

Museums, tourism and crowds.

Comparative case study on museums' capacity to face mass tourism between the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum.

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Abstract.

Mass tourism has not only hit certain destinations but also museums have experienced its effects. In recent years, superstar museums have seen how visitor's flows have been unceasingly increasing at the same time as tourism was being popularised as well. The present thesis seeks to delve into the reaction capacity of museums in relation to the management of large masses of visitors. Therefore, the research question addressed is focused on to what extent are museums capable to deal with mass tourism and the consequent crowd.

Since museums became tourist attractions, their success is closely related to the number of international visitors coming to the city. Therefore, the relevance of the relation between museums and municipalities is significant when facing such a challenging issue. In such a way, a comparative case study has been done to find out the measures and strategies undertaken by two museums and two cities in particular: the Van Gogh Museum (Amsterdam, the Netherlands) and the Picasso Museum (Barcelona, Spain).

The research consisted of interviewing eleven middle managers from the museums and policymakers from the municipalities in order to see first-hand what is being done in relation to overcrowding and congestion. In addition, strategic plans and reports from both cities were analysed to support the testimonies of the respondents and to contextualise the municipalities' management. Apart from these qualitative data, the visitor's numbers of the last eight years were provided by both museums too.

The analysis of the data collected drove the research to find some strategies and measures in common between the two museums and both cities. On the one side, the municipalities have designed integral plans to soften the nuisances caused by tourism by prioritising the liveability of their urban spaces. In this regard, they are working to find

solutions involving all the stakeholders implicated. Therefore, in this integrated strategy museums are included. On the other side, the two analysed museums have implemented several measures and they have studied thoroughly the phenomenon and their audiences. Among the measures considered by both museums, the online ticketing stands above the rest because it made disappear the long queues to buy tickets and it spread the visitors throughout the day thanks to the time-slotted tickets. Moreover, the reduction of the museums' maximum capacity improved the visitors' experience and diminished the bottlenecks originated in the building. Secondly, museums are working to soften seasonality and the accumulation of visitors at certain peak hours of the day. Finally, in line with the audience analysis they carry out, they are completely aware of the unbalanced ratio of locals and international visitors they host, and measures have been taken to attract residents. Nevertheless, this is a long-term goal and the strategies focused on that do not give immediate results.

On this basis, the thesis concludes that tourism needs to be managed in cooperation of all the agents implied to get to proper solutions. Museums for their part have come to soften the pressure of visitors in their buildings but there is still room for improvement.

KEYWORDS: congestion, overcrowding, municipalities, cultural tourism, superstar museums

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1. Introduction.

1.1. Background.

Tourism is an old phenomenon. Yet, over the last years there has been a tourist boom because travelling became more affordable to large groups of people. This late trend has specially affected cities that are now attracting important visitors' flows. However, although tourism is a source of income and employment, it might entail nuisances and negative consequences when it becomes massive. Therefore, in the present research we will see how this tourism affects art museums, but we will also investigate how they take control of the situation and study measures to soften its impact. In order to evaluate the phenomenon, we will focus on two particular museums, which are the Van Gogh Museum (Amsterdam, the Netherlands) and the Picasso Museum (Barcelona, Spain).

In addition, the present study intends to capture the entire picture, so also the municipalities' point of view will be included. By contextualising what is going on in Amsterdam and Barcelona in tourism terms, this thesis will gain a deeper understanding of such a complex subject. Therefore, the analysis will cover the relationship between two superstar museums with tourism and large flows of visitors, but at the same time we will see how the local governments tackle the same challenge but on a larger scale. Simultaneously, by analysing museums and municipalities, the relationship between these two spheres will be profiled as well.

Behind this work, there is a personal motivation reinforced by a deep interest in tourism and culture. This thesis was born in the Picasso Museum where I worked as a shop assistant and I could experience first-hand how culture and mass tourism coexist in museums. Working in such a close position to the visitors pushed me to witness in first person certain congestion signs and it stimulated my curiosity on the subject. Something made me realise that the museum had already got under way in managing visitors flows: there were screens in the street with a very graphic column chart that specified the tickets availability in time slots of fifteen minutes.

