

# **Immersive Theatre Attracts Millennials.**

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The factors that influence consumer interest in innovative theatre experiences.



## **Master Thesis**

M.A. Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship  
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication  
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Student name: Yvette de Boer  
Student Number: 499522  
Supervisor: Dr. P.V. Bhansing  
Second reader: Dr. C.W. Handke

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the determinants of consumer interest in the immersive theatre genre in order to determine which part of today's audience can best handle high risk and uncertainty in its decision-making process and thereby ensures the popularity of this innovative theatre genre. The study adopts a quantitative approach and samples 315 respondents from three different generations: the millennial generation, Generation X, and the baby boomers. Using literature about product innovation, consumer behavior, immersive theatre, and the millennial generation, hypotheses about the relationship between several determinants and the interest in immersive theatre experiences are developed and tested. The results indicate (1) that the millennial generation shows the most interest in immersive theatre, which can be explained by millennials' interest in other immersive experiences; (2) that individuals characterized by openness to experience, an entrepreneurial mindset, or symbolic needs show a higher interest in the immersive theatre form and/or its marketing strategy; and (3) that non-millennials characterized by hedonism demonstrate a low interest in the immersive theatre form, whereas millennials characterized by hedonism demonstrate a higher interest. An additional finding suggests that interest in the immersive theatre form from regular theatre goers can be explained by immersive theatre's marketing strategy. Altogether, the study demonstrates that the uncertainty that comes from product innovativeness in the performing arts does not always have a negative effect on the demand. In contradiction, it generates interest in performing arts among people who are younger and/or have the attitudes and behavior of the millennial generation.

## **Key words**

Immersive theatre, product innovativeness, consumer behavior, millennial generation, theatre marketing.

## **Word count**

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# 1. Introduction

Product innovativeness, which refers to the emergence of new or improved goods and services (Fagerberg, 2005), plays an important role in the performing arts industry. On the one hand, product innovativeness is a key quality indicator for performing arts organizations, because it can distinguish them from their rivals (Heilbrun, 1993). On the other hand, product innovativeness adds to more uncertainty in the performing arts industry (Colbert, 2003). When consumers decide whether or not to purchase tickets for a theatre performance, many factors influence this decision, including the important factor of the amount of information available about the performance (Colbert, 2003). Due to the newness of innovative performances, there is less information available about them. This increases the risk for potential consumers of purchasing tickets for something that does not meet their expectations.

In the performing arts industry product innovativeness occurs in many different forms (Bhansing, Leenders and Wijnberg, 2017). New or improved goods occur frequently in the form of new theatrical productions. Less frequently new styles or genres emerge. An example of this is immersive theatre. The form of immersive theatre emerged over the last few decades into a major theatre movement in several progressive countries (Machon, 2013), with the United Kingdom at the forefront of the evolution (Alston, 2013). Whereas passive spectatorship<sup>1</sup> has been the status quo for Western theatre from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward (Kattwinkel, 2003), the spectators of immersive theatre play a different, more active and empowered role. Immersive theatre is a theatrical form that immerses audiences by focusing on personal and individual experiences in expansive environments at unusual locations. Since immersive theatre is an emerged new genre that suppresses the traditional theatrical expectations of spectators (Eckert, 2017) it is considered innovative.

In previous years, immersive cultural experiences were demanded in various cities around the world. People are willing to pay high prices and wait in enormous lines to see immersive theatre performances and immersive museum exhibitions. Additionally, the number and popularity of immersive experiences like escape rooms and speakeasy bars (Heng, Loi and Nim, 2016) increased over the years. According to Levin (2018), immersive experiences are especially gaining ground because of the demands of the millennial generation. Millennials are people who were born between 1982 and 2002 (Howe and Strauss, 2001) and therefore share the same formative experiences that affect their consumer attitude and behavior (Sauser and Sims, 2012). According to research, millennials seek novelty, adventure and diversity in their leisure experiences (Hyun, 2015; Levin, 2018). Therefore, this group in particular may be willing to explore innovative artistic experiences (Hyun, 2015).

While this is one observation, another observation is that the uncertainty that comes with product innovativeness is problematic for performing arts (Bhansing et al., 2017). Taken together these two

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<sup>1</sup> Passive spectatorship implies that spectators perceive performances in a “receiver” status and have almost no impact on the performance (Kattwinkel, 2003).

observations, that on the one hand millennials worldwide are attracted to immersive experiences and on the other hand product innovativeness can lead to uncertainty in the performing arts market, led me to investigate if and how millennials are attracted to the innovative immersive theatre genre. Since millennials are not only characterized by age but also by their attitudes and behavior, the main question guiding this study is: *“What factors influence consumer interest in immersive theatre experiences?”*

To answer this research question, this study is structured as the following. First, studies on product innovativeness, consumer behavior, immersive theatre, and the millennial generation are discussed. From these previous studies a series of hypotheses is developed, based on a set of factors of consumer interest which are related to the age, attitudes and behavior of millennials, and on different aspects of immersive theatre experiences. In order to collect data for the quantitative analysis, a survey instrument is developed and spread among millennials and non-millennials. By means of multiple regression analyses the hypotheses are tested. Thereby, the factors that influence consumer interests in immersive theatre experiences are learned and discussed. In the managerial implications section it is advised what these findings could mean in terms of action. Finally, the limitations of the research are discussed, which lead to suggestions for future research.

This study is academically relevant since it takes into account how different generations of consumers deal with the lack of pre-purchase information for product innovations; it makes a contribution to the literature concerning product innovativeness and consumer behavior. In addition, the quantitative approach used in this study contributes to a range of qualitative studies about aspects of immersive theatre and its spectators (Machon, 2013; Alston, 2013; Eckert, 2017; Keegan, 2013; White, 2012; Zaiontz, 2014; O’Hara, 2012), and other immersive experiences (Levin, 2018; Heng et al., 2016). Additionally, this research contributes to studies about millennials’ attitudes and behavior (Sauser and Sims, 2012; Howe and Strauss, 2001; Pitts, 2016; Martin, 2010; Watson, 2018) and millennials as cultural consumers (Halliday and Astafyeva, 2014; Hyun, 2015; Burton, 2003; Gonzales, 2013) by quantitatively testing the determinants of these studies. Therefore, this research not only contributes to different studies in the field of theatre, but also to studies from other (cultural) fields.

This study is also practically relevant because it suggests implications for cultural organizations. Understanding millennials’ art consumption behavior is important for cultural organizations (Gonzales, 2013) since responding to their needs and values is the main way to build a relationship with them (Halliday and Astafyeva, 2014). This is relevant since there is a decline in the leisure market share for cultural institutions due to a shift in consumer preferences (Burton, 2003). As argued, this shift can be alleviated by the attraction of millennials (Gonzales, 2013). For example, Dutch theatre organizations try hard to reach a younger audience in a variety of ways. However, this research shows them that it is not only about the way that millennials are reached; it is also about the currently supplied forms of theatre. While immersive theatre has the potential to attract millennials, in the Netherlands the genre is still little-known.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Consumer behavior and product innovativeness in the performing arts**

#### 2.1.1 Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior is defined as the function of the interactions of interpersonal influences and personal factors of individuals who purchase goods and services (Luna and Gupta, 2001). However, consumer behavior research is not only limited to a better understanding of consuming motivations of individuals who purchase goods and services; it can also provide a better understanding of forecasting the subject of purchase. Since consumer behavior is an individual decision-making process, observable characteristics and past experiences of consumers can be studied to understand consumers (Diniz and Machado, 2010). The focus of this paper is on the influence of internal factors on consumers' intention to purchase.

When consumers decide whether or not to purchase a ticket for a theatre play, there are various factors that influence this decision, including personal, psychological, social, situational, and economic factors. Another important factor that influences this decision is product involvement. Colbert (2003) has defined product involvement as the feeling of personal interest in a product in a specific context or situation. This interest can come from the reflection of the importance of a product for an individual, which stems from different types of searching, information processes, and decision-making. The importance of a product for individuals stems from the benefits they sought in purchasing a product (Colbert, 2003). Benefits occur in different forms and vary from consumer to consumer. For performing arts, benefits sought can include enrichment, entertainment, education, and social prestige (Steinberg, Miaoulis and Lloyd, 1982). However, only when the involvement of consumers is high, they consider their benefits.

Product involvement can also be explained by the considered risk associated with purchasing the product (Rotschild, 1984). The higher the risk, the greater the time spent on searching, processing, and decision-making, and thus the higher the involvement with the product (Colbert, 2003). There are different types of risk related to cultural products such as functional risk, economic risk, psychological risk, and social risk (Colbert, 2003). Of these different types, functional risk has the most impact on consumer behavior in relation to cultural products, because it is related to the benefits sought by the consumer. Functional risk appears when consumers see the possibility that the product does not meet their expectations. This risk can be reduced by searching pre-purchase information about the product or by opting for "safe bets" about which they require less information. Economic risk appears when the decision-making process becomes more difficult because the product is expensive. Psychological risk is related to how the product corresponds to the consumer's desired self-image. Finally, social risk is related to the image that others have of the consumer.

Psychological and social risk can explain consumer behavior in terms of the social value of the product. Some consumers imitate others of a similar social standing in their consumer behavior or purchase something to please someone else just to belong to a certain social group (Schneidewind and Tröndle, 2003). People want to tell others who they are through the things they like, and the consumption of services and products is an effective way to do so (Colbert, 2003). In these cases, the product has social value. Only when the form of consumption is visible to other people, the image that others have of the consumer can be affected (Colbert et al., 2000). Therefore, the social value of consumption is not always present. However, since the internet made it possible for people to easily share their consumption behavior with others, the importance of social value increased.

In the cultural world, visitors identify themselves by attending certain events, being able to discuss a particular work, or demonstrating to other people that they participated in a specific cultural activity. This behavior is similar to that of people who identify themselves by the clothes they wear or the car they drive. In order to be part of a social group, people think they need to wear or drive a certain brand or style (Colbert, 2003). All these motivations of consumption illustrate someone's access to the markers of social status (Colbert, 2003). This psychological meaning of the product for the person is a symbolic need since it allows a consumer to communicate his or her personality and values through consumption (Colbert, 2003). In the cultural world, visitors that consume because of symbolic needs do not specifically care about the artwork or production (Gainer, 1995), but more about their own realization of a specific lifestyle (Schneidewind and Tröndle, 2003).

Finally, consumer behavior is always based on a certain amount of an individual's internal and external information (Colbert, 2003). An individual's internal information can come from previous experiences, and external information from the marketing of the product and other information sources (Colbert, 2003). Both sources of information can reduce functional risk. Therefore, one factor that eases the decision-making process of consumers is their previous experience. Most consumers prefer known products to unknown products because they favor continuity (Colbert, 2003). This can cause problems for new and innovative products since people did not previously have the chance to experience them. Nevertheless, there are some consumers that specifically look for novelty.

### 2.1.2 Product innovativeness in the performing arts

When new or improved goods and services occur, it is referred to as product innovativeness (Fagerberg, 2005). The concept of innovation can be understood as something new that is put into practical use (Fagerberg, 2005). In other words, innovation is a novelty that becomes valuable. Innovation can be graded in different ways, such as by differentiating between radical and incremental innovations (Caves, 2000). Whereas incremental innovation can be understood as small and continuous adaptations, radical innovation often replaces existing parts or systems in an episodic manner (Kennedy, Whiteman and Van de Ende, 2016).

In the performing arts industry, incremental innovation can be expressed in the newness or originality of productions (Bhansing et al., 2017). For example, in the form of new performances created out of existing ones (Kleinschmidt and Cooper, 1991). Additionally, radical innovation in the performing arts is expressed in complete new and original works entering the industry (DiMaggio and Stenberg, 1985).

Product innovativeness plays an important role in the value creation of performing arts productions since it is considered as a quality indicator for many stakeholders (Bhansing et al., 2017). Innovativeness can distinguish productions from their rivals in the competitive environment of the industry (Heilbrun, 1993). Additionally, artistic innovation brings existing audiences back that expect to see something new (Heilbrun, 1993). As argued by Lampel, Lant and Shamsie (2000) performing arts organizations must aim for novelty that differentiates between their productions, but without making them fundamentally different from other productions in the same category. In other words, Lampel et al. (2000) state that performing arts organizations need to focus on the implementation of incremental innovations.

Whereas on the one hand innovation is seen as a quality indicator of performing arts, on the other hand it can also add to uncertainty about the product's acceptance in the performing arts market (Bhansing et al., 2017). Highly innovative productions may increase uncertainty in terms of demand, because the lack of pre-purchase information increases functional risk for potential consumers (Colbert, 2003). Since consumers cannot base their decisions on their internal information, they can only rely on external information for highly innovative products (Colbert, 2003).

### 2.1.3 Marketing cultural products

For a supplier of a product, it is convenient to know if the purchasing decision of the potential customer is based on his or her internal or external information (Colbert, 2003). For example, the marketing of innovative products can be essential since it increases external information to meet the lack of internal information. More precisely, most potential consumers devote effort to gathering information that helps with their choice of purchasing (Caves, 2000). Therefore, the main focus of the marketing of an innovative product is often based on information provision in order to help consumers understand why they should choose the specific product above its competitors and why the product meets the consumer's needs.

However, when looking at cultural products, innovative or not, it is often difficult to market them since there is not much pre-purchase information available. This information problem in the performing arts is referred to as the "nobody knows" property, because it not only applies to consumers but also to suppliers (Caves, 2000). Towse has argued that "one of the biggest problems for producers and consumers alike in the world of the arts is information about quality" (2010, p. 63). Likewise, in the performing arts industry all different forms of performances have an important economic feature in

common: their quality is an information problem because it does not in a significant way consist of any objective factors (Towse, 2014). Therefore, performances are experience goods.

Since the pre-purchase information available about cultural products is often not enough for potential buyers to make a well-informed decision, consumers have to experience the products in order to obtain detailed information about them and judge their quality (Towse, 2010). Therefore, the personal experience of consuming remains the most reliable way to assess the product's utility (Towse, 2010). For that reason, consumers often use signals from third parties as an indicator of the product, because this can lower the risk and makes the decision-making process easier (Lampel et al., 2000). For example, word-of-mouth is a powerful transmitter of information regarding creative goods (Caves, 2000).

However, for suppliers of performing arts, relying only on word-of-mouth marketing and other third parties is risky, because it may hinder potential audience members from buying a ticket (Keegan, 2013). Especially when the price of a ticket is high, and thus the cost of making a disappointing purchase increases (Laband, 1991), most potential audience members will comprehensively try to search for quality signals of different theatre shows before purchasing. Therefore, Nelson (1970) has argued that the amount of quality signals often has an influence on the competition of the market. Hence, despite the fact that not enough pre-purchase information can be provided by suppliers of cultural products to let potential buyers make a well-informed decision, the main focus of marketing of cultural products remains on information provision.

#### 2.1.4. Consequences of innovation

Since performing arts are experience goods, they cause potential consumers uncertainty. While innovation can be considered as a quality indicator of performing arts, it can also add to even more uncertainty about the product (Bhansing et al., 2017). For that reason, Bhansing et al. (2017) have researched the moderators of the relationship between product innovativeness and the size of expected audiences on the performing arts market. They have found that product innovativeness sometimes has a positive effect and sometimes a negative effect on the expected demand depending on the sector within the performing arts industry. For example, in smaller, avant-garde markets, innovativeness is more valued, while for organizations with a more stable social perception, innovativeness has a negative relationship with scheduled audiences (Bhansing et al., 2017).

The focus of Bhansing et al.'s (2017) research is on the consequences of innovation for venue programmers' decision-making, and thus on the intermediate stage of productions. In this research, the focus is on the consequences of innovation for potential audiences' decision-making. Therefore, this study concentrates on the final stage of productions. More precisely, it researches which audiences are interested in the innovative aspects of immersive theatre experiences. However, before analyzing the potential consumers, this thesis first explains what immersive theatre is.

## 2.2 Immersive theatre

The term “immersive” is used to describe all-encompassing artistic experiences in which people are submerged in another medium (Machon, 2013). In terms of theatre, the term “immersive” means access to the inside of a performance (White, 2012). Immersive theatre is “a widely adopted term to designate a trend for performances which use installations and expansive environments, which have mobile audiences, and which invite audience participation” (White, 2012, p. 221). However, different immersive theatre companies all have their own take on how they immerse audiences (Alston, 2013). Additionally, there are also traditional theatre companies that work with aspects of immersion. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a clear working definition of immersive theatre. In order to do so, I draw upon Machon’s (2013) theory of the three categories of immersion of immersive theatre.

The first category Machon (2013) has proposed is “immersion of transportation.” This means that the spectator is reoriented to another place that requires navigation according to its own rules and logic (Machon, 2013). This other place is both an imaginative space and a physical space in which engagement with the environment is part of the experience. The second category is “immersion of absorption” (Machon, 2013). This category refers to how an immersive performance is able to engage the spectator fully not only in terms of concentration, interest, and imagination but also in terms of action (Machon, 2013). The third category is “total immersion.” Here it is referred to both of the aforementioned categories of immersion, which together lead to spectators being able to “fashion their own narrative and journey” (Machon, 2013, p. 63).

These three categories provide a basis for the definition of immersive theatre. However, more concrete information is needed to develop a clear working definition. Therefore, this section explains how there are different innovative aspects that differentiate immersive theatre from traditional theatre.

### *Immersion of transportation*

With most traditional theatre performances, audiences enter an identifiable theatre building, are seated, and wait until the performance begins (Machon, 2013). An immersive theatre performance does not normally take place in an identifiable theatre building (Machon, 2013). Additionally, immersive theatre audiences are not seated and do not know exactly when the performance begins.

An immersive theatre performance location is often difficult to find, which means that audiences make a journey to get to the location (Machon, 2013). The performances are often located in disused industrial spaces or buildings (White, 2012). The dramaturgy of these spaces is embedded in the productions but does not always respond to the site’s history or context (White, 2012). As with traditional theatre, the set design is an important part of the production. However, greater attention is paid to tangible details (Eckert, 2017).

Whereas traditional theatre audiences chat with their friends or family until the performance begins, immersive performances often begin before audiences enter (Machon, 2013). Additionally, friends and families within the audience are often separated from each other (Machon, 2013; Eckert,

2017). Finally, food and drinks are regularly part of the experience (Eckert, 2017; O'Hara, 2017) since there is often no intermission or curtain bow (Machon, 2013). Therefore, audiences often do not know exactly when the performance ends. For these reasons, immersive theatre audiences do not necessarily know the difference between the performance space and the everyday space.

In sum, whereas traditional theatre audiences mostly view a temporary, different world on stage, immersive theatre audiences become part of this different and new world. Therefore, Machon (2013) has argued that immersive theatre audiences enter a parallel theatrical universe.

### *Immersion of absorption*

In a traditional theatre auditorium, audiences observe, listen to, and try to discover the narrative of the performance (Machon, 2013). In immersive theatre spaces, audiences can actively engage in the action of the narrative (O'Hara, 2017). Audiences have to follow actors through rooms, corridors, fields, or cities (Machon, 2013) to observe the storyline from their own chosen perspective (Alston, 2013). They are required to become interactive agents who move within the space of the performers in order to find the narrative (Machon, 2013). For these reasons, the immersive theatre performance is multi-sensory, using exploratory experiences of space and sometimes addressing the senses of touch and smell (White, 2012).

Nonetheless, it is often impossible for audiences to see every scene element within the timeframe of the performance (Eckert, 2017). Therefore, part of the spectators' sensation is the feeling of making choices (White, 2012). Therefore, it has been argued that immersive theatre requires a different kind of audience participation than does traditional theatre. Alston (2013) has termed this kind of audience participation "entrepreneurial participation" since it is based on self-made opportunities. He has argued that immersive theatre shares the values of entrepreneurialism and the valorization of risk, agency, and responsibility with neoliberalism (Alston, 2013).

Despite their agency in the immersive performance, spectators cannot create or change storylines (Zaiontz, 2014). Rather, they are the "experiencers" of the performances (Zaiontz, 2014). Alston (2013) has argued that immersive theatre is mainly about the experience itself. The pleasure or challenge that comes from this experience is not just a by-product of immersive theatre but its main reason for existing (Alston, 2013). Accordingly, the immersive theatre experience appears to be hedonistic rather than utilitarian (Alston, 2013).

Not only do the experiences prioritize pleasure as an end in itself, but they also turn the attention on the spectator (Alston, 2013). The spectators completely engross themselves in the performance in ways that highlight their own relationship with the piece (Zaiontz, 2014). In this way, the self serves as a mode of experience, which makes the spectatorship itself the main entertainment that the spectators consume during the performance (Zaiontz, 2014). For these reasons, immersive theatre results in narcissistic spectatorship in which spectators aggregate as much pleasure for themselves as possible (Zaiontz, 2014). In addition, audiences are sometimes asked to wear masks, which not only gives them

a scenographic function but an “..anonymity and relaxing of typical social rules” (Eckert, 2017). Therefore, these narcissistic aspects are pleasurable to the spectators and make the spectacle feel intimate instead of exhibitionist (Zaiontz, 2014).

