant influence in their younger generation's acquisition of this type of personal heritage (De Graaf et al., 2000) as grandparents can also take this lead (Kallunki & Purhonen, 2017). This cultural exposure does not only acclimatise individuals to the musical genre but also normalise its consumption in the family household (Benzecry, 2011, 2009; Kotnik, 2017): "Family is the first social space where music and art are shared. Family or close relations have a lot of influence in the development of artistic taste in children and teens" (response 3).

Therefore, this data indicated that as opposed to engendering perceptions of elitism and exclusivity, opera acquires more personal and affective qualities rooted in a sense of belonging and togetherness with family (Park et al., 2019). Clearly, these legacies lead to feelings of nostalgia encouraged by the sensorial stimulation - the soundtrack that opera provides to these personal memories and emotional attachments (Garrido & Davidson, 2019). This cohesive effect is also tangible among partners as they themselves may initiate an individual's engagement with the art form (Upright, 2004) which further illustrates the transferable nature of this heritage. Consequently, the shared consumption of opera may strengthen the affective significance of practices and traditions among couples which further develops the network of shared heritage that reinforces relationships and family bonds (Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Prince, 2021).

Conditioning factors - Income and education

Having captured data about the influence of family members in the development of this personal heritage, the questions asked focused on further conditioning factors. The literature review identified the importance of an individual's sociodemographic indicators in cultural capital and personal heritage acquisition (Benzecry, 2009; Kotnik, 2019; Prior, 2013; Seaman, 2016). Therefore, the role of income and levels of education were then enquired about. The financial cost of engaging with staged opera productions was unsurprisingly noted among respondents: “Opera is a potentially expensive passion and therefore the wealthier are better able to indulge in it” (response 88). “A higher income is more likely to result in someone being able to invest in their interest. Opera is a potentially expensive passion and therefore the wealthier are better able to indulge in it” (response 2).

“There is a myth that attending opera and ballet is expensive but, these days many opera houses are more accessible, and you can get cheap tickets for really good performances. But if you want to have the best experience then for sure it is going to cost you more. Best seats in the House for example” (response 217).

This data highlighted that individuals in the upper-income levels may benefit from enhanced and more frequent opportunities to engage with this particular art form in line with Seaman’s (2016) findings on this topic as higher income levels deliver improved and more extensive opportunities to attend opera performance and to use tourism as a means of engaging with this personal heritage (Kim et al., 2007). In addition to income, educational levels were highlighted as a significant conditioning factor:

“An acquaintance with history, philosophy etc. helps one understand some operas better.

It also may be true that people who are interested in opera are on average more

intellectually inclined, and so one would expect them to be better educated” (response 53).

“The people I have known who are really into opera tend to study the music in a lot of detail: these people often have other academic interests and have attended university.

They are not so bothered by the challenges of opera e.g. the foreign languages, the jargon, and are perhaps more inured to snobbery” (response 191).

Hence, as Higher Education is pursued at more mature stages in life, a more mature mindset may present enhanced opportunities to engage with the art form better than in childhood:

“I attended the opera as a very young kid, and didn't appreciate it on any level deeper than it being a fun night out. It was not until I was 19 when I developed a certain level of emotional involvement and artistic understanding that I revisited opera and discovered my interest in it, and I have been hooked ever since” (response 42).

In spite of social inclusion strategies that cultural institutions often implement to widen their market segments (Prior, 2013), this evidence indicated that income and education remain significant elements in the process of an individual's engagement with opera productions (Kotnik, 2019; Montgomery & Robinson, 2006). Prior's (2013) notions on higher income levels facilitating this type of cultural consumption were reflected in these findings as respondents noted that belonging to the upper bands of disposable income enables optimal experiences of staged opera events (Liu et al., 2018). The link between these pursuits and income levels was also clear in the context of cultural tourism given that travel and other associated costs are added to the price of admission to opera performances (Kim et al., 2007). Notwithstanding this link, over half of respondents perceived their income levels to be basic