From this starting point, I experienced a growing interest to delve into the measures that superstar museums have applied to face the pressure of an excess of tickets demand. Thus, the opportunity to do some empirical research on this issue through a master thesis seemed to be the perfect format to explore and understand first-hand the situation and the whole context around it.

1.2. Research question.

Therefore, the main research question will be the following: To what extent are museums capable to deal with mass tourism and the consequent crowd? The research will delve not only into the measures and strategies implemented by museums but will also consider the context that is somehow related to this challenging situation. In general terms, the present study seeks to dig into the negative effects of popularity in museums but also in cities.

In addition, by its focus on exemplary cases, the study seeks to get an overview by analysing two museums, so we will be able to see how they are reacting to mass tourism. The comparative case study format will show to what extent are the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum comparable examples because in some respects they will act similarly, but in others their reaction will be different.

Overall, it will also be interesting to investigate how municipalities see the issue of mass tourism and the strategic plans they have developed to cope with such a complex phenomenon, and simultaneously see the same scenario but in a smaller scale with the analysis of the museums' perspective.

1.3. Scientific and societal importance.

In recent years tourism has become a hot topic in media but also in academia with dozens of articles and studies on its newest trends, visitors' behaviour, inquiry on its sustainability, research on the nuisances from mass tourism, and so on and so forth. Therefore, since tourism started to be theoretically studied, much progress has been done but part of the field still needs to be investigated.

Lately, cities have attracted large numbers of visitors leading to situations of congestion and overcrowding. For this reason, there is nowadays an increasing amount of literature analysing new concepts that are making headlines like 'overtourism' or 'tourismphobia'. Nevertheless, there are not yet many studies on how congestion has affected cultural institutions or museums in particular.

Additionally, even if mass tourism is currently a topic in vogue, more research on how specifically museums face congestion and crowds is still missing. Museums are cultural institutions that have been frequently studied but nothing has been written yet focusing specifically on how museums have reacted to such large influx of visitors. Hence, this thesis wishes to examine what is currently going on in superstar museums that have millions of

visitors per year. Through the comparison of two popular cases, the following study will present actual strategies and measures undertaken by the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum. Therefore, the overview that will result from this research could set the ground for further research on the implications derived from this phenomenon that is hitting museums. All this without forgetting the role of municipalities at tackling such a complex issue, because there is not a study considering how these two institutions, museums and municipalities, can face mass tourism in cooperation.

1.4. Approach.

Through a comparative case study, we will explore how museums cope with mass tourism and we will analyse which measures are being taken in relation to this issue. By choosing the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum, the purpose is to compare how these two organizations face a similar situation because they are both worldwide famous museums and have millions of visitors per year. Even if they are similar in terms of size and scope, we can expect differences in the ways they deal with the challenges of mass tourism, related to contextual factors (location, policy, etc.) and strategic priorities. To get a reliable overview, we will interview several managers and policymakers from the two museums but also from both municipalities. The aim of these interviews will be to get direct testimonies on which have been the main lines of action of the institutions where these respondents work. Lastly, two extra sources of information will be used to reinforce the data obtained from the interviews which are some policy documents from the municipalities and the visitor numbers of the last eight years from the museums. Thereby, the combination of these three different forms of data will lead to some interconnected and comprehensive results.

The study will start with a theoretical framework. This first part will present several concepts related to the main subject of the study in order to set some strong pillars to support the research. This theory will be classified in five groups that will go from a wider scope with reference to cultural tourism to a more detailed analysis when considering the two museums at hand. Secondly, the method used to collect and analyse all the data will be explained in detail by giving special attention to the interviewees that will participate in the study. This chapter will specify how the research has been undertaken in every step. Then, once the data will be collected, it will be properly analysed and the theories previously exposed will be linked to the results obtained from the research. Lastly, the concluding chapter will answer the research question and it will suggest how further research could be done in the future.

2. Theoretical framework.

2.1. Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism has received much attention over the last decades being considered as a more sustainable and preferable alternative in comparison to the globalised mass tourism that has deluged many European cities. Even if cultural tourism has a long history, researchers have not studied this type of tourism in-depth until it has become an industry as it is nowadays. For this reason, the most reliable and relevant studies on cultural tourism are from the nineties onwards but there is still nowadays more empirical research needed.