### *Total immersion*

As already explained, immersion of transportation refers to how audiences enter a parallel theatrical universe, and immersion of absorption to how audiences become interactive agents responsible for finding a narrative (Machon, 2013). Together these two categories of immersion result in total immersion in which audiences fashion their own personal journey (Machon, 2013). The range and variety of the relationships between the audience, the environment, and the performers result in unique and non-reproducible spectator experiences (Alston, 2013). Every time a spectator attends an immersive theatre performance, his or her experience will be different. This makes immersive theatre productions not only radically innovative compared with other genres or productions but also incrementally innovative within the same production.

With Machon’s (2013) three categories in mind, it is possible to provide a clear working definition of immersive theatre. In this research, immersive theatre is defined as “an innovative theatre form that empowers the audience, by focusing on non-reproducible, interactive, and individual theatrical experiences in expansive and thought-out environments at unusual locations.”

### *Marketing strategy*

Many differences between the traditional and immersive theatre forms are mentioned ahead. However, another major difference is not in the form but in the way that they are communicated to potential audiences. While the key function of the marketing of innovative and cultural products is to provide the consumer with information (Colbert, 2003), immersive theatre companies do not do so.

For most traditional theatre, potential audiences are informed about a performance via the venue’s program or different marketing materials. Meanwhile, potential audiences can often only hear about an immersive performance via word-of-mouth and online social networks (Machon, 2013). The marketing language of immersive theatre companies is mysterious. For example, when visiting the website of Punchdrunk, which is one of the leading immersive theatre companies worldwide (Eckert, 2017; Alston, 2013), their homepage states, “These things are mysteries not to be explained but you will understand when you get there alone” (Punchdrunk, n.d.). Instead of explaining their productions, Punchdrunk’s marketing materials are cryptic (Keegan, 2013). Machon (2013) has compared this mystery surrounding immersive theatre events to those surrounding secret societies.

One theatre audience development study found that 60% of the audiences prefer to be provided with a detailed description of the characters and the storyline of the performance before their purchase decision (Carnwath, 2017). Nevertheless, immersive theatre companies purposely do the opposite. The reason for this is that they want the audience to completely experience the production without prior

knowledge (Eckert, 2017). However, this lack of information leads to high functional risk for potential visitors since there is too little necessary information presented to clearly understand if the performance meets their expectations. This causes ambiguous situations (McLain, Kefallonitis and Armani, 2015).

### *Popularity*

Nonetheless, despite this high functional risk, many people perceive immersive theatre in a positive way. According to White (2012), the popularity of the genre can be explained through the unique spectator aspects. Since visitors have to make their own choices, they sometimes miss certain aspects of the show. In fact, because this creates a feeling of incompleteness (O'Hara, 2017), some audiences are driven to repeat their visit in order to engage with the performance differently.

Likewise, Machon (2013) has suggested that the success of immersive theatre responds to a larger need in today's audiences. She has noted that audiences want to exist as physical bodies in actual locations since much of contemporary life takes place on digital spaces (Machon, 2013). In other words, instead of seeing two-dimensional worlds, today's audiences seek expansive environments. Furthermore, she has argued that today's audiences prefer intimate and personal experiences since contemporary society lacks privacy (Machon, 2013). The individual audience experience of immersive theatre responds to this since its focus is to give the audience a feeling of identity and purpose (Eckert, 2017). Alston (2013) has argued that this promotion of individualism and perception of personal autonomy encourages opportunism among the spectators, especially for those with the capacity to act upon it.

Since none of these studies specify who today's audience is, one aspect of this research is to determine which generation of the audience ensures the popularity of the genre. Before I explain why I expect that younger audiences are the most attracted to this innovative theatre form, different generations are defined with a focus on the millennial generation.

### **2.3 The millennial generation**

The millennial generation is defined in different ways. First, since a generation is a cohort of people that are born within the same 20-year period (Sauser and Sims, 2012), it is defined by age. However, the exact dates of millennials' birth years vary among different theories. For this research, I draw upon the differentiation of generations of Howe and Strauss (2001), who differentiate between the "silent generation" (1925–1942), the "baby boomers" (1943–1960), "Generation X" (1961–1981), and the "millennial generation" (1982–2002).

Second, millennials can also be characterized by attitudes and behavior because people within a generation share the same formative experiences that affect their attitudes and behavior (Sauser and Sims, 2012). Examples of these experiences are educational practices, historical events, cultural events, fashion, and trends. For millennials, these events include the rise of computers, the internet, smartphones, and social media, as well as historical events such as 9/11 and the economic crisis of 2007-

2008 (Sauser and Sims, 2012). Other formative experiences of the millennial generation are video games, interactive television, virtual reality, escape rooms, and speakeasy bars. Some of these experiences are more recently developed than others, but all having immersive aspects (Heng, Loi and Nim, 2016).

### *Millennials and immersive experiences*

In addition to the name “millennials,” this generation is also referred to as “Generation Y”/“Generation Why” (Pitts, 2016) or “Generation Me” (Sauser and Sims, 2012). The names “Generation Y”/“Generation Why” come from the assumption that people within this generation are curious (Pitts, 2016; Sauser and Sims, 2012). Additionally, it is believed that most millennials are open to change and accept new ideas (Pitts, 2016). This is one of the reasons that a number of studies have argued that millennials are attracted to immersive experiences. For example, in a restaurant development study, Levin (2018) has stated that immersive dining and drinking experiences are “gaining ground as their core patrons – millennials – continue to seek out adventure and prioritize new experiences over acquiring new possessions. Whether it’s dining in the dark, wearing Hawaiian shirts to a tiki bar, sipping cocktails in a frigid ‘ice bar’ or having a meal in the middle of an art gallery at a pop-up restaurant, consumers are eager for novelty” (p. 1). In other words, Levin (2018) has argued that immersive experiences, such as immersive restaurants or bars, are becoming popular because they are novel and adventurous, which are factors that the millennial generation seeks in its leisure experiences.

Another explanation of millennials’ interest in immersive experiences is the participation aspect. Since social interaction was an expectation in the online and offline formative experiences of millennials, they prefer to participate in the creation of content. A report on ways that global brands have engaged with millennials states that “participation fulfills the deeper emotional needs of Millennials to be seen and heard, to create something meaningful, and to make one’s mark” (Martin, 2010, p. 7). Since it is becoming crucial for brands and organizations to invite millennials to contribute to the experience, it has been argued that the consumer rather than the brand is center stage (Martin, 2010). In fact, putting the consumer at the center of the stage is literally and figuratively what immersive experiences do.

Millennials’ attraction to immersive experiences can also be explained by their desire for authenticity and intimacy (Martin, 2010), which explains the name “Generation Me.” Allowing the audience to participate in the product or service somehow personalizes the consumers’ experiences (Martin, 2010). Besides this created intimacy, the interactive aspects result in authentic experiences.

Finally, millennials appreciate having insider knowledge and like to share it (Martin, 2010). Since immersive experiences are intimate and personalized for each consumer, consumers can only gain insider knowledge through witnessing the immersive experiences themselves. This explains millennials’ demand for these experiences, because the only way for them to share insider knowledge about immersive experiences is to consume them.

In sum, since millennials in general prioritize new, adventurous, authentic and personalized experiences, like to participate in content creation, and aim to obtain insider knowledge, it is assumed that they are attracted to immersive experiences.

#### *Millennials' cultural visiting motives*

This interest of millennials does not only apply to immersive experiences in the commercial or hospitality worlds but also to these sorts of experiences in the cultural field. In a study on millennials' leisure activities, Hyun (2015) has found that they are willing to explore new artistic experiences. This relates to the facts that millennials are more entrepreneurial and willing to take risks (Watson, 2018), are open to change (Pitts, 2016), and prefer to discover new things rather than being told about them (Martin, 2010). More specifically, in a study on millennials as cultural consumers, Halliday and Astafyeva (2014) have found that millennials' attendance motives are feelings of belonging, entertainment, experience, self-development, and prestige. All these motives can be explained by their attitudes, behavior, and formative experiences.

First, since many millennials belong to a world on the internet, building relationships outside the virtual world can sometimes be difficult for them. Therefore, aspirations to recognition, identity, and social interaction are central drivers for millennials (Halliday and Astafyeva, 2014). This can explain their attendance motive of feelings of belonging (Halliday and Astafaya, 2014).

Second, most millennials are focused on themselves and therefore have high expectations of themselves (Sauser and Sims, 2012). Since millennials were raised being told how special they are and how they can become anything they want to be, many of them believe that they are exceptional and can make a difference in the world (Safer, 2008). These thoughts have resulted in many millennials being narcissistic, self-focused, and self-assured, but it has also created a strong need to achieve among millennials (Pitts, 2016; Sauser and Sims, 2012; Martin, 2010). This need to achieve explains millennials' visiting motives of self-development and prestige.

Third, despite their need to achieve, most millennials find a good balance between leisure and work to be important (Sauser and Sims, 2012; Halliday and Astafyeva, 2014; Pitts, 2016). In line with this thought, they find the hedonic value of cultural activities more important than the utilitarian value (Hyun, 2015). This explains millennials' visiting motives of entertainment and experience.

In sum, millennials are not only characterized by age but also by their attitudes and behavior. There are many studies that link these attitudes and behavior to millennials' consumer interest. These studies suggest that millennials' attendance motives can be met by cultural activities that provide entertainment, social interactions, reputation, or enlightenment. Additionally, as it is assumed that millennials are attracted to immersive experiences, cultural activities that supply newness, greater involvement, co-creation, and intimate and exclusive aspects conceivably also address millennials' consumer interest.

## 2.4 Hypotheses

Taken all of these findings together, this section explains how consumer behavior, product innovativeness, immersive theatre, and millennials are related to each other and contributed to the development of my hypotheses.

To begin with, apart from all the differences between immersive and traditional theatre that make the former radically innovative, another important reason for immersive theatre's product innovativeness is the fact that all spectators have a unique experience from time to time. Spectators of immersive theatre are interactive agents who need to participate in an entrepreneurial and narcissistic way in order to find their own narrative and journey in the performance. This means that the performances are non-reproducible and unique artistic experiences that not only change every night but also vary from one spectator to the next on the same night. This incrementally innovative aspect, in combination with the radically innovative aspects of the genre, suggest that potential consumers of immersive theatre cannot draw upon their internal information in their decision-making process.

Additionally, potential visitors cannot draw upon external information in this process since there is a lack of pre-purchase information available concerning immersive performances. This lack is not only due to the experience good aspects of theatre in general, but also due to the decision of the suppliers of immersive theatre to reduce their marketing materials to mysterious and cryptic messages.

The fact that potential visitors cannot draw upon internal or external information in their decision-making process causes functional risk for potential consumers and therefore uncertainty in the immersive theatre industry. Nonetheless, immersive theatre has become a popular genre in some progressive countries. This means that despite the argument that consumers are most likely to choose a decision-making process that lowers the risk associated with purchasing the product (Colbert, 2003), consumers of immersive theatre do not. There are several possible explanations for this. For example, the high-risk perception of immersive theatre could cause a higher level of consumer involvement, which means that consumers consider their benefits sought after which their personal interest in the performance increases (Colbert, 2003). It is also possible that the unique spectator experiences of immersive theatre respond to a need in today's audiences (Machon, 2013).

However, in the first explanation it remains unclear who's benefits sought meet the benefits gained from immersive theatre, and in the second explanation which part of today's audience aims for unique spectator experiences. Therefore, this research intends to determine which people can handle high risk and uncertainty in their decision-making process and thereby ensure the popularity of the immersive theatre genre.

Since the literature suggests that the millennial generation is highly attracted to immersive experiences (Levin, 2018), there is a chance that they are also strongly interested to immersive theatre. Next to being defined by age, millennials are also characterized by their attitudes and behavior. Studies on these attitudes and behaviors in relation to consumer interest indeed suggest that millennials are

willing to explore new artistic experiences, are entrepreneurial, fashion entertainment in their leisure time activities, have narcissistic characteristics, and search for identity and belonging. These characteristics all respond to a variety of aspects of immersive theatre experiences. Therefore, I expect that immersive theatre experiences respond to millennials' needs. However, since this has never been proven, the ambition of this research is to confirm this theory. These considerations brought me to the first hypothesis:

H1 → “Millennials are more interested in the form of immersive theatre than are non-millennials.”

As explained, immersive theatre makers want their audiences to experience their productions without prior knowledge (Eckert, 2017). Communication about the performances is based on mysterious and cryptic texts; thus, potential visitors have to rely mostly on word-of-mouth information. This marketing strategy is a significant part of the immersive theatre experience, because potential consumers cannot circumvent it. Since millennials must somehow be brought into contact with the immersive theatre form in order to be interested in it, I expect that they are also more interested in immersive theatre's methods of communication. Therefore, my second hypothesis is as follows:

H2 → “Millennials are more interested in mysterious, cryptic, and word-of-mouth marketing than are non-millennials.”

Moreover, I think that millennials' interest in the form of immersive theatre may even be caused by its methods of communication. Since studies suggest that millennials want to belong to a greater whole, word-of-mouth marketing may be the right way to reach them. Additionally, studies state that millennials are willing to take risks, which could explain why cryptic and mysterious marketing texts catch their interest. For these reasons, I expect that there is a chance that the interest in the mysterious, cryptic, and word-of-mouth marketing mediates the effect of the interest of millennials in the immersive theatre form. Therefore, my first mediation hypothesis is as follows:

H3.a. → “The effect of age on interest in the immersive theatre form is mediated through interest in its marketing techniques.”

Since I also expect that other factors influence the interest of millennials in immersive theatre, two additional mediation hypotheses are created. First, since millennials are attracted to new, adventurous, authentic and personalized experiences, it has been argued that immersive experiences gained ground through the demands of the millennial generation (Levin, 2018). Therefore, my second mediation hypothesis is as follows:

H3.b → “The effect of age on interest in the immersive theatre form is mediated through interest in other immersive experiences.”

Second, despite the fact that immersive theatre is radically different from traditional theatre (White, 2012), it remains a form of performing arts. For this reason, I expect that there is a positive connection between millennials' interest in theatre in general and their interest in immersive theatre. Therefore, the third mediation hypothesis is as follows:

H3.c → “The effect of age on interest in the immersive theatre form is mediated through interest in theatre plays in general.”

In sum, it is not only expected that millennials are more interested in immersive theatre's form and marketing, but also that interest in the form is mediated through interest in its marketing, in other immersive experiences, and in theatre plays in general. To test for these effects, interest in the immersive theatre form, in immersive theatre's marketing, in other immersive experiences, and in theatre plays in general are all constructed as variables.

In addition, since millennials are also defined by behavior and attitudes, this research aims to determine what internal factors of consumer behavior coincide with an interest in the immersive theatre form. In order to gain a better understanding of the individual decision-making process of potential consumers of immersive theatre, I have decided on the following variables relating to millennials' personality traits to test among millennials and non-millennials.

#### *Entrepreneurial mindset*

First, entrepreneurial mindset is constructed as a variable. Davis, Hall and Mayer (2016) have explained how certain personality dimensions and skills can distinguish people with a highly entrepreneurial mindset from people with a less entrepreneurial mindset. The reason that entrepreneurial mindset is included as a variable is that someone's level of entrepreneurial mindset possibly influences his or her interest in immersive theatre.

This thought comes from the argument that spectators of immersive theatre need to participate in the performance in an entrepreneurial way (Alston, 2013). Moreover, Alston (2013) has argued that immersive theatre has values of entrepreneurialism and the valorization of risk, agency, and responsibility.

Meanwhile, Watson (2018) has found that millennials are more entrepreneurial and willing to take risks, which might be the reason that they are attracted to the self-made opportunities of immersive theatre (Alston, 2013). More generally, greater co-creation of cultural experiences meets millennials' desire to contribute and their urge toward self-development (Halliday and Astafyeva, 2014). Therefore, the following hypothesis is constructed:

H4.a → “People with a highly entrepreneurial mindset are more interested in the form of immersive theatre, and this interest may be mediated through their interest in immersive theatre's marketing, in other immersive experiences, or in theatre plays in general.”

### *Narcissism*

Second, since immersive theatre's experience of aggregating as much pleasure as possible for oneself results in narcissistic spectatorship (Alston, 2013; Zaiontz, 2014), narcissism is used as a variable. Since spectators of immersive theatre focus on themselves and their own relationship with the piece (Zaiontz, 2014), and the performances turn intention inward (Alston, 2013), narcissistic characteristics might influence someone's interest in immersive theatre.

Additionally, since millennials were raised being told how special they were and how they can become anything they want to be (Safer, 2008), studies suggest that millennials have narcissistic characteristics (Pitts, 2016; Sauser and Sims, 2012; Martin, 2010). For this reason, there is a chance that millennials are attracted to the narcissistic aspects of immersive theatre. In order to test this, the second hypothesis related to the internal factors of consumer behavior is as follows:

H4.b→ “People who are narcissistic are more interested in the form of immersive theatre, and this interest may be mediated through their interest in immersive theatre’s marketing, in other immersive experiences, or in theatre plays in general.”

### *Hedonism*

Third, hedonism is chosen as a variable since hedonism might be an important reason for a consumer to attend an immersive theatre performance. Purchasing values can have two motivations, either utilitarian value or hedonic orientation. Hedonic orientation refers to the sense of pleasure that comes from consuming (Ozturk, 2014). Alston (2013) has argued that since immersive theatre is all about the experience and the pleasure coming from this experience, the pleasure of immersive theatre is not a by-product, but the end in itself. Therefore, hedonism is an important aspect of immersive theatre.

Meanwhile, it has been argued that millennials seek hedonic value in their leisure time experiences (Alston, 2013; Hyun, 2015; Halliday and Astafyeva, 2014). This hedonistic aspect of immersive theatre may therefore explain millennials' interest in immersive theatre. For this reason, the following hypothesis is constructed:

H4.c→ “People who value hedonism are more interested in the form of immersive theatre, and this interest may be mediated through their interest in immersive theatre’s marketing, in other immersive experiences, or in theatre plays in general.”

### *Openness to experience*

Fourth, openness to experience is constructed as a variable because audiences' search for novel experiences might be an explanation of immersive theatre's popularity (Machon, 2013). Immersive theatre can be seen as a “novel experience” because of its high level of product innovativeness. As previously explained, not only is immersive theatre radically innovative compared to other theatre productions or genres, but the unique and non-reproducible aspects also create incremental innovation within the same productions. Since most consumers prefer known products to unknown products due to

their desire for continuity (Colbert, 2003), consumers of immersive theatre need to be different, and especially more open to new experiences.

Meanwhile, studies suggest that millennials are open to change (Pitts, 2016) and eager to explore new artistic experiences (Levin, 2018; Hyun, 2015). If millennials are indeed eager to attend new and innovative experiences, they are likely to be attracted to immersive theatre performances. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis related to the internal factors of consumer behavior is as follows:

H4.d→ “People who are open to experiences are more interested in the form of immersive theatre, and this interest may be mediated through their interest in immersive theatre’s marketing, in other immersive experiences, or in theatre plays in general.”

#### *Tolerance for ambiguity*

The fifth chosen variable is tolerance for ambiguity, since this personality trait could possibly influence how attracted someone is to immersive theatre. Ambiguity tolerance is a construct that describes how an individual processes, interprets, and reacts to information (McLain et al., 2015). People with high tolerance for ambiguity perceive ambiguous situations as desirable, whereas people with low tolerance for ambiguity perceive ambiguous situations as a threat (Budner, 1962).

As explained, the lack of pre-purchase information coming from the mysterious and cryptic marketing strategy of immersive theatre companies (Keegan, 2013), creates ambiguous situations for potential consumers. Ambiguous situations are characterized by novelty, complexity, or insolubility (Budner, 1962). Since cultural products are experience goods, their consumers have to deal with a lack on pre-purchase information, and therefore with ambiguity (Lampel et al., 2000). More specifically, since immersive theatre does not only lack pre-purchase information but is also innovative, the situation of a potential visitor of immersive theatre comes close to the novelty aspect of ambiguity. Novelty can be viewed as newness, presenting a situation that has not been experienced before (McLain, 2009).

Meanwhile, Martin (2010) has found that millennials prefer to discover new things themselves rather than being told about them. In addition, the same study found that marketers can best reach millennials with emotional intensity instead of relevant information (Martin, 2010). Based on these findings, millennials seem to perceive ambiguous situations as desirable. For this reason, the following hypothesis is constructed:

H4.e→ “People with a high tolerance for ambiguity are more interested in the form of immersive theatre, and this interest may be mediated through their interest in immersive theatre’s marketing, in other immersive experiences, or in theatre plays in general.”