or average, yet a significant majority belonged to the upper tiers of educational achievement and reported being employed (Figure 2). This finding highlighted that the pursuit of Higher Education and exposure to academic environments may also act as a conditioning factor that enables individuals to develop an interest in opera (Benzecry, 2009; Kotnik, 2017; Prior, 2013): “Opera is an advanced form of art that needs concentration, curiosity and an open mind for full appreciation. These are qualities needed to develop one’s education” (response 103). In turn, income levels are likely to improve with higher levels of educational attainment enabling the pursuit of this interest (Barbieri & Mahoney, 2010; Benzecry, 2011). Therefore, an early introduction during childhood may be beneficial (McDonald, 2011). But more mature lifecycle stages may also report better developed cognitive abilities and social settings allowing individuals to better connect with the genre and engage with it more fully (Fortuna, 2013). The role of age as a conditioning factor resulting in the development of these cultural interests was also evidenced by the fact that the majority of respondents belonged to older age groups (Figure 2).

The role of cultural distance

This study also aimed to understand the role that cultural proximity/cultural distance with opera may play in the development of an individual’s personal heritage which can result in travel choices and leisurely pursuits that allow tourists to engage with this heritage at the destinations they visit (Cheung & Saha, 2015; Seongseop Kim & McKercher, 2011; Yang et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2015). Hence, respondents were then asked about whether their nationalities and places of origin exerted an influence in their interest in opera and personal heritage development around this cultural pursuit. The data collected indicated that exposure to opera was also linked by some respondents to the context of their country of origin: “Opera is more common in some countries than others and people growing up in countries where it is

not that common may be less interested because they haven't had the same opportunities to know it" (response 201). Hence, the European setting was noted as providing a richer cultural landscape to enable such engagement: "I think that opera's important historical role in countries such as Italy, Germany, or France, will make its citizens relate to opera in a much different way than those from parts of the world without such cultural inclinations" (response 47).

"Opera is much more socially immersed in European culture. That is just due to history, but because of that history, the current cities in Europe still have a lot more opportunities to experience great Opera, where Opera companies are fewer here in the States and other places" (response 62).

Hence, it becomes clear that Europe's condensed array of notorious Opera Houses along with the cultural legacies European composers have contributed to the genre result in a more normalised exposure to the art form to natives and residents of this part of the world. However, the evidence also indicated that this interest may be developed for other reasons beyond the boundaries of physical distance, motivating tourists that are not physically proximate to Europe to seek destinations that match these cultural interests. This was evidenced by the fact that the majority of responses were from the U.K. and Europe, but data was also captured from respondents from other parts of the world:

"In Europe there's opera everywhere, for all budgets. In London, I can go to a different opera every week. Even more so in Vienna, Paris or Italy. In Mexico, where I'm from, if I was lucky, I could go to six a year. There is no budget for more opera and there are fewer houses, companies, and audiences. So, it's not that nationality per se is related to being interested in opera: your national set of circumstances make you more or less likely to have the opportunity to go to the opera" (response 23).

These findings evidenced that this type of personal heritage spans beyond emotional attachments entrenched with legacies and traditions linked to family. It acquires a broader significance as tourists' national identities are also stimulated (Tomka et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2015) when they are exposed to platforms for engagement with musical cultural resources that elicit memories of practices and elements of the places where they are from (Cheung & Saha, 2015; Yang et al., 2019). This sense of 'nationhood' stimulated by culture (Yu Park, 2010) indeed proved to exert an influence in their decision-making process and travel behaviour as they choose to visit destinations seeking to experience this type of culture away from home (Bi & Lehto, 2018; Bond & Falk, 2013; Crotts, 2004; Vigolo et al., 2019). Yet, this form of cultural consumption is one that may remind them of home (Bhandari, 2014; Sharma et al., 2016; Yu Park, 2010). Just as introducing an individual to these cultural resources at a young age may prove beneficial to develop this personal heritage, the European context appears to facilitate and normalise exposure to the art form enabling individuals to acclimatise to them and grow up to appreciate them (Edwards, 2019; Falk et al., 2011): "A country that emphasizes the arts and has programs and grants, and increases musical education and appreciation, then that country will inevitably see more interest in opera" (response 42).