Several authors have attempted to define cultural tourism, but there is still not unanimity. Nevertheless, Melanie K. Smith (2015, p17) finds a definition that fundamentally covers the entire theoretical spectrum of this concept:

“Passive, active and interactive engagement with heritage, arts and the culture(s) of communities, whereby the visitor gains new experiences of an educational, creative, and/or entertaining nature.”

This inclusive definition fits all the new practices considered also as cultural, for instance those more related to creative and experiential activities. This comprehensive approach encompasses the consumption of past and present cultural products or, in other words, experiencing the people’s way of life and participating actively in cultural activities apart from the classic and passive kind of cultural consumption (Richards, 2001). Considering this broad definition, cultural tourism embraces a larger selection of tourist’s profiles and not only the intellectual one that visits museums. In this way, it is a way of travelling and knowing other countries and cultures that plays an important part inside the whole tourism industry.

Cultural tourism is expected to keep growing and some voices have been raised questioning its alternative or more authentic nature because it is starting to show some signs of congestion. In this line, Dobrica Jovicic (2016) stated that between the eighties and the nineties, cultural tourism already acquired certain characteristics of mass tourism, away from its original alternative form. Even if this more cultivated tourism keeps being considered as a more qualitative and respectful one, the boundaries between cultural tourism and leisure tourism have not always been that clear. Especially when cultural tourism

corresponds to heritage tourism which is one of the most widespread forms of tourism (Timothy & Boyd, 2006; Jovicic, 2016).

The interest that cultural tourism has aroused over the last years is due to a diverse range of reasons. Firstly, the visitor's profile that is linked to this tourism segment is distinguished for having higher average income, being educated people, being less price sensitive, being more willing to travel longer distances, and for spending more money than mass tourists (Frey, 2019; Jovicic, 2014; Nicolau, 2010; Murzyn-Kupisz, 2012). It is worth mentioning that even if this tourism segment has always been assumed to be more high-brow and with a higher educational level than the average, recent studies are proving that this type of tourism has been diversified and segmented into several sub-categories, so the cultural capital differs too. Along the same lines, Greg Richards and L. Andries van der Ark (2013) highlighted that the characteristics of cultural tourists vary depending on the activities or events that they attend. For instance, according to Richards and van der Ark (2013), increasing cultural capital is more related to museums and historical sites than to classical music concerts and theatre.

Moreover, according to Robert A. Stebbins (1996), among the cultural tourists, there is a specific profile called 'specialized cultural tourist' that repeatedly visits the same city or region in order to deepen in that area's culture or traditions. By focusing on the visitor's interest geographically, that person can explore the city away from the highlights because he already visited them the first time he got there. This type of tourist would be the preferred one by municipalities because he spreads his expenditure throughout the country or the city instead of focusing his economic footprint in the city centre.

This diversification of what has been understood as cultural tourism shows that it has evolved from a more passive to a more active kind of visitor who engages with local traditions and wants to experience in a more pro-active way the destination that he or she is visiting. Instead of basing the trip on a superficial tour of monuments (heritage tourism), the current trend is going towards a creative tourism because the visitor seeks for more enriching experiences (Jovicic, 2014; Richards, 2011). In other words, visitors are looking for more tailor-made trips that can bring them something else apart from a bunch of pictures. This trend goes hand by hand with the interests of municipalities who prefer this more qualitative tourism that pretends to get more in-depth contact with the city, instead of the fast-food-like tourism that in two days visits the main attractions and leaves.

Returning to the matter of the preference for cultural tourism, it is not only interesting for this characteristic visitor profile, but it can also have an influential role in the destinations' reputation. Bruno S. Frey (2019) draws particular attention to how this tourism can influence the prestige of a certain location if it has renowned cultural sites. In this way, this aspect can be crucial to understand why nowadays cultural tourism is targeted by certain municipalities because the city's image and reputation can be improved thanks to it. In consonance with this, Greg Richards (1996) also pointed out that culture is used as a tool for tourism development and promotion, becoming a crucial element of public policy.