#### *Symbolic needs*

The last constructed variable in relation to the internal factors of consumer behavior is symbolic needs. As previously explained, some people participate in certain cultural events or activities for the social value of the product (Kainth and Verma, 2011). These people want to demonstrate that they belong to a

certain social group through consumption (Schneidewind and Tröndle, 2003). This psychological meaning of the product for a person is referred to as a symbolic need, because it allows a consumer to communicate his or her personality and values through consumption (Colbert, 2003). When the decision-making process of the consumer is related to symbolic needs, the choice of work or play means less for the consumers than the medium or style of communicating the work or play (Colbert, Nantel, Bilodeau and Rich, 2000). For this reason, someone's symbolic needs may influence his or her interest in immersive theatre because of its unique way of communicating.

In addition, millennials have a desire for belonging and see prestige as a motive to participate in cultural experiences (Halliday and Astafyeva, 2014). They are not always interested in the cultural activity itself but sometimes just want to be part of it and be able to talk about it to identify their social status. Besides, the social value of goods is especially present for millennials, because they are used to sharing their consumption behavior with others on the internet. In this case, socio-psychological network effects (Kretschmer, Klimis and Choi, 1999) play a role. When someone talks about an immersive theatre production, the utility of the performance is subject to how many others have seen it. Additionally, millennials appreciate having insider knowledge that they can share with others (Martin, 2010).

Since immersive performances are characterized by a complete lack of pre-purchase information, visitors first have to purchase a ticket and experience the performance in order to talk about it. This reasoning, plus the fact that millennials may have higher symbolic needs, brought me to the final hypothesis:

H4.e → “People who have more symbolic needs are more interested in the form of immersive theatre, and this interest may be mediated through their interest in immersive theatre’s marketing, in other immersive experiences, or in theatre plays in general.”

These six independent variables are tested on millennials and non-millennials to see how these factors relating to millennial personality traits influence consumer interest in the immersive theatre form. In addition, tests are conducted to determine if there may be mediating factors that influence this interest, such as interest in immersive theatre's marketing, in other immersive experiences, or in theatre plays in general.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research setting

To answer my research question – “*What factors influence consumer interest in immersive theatre experiences?*” – a quantitative method is used. Most previous research on immersive theatre audiences was conducted in a qualitative manner, but this quantitative method can more accurately and precisely demonstrate which determinants have what effect on the interest in immersive theatre experiences. Whereas the qualitative studies had an inductive approach, this study tests these theories in a deductive manner (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, a quantitative approach was chosen over a qualitative approach because it allows for a larger sample size, which makes the research more generalizable (Bryman, 2012).

This section explains how the data is collected; what the sample consists of; how the theory is operationalized; how the dependent, independent, mediator, and control variables are measured; and how the data is analyzed.

#### 3.2 Data collection

To test for mediation between the independent, dependent, mediating, and control variables, data were gathered by means of a survey (see Appendix A). This survey included questions related to all variables. For all the measures except the year of birth, closed multiple-choice questions were used, which the respondents reacted to on a seven-point Likert scale. The answers to the questions were entirely anonymous. For most of the independent variables, existing scales were used in the survey, whereas for one independent variable as well as the dependent and mediating variables, a self-developed questionnaire was used. All questions were written in the English language since respondents of the survey included foreigners living in the Netherlands and Dutch people’s networks in foreign countries.

The survey was spread in the form of a self-completion questionnaire via the internet. Non-probability sampling (Bryman, 2016) was used, spreading the survey among both millennials and non-millennials via social media networks and anonymous links. As this resulted in snowball sampling, not everyone in the population had an equal chance to react on the survey. However, to avoid bias toward my personal background, the survey was spread on the pages, or via the networks, of others. Additionally, people were encouraged via incentive to respond to the questionnaire. Since the questionnaire was relatively long (approximately seven minutes), people who completed the whole questionnaire were able to enter a contest giveaway. In this giveaway, they were able to win either two tickets to a theatre show in a well-known Dutch theatre or a gift card to avoid a bias toward interest in theatre. To keep the answers to the questions anonymous, the contest giveaway was voluntary. Whenever the respondent finished the main survey, he or she was forwarded to another survey (see Appendix A) in which he or she was asked for his or her preference of reward and contact details. Since the survey collected data across a timespan of five weeks (April 1, 2019–May 6, 2019), a cross-sectional

approach was used, which collects data over a short period of time (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, since this research observed relationships without interfering with them by taking a snapshot of many variables at a certain point in time, it is correlational (Field, 2009).

### 3.2.1 Sample

Primary data was collected in relation to the characteristics and attitudes of the sample. In total, 315 responses were collected. This sample is comprised of 177 millennials and 138 non-millennials, resulting in an average age of 39.8. Of the non-millennials, a distinction can be made between the baby boomers or older (N = 68) and Generation X (N = 70). Of the whole sample, 67.3% is female, 47.3% are highly educated, 91.1% are of Dutch nationality, and 89.5% live in the Netherlands. Of the non-Dutch people, most of them are American, Greek, or Italian. Of the respondents not living in the Netherlands, most of them live in the United States or the United Kingdom. An overview of the numbers of the demographics of the sample can be found in Appendix B.

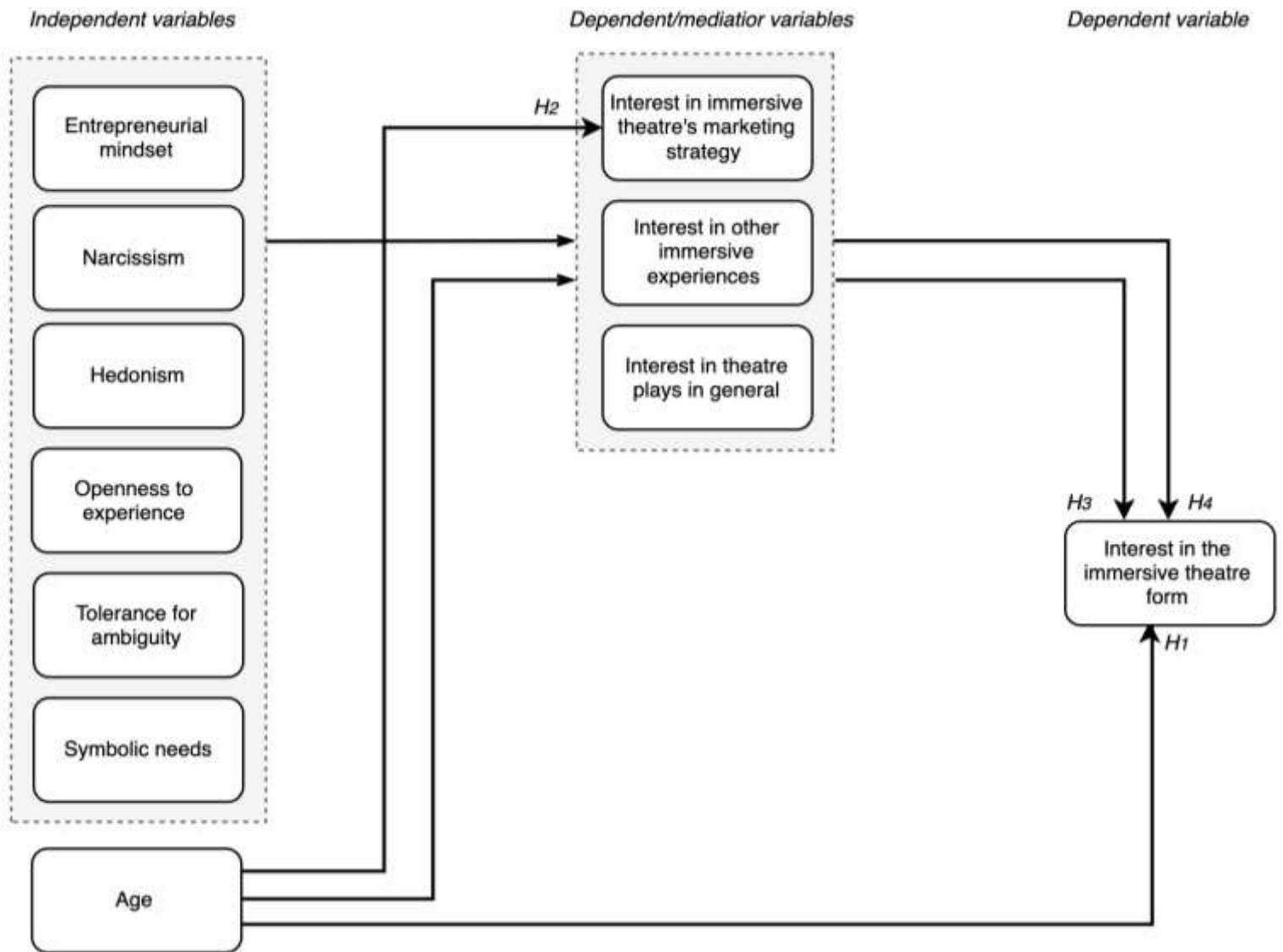
There was no requirement for the respondents to be familiar with immersive theatre or even regular theatre since I believed that the target audience of immersive theatre could be larger than just regular theatregoers. Of the sample, 75.9% are likely to go to a theatre play. However, only 34.3% had ever heard of immersive theatre.

## 3.3 **Operationalization of theory**

Figure 3.1 portrays the conceptual research design. As is apparent in the model, age is an independent variable and interest in the immersive theatre form and interest in immersive theatre's marketing are dependent variables. From the review of the literature, the concepts of entrepreneurial mindset, narcissism, hedonism, openness to experience, tolerance for ambiguity, and symbolic needs, which are personality traits that relate to both attitudes and behavior of the millennial generation and immersive theatre audiences, were also constructed as independent variables. Finally, two mediating variables were included for additional and mediating analyses, which are interest in theatre plays in general and interest in other immersive experiences.

### 3.3.1 Measurements

First, to measure the independent variable of someone's age, the respondents were directly asked for their year of birth. For the other variables, the questions were not so directly. For all the independent, dependent, and mediating variables, the questions of the survey were deliberately chosen from existing scales or formulated from previous research on the topic. This section discusses the operationalization of the variables.



**Figure 3.1** Conceptual research design.

### 3.3.1.1 *Independent variables*

#### *Entrepreneurial mindset*

To measure the entrepreneurial mindset of the respondents, a scale was constructed based on the Entrepreneurial Mindset Profile (EMP) (Davis et al., 2016). The EMP was developed to assess the entrepreneurial mindset of people and thereby differentiates entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs. In addition to this scale being used in corporate settings, it has also been suggested as a research tool. According to Davis et al. (2016), an entrepreneurial mindset consists of certain personality traits and skills. Therefore, half of their measurement instrument measures personality dimensions, and the other half measures skills. However, they have found that the seven personality dimensions predict entrepreneurial status more strongly than the seven skills. For this reason, this research focuses only on the personality dimensions, which are independence, preference for limited structure, nonconformity,

risk acceptance, action orientation, passion, and need to achieve. Together, these features make people more likely to be drawn toward entrepreneurial efforts (Davis et al., 2016).

Due to length constraints, it was not possible to include the whole personality scales in the survey. Hence, for the construction of this entrepreneurial mindset scale, the most important and suggested statement per personality dimension scale was included. Built as a seven-point Likert scale, the respondents of the survey had to react how much they agreed with seven statements (see Table 3.1). Two of the statements were slightly adjusted from the original scale to make them more readable. In Table 3.1 these adjustments are highlighted in bold.

People who score high on this scale appear to have a more entrepreneurial mindset than people who score low on the scale. However, the scale does not consistently reflect the construct that it is measuring, because its Cronbach's  $\alpha$  is 0.53 (and 0.56 after deleting Items 3 and 7), which does not meet the minimum of 0.7. Since Cronbach's  $\alpha$  measures unidimensionality, meaning the extent to which the scale measures one underlying factor, this means that the entrepreneurial mindset scale used does not measure just one construct.

Therefore, a principal component analysis (PCA)<sup>2</sup> was run with a Varimax rotation. This factor analysis can explore the underlying factors of a set of variables and reveal interpretable factor clusters (Field, 2009). From this PCA three different components appeared. However, none of these three components met a higher reliability on its own than the reliability of the complete scale. For this reason, I decided to continue with the complete entrepreneurial mindset scale despite its low reliability. Items 3 and 7 were not excluded from the scale to contribute to a higher reliability, because this improvement did not make the scale reliable. In addition, since the original EMP consists of seven different personality dimensions (Davis et al., 2016), excluding two of the seven items would not accurately assess people's entrepreneurial mindset.

**Table 3.1** Measurements of Entrepreneurial Mindset.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Measurement</i>
1.	I'm uncomfortable when <b>I'm</b> expected to follow others' rules.	Independence
2.	I find it boring to work on clearly structured tasks.	Preference for limited structure
3.	I like to stand out from the crowd.	Nonconformity
4.	I'm willing to take a certain amount of risk to achieve real success.	Risk acceptance
5.	I tend to make decisions quickly.	Action orientation
6.	I'm passionate about what I do.	Passion
7.	I want to be the best at <b>what</b> I do.	Need to Achieve

<sup>2</sup> Conducting a factor analysis is applicable for this construct since the minimum amount of five respondents per variable to achieve a sample size appropriate for factor analyses (Field, 2009) was met. Considering the seven items that measure entrepreneurial mindset, the sample size of 315, with a ratio number of respondents to variables of 45:1, is more than enough. Additionally, even the recommended number of 300 respondents (Field, 2009) for a factor analysis was met.

### *Narcissism*

In order to measure narcissism among the respondents, a four-item narcissism scale was included in the survey (see Table 3.2), on which the respondents had to react on a seven-point Likert scale regarding how much they agree or disagree with the different statements about their personality. This scale was recently developed as part of the “Dark Triad Dirty Dozen” scale (Jonason and Webster, 2010). The Dark Triad scale was created to measure three negative interpersonal traits, namely narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism (Jonason and Webster, 2010). The three different measures of this scale can be assessed as three related concepts, but also as single scales (Konrath, Meier and Bushman, 2014). Indeed, the narcissism scale used appeared to have a high internal reliability, because its Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.76$ . This means that the higher a person scores on this scale, the more narcissistic that person is.

**Table 3.2** Measurements of Narcissism.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Measurement</i>
1	I tend to want others to admire me.	Narcissism
2	I tend to want others to pay attention to me.	Narcissism
3	I tend to seek prestige or status.	Narcissism
4	I tend to expect special favors from others.	Narcissism

### *Hedonism*

To measure someone’s hedonic orientation, items of the European Social Survey (ESS) Human Values Scale (Schwartz, 2007) were used. The original scale includes brief verbal “portraits” of 21 different kinds of people with which it can measure 10 basic types of motivational values among respondents (Schwartz, 2007). Each of these statements describes a goal, aspiration, or wish that points to a single value (Schwartz, 2007). All ESS value items consist of two sentences, of which one mentions the importance of the specific value to someone and the other the feelings toward this value. According to analyses, the importance sentence and the feeling sentence measure the same thing (Schwartz, 2007). For each sentence, the respondents must answer the question “How much like you is this person?” by choosing a response on a six-point numerical scale varying from “very much like me” to “not like me at all.”

One of the values included in the ESS Human Value Scale is hedonism, which Schwartz (2007) has defined as “pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself” (p. 166). Hedonism values imply that pleasure and excitement are the most prominent motivations for activities (Schwartz, 2007). Therefore, the two hedonism statements were covered in the survey but separated into two different sentences per statement. Therefore, a total of four hedonism statements were included in the survey (see Table 3.3). Instead of describing the statements as “portraits” (i.e., “How much is this person like you?”), the sentences were adjusted to the first-person. Additionally, to make the scale more coherent with the other

parts of the survey, it was adjusted to a seven-point Likert scale on which the respondent could answer from “extremely disagree” to “extremely agree.” This four-item scale is reliable since its Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.73$ . The higher a person scored on this construct, the more hedonism values that person has.

**Table 3.3** Measurements of Hedonism.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Measurement</i>
1	Having a good time is important to me.	Importance of hedonism
2	I like to “spoil” myself.	Feeling of hedonism
3	I seek every chance I can to have fun.	Feeling of hedonism
4	It is important to me to do things that give me pleasure.	Importance of hedonism

#### *Openness to experience*

To measure the respondents’ openness to experience, parts of the Big Five Inventory (BFI) were used. This scale is normally measured by 44 items connected to five dimensions of personality, namely neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (John and Srivastava, 1999). Including the whole 44-item scale in the survey made the survey irrelevant and too long. Even including only the items of the scale that relate to openness to experience made the survey too long. Therefore, a shorter assessment of the Big Five (Lang, John, Ludtke, Schupp and Wagner, 2011) was used. This 15-item Big Five Inventory (BFI-S) of personality dimensions is often used for large-scale multidisciplinary surveys (Lang et al., 2011). Of these 15 items, only the three items related to the personality trait “openness to experience” were included in the survey (see Table 3.4). The respondents responded on a seven-point Likert scale with their level of agreement to these three statements. This three-item scale appeared to be reliable for measuring openness to experience, since its Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.7$ . People who score higher on the scale are more open to experiences than people who score lower.

**Table 3.4** Measurements of Openness to Experience.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Measurement</i>
1	I see myself as someone who is original, comes up with new ideas.	Openness to experience
2	I see myself as someone who values artistic, aesthetic experiences.	Openness to experience
3	I see myself as someone who has an active imagination.	Openness to experience

#### *Tolerance for ambiguity*

To measure the respondents’ tolerance for ambiguity, which is used to determine how the respondents deal with incomplete information, the Intolerance for Ambiguity Scale (Budner, 1962) was used. The complete scale measures novelty, complexity, and insolubility since these are all characteristics of

ambiguous situations. Due to length constraints, only the subscale of novelty is included in the survey, because novelty comes closest to the situation of a potential consumer of immersive theatre. The novelty scale consists of four statements. All four statements were included in the survey, on which the respondents were able to react with their level of agreement measured on a seven-point Likert scale (see Table 3.5). Two of the statements were slightly adjusted to make them easier to understand. The adjustments are highlighted in bold in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5** Measurements of Tolerance for Ambiguity.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Measurement</i>
1.	I would like to live in a foreign country for a while.	Intolerance for ambiguity
2.	What we are used to is always <b>more</b> preferable <b>than</b> what is unfamiliar.	Intolerance for ambiguity
3.	A person who leads an even, regular life in which few surprises or unexpected happenings arise really has a lot to be grateful for.	Intolerance for ambiguity
4.	I like parties where I know most of the people more than <b>parties</b> where all or most of the people are complete strangers.	Intolerance for ambiguity

Statement 1 is a reversed-phrased item, so the way in which it is scored is reversed before the reliability analysis. Despite this, this four-item scale had relatively low reliability, because Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.6$  even after deleting one item (Item 1). However, since the scale is short, the low reliability score is less relevant than for a longer scale, since in general Cronbach's  $\alpha$  increases when there are more items on the scale (Field, 2009). Furthermore, according to Field (2009), values below 0.7 can be expected when dealing with psychological constructs. Therefore, despite its low reliability, I continued with this scale in the research. However, Item 1 was excluded from the analyses.

People who scored high on this scale are more intolerant of ambiguous situations. Since my constructed variable is someone's tolerance instead of intolerance for ambiguity, it is taken into account in the analyses that a higher score on this scale measures the opposite effect.

### *Symbolic needs*

To measure someone's symbolic needs as a motivation to participate in cultural activities, there was no existing scale to use or adjust. These symbolic needs are related to how someone communicates his or her personality via his or her consumer choices (Colbert, 2003). Therefore, a scale was constructed based on one's access to the markers of social status (Colbert, 2003). Social status can be achieved in several ways, such as by being seen at a particular cultural event, by being able to discuss a particular type of performance, or by purchasing products in a museum shop (Colbert, 2003). Out of these examples, three questions were constructed in the survey to measure someone's symbolic needs. Furthermore, since Colbert (2003) provided these examples in an article written in 2003 and times have

changed due to the internet, one question was added in relation to sharing cultural activities on social media. A total of four statements were included in the survey (see Table 3.6), on which the respondents had to react on a seven-point Likert scale with their level of agreement.

The reliability of the created scale is high enough since its Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.71$ . In addition, since this is a self-constructed scale, a factor analysis (PCA)<sup>3</sup> was run to understand the structure of the set of items related to symbolic needs. From this factor analysis it was found that all four items measure the same thing since they have the same underlying structure. Therefore, people who score higher on this scale have more symbolic needs than people who score lower.