As noted above, this finding was also illustrated by the fact that the majority of respondents were of European/U.K. origin. However, it was also evident that individuals from all corners of the globe may have experienced such exposure through other conditioning factors (Crotts, 2004; Liu et al., 2018; Seongseop Kim & McKercher, 2011) which can also result in the development of this personal musical heritage. In this respect, Europe appears to present abundant opportunities to further develop and engage with the musical cultural resources upon which this heritage is founded (Breckman, 2008).

Opera in tourism

This study was situated within a tourism context as it was informed by individuals who have developed personal heritage around the consumption of opera that drives them to visit destinations seeking to engage with this heritage (Guachalla, 2019; Prince, 2021; Timoney, 2020). Therefore, and in line with this research objective, participants were asked how their personal musical heritage is stimulated by musical resources that destinations offer to this specific tourist market segment. The evidence analysis indicated that visits to Opera Houses were noted as platforms to experience destination attributes within that specific setting of cultural consumption:

“Someone visiting the Royal Opera House would experience cast, crew and front of house staff from all over the world who care deeply about the arts and stage some of the very best standard performances you could ever hope to see. I feel this embodies London’s diverse population and artistic excellence. Even the high cost of living in London is reflected in the price of the drinks” (response 142).

Adding to this data, engagement with this specific musical heritage at destinations provided insights and exposure to this type of cultural consumption by local communities with shared interests that manifest themselves through actual practices: “It's always interesting to watch the audience - you can learn a lot about who attends, how they dress and act. This can give you a feel for how the city lives” (response 138). “It’s interesting to soak up the atmosphere of an Opera House in another city – see the people and how they socialise in the intervals and respond to the performances” (response 122). Hence, this evidence highlighted that in the view of some of these tourists, the Opera House setting - which is the main platform for the consumption of opera in person - appears to be representative of specific and distinctive destination attributes from a wider perspective. In addition, the data

collected also evidenced the social value and communal nature of attending staged opera performances in the tourist experience: “It's thrilling, you're taking part of the cultural and artistic life of the city in what is often its oldest and biggest theatre. I feel it is a sort of window into that city's society (or part of it)” (response 166).

“Opera productions involve so many people, it takes a special love to bring them to life. There's a shared fellowship amongst opera lovers that makes every visit a potential adventure, and a great appreciation for the luck of having so many people cooperating to entertain us” (response 162).

This evidence highlighted that tourists attending performances at a destination's Opera House gain valuable insights into the destination's social settings within these communities of cultural consumption. Consequently, the data also confirmed that place attachment and destination loyalty may develop as a result:

“If you have good memories of seeing a show in a wonderful theatre, then you want to repeat those experiences in future. I would love to go back to Moscow to see an opera at the Bolshoi because that is my best memory of the city from the one time I visited, which was to do just that” (response 226).

The pursuit of cultural experiences rooted in this type of personal musical heritage appears to report wider benefits in addition to the direct fulfilment of these cultural longings (Liu et al., 2018). The desire to engage with this personal heritage takes tourists to the destinations and Opera Houses that appear to match their expectations as defined by their family legacies and national identities (Bond & Falk, 2013; Vigolo et al., 2019). But this data also highlighted that these journeys also act as gateways to experience further cultural aspects of these destinations including their social settings. These experiences associated with

cultural consumption in turn provide further engagement with specific destination attributes associated with the consumption of this form of culture (Obasi, 2017). These attributes may relate to further cultural resources and the experience of cultural quarters/attractions where these Opera Houses are based (Falk et al., 2019; Guachalla, 2019): “If on holiday we normally spend some time exploring the area beforehand. So if there are any museums or exhibitions or churches nearby then we make sure to visit those to get into the local mood” (response 109). Therefore, opera as an intangible cultural resource materialises into tangible heritage (Broclain et al., 2019) through the Opera Houses that have the talent that delivers the cultural product and attracts the tourists that become place-making elements themselves within the areas and venues they visit (Guachalla, 2019; Mansfield, 2018).