Nevertheless, there is not a homogeneous opinion about cultural tourism because even if it has been considered as a positive and respectful kind of tourism, there are also some critical voices that warn about possible side-effects. For instance, Greg Richards (2003) exposes one of the main objections highlighting how dangerous it can be to allow mass tourists to get into sensitive cultural environments. Still, compared to what is considered as mass tourism, cultural tourism has a better reputation and it seems to be natural that cities pretend to switch the kind of visitor they attract into this one.

Last but not least and as an illustration that cultural tourism is a hot topic, a recent report about this issue applied to the city of Barcelona is illustrated here. On March 23rd, 2019, the newspaper 'El Periódico de Catalunya' published a report analysing the role of museums in an international tourist destination as Barcelona¹. The journalist underlined that Barcelona had as its major attractions some monuments and heritage sites, but the city is not known for its museums. For this reason, the report suggests that the offer of museums could be better promoted to get more attention because these museums' potential is not developed to the fullest in comparison to other European cities. In these terms, according to the newspaper editorial, the City Council should potentiate the role of museums in tourist terms by calibrating their cultural input and the sector's sustainability. So, even if there are a few successful museums that have about 80% of the ticket sales coming from international visitors, there are other smaller museums that should improve their attractiveness in order to get more cultural tourists. Therefore, the current trend that intends to attract selected cultural tourists instead of mass tourism flows is somehow connected to the kind of strategies just suggested in the report. Continuing with this topic of tourism, next will focus on how urban tourism has evolved into a real and big issue when cities get crowded.

¹ Report available online at the following link: <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/ocio-y-cultura/20190322/barcelona-fuera-de-juego-ante-boom-mundial-de-museos-7369375>

2.2. Tourism in cities and crowds. Overtourism?

Tourism is positive in its essence, but its overexploitation and the residents' complaints have made municipalities rethink how it should be approached and rethought. Several strategies have been studied to amend this complex situation. For instance, the aim to attract a certain type of tourist is one of the most broad-spread strategies. So, instead of looking for tourists in quantity, the municipalities prefer now to target a specific kind of more qualitative tourism like the before mentioned cultural tourism. Murzyn-Kupisz (2012) referred to this idea by pointing out that attracting visitors without any filter could work on a short-term basis but on the long-term it would entail negative consequences. Therefore, the researcher adverted to focus on cultural tourism. In comparison to massive leisure tourism, this one is more sustainable and respectful. In addition, the staying of cultural tourists is considered to be more qualitative because they spend more days on average and their expenditures are higher. Apart from this, because of their cultural interest, they are supposed to have more sensibility towards the conservation and preservation of heritage, so they are more aware of their footprint as tourists and they are interested in sustainable options and solutions.

Even so, before getting to analyse the strategies undertaken to face mass tourism, it is crucial to understand first this phenomenon by seeing how it has been approached by scholars and governmental organisations.

One of the most recent reports on mass tourism is 'Overtourism: impact and possible policy responses' requested by the TRAN (Transport and Tourism) committee in the European Parliament (Peeters et al, 2018). Its principal aim is to study in-depth the phenomenon of overtourism and to update the general knowledge about it in order to translate it into policies. By considering all the stakeholders, the researchers pretend to get to conclusions and useful measures to reduce its negative effects. The report presents this challenging issue from a theoretical point of view and then the researchers analyse 41 case studies. Thanks to this varied selection of cases, they proved that it is not possible to get a unique solution nor general indications because every destination needs specific policies that suit their circumstances.

This report was commissioned with the intention of analysing overtourism in a direct and unvarnished way. This relatively new term has been used often during the last years and it encompasses the negative consequences of overcrowding in tourism, but mass tourism has

been studied already for some decades now. According to Peeters et al. (2018, p22), the definition of overtourism is the following:

“Overtourism describes the situation in which the impact of tourism, at certain times and in certain locations, exceeds physical, ecological, social, economic, psychological, and/or political capacity thresholds.”

Although the terms mass tourism and overtourism are widespread among the academia and the media, there is some controversy around them because these concepts criminalise the individuals, the visitors. It is, in fact, an issue difficult to assess because there needs to be considered a social context which encompasses part of these cities' population discomfort with tourism.