**Table 3.6** Measurements of Symbolic Needs.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Measurement</i>
1	It is important for me to be seen at some particular cultural events.	Symbolic needs
2	It is important for me to be able to discuss a particular type of artwork or production.	Symbolic needs
3	It is important for me to purchase something in a museum shop after visiting.	Symbolic needs
4	It is important for me to share my cultural activities on social media.	Symbolic needs

### 3.3.1.2 *Dependent variables*

#### *Interest in immersive theatre experiences*

In addition to the attitudes of the respondents toward the independent variables, their attitudes toward the dependent variable were also measured. However, to measure someone's interest in an innovative theatre form that empowers the audience, by focusing on nonreproducible, interactive and individual theatrical experiences in expansive and thought-out environments on unusual locations, there was no existing scale to use. Nonetheless, since it is possible to measure the intensity of feelings about something specific with a self-developed multi-item scale (Bryman, 2016), a new scale was developed. The review of the literature and empirical research provided the basis for the creation of this scale. The scale is comprised of two different parts: one relating to the marketing strategy of immersive theatre and one to the theatrical form of immersive theatre.

For the first part of the construct, a marketing material of a famous immersive theatre company (Punchdrunk, n.d.), an excerpt of an audience reaction (Anarug, 2019), statements related to word-of-mouth marketing, and statements related to the mysterious aspects of marketing were used. This led to

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<sup>3</sup> Conducting a factor analysis for this construct is applicable since the ratio number of respondents to variables is 79.8:1, meaning that the minimum amount of five respondents for an appropriate factor analysis per variable is easily.

the five questions described in Table 3.7. For the second part of the construct, six questions were carefully formulated based on existing literature about the immersive theatre form and its audience. The questions were related to immersive theatre’s aspects of unusual locations, empowered and mobile audiences, self-made opportunities, and individual, personal and total experiences. The last included question was related to the personal experience of immersive theatre based on an example of one of the most popular immersive theatre plays, namely *Sleep No More*<sup>4</sup>. These six questions are formulated in Table 3.8. On all the 11 questions, the respondents had to react on a seven-point Likert scale with their level of likeness to go, varying from “extremely unlikely” to “extremely likely.”

**Table 3.7** Measurement of Interest in Immersive Theatre – Marketing Strategy.

Item	Question	Measurement
1.	How likely are you to go to go to a theatre experience if this is the only description of it available? 	Interest in cryptic communication on a website page.
2.	How likely are you to go to go to the same theatre experience if someone close advised you to go there?	Interest in word-of-mouth marketing by someone close.
3.	How likely are you to go to the same theatre experience if someone you don’t know advised you to go there?	Interest in word-of-mouth marketing by someone random.
4.	How likely are you to go to a theatre experience if someone who already went there writes this as a review: <i>“... an interactive, explorative theater experience with an eerie plot you'll become lost in. It creates a wild mix of emotions. Confusion, excitement, fear, curiosity, sadness, sensuality... I could go on. I won't say too much because the mystery behind it all is why it's so good.”  </i>	Interest in a mysterious audience review.
5.	How likely are you to join a secret society?	Interest in the mystery surrounding a secret society.

<sup>4</sup> *Sleep No More* is an immersive theatre experience, in which masked audiences have to find their way through a created spooky town in a six story old warehouse. In order to find the narrative, the audiences can decide to either follow the performers or wander around themselves and focus on the tangible details. The storyline is an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Mac Beth*. The production of *Sleep No More* started in London (2003) but currently plays in New York City (2011) and Beijing (2017) (Punchdrunk, n.d.).

**Table 3.8** Measurements of Interest in Immersive Theatre – Theatrical Form.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Measurement</i>
1	How likely you are to go to a theatre experience that is not located in a theatre venue, but in an unusual place like a disused warehouse or hospital?	Interest in a theatrical experience at an unusual location.
2	How likely you are to go to a theatre experience where you will not be seated, but have to move yourself in the same space as the performers?	Interest in a theatrical experience with an empowered and mobile audience.
3	How likely you are to go to a theatre experience where you will be separated from your company before the performance starts?	Interest in an “individual” theatrical experience.
4	How likely you are to go to a theatre experience where the story that you will see depends on your own decisions made during the performance?	Interest in a theatrical experience that is based on self-made opportunities.
5	How likely you are to go to a theatre experience where you are not only able to hear and see the performance, but also to touch, taste and smell aspects of it?	Interest in a “total” theatrical experience, where food and drinks are part of the experience.
6	How likely you are to go to a theatre experience where you and all the other spectators are asked to wear a mask?	Interest in a “personal” theatrical experience.

#### 3.3.1.2.1 Factor analysis

The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of the constructed scale of the two parts together is 0.9. To explore the underlying constructs of this set of variables, a PCA was conducted. In order to reveal interpretable factor clusters, a Varimax rotation was applied (Field, 2009). All variables measuring interest in the immersive theatre’s form as well as interest in immersive theatre’s marketing were included in this factor analysis.

Conducting a factor analysis is applicable for this construct, since all requirements for an appropriate factor analysis are met. First, the minimum amount of the sample size, which is five respondents per variable (Field, 2009), was met. Considering the construct consists of 11 items in total, the ratio number of respondents to variables is 28.6:1. Second, also the recommended number of 300 respondents (Field, 2009) was reached. Third, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis since  $KMO = 0.89$ , which means that the proportion of variance in the variables might be caused by underlying factors. Finally, Bartlett’s test of sphericity indicated that the correlations between the variables were large enough for a PCA ( $v^2 = 1911.92$ ,  $df = 55$ ,  $p = < 0.01$ ).

**Table 3.9** Factor loadings > 0.4, PCA.

<b>Component</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Immersive Form Q4 – Self-made opportunities	<b>0.847</b>	
Immersive Form Q5 – Total experience	<b>0.842</b>	
Immersive Form Q6 – Personal experience	<b>0.825</b>	
Immersive Form Q3 – Individual experience	<b>0.811</b>	
Immersive Form Q2 – Empowered and mobile audience	<b>0.809</b>	
Immersive Form Q1 – Unusual location	<b>0.614</b>	0.418
Immersive Marketing Q3 -Word-of-mouth – someone random		<b>0.840</b>
Immersive Marketing Q4 - Mysterious audience review		<b>0.780</b>
Immersive Marketing Q2 – Word-of-mouth - someone close		<b>0.766</b>
Immersive Marketing Q1 - Cryptic website page		<b>0.703</b>
Immersive Marketing Q5 - Mystery of a secret society		

*Note.* Extraction method: PCA. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization. Rotation converged in five iterations.

As expected, without restricting the number of factors, two components had eigenvalues over one and in combination explained 63.86% of the variance. Nevertheless, there was one item that did not similarly cluster into the two components. This was Question 5 of the immersive marketing part, which asked for the likelihood to join a secret society. This question was therefore excluded from the analysis. Running the factor analysis again, the two components with eigenvalues over one together explained 68.15% of the variance. Table 3.9 displays the factor loadings after rotation. Component 1 relates to the questions measuring interest in the immersive theatre form (eigenvalue 5.49, explaining 49.90% of variance) and Component 2 to the questions measuring interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy (eigenvalue 1.54, explaining 13.94% of variance). This means that within the variable of interest in immersive theatre experiences, two separate constructs can clearly be detected. Someone’s interest in the theatre form is not equal to someone’s interest in the way that the form is communicated to potential audiences, and vice versa. With this in mind, these two constructs were treated as two different dependent variables in this research.

To measure the internal consistency between the items on the scales, an initial analysis was run to obtain Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  per component. Looking at the reliability of the first subscale, which is related

to immersive theatre’s marketing strategy, Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  is high (0.77) and indeed becomes significantly higher (0.81) when Question 5 is removed. This means that the higher the respondent scores on the scale, the more interested he or she is in the immersive theatre’s marketing strategy. Furthermore, for the second component, which relates to interest in the form of immersive theatre, the reliability is also high, since Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.91$ . Similarly, this means that the higher the respondent scores on the scale, the more interested the respondent is in the immersive theatre form.

In all, the items that were developed from different theories proved its validity and reliability as component parts of an overarching factor measuring someone’s interest in immersive theatre experiences.

### 3.3.1.3 *Mediating variables*

In addition to the dependent variables, two mediating variables were included in the research to control for their relationship with the independent and dependent variables.

First, someone’s interest in theatre plays in general was measured to see how this relates to someone’s age, personality traits, and interest in immersive theatre experiences. Theatre plays in general are, in contrast with immersive theatre experiences, a familiar concept. Therefore, the scale used to measure this interest was short, consisting of one direct question (see Table 3.10). The respondents had to answer this question with their level of likeness to go, from “extremely unlikely” to “extremely likely” on a seven-point Likert scale. The higher the person scores on this scale, the more interested the person is in theatre plays in general.

**Table 3.10** Measurements of Interest in Theatre Plays in General.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Measurement</i>
1	How likely you are to go to a theatre play?	Interest in theatre plays in general

Second, respondents’ interest in known immersive experiences was measured. For this part, three direct questions were asked of the respondents about their likelihood to attend or play a known immersive experience. Similar to the measurement of someone’s interest in theatre plays in general, this technique could not be used on the immersive theatre part since immersive theatre is something that is not familiar enough to Dutch respondents to ask about directly. The three chosen examples of immersive experiences for this construct are escape rooms, video games and speakeasy bars or restaurants because they are all new, adventurous, and personalized experiences. The questions relating to these three immersive experiences are displayed in Table 3.11.

The respondents’ interests in the three items are measured on a seven-point Likert scale on which the respondents had to answer from “extremely unlikely” to “extremely likely.” The developed scale appeared to be reliable, as its Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.75$ . Therefore, the higher the respondents scored on this scale, the more interested they are in immersive experiences.

**Table 3.11** Interest in Other Immersive Experiences.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Measurement</i>
1.	How likely you are to go to an escape room?	Interest in other immersive experience
2.	How likely you are to play a video game?	Interest in other immersive experience
3.	How likely you are to go to a speakeasy (secret) bar or restaurant?	Interest in other immersive experience

#### *3.3.1.4 Control variables*

Finally, the socio-demographic aspects of gender, nationality, country of residence, and educational background were included in this research as control variables. In addition, an individual's familiarity with immersive theatre was included as a control variable. All these control variables were added because they may be able to clarify effects. These variables were all directly asked for in the survey via multiple-choice questions (see Appendix A). Since this technique resulted in the control variables being categorical variables, dummies were created to include them in the analyses. For example, for the educational level measurement, dummies were created for low education (high school or lower), middle education (bachelor's degree), and high education (master's degree or higher). In this case, only two of the three dummies were included in the analyses (low and middle education) to compare them with the third missing dummy (high education). For all the dummy variables, the dummy with the highest N is left out of the analysis as a reference group with which to compare the others.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

The measures of the survey together provide a basis for the degree of relationship between the concepts that I have developed from preexisting qualitative theories and studies. Since it is possible to predict an outcome variable from several predictor variables with a multiple regression analysis (Field, 2009), multiple linear regression analyses were run in order to answer my research question. Since the dependent variable of interest in immersive theatre experiences is separated into two components, two separate multiple regressions were run, each with another component of the dependent variable. Furthermore, two multiple regression analyses were conducted for additional analyses, one with interest in other immersive experiences and one with interest in theatre plays in general as the dependent variable. Finally, a multiple regression analysis was run to test for mediation between all variables.

Since these analyses were conducted to test for causal relations and possible mediations between the independent, mediating, dependent, and control variables, their results made it possible to test my hypotheses. The data analyses and results are presented in the following chapter.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Correlations and descriptives

Before the hypotheses tests are presented, some insights are outlined regarding the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables. These are shown in the correlation matrix in Table 4.1. The correlations between the variables confirm the scale validations. Since these correlations are not too high, all variables are independent constructs.

Aside from this, the correlation matrix indicates that there are significant bivariate correlations between age and several independent, mediator, and dependent variables. As expected, interest in immersive theatre's marketing ( $r = -0.21, p < 0.01$ ) and interest in the immersive theatre form ( $r = -.33, p < 0.01$ ) both negatively correlate with age. Additionally, interest in other immersive experiences ( $r = -0.65, p < 0.01$ ) also strongly negatively correlates with age. However, it is notable that age does not correlate with interest in theatre plays in general ( $r = 0.06, p > 0.10$ ). Looking at the further one-on-one relationships with age, the correlation matrix gives the impression that age negatively correlates with all the internal factors of consumer behavior except openness to experience and symbolic needs.

It is worth noting that the Pearson correlations between the four dependent variable subscales indicate that all four positively correlate except interest in theatre plays in general with interest in other immersive experiences ( $r = -0.03, p = 0.58$ ). Interestingly, interest in immersive theatre experiences has to do with both interest in theatre in general and interest in other immersive experiences even though those two variables are not related to each other. Another interesting insight is that the two dependent variables – interest in immersive theatre's marketing and the immersive theatre form – and the additional variable of interest in other immersive experiences do not only correlate with age but also with almost all the millennial characteristics. Meanwhile, the additional variable of interest in theatre plays in general does not correlate with age at all and just with one characteristic of the millennial generation, namely symbolic needs.

### 4.2 Assumptions

Since there are more than two independent variables to explain variations in the dependent variables, I ran multiple linear regression analyses to test my hypotheses. However, in order to draw conclusions about a population based on a multiple regressions analysis on a sample, several assumptions must be met (Field, 2009). In my multiple regression models, all necessary assumptions that guarantee that the parameters and coefficients are unbiased are met.

First, in the nature of the research both the independent and dependent variables are quantitative and there is a variation in the value of predictor variables and outcome variables. Second, the multicollinearity statistics do not cause any concern since the average tolerance value is above 0.2 and all the variance inflation factor (*VIF*) values are between one and two and therefore far beneath 10.

**Table 4.1.** Correlation matrix.

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Cryptic marketing	4.672	1.206	1.00										
2. Immersive theatre form	4.329	1.505	0.53**	1.00									
3. Other immersive experiences	4.075	1.716	0.22**	0.42**	1.00								
4. Theatre plays in general	5.187	1.566	0.41**	0.21**	-0.03	1.00							
5. Narcissism	4.090	1.113	0.12*	0.12*	0.27**	-0.01	1.00						
6. Openness to experience	5.207	0.986	0.24**	0.32**	0.13*	0.10	0.02	1.00					
7. Intolerance for ambiguity	3.860	1.184	-0.12*	-0.03	0.16**	-0.05	0.11	-0.06	1.00				
8. Hedonism	5.413	0.936	0.28**	0.13*	0.34**	0.04	0.36**	0.11*	0.02	1.00			
9. Symbolic Needs	3.100	1.160	0.31**	0.15*	0.01	0.30**	0.28**	0.13*	-0.07	0.18**	1.00		
10. Age	39.781	17.314	-0.21**	-0.33**	-0.65**	0.06	-0.46**	-0.08	-0.21**	-0.46**	-0.08	1.00	
11. Entrepreneurial mindset	4.918	0.705	0.17**	0.18**	0.01	0.02	0.11	0.36**	-0.25**	0.08	0.00	0.07	1.00

\* < 0.05; \*\* < 0.01

Third, as can be seen in the scatterplots (see Appendix C), there is no heteroscedasticity. In addition, the histograms (see Appendix C) indicate that the models also have a normal distribution of errors. Furthermore, the predictors are uncorrelated with external variables because no variables with an influence on the outcome are excluded in the multiple regression model. Next, as found in the Durbin-Watson tests in the model summaries, the independent errors all meet a number between one and three. Furthermore, there are no severe outliers. Despite the fact that in three of the four models there is one outlier, none of them is severe and thus none of them has a significant influence. Finally, the models meet the assumption of linearity since there is a linear relationship in all multiple regressions between the outcome variable and the independent variables. In sum, the model appears to be accurate and generalizable to the population.

### 4.3 Multiple regression analyses

As previously explained, the dependent variable of interest in immersive theatre experiences is separated into interest in the immersive theatre form and interest in its marketing strategy. The first multiple regression analysis displays the interactions between the independent variables and interest in immersive theatre's marketing strategy (see Table 4.2), and the second with interest in the immersive theatre form (see Table 4.3). The independent and dependent variables were calculated by first mean-centering the variables. Next to these continuous variables, the analysis also included several categorical variables as

independent and control variables. For the categorical control variables, the created dummies were included in the analysis.

In both tables, five different models are shown. In all models I controlled for possible interactions between the control, independent, and dependent variables. Model 1 contains the results of the control variables and Model 3 the results of the control and all the independent variables. Since two of the independent variables did not meet the minimum Chronbach's  $\alpha$ , Model 2 is included without the variables of intolerance for ambiguity and entrepreneurial mindset to see if these two variables influenced the other results. Model 4 excluded age as a continuous variable. Instead, this model included dummies for two different groups of generations, the baby boomers and Generation X, to compare those with the millennial generation. Model 5 did the same, but with the two less reliable variables included. Since there are no major differences between the results in the models, Models 3 and 5, which both include the two less reliable scales, are used in the analysis. The results provided in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 were used to test Hypotheses 1 and 2.

#### 4.3.1 Mediation

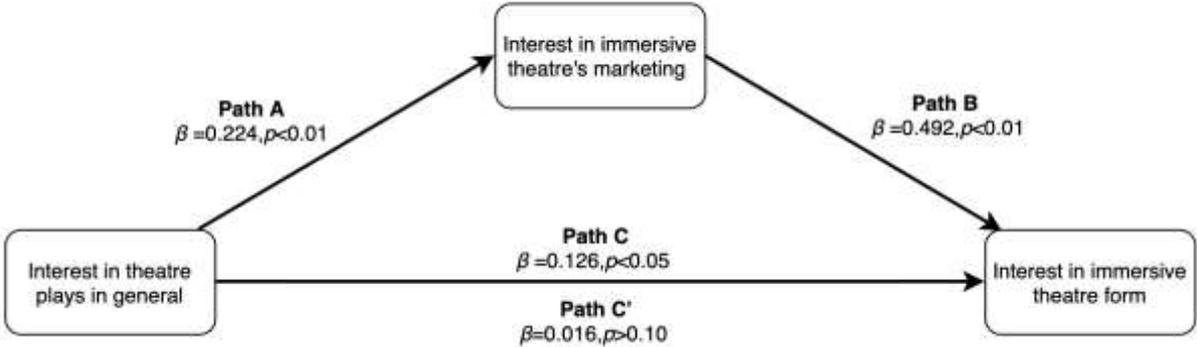
In order to test the sub-hypotheses of Hypotheses 3 and 4, an additional multiple regression analysis was run (see Table 4.4) to test for mediations, using Baron and Kenny's (1986) single mediation model. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), a variable is considered a mediator when it meets three conditions. First, variations in the significance level of the independent variables account for the variations in significance level of the presumed mediation variable. Baron and Kenny (1986) refer to this as "Path A." Second, variations in the mediating variable significantly account for variations in the dependent variable, which Baron and Kenny refer to as "Path B." Third, when Path A and Path B are controlled, the original relationship between the independent and dependent variable (Path C) is no longer significant (Path C').

In the mediation analysis of Table 4.4, only the models that include all seven independent variables are included, with the focus on the models that measure the different generation groups instead of age. The table includes eight models, of which Model 1 is the same as Model 5 of Table 4.3. Models 2, 3, and 4 each add one mediating variable to the independent variables. Model 7 includes all three mediating variables at the same time. It is remarkable that all three mediating variables separately have a significant positive influence on the dependent variable (Path B). However, at the moment that all three are tested together, the significance of the variable that measures someone's interest in theatre plays in general disappears (Path C'). This suggests that there is mediation within these mediating variables.

For this reason, Models 5 and 6 are included in Table 4.4 in order to better understand how these mediating variables are interconnected. Looking at Model 6, where interest in other immersive experiences and interest in theatre plays in general are both included, it is apparent that the influence of both variables remains positive and significant on interest in the immersive theatre form. Model 5

includes both interest in immersive theatre’s marketing and in theatre plays in general. From this model it becomes clear that the effect of interest in theatre plays in general on interest in the immersive theatre form disappears (Path C’) when interest in immersive theatre’s marketing is added. This suggests mediation. Therefore, the influence of theatre plays in general on interest in immersive theatre’s marketing is tested on significance (Path A).

These effects are displayed in Figure 4.1, which suggests that all three conditions of Baron and Kenny (1986) are met for mediation. In addition, a Sobel test is run to confirm the significance of the mediation (Sobel, 1982). This Sobel test suggests that the mediation is significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). This means that interest in immersive theatre’s marketing mediates the relationship between interest in theatre plays in general and interest in the immersive theatre form.



**Figure 4.1.** Mediating role of interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy.

Now that this mediation is confirmed, it must be kept in mind that whenever interest in theatre plays in general mediates a relationship, there may be a two-way mediation. In this case the relationship is first mediated by interest in theatre plays in general and second by interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy before it influences interest in the immersive theatre form.