The presence of these Opera Houses stimulates reflection on and engagement with social elements related to the shared consumption of opera among tourists and locals, enriching the cultural elements that tourists tend to associate with opera productions (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Quinn, 2003; Vigolo et al., 2019). Therefore, opera clearly can play a significant role in providing the emotional response stemming from social memorable experiences that also strengthen the significance and value assigned to this type of personal heritage as noted by this evidence (Garrido & Davidson, 2019; Prayag & Del Chiappa, 2021).

Conclusions

This research has focused on a range of factors that can position opera as a significant element of an individual’s personal heritage and how this influences tourists’ perceptions and experiences of the destinations they visit seeking to engage with this heritage. Its contribution to studies in leisure and tourism acquired two dimensions. It analysed the environments and influences that develop this type of personal heritage among tourists and how this heritage, in

turn, makes tourists engage with musical heritage related to the leisurely consumption of opera at the destinations they visit.

The first research objective of this study sought to evaluate the contributing factors that engender the development of this personal heritage and the data collected **confirmed** that these factors can be directly associated with family influences, levels of income, educational achievement and cultural affinity. The heritage resources that destinations offer which allow tourists to engage with this personal heritage are related to the Opera Houses that host this art form, and to the specific communities and environments for this type of cultural consumption. The evidence indicated that the family home as the person's closest reference group may provide exposure to the genre across generations as parents and grandparents cultivate an interest in the art form among their young from an early age. Hence, this music acquires affective qualities rooted in personal memories of family connections, practices and legacies that legitimise its role as a familial cultural value. In addition, this process may also be facilitated by partners in adulthood, which can further reinforce bonds and cultural emotional attachments among members of family units at different levels. As engagement with the art form tends to be costly to varying degrees, the evidence **highlighted** that higher levels of disposable income may play a facilitating role allowing individuals to pursue the interest and expose their family members to it. **In addition, a person's income level** can be linked to **their** level of educational achievement as the pursuit of Higher Education may not only result in higher income which enables tourists to engage with staged opera productions. But from a social perspective, Higher Education may also develop cognitive abilities and provide exposure to further social actors that could also enable a better-focused exposure to the art form in more mature lifecycle stages.

The second research objective referred to the role that cultural affinity and cultural distance may play in an individual's likelihood to develop opera as personal heritage. The evidence collected from respondents indicated that cultural distance plays an active role in the development of this type of personal musical heritage and its implications for tourism are evident as the art of opera and the infrastructure needed to stage opera productions have been ingrained more strongly within specific local cultures. This leads to a more normalised consumption and seamless exposure to individuals from these local cultures that may find a sense of national identity in these cultural resources. In this sense, opera has found its domain throughout centuries within European stages as evidenced by Europe's musical heritage and range of Opera Houses that enable its delivery. However, these audiences are becoming more global and the art form does engage individuals from outside of the European setting. The increasingly globalised and cosmopolitan Opera House tourist market can motivate Opera House tourists to travel with the purpose of engaging with musical resources and practices that they find a sense of cultural affinity with, which can relate to, but is not exclusive to physical proximity. These pursuits allow them to experience the tangible expressions of this intangible heritage - the Opera Houses that bring audiences together, exposing tourists to the talent and social environments that destinations offer to this market, which engenders social cohesion among these communities of cultural consumption. They are often set in cultural quarters that may also provide further cultural engagement opportunities and result in the personal memories and sense of nostalgia that can position this music as an important element of an individual's personal heritage. Therefore and responding to the third and final research objective, a destination's infrastructure for musical performances of this type, its musical legacies and traditions along with the audiences that are brought together to consume this form of art may firmly position its ability to assist individuals in engaging with this personal heritage through tourism.