When tourism gets out of hand, part of the city's residents starts to suffer direct and disagreeable consequences. These local communities that live closer to the most touristic areas are particularly susceptible to the nuisances caused by crowds and they are less likely to be enthusiastic about tourism (Choi & Murray, 2010). The daily life of residents gets disrupted in numerous and various ways that go from impossibility to sleep because of the noise to the increase of rents because illegal tourist apartments are taking over the market due to their high rentability.

Notwithstanding, this social aversion against tourism has not been developed overnight. Claudio Milano (2017) exposes in a report about overtourism and tourismphobia how society and neighbours can go from excitement about tourism to such a social rejection. The model that he uses belongs to a theory on the residents' perception of the tourist destination where they live in by George Doxey (1975). It graduates the reaction to tourism in four stages: euphoria, apathy, irritation and antagonism. Through this classification, residents go from a welcoming behaviour to a more sceptic attitude towards the benefits of tourism when the number of visitors grows without control, and finally this discomfort is expressed, and locals start to complain. For instance, Garau-Vadell et al. (2018) analyse the euphoria towards tourism during and after the financial crisis of 2008. After that positive peak on residents' satisfaction with tourism, there was a turning point that took place when the liveability for the inhabitants was affected by crowds and congestion in their neighbourhoods.

Therefore, when part of the residents gets tired of the nuisances caused by an excess of tourists, they externalise this discomfort and they ask their politician representatives to take control of the situation. For this reason, neighbours start to get organised through associations and they set demonstrations around the city (Milano, 2017). These actions are probably the most evident ones because they are on the media and they can create some debate around the issue. Nevertheless, citizens can push the public institutions to react, when municipal elections take place. By voting those parties that promise radical changes in tourism terms, the inhabitants send a clear message. This is the case of Amsterdam and Barcelona where, respectively, 'GroenLinks', the green party, and 'Barcelona en Comú' won the elections after mass tourism had hit the cities, in 2018 and 2015 respectively.

Because of the great importance of municipalities in managing tourism and its counter effects, the next section is focused on their role in coping with such a challenging and complex phenomenon.

2.3. City Halls: how tourism and visitor flows are being managed.

The role of municipalities in managing how the city should approach tourism in a more transversal way is determinant. Considering the wide scope that tourism has got, governments should not pretend to address it only from a financial point of view or by taking arbitrary decisions.

For instance, Hwansuk Chris Choi and Iain Murray (2010) prove that sustainable tourism, and more precisely long-term planning, full community participation and environmental sustainability within tourism, are clearly related to a greater support for tourism by residents. Among the measures suggested, the participatory sense of the strategy that Choi and Murray (2010) propose is highlighted and it matches the general new trend to approach tourism from a more integral approach. If the government's mission is to change the residents' perspective and improve the coexistence between locals and visitors, residents need to be listened and considered carefully. In connection with this, Eleni Mavragani (2018) pointed out the need for a real cooperation between several stakeholders like museums, hotels and municipalities to work in partnership towards a common goal. Similarly, María Velasco González (2009) defends that tourism management requires a process of reflection before taking any action, so planning is vital when approaching such issues. Moreover, the solutions proposed in these plans need to be tailor-made to every case considering the peculiarities of cities and their contexts (Peeters et al, 2018).

Likewise, over the last years there has been an increasing number of academic papers and reports on the relation between tourism and governments. For instance, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) issued in September 2018 a report titled “Overtourism? – Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions” that focuses on how to face tourism flows in cities. A total of 68 measures and 11 strategies were indicated, all of them aiming to manage tourism by benefiting visitors and residents at the same time. The study put much emphasis on this balance in order to get a more sustainable tourism in the long term. In a second volume of the same report, the measures and strategies were applied to a total of nineteen cases of cities around the world and, of course, Amsterdam and Barcelona were among these destinations. Even if they all had geographical and social differences, at the end of the day the nineteen municipalities’ concerns were similar and they were mainly focused on congestion and overcrowdings. Apart from this shared worry, they also preferred certain measures above the rest which were the ones related to spreading visitors throughout the city. This one in particular is not new and several researchers and policymakers defend it as one of the main measures to consider when facing congestions in an urban scale. Along the same lines, Christian Ost (2009, p78) affirmed the following:

“Dealing with mass tourism implies the distribution of tourist flows in such manner that visitor satisfaction and heritage protection are in balance. If we succeed in giving information and advice to people that will help them modify their consumer behaviour, such that they agree to visit alternative monuments with almost the same satisfaction, then excess demand could be extended over a wider territorial area.”