In the following part, Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 are first tested to understand the role of age in interest in immersive theatre experiences and what might mediate this influence. Afterward, all sub-hypotheses of Hypothesis 4 are tested to see what internal factors of consumer behavior play a role in interest in immersive theatre experiences and if there are other factors that mediate these relationships.

4.3.2 Role of age in interest in immersive theatre

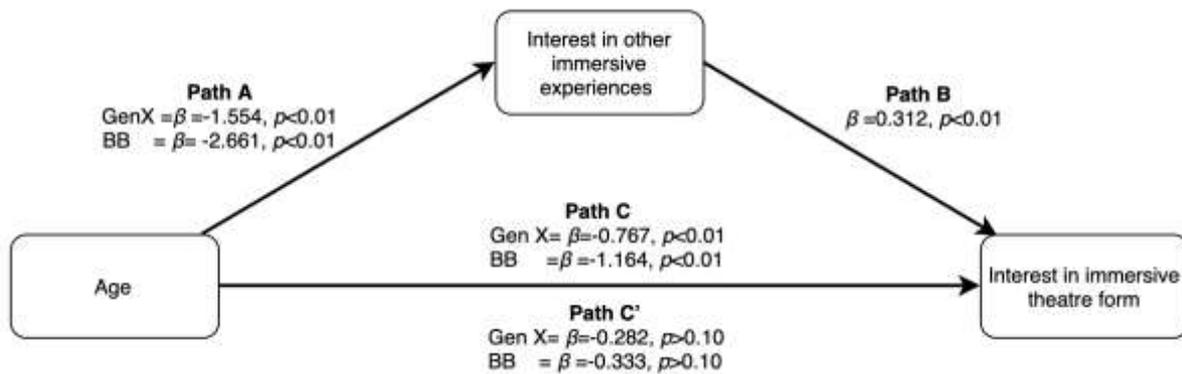
In Table 4.3, the results demonstrate a significant negative relationship between age and interest in the immersive theatre form ( $\beta = -0.031, p < 0.01$ ). Hence, this finding demonstrates that the older a person is, the less interest that person has in the form of immersive theatre. Moreover, looking at the three different age groups, it is clear that millennials are more interested in the immersive theatre form than people from the baby boom generation or Generation X. These findings confirm Hypothesis 1 (“Millennials are more interested in the immersive theatre form than are non-millennials”).

When looking at the results concerning interest in immersive theatre's marketing strategy (see Table 4.2), it is apparent that age only has a slightly significant negative relation with this interest ( $\beta = -0.007, p < 0.10$ ). This can be explained by analyzing the interest of the three different generations in the marketing strategy. Here it becomes clear that millennials are significantly more interested in immersive theatre's marketing than baby boomers are, but millennials' interest does not differ significantly from that of Generation X. Therefore, also Hypothesis 2 ("Millennials are more interested in mysterious, cryptic, and word-of-mouth marketing than are non-millennials") is confirmed.

Since the sub-hypotheses of Hypothesis 3 are related to mediating effects, Table 4.4 was analyzed for these tests. As can be seen in Model 2 of this table, there is no mediating role for interest in immersive theatre's marketing on the effect of someone's age on his or her interest in the immersive theatre form. Both the significance of the baby boomers and of Generation X remain similar when interest in immersive theatre's marketing is included in the analysis. This suggests that interest in the marketing strategy is not a predictor of the effect of millennials' interest in the immersive theatre form. Therefore, Hypothesis 3.a ("The effect of age on interest in the immersive theatre form is mediated through interest in its marketing technique") is rejected.

Similarly, as can be seen in Model 4 in Table 4.4, there is also no mediating role for interest in theatre plays in general on the effect of someone's age on his or her interest in the immersive theatre form. Likewise, the significance of both the baby boomers and Generation X remain similar when interest in theatre plays in general is included in the analysis. Since this suggests that millennials' interest in theatre in general does not account for millennials' interest in the immersive theatre form, Hypothesis 3.c ("The effect of age on interest in the immersive theatre form is mediated through interest in theatre plays in general") is also rejected.

When analyzing Model 3 in Table 4.4, it becomes clear that there is a mediating role for interest in other immersive experiences in the effect of age on interest in the immersive theatre form. Both the significant effects of the baby boomers and the effect of Generation X disappear when the variable of interest in other immersive experiences is included in the analysis. This mediating role of interest in other immersive experiences is illustrated in Figure 4.2 for both Generation X and the baby boomers. As is apparent, the three conditions of mediation (Baron and Kenny, 1986) are met. Path A and Path B are significant, whereas Path C becomes insignificant (Path C') once interest in other immersive experiences is included in the analysis. Additionally, Sobel tests were run to confirm the significance of the mediations. Both the mediations for the analysis that includes Generation X ( $p < 0.01$ ) and the analysis that includes baby boomers ( $p < 0.01$ ) are significant. This means that the effect of age on interest in the form of immersive theatre is mediated through interest in other immersive experiences. Therefore, Hypothesis 3.b ("The effect of age on interest in the immersive theatre form is mediated through interest in other immersive experiences") is confirmed.



**Figure 4.2.** Mediating role of interest in other immersive experiences. *Note:* Gen X = Generation X and BB = baby boomers.

#### 4.3.3 Role of internal factors of consumer behavior in interest in immersive theatre

With respect to the sub-hypotheses of Hypothesis 4, the six different internal factors of consumer behavior are included in all tables. Per different dependent variable, different internal factors of consumer behavior have significant influences on interest in immersive theatre experiences.

##### *Entrepreneurial mindset*

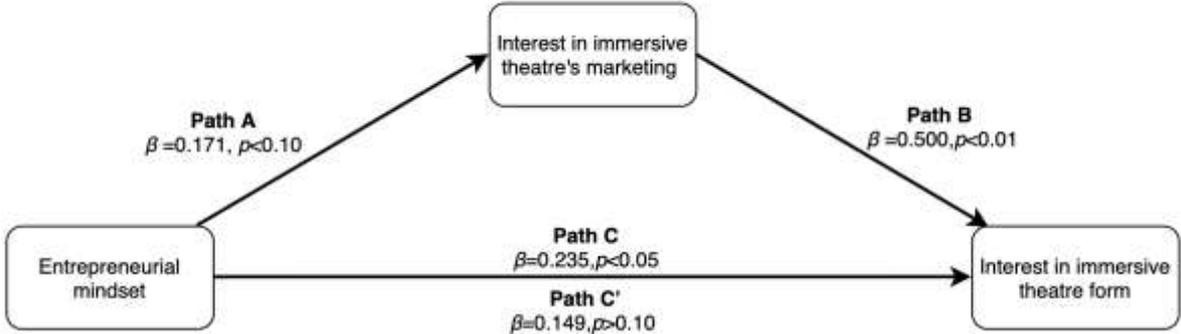
As can be seen in the results of Table 4.3, people with a highly entrepreneurial mindset are more interested in the immersive theatre form ( $\beta = 0.228, p < 0.10$ ) since the effect is marginally significant. It is worth noting that this interaction becomes more significant when the division is made between the different groups of generations instead of just age. This means that the first part of Hypothesis 4.a (“People with a highly entrepreneurial mindset are more interested in the form of immersive theatre, and this interest may be mediated through their interest in immersive theatre’s marketing, in other immersive experiences, or in theatre plays in general”) is confirmed.

In addition, to test if this effect is mediated through any of the mediating variables, Table 4.4 was analyzed. The results in Model 4 indicate that the effect of having an entrepreneurial mindset on interest in the immersive theatre form remains similarly significant in the model that includes interest in theatre plays in general. However, Model 2, where the variable that measures interest in immersive theatre’s marketing is included, and Model 3, where the variable that measures interest in other immersive experiences is included, both indicate that the significance of the effect of having an entrepreneurial mindset diminishes. These two findings reveal that the requirements of mediation (Baron and Kenny, 1986) regarding Path C and Path C’ are met. However, the other two paths must also be significant.

As can be seen in Table 4.2, the effect of an entrepreneurial mindset on interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy (Path A) is significant ( $\beta = 0.171, p < 0.10$ ). However, from the additional analysis in Table 4.5, it becomes clear that the effect of an entrepreneurial mindset on interest in other immersive experiences (Path A) is not significant ( $\beta = 0.057, p > 0.10$ ). This suggests that interest in

other immersive experiences cannot mediate the relationship between an entrepreneurial mindset and interest in the immersive theatre form. Nonetheless, interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy can.

After checking Path B ( $\beta = 0.500, p < 0.01$ ) as well, it becomes clear that interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy indeed mediates the relationship. In Figure 4.3, the mediation and effects are conceptualized. After running a Sobel test to check the significance of this mediation ( $p < 0.1$ ), it can be confirmed under the assumption of 90% reliability that the effect of an entrepreneurial mindset on interest in the immersive theatre form is mediated through interest in immersive theatre’s marketing. Therefore, since the second part of Hypothesis 4.a is also accepted, the whole hypothesis is confirmed.



**Figure 4.3.** Mediating role of interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy.

*Narcissism*

While it was expected that people who are more narcissistic are more interested in immersive theatre experiences, the results do not confirm this. In both multiple regressions there is no significant relation between someone’s narcissistic characteristics and his or her interest in immersive theatre’s marketing or form. Since Path C is not significant, there was no need to test for mediation. However, despite the interactions not being significant, it is apparent that the interactions are all negatively correlated. This means that people who are less narcissistic are more interested in immersive theatre experiences instead of the opposite. Nonetheless, Hypothesis 4.b (“People who are narcissistic are more interested in the form of immersive theatre, and this interest may be mediated through their interest in immersive theatre’s marketing, in other immersive experiences, or in theatre plays in general”) is rejected since the results support no significant relations.

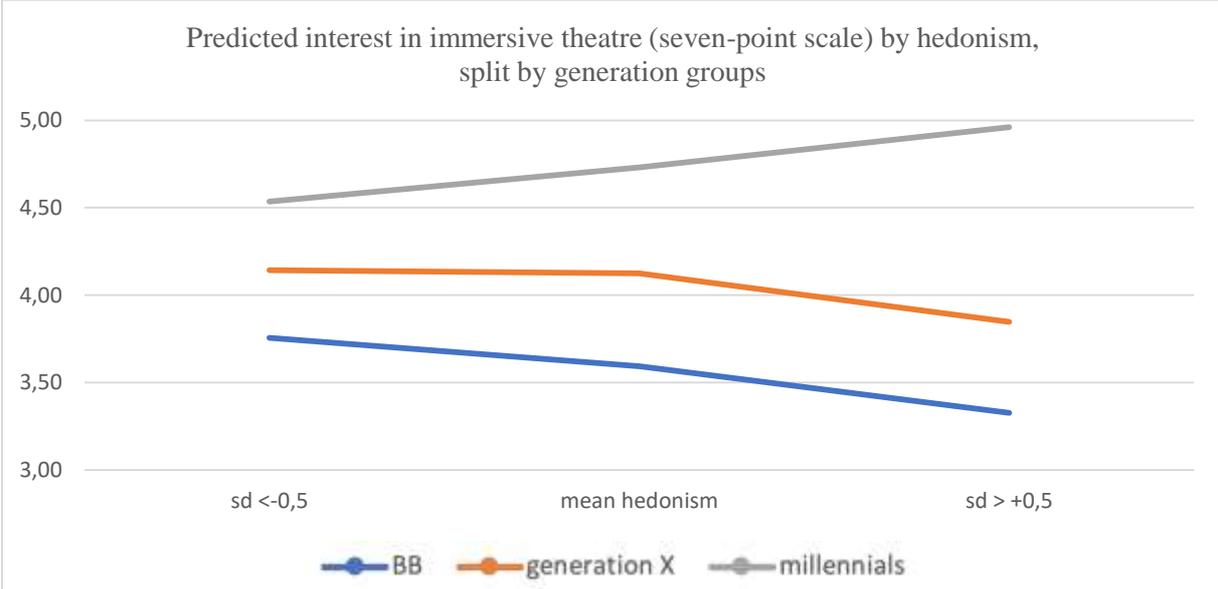
*Hedonism*

Regarding hedonism, Table 4.2 demonstrates that people who value hedonism significantly have a greater interest in immersive theatre’s marketing ( $\beta = 0.200, p < 0.01$ ). However, no support was found for the hypothesis that people who strongly value hedonism are also more interested in the immersive theatre form than are people who value hedonism less. Since there is no significant relationship here (Path C), there is no need to test for mediation. Therefore, Hypothesis 4.c (“People who value hedonism are more interested in the form of immersive theatre, and this interest may be mediated through their

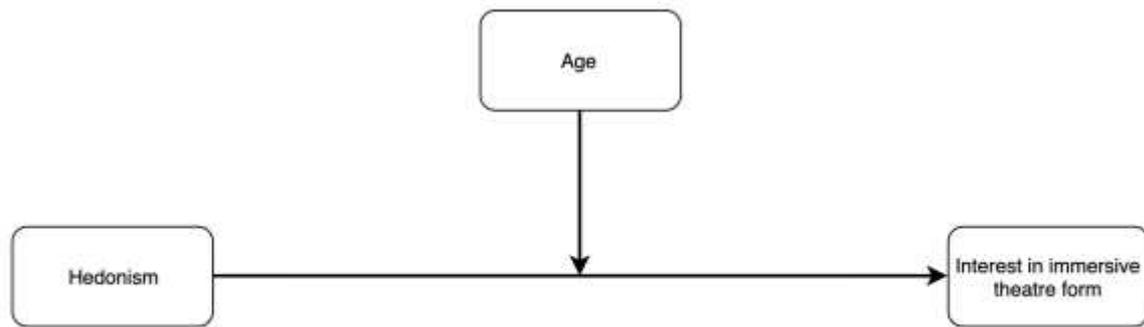
interest in immersive theatre’s marketing, in other immersive experiences, or in theatre plays in general”) is rejected.

Apart from this, in the results of Table 4.4, a different effect of hedonism can be detected. The influence of hedonism on interest in the immersive theatre form was not significant without the mediation variables. However, in the models that include these variables, the influence becomes negatively significant in all models except the model that included interest in theatre plays in general. For this reason, an additional analysis was run to see where these effects come from. When analyzing the correlation model (see Table 4.1), it appears that hedonism has the most significant one-on-one relationships with narcissism and age. Therefore, first an additional analysis was run that excludes narcissism. However, this showed no difference in effects, since they remained significant. Second, an additional analysis was run without including the two generation groups. This analysis demonstrated major differences in effects, since most of them became insignificant. This means that age has something to do with these changing effects.

For this reason, the effect of hedonism is measured per generation group (see Model 8) to see its influence on interest in the immersive theatre form. The results of this analysis suggest that this effect is different for millennials than for Generation X and baby boomers. For people in the millennial generation and Generation X, hedonism had no significant effect on their interest in the form of immersive theatre, whereas for baby boomers, hedonism had a significant negative effect on their interest in immersive theatre. These effects are portrayed in Figure 4.4, in which the grey line portrays the millennial generation, the orange Generation X and the blue the baby boomers. As is apparent, the older the person is, the more negative the effect of hedonism is on interest in the immersive theatre form. Meanwhile, for millennials hedonism has no negative effect on interest in the immersive theatre form, but rather a slightly positive effect. These findings indicate that age plays a moderating role in this relationship, which is portrayed in Figure 4.5.



**Figure 4.4** The influence of hedonism on interest in immersive theatre per generation.



**Figure 4.5** The moderating role of age.

*Openness to experience*

The analysis in Table 4.2 demonstrates that openness to experience has no significant effect on interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy. Nonetheless, the analysis in Table 4.3 indicates that people who are open to experiences are significantly more interested in the immersive theatre form ( $\beta = 0.273$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, the first part of Hypothesis 4.d (“People who are open to experiences are more interested in the form of immersive theatre, and this interest may be mediated through their interest in immersive theatre’s marketing, in other immersive experiences, or in theatre plays in general”) is confirmed. To see if this relationship is mediated through another factor, Table 4.4 was analyzed. From these findings it can be concluded that there is no mediation in this relationship since Path C remains significant in all models. Therefore, Hypothesis 4.d is rejected.

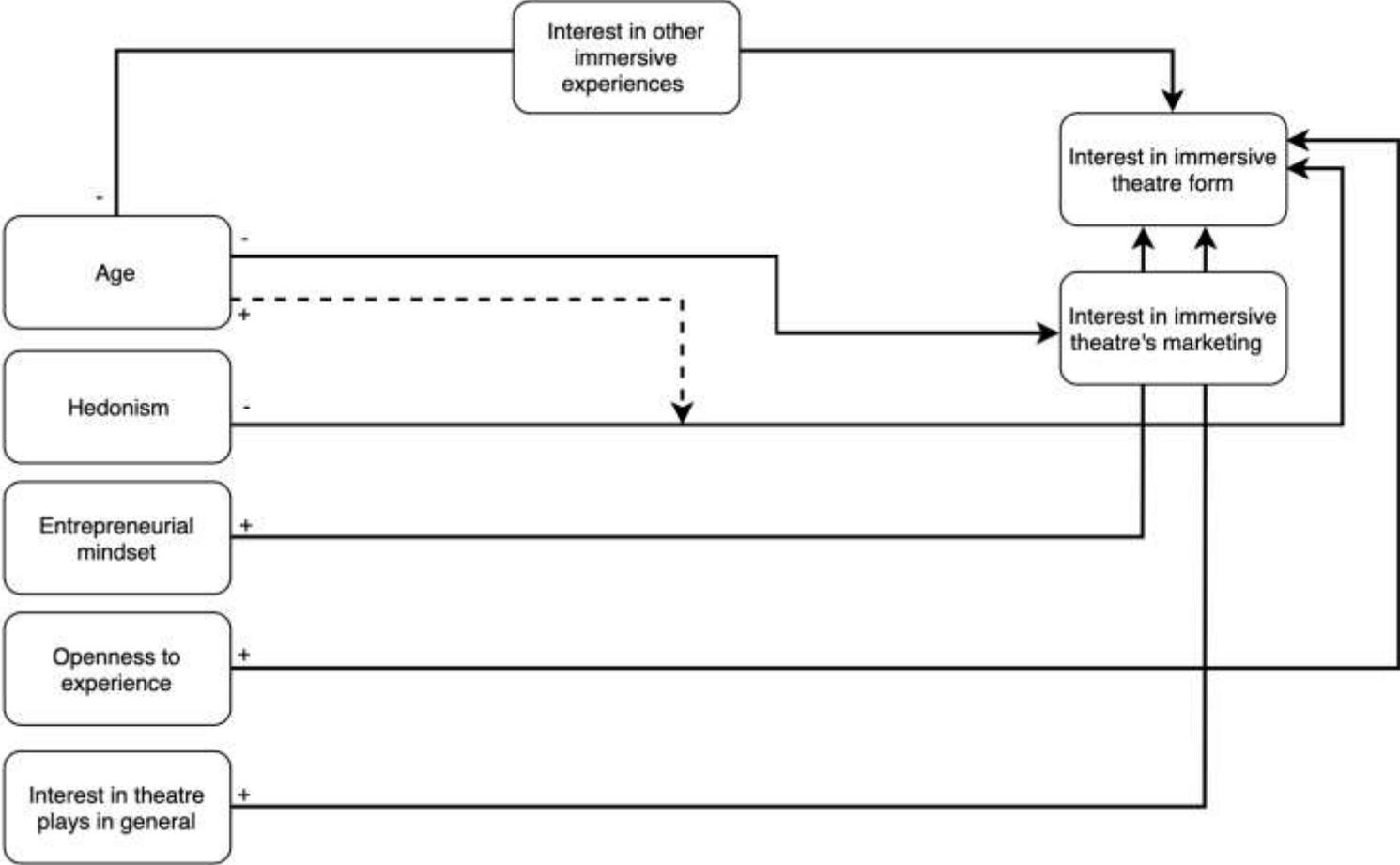
*Tolerance for ambiguity*

It was expected that people with a high tolerance for ambiguity are more interested in immersive theatre experiences. Since intolerance for ambiguity was measured, the variable should have a significant negative relationship with interest in the immersive theatre form. However, there was no significant positive or negative effect found in the results of the multiple regression analysis. Since there is no need to test for mediation if Path C is not significant, Hypothesis 4.e (“People with a high tolerance for ambiguity are more interested in the form of immersive theatre, and this interest may be mediated through their interest in immersive theatre’s marketing, in other immersive experiences, or in theatre plays in general”) is rejected.