Due to the contrasting variety of cultural landscapes in the context of opera found in different parts of the world, and the differing levels of exposure to these art forms that individuals may experience, future research in leisure and tourism could adopt a case study approach. For example, the significance of Italian opera could be studied specifically from the perspective of both the local communities engaged with this art form and the tourists that are drawn to the country seeking to experience it. In light of the evidence captured by this research, the role of cultural affinity and cultural distance in personal heritage development is an area that opens wide-ranging avenues for further research to better understand how an individual's national and cultural backgrounds influence their behaviour and interests as tourists in the context of this type of cultural consumption. Tourists' perceptions and experiences of specific Opera Houses could also be studied taking specific cases of opera providers from the ample spectrum of these found within different regions of the world. To this end, further qualitative and more innovative data collection methods could be employed since a significant limitation of this study was the fact that it did not focus on one specific provider. Opera Houses across the world vary in age, visual structure, legacy and repertoire. Therefore, a more specific focus could be adopted in future studies.

This research captured insightful qualitative data to enquire about deeply personal subject areas, and positively tested the use of a data collection instrument that gathered rich qualitative data in written form for this purpose. However, probing respondents was not feasible which was another significant limitation of the methodological framework adopted. Therefore, future studies could use case study approaches and more thorough qualitative procedures to further understand how musical legacies and musical infrastructure provided by specific destinations engage this segment of the leisure tourism market, and for which reasons. This research concluded that these reasons blend intrinsic factors to the individual

and their personal heritage with cultural qualities inherent to the destinations themselves.

Hence, it is clear that a complex network of elements orchestrates the development of this type of cultural tourism. This **complexity** presents ample opportunities to further understand how tourists may **have** deeply held emotional attachments **to** the tunes of opera, which can soundly harmonise with distinctive destination features and the heritage **associated with** this musical form of art.