Although this reflection was made thinking about cultural heritage, it can be applied to any cultural equipment as well. In recent years, this geographical distribution of visitors has been undertaken by several municipalities with the intention to reduce visitors’ pressure on the most popular tourist attractions. For instance, the ‘iamsterdam.com’ website by amsterdam&partners is an accurate example of a tool to let visitors and residents know about the wide cultural offer that Amsterdam has throughout the whole city and its metropolitan area.

In this report from UNWTO (2018), both cases of Amsterdam and Barcelona are explained by representatives of their respective local governments. On the one side, the

Dutch capital city exposed the main strategies and actions taken over the last years, but more precisely during 2018 when the municipal government changed hands and they began to regulate tourism more strictly. Based on this rethinking of how to approach tourism, the municipality of Amsterdam developed a report titled 'Stad in Balans' (City in Balance) that will be illustrated more in depth later. On the other side, Barcelona also exposed some of the latest measures taken in the city after the publication of their 'Pla Estratègic de Turisme 2020' (Strategic Tourism Plan 2020).

Both cities have focused their attention and efforts in finding effective ways to manage the growing numbers of tourists keeping sustainability as their main core value. Some of the points that they share are the reduction of nuisances that residents have to endure, the protection and stimulation of local economies, the identity preservation, or the already mentioned distribution of visitors over the entire city. For instance, Gregory J. Ashworth (2013) insisted on the importance of the destinations' identity and how the municipalities should take care of the uniqueness of their place before it gets standardised. Nevertheless, even if the municipalities' goals are numerous and they embrace diverse areas of the city, Amsterdam and Barcelona have a core mission which is the protection of the citizens' liveability. At the end of the day, they are the taxpayers and during the tourism boom they got a bit forgotten.

Lastly, tourism management cannot only be focused on controlling crowds and the consequences that are already taking place right now, but there are some strategic matters that need to be planned in advanced. For instance, Greg Richards noticed already in 2011 that there was a global tendency towards a more qualitative, and not quantitative, growth of tourism demand. If cities want to readdress their reputation and change the type of visitors they are welcoming by attracting, for instance, the cultural tourists, there needs to be a strong marketing strategy. These marketing tools that were previously used to attract visitors indiscriminately, can now be rethought to be useful considering the new municipalities' goals. In this way, marketing loses its commercial focus and it is used in a more selective and wise way.

As an example, Amsterdam and Barcelona have developed new marketing plans following this late trend highlighted by Richards (2011). The Strategic Plan 2016-2020 written by amsterdam&partners (known as Amsterdam Marketing until 2019) and the Tourism Marketing Strategy of Barcelona's Destination would be the documents containing a guideline to follow when positioning the city in tourism terms.

2.4. Superstar museums.

Turning now to the field of culture, the study of superstar museums is very appealing for the present thesis because the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum could be considered as such. These two blockbuster museums are the paradigm of this complex and controversial relationship between tourism and culture. Indeed, from the clash between culture and mass tourism is born this superstar museum category that will be developed next.

Superstar museums were defined for the first time by Bruno S. Frey in 1998. He numbered up to five aspects related to these cultural institutions that defined them as superstar. First of all, they are a 'must' for tourists and they have achieved a worldwide cult status. Visiting a city without getting inside them is unthinkable. For this reason, they have large numbers of visitors, the majority of them internationals, so according to Frey (1998, p114), "[these museums] are now an integral part of mass tourism". This statement contradicts the positive image that cultural tourism has built in terms of being a more respectful and careful kind of tourism because Frey connected it directly to the demonised mass tourism. In this case, superstar museums show that boundaries between cultural tourism and mass tourism are not so well-defined and they can also become blurred. Therefore, this case reinforces the critical voices (Richards, 2003) that question the municipalities' strategy to attract cultural tourists as a panacea for all ills.