*Symbolic needs*

I expected people who have symbolic needs in terms of their cultural consumption to be more interested the immersive theatre form. However, as found in the results, people who have strong symbolic needs are not specifically more interested in the immersive theatre form than people who have fewer symbolic needs. Since there is no significant relationship with interest in the immersive theatre form, there is no possibility of a mediating variable. Therefore, Hypothesis 2.f (“People who have more symbolic needs are more interested in the form of immersive theatre, and this interest may be mediated through their

interest in immersive theatre’s marketing, in other immersive experiences, in theatre plays in general”) is rejected. It is worth noting, as can be seen in Table 4.2, that there is a strong positive relation ( $\beta = 0.202, p < 0.01$ ) between this internal factor of consumer behavior and interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy.



**Figure 4.6** Confirmed relations of Hypotheses 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Figure 4.6 conceptualizes the discussed confirmed relations of Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4. In summary, age has a direct influence on interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy, but its influence on the immersive theatre form itself is mediated through interest in other immersive experiences. Furthermore, having an entrepreneurial mindset and being open to experiences also have a positive influence on interest in the immersive theatre form. However, the influence of an entrepreneurial mindset is mediated through interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy. Furthermore, the influence of hedonism on interest in the immersive theatre form is moderated through age. The older the person is, the more negative the influence of hedonism is on interest in immersive theatre. Meanwhile, the younger the person is, the more positive the influence of hedonism is on interest in immersive theatre. However, the model displays only the negative effect on older people, since only this effect is significant. Finally, interest in immersive theatre for people who are already interested in theatre plays in general is mediated through interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy

#### 4.3.4 Additional analyses

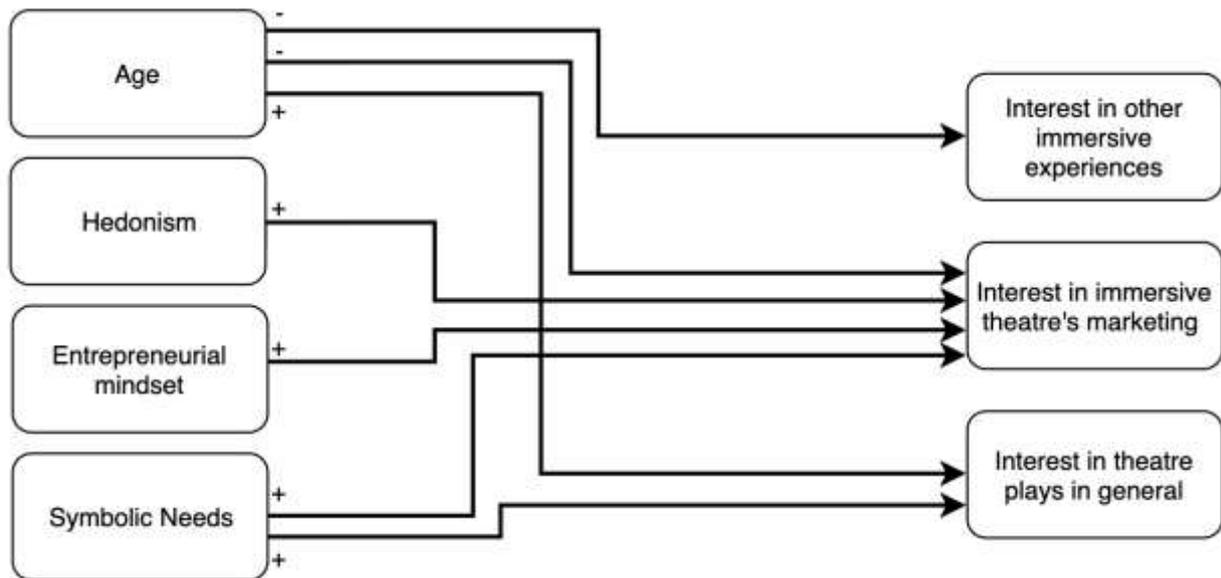
To exclude the chance that age and millennial characteristics in themselves are strong predictors of someone's enthusiasm and interest in something, the same multiple regression analyses are repeated on the variables that measure someone's interest in other immersive experiences (see Table 4.5) and the variable that measures someone's interest in theatre plays in general (see Table 4.6).

First, the influence of age on interest in other immersive experiences is, similar to interest in the immersive theatre form, strongly negative ( $\beta = -0.066$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, looking at the three different age groups, it is also clear that millennials are more interested in other immersive experiences than people from the baby boom generation or Generation X. Furthermore, looking at the different millennial characteristics, there is no evidence that any of them significantly positively or negatively correlate with interest in other immersive experiences.

Second, from the multiple regression analysis measuring someone's interest in theatre plays in general, almost no significant relationships are found. The only internal factor of consumer behavior that has a strong positive influence on interest in theatre plays in general is someone's symbolic needs ( $\beta = 0.351$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Narcissism, hedonism, tolerance for ambiguity, openness to experience, and entrepreneurial mindset all seem to have no direct relationships with someone's interest in theatre plays in general. Furthermore, in contrast with the three other mediating and dependent variables, age has a positive effect ( $\beta = 0.0112$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ) on interest in theatre plays. This means that the older the person is, the more interested he or she is in theatre in general. Interestingly, for Generation X ( $\beta = 0.373$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ) the effect is more positive than for the baby boomers ( $\beta = 0.281$ ,  $p > 0.10$ ), meaning that despite the baby boomers being older, people from Generation X are more likely to go to theatre plays in general. The found relationships of these two additional analyses, plus the influences of the internal factors of consumer behavior on interest in immersive theatre's marketing strategy, are conceptualized in Figure 4.7.

In addition, to check the robustness of the findings, I explored whether or not differences in the strength of relationships between age, internal factors of consumer behavior, and interest in all dependent variables could be explained by the exclusion (Models 2 and 4) or inclusion (Models 1, 3, and 5) of the two less reliable constructs of tolerance for ambiguity and entrepreneurial mindset in the analysis. Notable, Table 4.2 indicates that the exclusion of these two constructs influences the strength of the relationship between the characteristic of openness to experience and age with interest in immersive theatre's marketing. The relationship between age and the marketing strategy becomes less negative and insignificant ( $\beta = -0.005$ ,  $p > 0.10$  instead of  $\beta = -0.00732$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ). The relationship between openness to experience and interest in immersive theatre's marketing becomes more positive and more significant ( $\beta = 0.146$ ,  $p < 0.05$  instead of  $\beta = 0.103$ ,  $p > 0.10$ ). However, for interest in the immersive theatre form, other immersive experiences, and theatre plays in general, no variations in significance were found when the two constructs were deleted.

In sum, since these additional analyses demonstrate that age and millennial characteristics in themselves are not strong predictors of someone’s enthusiasm and interest in something, and that the exclusion or inclusion of the two less reliable variables does not cause major differences in the strength of relationships, they confirm the robustness of the findings.



**Figure 4.7** Found relations of additional analyses.

#### 4.3.5 Controls

Finally, interesting results are found in the relationships between the control variables and interest in immersive theatre’s marketing, the immersive theatre form, other immersive experiences, and theatre plays in general.

Beginning with the difference in gender, females strongly value immersive theatre’s marketing more than males do ( $\beta = -0.505, p < 0.01$ ). Less strongly, but also significantly, females also value the immersive theatre form more than males do ( $\beta = -0.273, p < 0.10$ ). Meanwhile, males are more interested in other immersive experiences than females are ( $\beta = 0.356, p < 0.05$ ). Finally, gender seems to have no influence on someone’s interest in theatre plays.

Second, the analysis demonstrates that people who are familiar with the genre of immersive theatre are more interested in the immersive theatre form than people who are not familiar with it ( $\beta = 0.884, p < 0.01$ ). Similarly, they are also more interested in immersive theatre’s marketing ( $\beta = 0.744, p < 0.01$ ). Not surprisingly, the results suggest that people who are familiar with immersive theatre are also more interested in theatre plays in general ( $\beta = 0.618, p < 0.01$ ). What is remarkable is that these people who are familiar with immersive theatre are not significantly more interested in other immersive experiences.

Furthermore, the difference between Dutch people living in the Netherlands and Dutch people living abroad only becomes clear in the two additional analyses. First, Dutch people living abroad appear

to be more interested in other immersive experiences than Dutch people living in the Netherlands ( $\beta = 0.731, p < 0.01$ ). Second, Dutch people who live in the Netherlands are more interested in theatre plays in general than Dutch people living abroad ( $\beta = -0.547, p < 0.05$ ).

Finally, looking at the different levels of education, only in interest in the immersive theatre form is a significant difference visible between people with low and high education levels ( $\beta = 0.487, p < 0.05$ ). This suggests that people with a high level of education are more interested in the immersive theatre form than people with a low level of education. However, there is no strong difference in this interest between people with high education levels and those with middle education levels.

**Table 4.2** Results of multiple regression analysis for interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy.

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<b>MARKETING STRATEGY</b>					
<i>Control variables</i>					
d Male	-0.628*** (0.130)	-0.488*** (0.129)	-0.505*** (0.128)	-0.483*** (0.129)	-0.502*** (0.128)
Familiarity with immersive theatre	0.980*** (0.129)	0.771*** (0.127)	0.744*** (0.127)	0.763*** (0.127)	0.739*** (0.127)
d Foreign country	-0.015 (0.200)	0.084 (0.190)	0.069 (0.189)	0.072 (0.190)	0.053 (0.189)
d Low education	-0.229 (0.197)	-0.241 (0.188)	-0.162 (0.190)	-0.220 (0.188)	-0.135 (0.190)
d Middle education	-0.097 (0.131)	-0.143 (0.125)	-0.119 (0.125)	-0.138 (0.124)	-0.110 (0.125)
<i>Independent variables</i>					
Narcissism		-0.060 (0.063)	-0.073 (0.063)	-0.063 (0.062)	-0.075 (0.063)
Openness to experience		0.146** (0.061)	0.103 (0.065)	0.149** (0.061)	0.104 (0.065)
Hedonism		0.219*** (0.071)	0.200*** (0.071)	0.214*** (0.071)	0.198*** (0.071)
Symbolic Needs		0.199*** (0.054)	0.202*** (0.054)	0.198*** (0.054)	0.201*** (0.054)
Entrepreneurial Mindset			0.166* (0.094)		0.171* (0.095)
Ambiguity			-0.072 (0.052)		-0.066 (0.052)
Age		-0.005 (0.004)	-0.007* (0.004)		
d Baby Boomers				-0.261 (0.178)	-0.350* (0.180)
d Generation X				-0.030 (0.152)	-0.091 (0.153)
Constant	4.610*** (0.113)	2.516*** (0.608)	2.449*** (0.735)	2.412*** (0.537)	2.221*** (0.671)
Observations	315	315	315	315	315
R-squared	0.216	0.314	0.329	0.317	0.331
F	17.07	13.94	12.34	12.76	11.45
p	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

Standard errors in parentheses  
 \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 4.3** Results of multiple regression analysis for interest in the immersive theatre form.

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<b>IMMERSIVE THEATRE FORM</b>					
<i>Control</i>					
d Male	-0.420** (0.166)	-0.255 (0.161)	-0.273* (0.161)	-0.267* (0.161)	-0.283* (0.161)
Familiarity with immersive theatre	1.199*** (0.164)	0.901*** (0.159)	0.884*** (0.159)	0.923*** (0.160)	0.911*** (0.160)
d Foreign country	0.141 (0.255)	0.208 (0.237)	0.176 (0.238)	0.179 (0.238)	0.141 (0.239)
d Low education	-0.537** (0.251)	-0.581** (0.236)	-0.487** (0.239)	-0.516** (0.236)	-0.417* (0.240)
d Middle education	-0.012 (0.167)	-0.116 (0.156)	-0.080 (0.157)	-0.078 (0.156)	-0.038 (0.157)
<i>Independent</i>					
Narcissism		-0.074 (0.079)	-0.097 (0.080)	-0.053 (0.078)	-0.077 (0.079)
Openness to experience		0.331*** (0.076)	0.273*** (0.081)	0.320*** (0.077)	0.261*** (0.082)
Hedonism		-0.124 (0.089)	-0.142 (0.089)	-0.105 (0.089)	-0.121 (0.089)
Symbolic Needs		0.093 (0.068)	0.102 (0.068)	0.0912 (0.068)	0.101 (0.069)
Entrepreneurial Mindset			0.228* (0.118)		0.235** (0.119)
Ambiguity			-0.025 (0.065)		-0.012 (0.065)
Age		-0.028*** (0.005)	-0.031*** (0.005)		
d Baby Boomers				-1.081*** (0.223)	-1.164*** (0.227)
d Generation X				-0.720*** (0.190)	-0.767*** (0.192)
Constant	4.110*** (0.144)	4.286*** (0.761)	3.803*** (0.923)	3.403*** (0.674)	2.774*** (0.846)
Observations	315	315	315	315	315
R-squared	0.182	0.311	0.321	0.308	0.318
F	13.75	13.73	11.91	12.25	10.78
p	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

Standard errors in parentheses  
 \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 4.4** Results of multiple regression analysis for mediation and moderation effects.

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	<b>IMMERSIVE THEATRE FORM</b>							
<i>Control</i>								
d Male	-0.283*	-0.033	-0.392**	-0.251	-0.032	-0.360**	-0.147	-0.166
	(0.161)	(0.152)	(0.154)	(0.160)	(0.152)	(0.153)	(0.147)	(0.147)
Familiarity with imm. theatre	0.911***	0.542***	0.891***	0.837***	0.538***	0.822***	0.552***	0.506***
	(0.160)	(0.155)	(0.152)	(0.162)	(0.156)	(0.154)	(0.150)	(0.150)
d Foreign	0.141	0.115	-0.060	0.210	0.124	0.006	-0.045	-0.074
	(0.239)	(0.220)	(0.230)	(0.238)	(0.222)	(0.229)	(0.215)	(0.214)
d Low edu.	-0.417*	-0.350	-0.416*	-0.398*	-0.348	-0.399*	-0.353*	-0.364*
	(0.240)	(0.221)	(0.228)	(0.238)	(0.221)	(0.226)	(0.212)	(0.211)
d Middle edu.	-0.038	0.017	-0.006	-0.049	0.015	-0.016	0.037	0.035
	(0.157)	(0.145)	(0.149)	(0.156)	(0.145)	(0.148)	(0.139)	(0.139)
<i>Independent</i>								
Narcissism	-0.077	-0.040	-0.051	-0.064	-0.039	-0.039	-0.019	-0.022
	(0.079)	(0.073)	(0.075)	(0.079)	(0.073)	(0.075)	(0.070)	(0.070)
Openness to exp.	0.261***	0.209***	0.240***	0.253***	0.209***	0.233***	0.195***	0.192***
	(0.082)	(0.076)	(0.078)	(0.081)	(0.076)	(0.077)	(0.073)	(0.072)
Hedonism	-0.121	-0.220***	-0.170**	-0.124	-0.219***	-0.173**	-0.252***	-0.045
	(0.089)	(0.083)	(0.085)	(0.088)	(0.083)	(0.084)	(0.080)	(0.124)
Symbolic needs	0.101	0.000	0.106	0.056	-0.004	0.065	0.009	0.017
	(0.069)	(0.064)	(0.065)	(0.070)	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.063)	(0.063)
Entrepr. mindset	0.235**	0.149	0.217*	0.233**	0.150	0.216*	0.143	0.122
	(0.119)	(0.110)	(0.113)	(0.118)	(0.110)	(0.112)	(0.106)	(0.106)
Ambiguity	-0.012	0.021	-0.040	-0.016	0.020	-0.043	-0.007	-0.011
	(0.065)	(0.060)	(0.062)	(0.064)	(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.058)	(0.058)
d Baby Boomers	-1.164***	-0.989***	-0.333	-1.200***	-0.996***	-0.377	-0.301	-0.377
	(0.227)	(0.210)	(0.259)	(0.225)	(0.211)	(0.258)	(0.242)	(0.245)
d Generation X	-0.767***	-0.722***	-0.282	-0.814***	-0.728***	-0.332*	-0.318*	-0.266
	(0.192)	(0.177)	(0.201)	(0.191)	(0.178)	(0.200)	(0.188)	(0.189)
Imm. Marketing		0.500***			0.492***		0.448***	0.462***
		(0.067)			(0.071)		(0.068)	(0.068)
Other imm. exp.			0.312***			0.308***	0.267***	0.262***
			(0.054)			(0.054)	(0.051)	(0.051)
Theatre plays				0.126**	0.016	0.118**	0.019	0.023
				(0.049)	(0.048)	(0.047)	(0.046)	(0.046)
D Baby Boomers x Hedonism								-0.388**
								(0.174)
d Generation X x Hedonism								-0.270
								(0.212)
Constant	2.774***	1.664**	1.710**	2.314***	1.623**	1.295	0.800	-0.301
	(0.846)	(0.792)	(0.825)	(0.857)	(0.803)	(0.834)	(0.785)	(0.925)
Observations	315	315	315	315	315	315	315	315
R-squared	0.318	0.425	0.386	0.332	0.425	0.398	0.474	0.483
F	10.78	15.83	13.46	10.66	14.74	13.20	16.80	15.37
p	0<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 4.5.** Results of multiple regression analysis for interest in other immersive experiences.

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<b>OTHER IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES</b>					
<i>Control</i>					
d Male	-0.091 (0.207)	0.353** (0.162)	0.356** (0.163)	0.342** (0.163)	0.348** (0.163)
Familiarity with immersive theatre	0.371* (0.204)	0.011 (0.160)	0.0269 (0.162)	0.043 (0.161)	0.065 (0.162)
d Foreign country	0.587* (0.318)	0.746*** (0.239)	0.731*** (0.241)	0.667*** (0.240)	0.646*** (0.241)
d Low education	-0.013 (0.313)	-0.169 (0.238)	-0.168 (0.242)	-0.004 (0.238)	-0.001 (0.243)
d Middle education	0.042 (0.208)	-0.199 (0.158)	-0.191 (0.159)	-0.115 (0.157)	-0.103 (0.159)
<i>Independent</i>					
Narcissism		-0.104 (0.079)	-0.111 (0.081)	-0.069 (0.078)	-0.084 (0.080)
Openness to experience		0.098 (0.077)	0.091 (0.082)	0.077 (0.077)	0.067 (0.083)
Hedonism		0.126 (0.090)	0.130 (0.090)	0.154* (0.090)	0.158* (0.090)
Symbolic Needs		-0.023 (0.069)	-0.017 (0.069)	-0.027 (0.069)	-0.018 (0.069)
Entrepreneurial Mindset			0.034 (0.120)		0.057 (0.121)
Ambiguity			0.058 (0.066)		0.089 (0.066)
Age		-0.067*** (0.005)	-0.066*** (0.005)		
d Baby Boomers				-2.685*** (0.225)	-2.661*** (0.229)
d Generation X				-1.585*** (0.192)	-1.554*** (0.195)
Constant	3.900*** (0.179)	5.938*** (0.767)	5.534*** (0.936)	3.986*** (0.679)	3.405*** (0.856)
Observations	315	315	315	315	315
R-squared	0.023	0.461	0.463	0.460	0.463
F	1.484	26.04	21.68	23.44	19.97
p	0.195	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

Standard errors in parentheses  
 \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 4.6.** Results of multiple regression analysis for interest in theatre plays in general.

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<b>THEATRE PLAYS IN GENERAL</b>					
<i>Control</i>					
d Male	-0.350*	-0.282	-0.279	-0.264	-0.261
	(0.184)	(0.186)	(0.186)	(0.186)	(0.187)
Familiarity with immersive theatre	0.737***	0.608***	0.618***	0.582***	0.589***
	(0.182)	(0.183)	(0.185)	(0.184)	(0.186)
d Foreign country	-0.619**	-0.542**	-0.547**	-0.538*	-0.544*
	(0.283)	(0.274)	(0.276)	(0.275)	(0.277)
d Low education	-0.0816	-0.133	-0.138	-0.147	-0.149
	(0.278)	(0.272)	(0.278)	(0.272)	(0.278)
d Middle education	0.0972	0.103	0.105	0.085	0.087
	(0.185)	(0.180)	(0.182)	(0.180)	(0.182)
<i>Independent</i>					
Narcissism		-0.077	-0.080	-0.099	-0.102
		(0.091)	(0.092)	(0.090)	(0.092)
Openness to experience		0.057	0.057	0.066	0.064
		(0.088)	(0.094)	(0.088)	(0.095)
Hedonism		0.048	0.052	0.025	0.027
		(0.103)	(0.104)	(0.103)	(0.103)
Symbolic Needs		0.349***	0.351***	0.351***	0.353***
		(0.079)	(0.079)	(0.079)	(0.079)
Entrepreneurial Mindset			0.004		0.010
			(0.138)		(0.138)
Ambiguity			0.033		0.029
			(0.075)		(0.075)
Age		0.011*	0.011*		
		(0.006)	(0.006)		
d Baby Boomers				0.270	0.281
				(0.257)	(0.263)
d Generation X				0.361	0.373*
				(0.219)	(0.223)
Constant	5.084***	3.355***	3.166***	3.814***	3.647***
	(0.159)	(0.878)	(1.072)	(0.776)	(0.981)
Observations	315	315	315	315	315
R-squared	0.076	0.153	0.154	0.153	0.153
F	5.082	5.496	4.570	4.959	4.182
p	0.000171	1.62e-07	8.55e-07	4.32e-07	2.11e-06

Standard errors in parentheses  
 \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

The main aim of this study was to understand what factors influence consumer interest in immersive theatre in order to determine which part of today's audience can handle high-risk in its decision-making process and thereby ensures the popularity of this innovative theatre genre. It was expected that millennials are the most interested in immersive theatre experiences. Since millennials are not only defined by age but also by certain attitudes and behaviors, the study investigated how the factors of age and six millennial personality traits influence interest in immersive theatre experiences.