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Figures

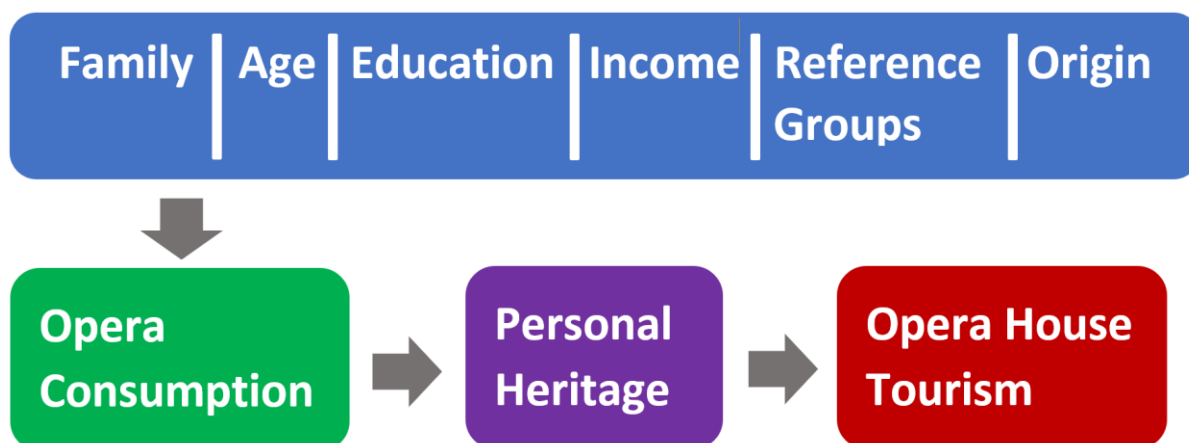


Figure 1. Graphical abstract

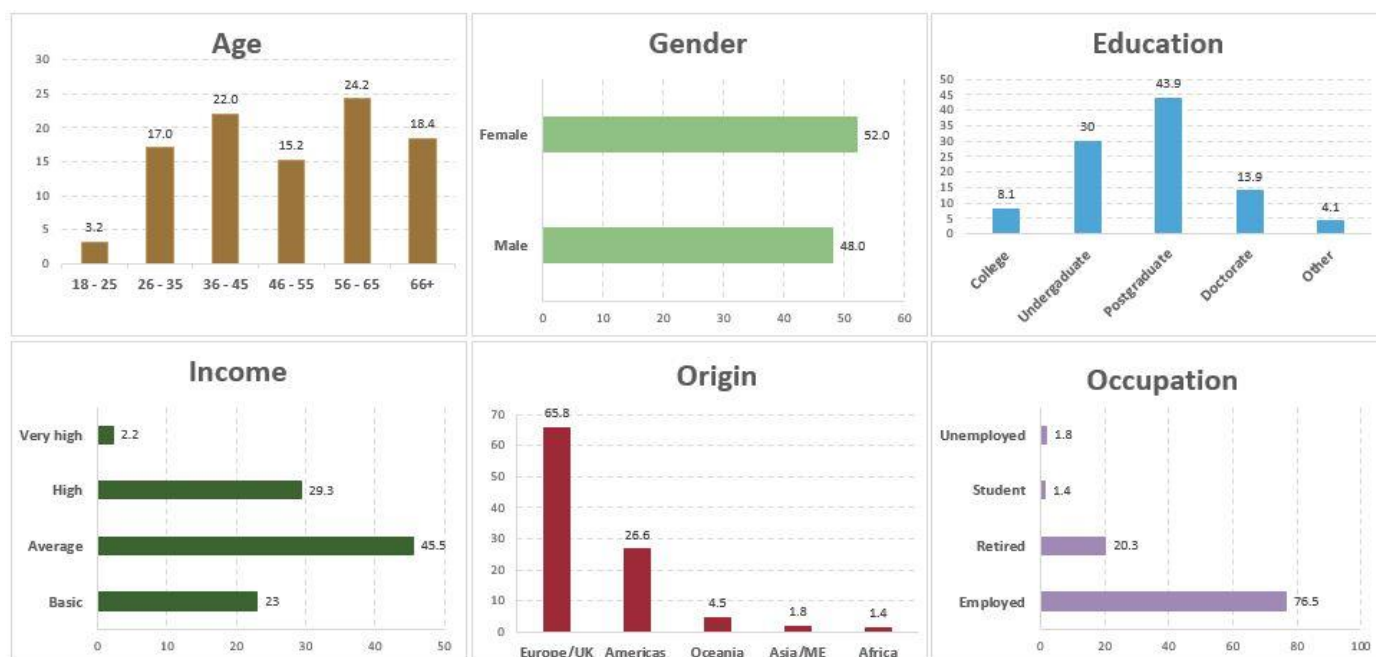


Figure 2. Sample structure (226 respondents)

Appendix A

Topic guide

Part 1- Sociodemographic profile	Part 2 – Factors influencing the interest	Part 3 – Cultural affinity/cultural distance	Part 4 – Opera House tourism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your age? • What is your gender? • What is your highest qualification? • How would you describe your ethnicity? • What is your nationality? • What is your occupation? • How would you describe your income? • Tell us how you were introduced to opera and what this musical genre means to you: <i>(open)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you enjoy opera? • Do you believe that an interest in opera is related to a person’s age? • Do you believe that an interest in opera is related to a person’s level of education? • Do you believe that an interest in opera is related to a person’s occupation or level of income? • Do you believe that an interest in opera is related to a person’s family structure? (parents, marital status etc) <p><i>(each of the above followed by a request asking respondents to elaborate the answers)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you believe that an interest in opera is related to a person’s nationality or ethnicity? • Please explain your answer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your favourite Opera House? (excluding your local) • Why is it your favourite? • What do you think people learn about the city where it is set because of this Opera House? • How do you feel when you attend an opera at a destination’s main Opera House? • Other than attending the opera, what else do you do on your visit? (ie. Visit museums beforehand, eat/drink at the Opera House restaurant, etc – please provide examples) • Do you think the Opera House makes people more attached and loyal to the destination as a whole? • Summarise what you believe Opera Houses add to destinations

Table A. Topic guide