Going back to the five aspects that define superstar museums, they usually feature renowned painters and famous artworks with which the institution is associated to. In particular, Frey pointed out that the newly established museums in the 1990's were focused on one artist only but very famous one. Also, superstar museums are usually located in iconic architectures that become a symbol of the city. Finally, these museums are highly commercialised, and they have some services inside their facilities such as bookshops and restaurants that complete the visitor's experience.

In relation with the last 'condition' to be considered as superstar museum, there is a historic debate around it. The commercialisation of museums is controversial for some researchers who do not see it with good eyes (Ames, 2005; Toepler & Kirchberg, 2002). In the case of Stefan Toepler and Kirchberg (2002), they were worried about this tendency of museums towards commercialisation and how these institutions were focusing their efforts on being more commercial and getting more profits from ancillary activities. For the last two decades, museums have explored alternative funding ways in order not to depend so much on public subsidies or donations, so commercialisation has become crucial. For instance,

Frey (2019) pointed out that the revenues from ancillary activities can play an important role to cover operating costs and in similar terms Greg Richards (1996) stated that commercialisation might be crucial not to depend on subsidies and gain more autonomy as an organisation. Similarly, other authors have also defended the importance of commercial activities like Pawlikowska-Piechotka (2014), Irina van Aalst and Inez Boogaarts (2002). Complementarily to sales of merchandising, commercialisation also encompasses other activities like renting spaces to host events or the exploitation of their collection images rights.

In connection with the third aspect of the listed ones by Frey (1998) that superstar museums feature world famous painters, there is a paper on superstar paintings by Guido Ferilli et al. (2016) that focuses on the attraction of certain artworks. According to this study, there are some paintings that have an 'auratic' character and they attract irrationally the visitors' attention. These world-wide known artworks are often the main reason to call 'superstar museums' the institutions where they are exhibited. A couple of examples like these related to this thesis could be the 'Sunflowers' by Vincent van Gogh and 'Las Meninas' by Pablo Picasso. Both works are among their museum's highlights and attract an important part of their total audiences.

2.5. The Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum.

The two museums chosen in this comparative case study have certain similarities. The Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum are both located in cities that in recent years have become great tourist destinations, Amsterdam and Barcelona, and the number of visitors they attract yearly is millionaire, of around one million and two million visitors respectively. Also, both of them are art collections of a single painter whose surname has become a brand and also the museum's name. Following the aforementioned listed aspects of superstar museums, the two cases are tourist attractions that host more international visitors than locals and they appear in every top-ten places to visit in each city. Therefore, the two museums are clearly poles of attraction for many reasons and they have become a referent in the cultural sector on a national and international level.

The Van Gogh Museum is next to the Rijksmuseum the most visited museum in the whole country. They are located in the Museumplein that is an area full of cultural institutions and it is usually crowded with visitors. For instance, Irina van Aalst and Inez Boogaarts

(2002) took it as a case study for their paper on museums and mass entertainment. They analysed the relation between the three big museums located there in 2002 and highlighted the little cooperation and cohesion between the Rijksmuseum, the Stedelijk Museum and the Van Gogh Museum back then. Even if the context of the Museumplein eighteen years ago cannot be compared to the current one in tourism terms, the study highlighted the importance of the redevelopment of the park in 1999 that unified the three museums. Moreover, the researchers stated that the construction works of the moment had the intention to make the museums more accessible and more attractive to mass public. In this sense, the gestation of what the square has become nowadays took place twenty years ago and it can be stated, without a doubt, that they fulfilled their goal of being a popular space. Now the city's objective is completely different because the municipality is trying to spread the visitors throughout the city.

In another vein, the Van Gogh Museum is object of many other studies. For instance, Vermeulen et al. (2019) analysed how the museum can engage with youths with a migrant background. This research related to audience analysis and the promotion of cultural participation among a target group is linkable to the museum's aim to attract locals to their facilities and balance the audience ratio which is now mostly international.