For the analyses, interest in immersive theatre experiences was split up into two separate components, namely interest in the theatre form and in its marketing strategy. To get a more extensive understanding of the relationships, the research also focused on the influence on interest in other immersive experiences and theatre plays in general. Finally, the research explored whether or not these additional variables or interest in the marketing strategy mediated the effects of the independent variables on interest in the immersive theatre form and investigated if and how these variables are interconnected. This section discusses the results of the research, considers its implications and emphasizes its limitations, after which it proposes paths for future research.

### 5.1 Main findings

#### *Influence of age*

The first major finding of this study is that older people are the most interested in theatre plays in general, whereas younger people are evidently the most interested in immersive theatre experiences. While a positive relationship was found with interest in theatre plays in general for both interest in the form of immersive theatre and other immersive experiences, a negative relationship was found with age. The positive effect of age on interest in theatre plays in general could possibly be explained by the product involvement of the audiences. Since decisions are based upon an individual's internal and external information (Colbert, 2003), whereas external information for theatre in general is a difficult notion due to its experience good aspects (Towse, 2010), potential visitors will try to base their decision on their internal information. As previously argued, this sort of information does not exist for immersive theatre experiences, but it does exist for theatre plays in general. Hence, the older the person is, the more likely he or she is to have an interest in theatre plays in general, because experience comes with age. Meanwhile, since most of the respondents of this study are Dutch and immersive theatre has not yet become popular in the Netherlands, this finding means that the genre of immersive theatre may need more time to establish itself before it raises non-millennials' interest.

In addition, the mediating role of interest in other immersive experiences explains the influence of age on interest in the immersive theatre form. In other words, interest in playing a video game, going to an escape room, or going to a speakeasy bar accounts for the fact that younger people are the most interested in the immersive theatre form. This suggests that the aspects of the immersive theatre form that correspond to aspects of other immersive experiences explain the interest of millennials in the immersive theatre form. Examples of these factors are the participation in content creation, the acquisition of insider knowledge and the novel, adventurous, authentic and personalized aspects of the experiences.

Finally, the results indicate a less significant relationship between age and interest in immersive theatre's marketing, meaning that there is no major difference between young and old people. However, the correlation matrix suggests that the one-on-one relationship between age and interest in immersive theatre's marketing has a high mean. This means that for both young and old, the product involvement is high, which results in both of them considering their benefits sought during the decision-making process (Colbert, 2003). This could explain the fact that older people are less interested in the immersive theatre form, because they might be looking for different benefits than younger people.

#### *Influence of internal factors of consumer behavior*

As expected, interest in immersive theatre experiences has not only to do with age but also with internal factors of consumer behavior, which are related to the millennial generation.

First, the most significant relation between interest in both the immersive theatre form and its marketing is with openness to experience. This finding can be explained by the fact that immersive theatre is something novel for most of the respondents, since only 34.3% have ever heard of immersive theatre. In line with this thought, the openness to experience characteristic has no significant relation with interest in theatre plays in general or in other immersive experiences, possibly because playing a video game or going to a theatre play, an escape room, or a secret bar is more familiar to most people than going to an immersive theatre play. Therefore, despite the argument that most consumers prefer known products to unknown products (Colbert, 2003), consumers who are open to experience do not. Furthermore, the fact that openness to experience strongly influences interest in immersive theatre's marketing while age does not, can be traced back to the one-on-one relations in the correlation matrix. As can be seen in here (see Table 3.1), openness to experience is indeed one of the few characteristics that does not correlate with age.

The second interesting insight in relation to the tested internal factors of consumer behavior is related to symbolic needs. Having symbolic needs has no significant relationship with interest in the immersive theatre form or other immersive experiences, but it has a strong positive relationship with interest in theatre plays in general and interest in immersive theatre's marketing. These findings are in line with the thought that people with high symbolic needs want to demonstrate their social self-concept through their consumption (Kainth and Verma, 2011). Since immersive theatre is something new for

most people, it is no surprise that symbolic needs have no significant positive relationship with interest in the immersive theatre form. This unknown form carries the social risk of damaging their social self-concept. In contrast, the strong positive relationship with interest in theatre plays in general can be explained by the fact that someone who has high symbolic needs wants to belong to a certain social group by identifying himself or herself through cultural consumption (Colbert, 2003). Apparently, theatre plays are a better and less risky demonstration of someone's social self-concept than unknown immersive theatre experiences. The positive relationship between symbolic needs and interest in immersive theatre's marketing can be explained by the aspect of word-of-mouth marketing. Whenever someone with high symbolic needs is reached by word-of-mouth marketing, this indirect approval of others can lead to more interest in going somewhere, because there is less risk to damage his or her social image.

Third, the results suggest that the factor of hedonism has no significant relationships with interest in the immersive theatre form, other immersive experiences, or theatre plays in general, whereas it has a strong positive relationship with interest in immersive theatre's marketing. This positive relationship can be explained by the fact that people who strongly value hedonism see pleasure and excitement as the most important motivations for activities (Schwartz, 2007). In other words, it is no surprise that recommendations of others in combination with mystery can lead to their interest in going somewhere. However, that people with strongly hedonistic values are not more interested in the immersive theatre form, other immersive experiences, and theatre plays in general than people with less hedonistic values was more unexpected. Moreover, despite the fact that the relationship between hedonism and interest in the immersive theatre form is not significant, the findings suggest that this relationship is negative. However, after additional analyses, it was found that the strength of this relationship is affected by age. Millennials' high hedonism values have a positive effect on interest in the immersive theatre form, while for Generation X and baby boomers, higher hedonism values cause a negative effect on interest in the immersive theatre form. This supports the theory that people within a generation share the same formative experiences (Sausser and Sims, 2012). Since these experiences affect their attitudes and behavior, it is no surprise that each generation has a different idea of pleasure and excitement. Even though people from all generation groups with highly hedonistic values view pleasure and excitement as the main reason for doing things, people from the millennial generation get pleasure and excitement from doing different things than people from the baby boom generation. For example, if older people get pleasure from being seated and entertained at a theatre show instead of being masked and split from their company, their higher hedonistic values would indeed have a strong negative effect on their interest in immersive theatre. After all, since the influence of hedonism on interest in immersive theatre is evidently moderated by age, it is a matter of different preferences among the different generations that influence this interest.

Fourth, the last internal factor of consumer behavior with an influence on interest in immersive theatre experiences is an entrepreneurial mindset. More specifically, while there is no influence of an

entrepreneurial mindset found on interest in other immersive experiences or theatre plays in general, for both the marketing aspect and the form of immersive theatre, the results suggest a positive influence of an entrepreneurial mindset. The positive influence on interest in the immersive theatre form is in line with the arguably necessary entrepreneurial participation of audience members, because they have to deal with aspects of agency and self-made opportunities (Alston, 2013). The positive influence on interest in immersive theatre's marketing can be clarified by three of the seven personality traits of the EMP. Indeed, it is no surprise that people with a preference for limited structure, who are willing to accept a certain amount of risk, and make decisions quickly are more interested in immersive theatre's marketing than other people, because they do not require an extensive overview of information before they make the decision to go somewhere. Interestingly, the positive relationship between someone's entrepreneurial mindset and his or her interest in the immersive theatre form is even mediated through interest in immersive theatre's marketing. This suggests that the way that immersive theatre is marketed accounts for the interest of people with a high entrepreneurial mindset in the immersive theatre form.

Fifth, the findings of the research suggest that the factors of narcissism and tolerance for ambiguity have no significant positive or negative influence on interest in immersive theatre's form, its marketing, other immersive experiences, or theatre plays in general. This implies that despite the argument that immersive theatre results in narcissistic spectatorship (Zaiontz, 2014), immersive theatre does not necessarily attract narcissistic people. Additionally, despite the fact that the complete lack of pre-purchase information about immersive theatre causes ambiguous situations, this does not mean that immersive theatre attracts people with a high tolerance for ambiguity.

### *Influence of demographics*

At a more general level, the results provide insights regarding the influence of demographics in interest in the immersive theatre form, immersive theatre's marketing strategy, other immersive experiences, and theatre plays in general.

First, the results suggest that females are more interested in immersive theatre's marketing and in the immersive theatre form than males. Meanwhile, males are more interested in other immersive experiences than females. These findings can be explained by the fact that according to the results, females are the most interested in theatre plays in general. Both interest in the marketing methods and the immersive form somehow have to do with interest in theatre. The strong interest of males in other immersive experiences can possibly be explained by the immersive aspects related to video games, because those are more attractive to males than females (Van Rooij, Schoenmakers and Van de Mheen, 2014).

Second, in terms of level of education, only interest in the immersive theatre form is influenced. According to the results, people who are more highly educated are more interested in this form than people with lower education levels. This is an intriguing finding since there is no significant relationship found between education level and someone's interest in theatre in general.

Third, the finding that Dutch people living abroad are more interested in other immersive experiences than Dutch people living in the Netherlands can be explained by the fact that some examples of other immersive experiences, such as speakeasy bars and restaurants, are more common in other countries. Most of the Dutch respondents that live abroad live in the United States and the United Kingdom, and both of these countries are home to many of these bars and restaurants.

Last but not least, the results suggest that people who are familiar with immersive theatre are undoubtedly the most interested in the immersive theatre form and in immersive theatre's marketing than people who are not familiar with it. This could suggest that the perception of the theatre form is positive, since people who know what it is would certainly visit a show. It is remarkable that these people are not significantly more interested in other immersive experiences than people who are not familiar with immersive theatre. This suggests that immersive theatre is received in a different way than other immersive experiences.

#### *Additional finding*

Finally, an unexpected but interesting finding of this study is found within the interconnection of the dependent and mediating variables. The effect of someone's interest in theatre plays in general on his or her interest in the immersive theatre form is mediated through his or her interest in immersive theatre's marketing strategy. This means that the way that immersive theatre is marketed accounts for the interest of regular theatre goers in the immersive theatre form. This can be interpreted as the attention and interest of people who regularly visit theatres being mostly positively caught through the different – and possibly refreshing compared with regular theatre companies – marketing strategies of immersive theatre companies. Meanwhile, this finding also suggests that using this sort of marketing strategy is mostly effective for attracting people who already visit theatre plays in general, and less effective for attracting people who do not.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Since immersive theatre is not only radically innovative compared with other forms of theatre, but also has incrementally innovative aspects within the same productions due to its non-reproducible and unique spectator experiences, there is a lot of risk related to the genre. Functional, psychological, and social risks are discussed as all being high for potential visitors of immersive theatre. Whereas normally these sorts of uncertainty regarding performing arts are reduced by the provision of information, the makers of immersive theatre experiences do not provide comprehensive external information. Potential visitors can neither draw upon their internal information due to the innovative aspects of the genre. This results in a complete lack of pre-purchase information. Nonetheless, despite this high risk and uncertainty for potential consumers, the popularity of the genre suggests that there is enough interest in immersive theatre.

To answer my research question – “*What factors influence consumer interest in immersive theatre experiences?*” – I have built upon extensive literature about product innovation, consumer behavior, immersive theatre, and the millennial generation to develop and test hypotheses about the determinants of consumer interest in immersive theatre experiences. This brought me to the answer that an important factor that influences consumer interest in immersive theatre, is whether or not someone is a millennial. In both ways of defining millennials –by age or by attitudes and behavior – confirmed relations are found to support this conclusion.

First, whereas this study confirmed that theatre plays in general are the most attractive to non-millennials, the millennial generation demonstrates significantly more interest in immersive theatre experiences than non-millennials. Moreover, this interest from the millennial generation in the immersive theatre form, can be explained by millennials’ interest in other immersive experiences. This suggests that the aspects of the immersive theatre form that correspond to aspects of other immersive experiences, such as the co-creation, exclusivity, authenticity and novelty aspects, respond to a need in young audiences.

Second, the study found that individuals characterized by openness to experience, an entrepreneurial mindset, and symbolic needs all demonstrate a higher interest in the immersive theatre form and/or its marketing strategy. Moreover, the influence of having an entrepreneurial mindset on having an interest in the immersive theatre form is mediated through interest in immersive theatre’s marketing. These findings suggest that apart from age, people with millennial attitudes and behavior are more interested in immersive theatre than people who do not hold these attitudes and behavior.

Third, the study detected that non-millennials characterized by hedonism demonstrate a low interest in the immersive theatre form whereas millennials characterized by hedonism demonstrate greater interest. This finding suggests that older people have a different idea of pleasure and excitement than younger people. Nonetheless, the fact that younger people see the benefits of immersive theatre as pleasure and excitement, confirms the theory that millennials are attracted to immersive theatre.

Finally, an additional finding suggests that interest in the immersive theatre form of people who are interested in theatre plays in general can be explained by their interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy. This finding implies that immersive theatre’s marketing strategy accounts for the interest in immersive theatre of regular theatre goers, but also that immersive theatre’s marketing strategy is ineffective for attracting irregular theatre goers to immersive theatre.

To conclude, the study demonstrates that the uncertainty that comes from product innovativeness in the performing arts does not always have a negative effect on the demand. In contradiction, the main findings show that it even generates interest in the performing arts among people who are younger and/or have the attitudes and behavior of the millennial generation. Therefore, it can be stated that millennials in particular can handle high risk in their decision-making process and thereby ensure the popularity of innovative theatre genres like immersive theatre.

### **5.3 Managerial implications**

As previously mentioned, there is a decline in the leisure market share for cultural institutions (Burton, 2003). This decline can be met by attracting millennials (Gonzales, 2013). My results confirm this thought with regard to performing arts institutions, as they indicate that non-millennials are significantly more likely to visit a theatre play than millennials are. Indeed, attracting more millennials is often a goal for theatre companies. As it has been argued that understanding and responding to the needs of millennials is an important way to build a relationship with them (Halliday and Astafyeva, 2014), performing arts companies should consider how millennials' attitudes and behavior influence their consumer interest. I would advise performing art companies to recognize millennials' desire for newness, intimacy, entertainment, social interactions, reputation, and enlightenment when trying to supply theatre and other programs for millennials. Additionally, performing arts companies should be aware that the needs of millennials can be met by greater involvement and co-creation of cultural processes (Halliday and Astafyeva, 2014).

An example of a new, intimate, artistic experience with great involvement and co-creation in the performing arts is immersive theatre. As my findings confirm, millennials have a strong interest in this theatre form. Therefore, depending on the sort of performing arts company, either programmers or theatre makers would be well advised to program or create immersive theatre performances in order to attract millennials. Besides, as most of my respondents were Dutch, this study found that there is a large demand for immersive theatre among millennials in the Netherlands.

In the Dutch performing arts industry, the immersive theatre genre is still little-known; established theatre groups are experimenting with some immersive aspects, and less established theatre makers are creating almost completely immersive performances. In order to help the immersive theatre genre break through in the Netherlands, it would be advisable for established Dutch theatre companies to co-produce (foreign) immersive theatre productions in the Netherlands. In this way, the (foreign) immersive theatre company could take advantage of the brand awareness and contacts of one or more established Dutch companies, and the Dutch companies could take advantage of the attraction of millennials. The spillover effects of this co-produced performance may even affect later performances of both companies. For people who are unfamiliar with immersive theatre productions, their internal information about immersive theatre productions would increase, and for (younger) people who are less familiar with the Dutch established theatre companies, their internal information about these companies would increase. This effect can be compared with the spillover effect of the annual Dutch museum night on the participating museums.

Despite the fact that the Dutch theatre infrastructure is mostly designed for audiences sitting in a venue to see what happens on stage, the immersive theatre genre easily fits the available Dutch resources. There are often disused warehouses and hospitals available, plus the performances can also be located in city centers or woods. However, if creating, programming, or co-producing immersive

theatre is too radical to implement, Dutch theatres could also program or create performances with greater spectator involvement and co-creation in order to attract millennials.

In addition, my results suggest that the marketing technique of immersive theatre plays a mediating role in attracting people who are interested in theatre plays and people with an entrepreneurial mindset to the immersive theatre form. Additionally, millennials, females, people with highly hedonistic values, and people with symbolic needs are all highly attracted to this form of marketing. Therefore, if their aim is to diversify their audience, marketers of performing arts companies would be well advised to adjust their marketing strategies. Of course, not every traditional theatre company should make its marketing materials more cryptic and mysterious out of the blue. The strategy must also “fit” with the sort of performance and reputation of the company. However, traditional theatre companies who aim to attract a greater amount of millennials with their marketing strategy should consider spreading their materials in a more exclusive way to focus more on word-of-mouth marketing.

Finally, the findings of this research are not limited in application to the performing arts sector. Other cultural sectors such as the museum sector could adopt the same strategies of immersive exhibitions or exhibitions with more involvement and co-creation to attract millennials. Similarly, if museums want to reach younger audiences, they could implement the same marketing strategies of either providing mysterious and cryptic information to potential visitors or focusing more on word-of-mouth marketing, depending on the type of museum and/or exhibition.

#### **5.4 Limitations and future research**

Since this study is subject to several limitations, it is necessary to discuss these so that future researchers can make improvements.

First, the most significant limitation is the lack of reliability of two of the included variables in the research, namely entrepreneurial mindset and tolerance for ambiguity. Another scale for entrepreneurial mindset must be used for future research. A possibility for this would be to use the same EMP scale (Davis et al., 2016) but include the seven different skills too instead of only focusing on the seven personality traits. If this option is not possible due to length constraints, another option would be to measure someone’s entrepreneurial intentions instead of his or her entrepreneurial mindset. When doing so, parts of the Entrepreneurial Intention Questionnaire (EIQ) (Liñán and Chen, 2009) could be included in the survey. Second, a different scale for tolerance of ambiguity should also be used for future research. If length is not a constraint, I would recommend that future researchers include the entire Intolerance for Ambiguity Scale (Budner, 1962), which consists of subscales measuring complexity, insolubility, and novelty, instead of only including the subscale of novelty. If length is a constraint, future researchers must search for another short scale. If they are not capable of finding a useful scale, I would recommend that they create one themselves.

A second limitation is the biased sample. Despite the sample size being satisfactory and the assumptions for the multiple regression analysis being met, the sample is not truly generalizable for the

whole population. Since I used snowball sampling to find as many respondents as possible in a short time, there is a bias toward my personal background. Looking at the sample, most of the respondents are female, born in 1993, and highly educated. The greatest complication of this biased sample is the distribution of age. However, I tried to meet this limitation by not only including age but also generation groups in my analysis. Additionally, another problem is found when comparing the rates of education levels of my sample with the rates of education levels of the Dutch population. 47.3% of my sample is highly educated, whereas only 11% of the entire population is highly educated (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2018). In addition, since the dummies that I created for this study make a distinction between high school and less than high school as a low education level, a bachelor's degree as a moderate education level, and a master's degree or higher as a high education level, repeating this research in a year with the same respondents might cause an even higher percentage of highly educated respondents. Since I asked the respondents for their highest completed education, there is a possibility that many of the respondents will have finished their master's degrees in a year. This bias toward highly educated people could be caused by the English language of the survey. Therefore, future research could focus on obtaining a more diverse sample by avoiding snowball sampling and translating the survey into Dutch.

Third, it is of concern whether or not the dependent variables are reliable, because it is difficult to measure someone's interest in something. A suggestion for future research is to include more economic aspects such as pricing when measuring someone's interest in going somewhere. The price of a ticket can play an important role in the likelihood of someone attending an event. Furthermore, functional, psychological, and social risks are discussed as all being high for potential visitors of immersive theatre. However, the fourth risk of consumer behavior – economic risk – is not considered in this study, while the economic risk of immersive theatre is often high. Therefore, if future research takes more economic aspects in consideration, the study will be more complete and reliable.

Additionally, I hope that this study will stimulate more research of consumers of immersive theatre, because this subject is still underexplored. Apart from including economical aspects in future research, it would be interesting to repeat this research in the United Kingdom or the United States. Since approximately 90% of the sample in this study is from the Netherlands, and this is a country where immersive theatre is not yet established, using samples from countries where the genre is more familiar could lead to different findings. In addition, broadening the sample to take national differences in consumer interest into account could be a valuable direction for future research.

Finally, since there is a stark difference found in the ideas of pleasure and excitement among the different generations, based on the moderating role of age in the relationship between hedonism and interest in immersive theatre, I recommend that future researchers use this fact as a starting point for research concerning the differences in preferable leisure time activities between young and old.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A - Survey design

### Survey 1

Dear participants,

Thank you for filling out this survey. Completing the survey will take approximately 7 minutes.

The participants who complete the whole survey have the chance to enter a contest giveaway and win a €25,- giftcard (depending on your location: bol.com, Amazon or Lazada giftcard), or 2 tickets for a performance during Carré Cirque, a physical theatre festival in Koninklijk Theater Carré in Amsterdam (2-11 July 2019).

After the last question of this survey, you will be redirected to another survey page where you will be asked for your preference of reward for completing this survey and where you can voluntary enter your contact details. This is another survey, so your answers to the following questions will remain entirely anonymous.

**1. What is your year of birth?**

....

**2. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female
- Other

**3. What is your nationality?**

- Dutch
- Other, namely: ...

**4. What is your country of residence?**

- The Netherlands
- Other, namely ....

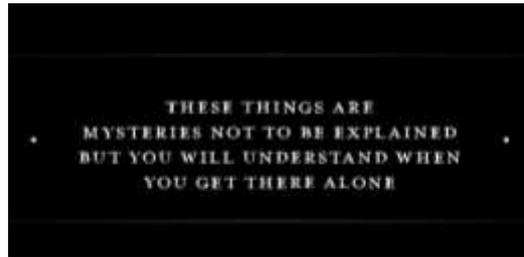
**5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- Less than high school
- High school
- Bachelor
- Master's
- Other, namely ...

**6. For the following seven statements, please indicate how much you agree with each statement.**

1. I'm uncomfortable when I'm expected to follow others' rules.
  2. I find it boring to work on clearly structured tasks.
  3. I like to stand out from the crowd.
  4. I'm willing to take a certain amount of risk to achieve real success.
  5. I tend to make decisions quickly.
  6. I'm passionate about what I do.
  7. I want to be the best at what I do.
- 7. For the following four statements, please indicate how much you agree with each statement.**
1. I tend to want others to admire me.
  2. I tend to want others to pay attention to me.
  3. I tend to seek prestige or status.
  4. I tend to expect special favors from others.
- 8. For the following seven statements, please indicate how much you agree with each statement.**
1. I see myself as someone who is original, comes up with new ideas.
  2. I see myself as someone who values artistic, aesthetic experiences.
  3. I see myself as someone who has an active imagination.
- 9. For the following four statements, please indicate how much you agree with each statement.**
1. I would like to live in a foreign country for awhile.
  2. What we are used to is always more preferable than to what is unfamiliar.
  3. A person who leads an even, regular life in which few surprises or unexpected happenings arise really has a lot to be grateful for.
  4. I like parties where I know most of the people more than parties where all or most of the people are complete strangers.
- 10. For the following four statements, please indicate how much you agree with each statement.**
1. Having a good time is important to me.
  2. I like to "spoil" myself.
  3. I seek every chance I can to have fun.
  4. It is important to me to do things that give me pleasure.
- 11. For the following four statements, please indicate how much you agree with each statement.**
1. It is important for me to be seen at some particular cultural events.
  2. It is important for me to be able to discuss a particular type of artwork or production.
  3. It is important for me to purchase something in a museum shop after visiting.
  4. It is important for me to share my cultural activities on social media.
- 12. For the following question, please indicate how likely you are to..**
1. ..go to a theatre play?
- 13. For the following five questions, please indicate how likely you are to..**

1. .. go to a theatre experience if this is the only description of it available?



2. .. go to the same theatre experience if someone close advised you to go there?
3. .. go to the same theatre experience if someone you don't know advised you to go there?
4. ..go to a theatre experience if someone who already went there writes this as a review:

*"... an interactive, explorative theater experience with an eerie plot you'll become lost in. It creates a wild mix of emotions. Confusion, excitement, fear, curiosity, sadness, sensuality... I could go on. I won't say too much because the mystery behind it all is why it's so good."*

5. .. join a secret society?

**14. For the following six questions, please indicate how likely you are to go to a theatre experience..**

1. ..that is not located in a theatre venue, but in an unusual place like a disused warehouse or hospital?
2. ..where you will not be seated, but have to move yourself in the same space as the performers?
3. ..where you will be separated from your company before the performance starts?
4. ..where the story that you will see depends on your own decisions made during the performance?
5. ..where you are not only able to hear and see the performance, but also to touch, taste and smell aspects of it?
6. .. where you and all the other spectators are asked to wear a mask?

**15. For the following three questions, please indicate how likely you are to..**

1. .. go to an escape room?
2. .. play a video game?
3. .. go to a speakeasy (secret) bar or restaurant?

**16. Have you ever heard of immersive theatre?**

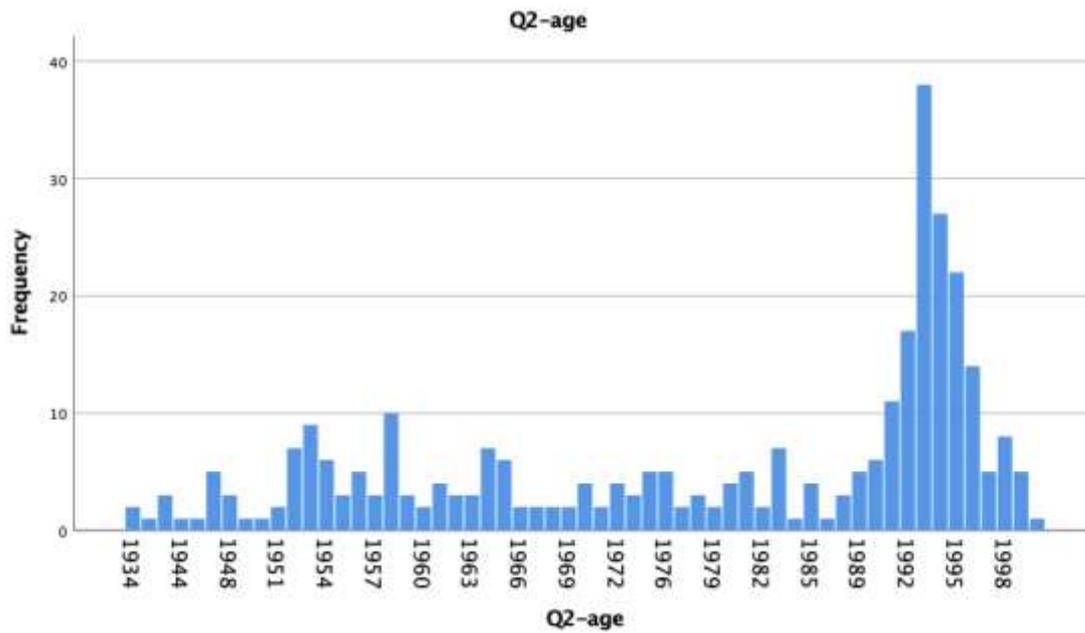
- Yes
- No

## Appendix A (continued)

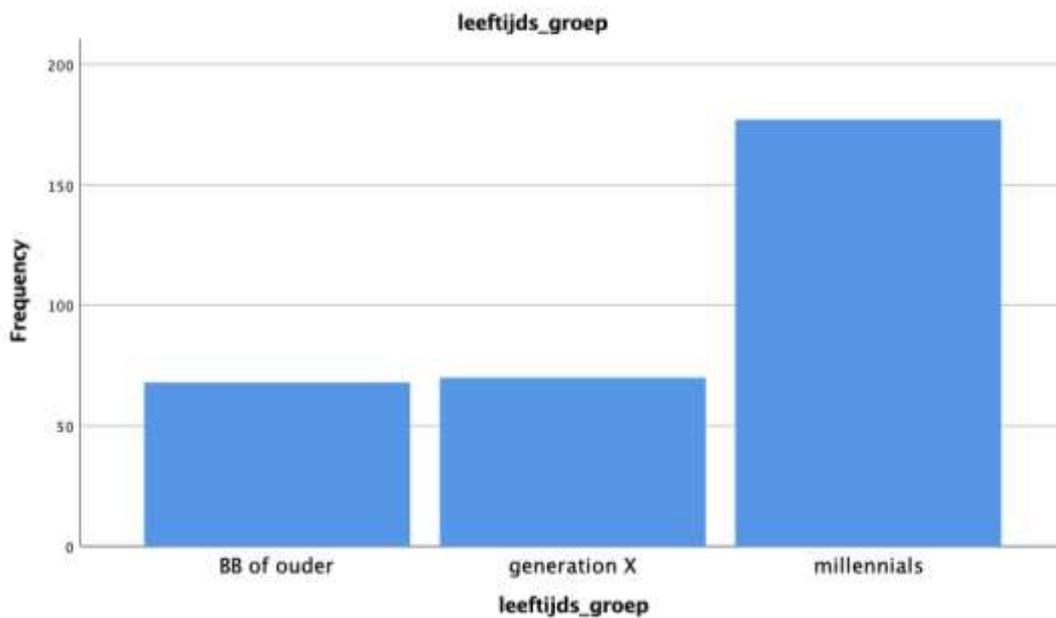
### Survey 2

1. **Please indicate your preference of reward for completing this survey:**
  - a. €25,- giftcard
  - b. Two tickets for a performance during Carré Cirque at Koninklijk Theater Carré
  
2. **Which giftcard do you prefer?** *(only shown when answer on 1 was →a)*
  1. Bol.com
  2. Amazon
  3. Lazada
  
3. **Is/are there any date(s) you can NOT go to a performance?** *(only shown when answer on 1 was →b)*
  - a. July 2
  - b. July 3
  - c. July 4
  - d. July 5
  - e. July 6
  - f. July 7
  - g. July 8
  - h. July 9
  - i. July 10
  - j. July 11
  
4. **Please provide your contact details (phone or email) on which you would like to be contacted if you win**  
.....

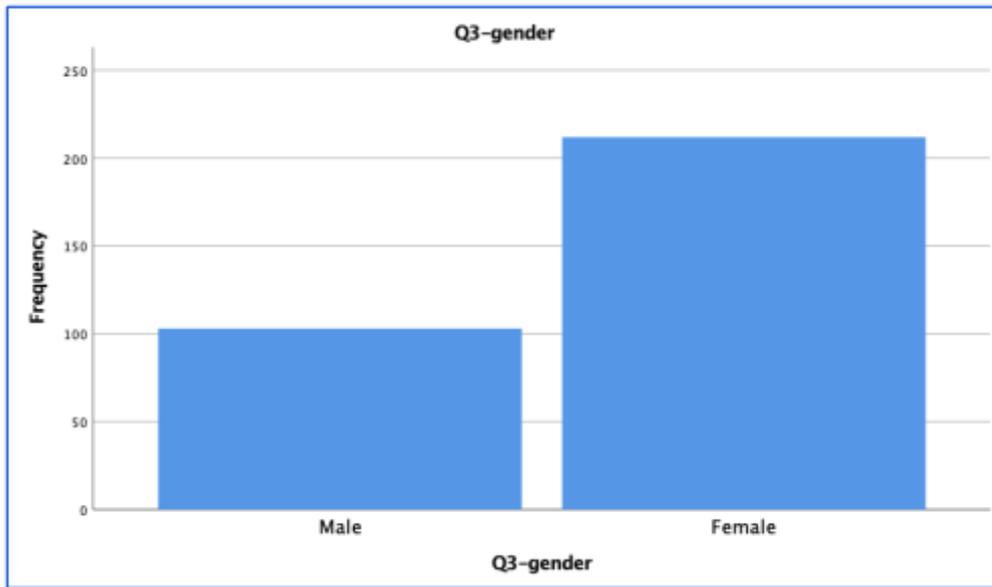
**Appendix B - Demographics of the sample**



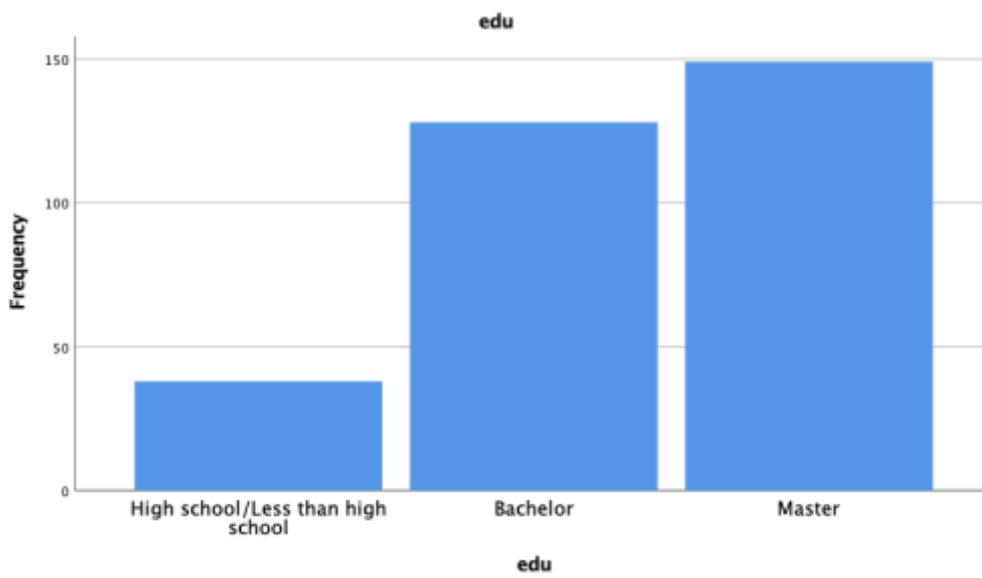
**Appendix B.1.** Distribution of age



**Appendix B.2.** Distribution of generation groups

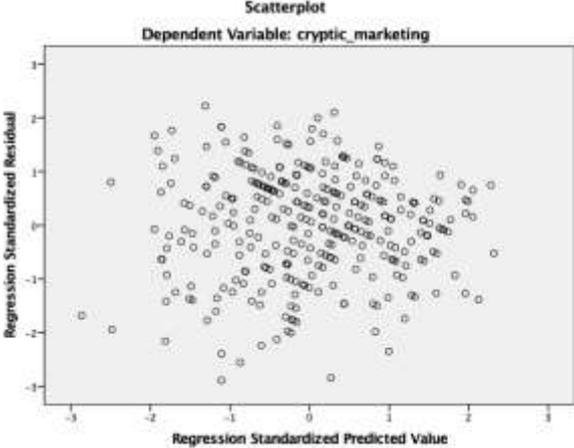
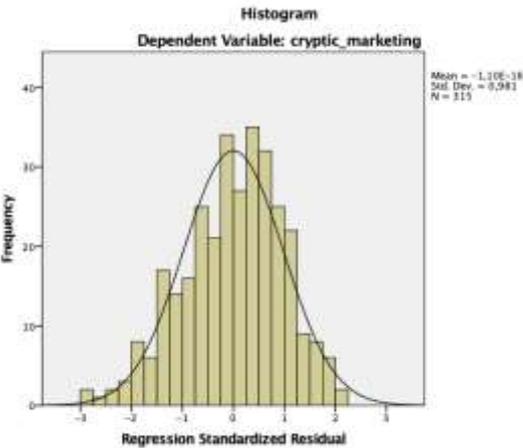


**Appendix B.3.** Distribution of gender

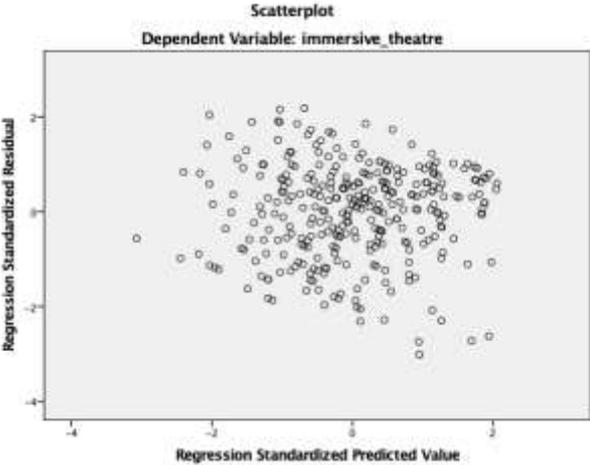
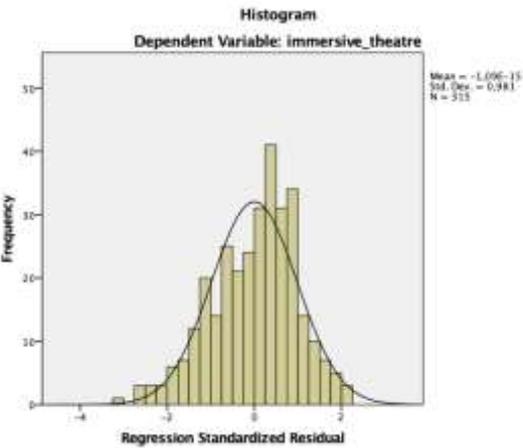


**Appendix B.4.** Distribution of educational level

**Appendix C - Histograms and scatterplots**



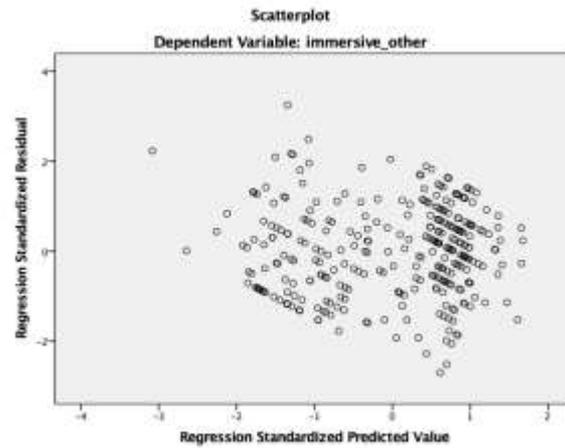
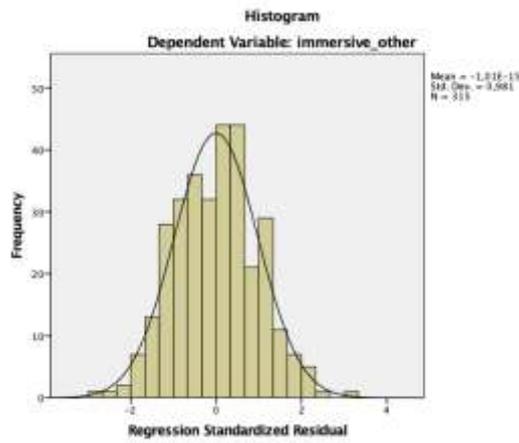
**Appendix C.1.** Histogram and scatterplot for the multiple regression analysis for the interest in immersive theatre’s marketing strategy.



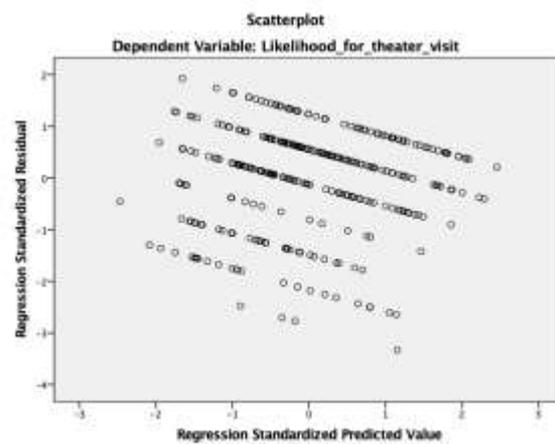
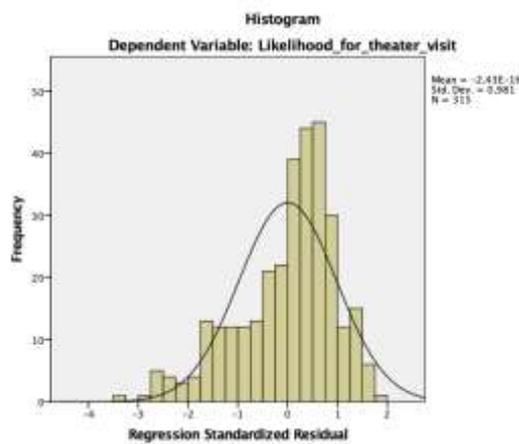
**Appendix C.2.** Histogram and scatterplot for the multiple regression analysis for interest in the immersive theatre form.

## Appendix C (continued)

### Histograms and scatterplots



**Appendix C.3.** Histogram and scatterplot for the multiple regression analysis for interest in other immersive experiences.



**Appendix C.4.** Histogram and scatterplot for the multiple regression analysis for interest in theatre plays in general.