On the other hand, the Picasso Museum is also an organisation that has attracted the attention of researchers. Ester Noguer i Juncà and Àlvar Saéz i Puig (2018) undertook a customer study that settled the basis to better understand the museum's audience and to improve the museum's customer services. With this paper, the authors reinforce the importance of studying visitors in-depth to adapt the organisation to the visitors' needs.

On the whole, the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum are exemplary cases of superstar museums. Their role as tourist attractions makes cultural participation from residents difficult. Therefore, one of their main goals is to attract locals because they might feel pushed away by the international visitors' crowds.

3. Methodology.

3.1. Method.

As mentioned, the present study seeks to delve into the consequences of overtourism on art museums, but more specifically on how these cultural institutions manage congestion and crowds. Therefore, two cases have been selected in order to bring to light the strategies and measures that museums can apply in relation to massive attendance. Through a comparative case study between the Van Gogh Museum (Amsterdam, the Netherlands) and the Picasso Museum (Barcelona, Spain), this empirical research is looking for a snapshot of what is being done to cope with the negative consequences of an excess of tourism.

First and foremost, it must be stated that the choice of these two museums and cities has not been arbitrary at all. At first glance it might seem to be a facile comparison between two iconic tourist attractions selected randomly among the dozens of blockbuster museums in Europe. The real reason is away from this simplistic criterion because in actual fact, the selection arose from a personal bond with one of the institutions. A professional experience in the Picasso Museum in Barcelona could be considered the origin of this thesis due to the direct and daily contact with tourism there in its maximum essence. The clash between culture and tourism that takes place inside these successful museums is an interesting topic, but its consequences like congestion and the measures applied to soften the pressure have not been yet studied in-depth. For this reason, from this starting point, i.e. the Picasso Museum, the research had the opportunity to build a strong case study, but it seemed more enriching to compare it to another museum. In order to better understand the position in which these must-see museums are, the second case had to share some of the Picasso's characteristics, but more specifically in the Netherlands where part of the research would be undertaken. The Van Gogh Museum met many of these 'requirements' because it is located in Amsterdam and it is comparable to the Picasso Museum for more than one aspect. In fact, the Van Gogh Museum is a worldwide known institution that exhibits the largest painting collection of the Dutch artist, Vincent van Gogh. Moreover, they welcome around two million visitors per year, and it has become a must-see attraction in the city. Meanwhile, the Picasso Museum receives one million visitors yearly and it is listed in every guidebook about the city of Barcelona. Also, both museums have a strong emotional tie with the cities and the countries where they are located, so the citizens can feel that those collections belong to them somehow. Then, this study analyses two institutions that have become cultural icons

and symbols with a strong brand image. By choosing two superstar museums located in Barcelona and Amsterdam which are trendy destinations nowadays, the thesis wishes to establish the common and differentiating factors that lay behind the museums' success and saturation.

Next to the analysis of the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum, also the role of the municipalities of Amsterdam and Barcelona is included in the study. By adding them, the research aims to get a wider scope and contextualize what is the current situation of tourism in each city.

In order to get a full overview of what are superstar museums doing since mass tourism started to become an issue, the present research has worked mainly on qualitative data that was obtained through three sources:

- Interviews to middle managers from the museums and policymakers from both municipalities;
- Data on monthly visitor numbers directly provided by the two museums from the last eight years;
- Policy documents on tourism management from both City Councils. They are the Strategic Tourism Plan 2020 (ES), the Tourism Marketing Strategy of Barcelona's Destination (ES), the City in Balance report (NL), and the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 (NL).

The three different sources of information will complement each other, and the results obtained from their analysis will be reinforced when being put together. The interviews to strategic and key respondents make the research gain a personal and subjective insight on the topic. The documents analysis provides a straight and objective point of view. In addition to this qualitative data, an analysis on visitors' flows from the last eight years is also included to illustrate how these numbers have recently evolved with the urban tourism boom. For instance, one of the most spread characteristics related to tourism is the seasonality of visitors' demand which gets concentrated in a few months. This repeated trend over the years is a matter of discussion in the interviews and at the same time it also appears in the analysed reports because it is a very particular aspect of the tourism industry. So, the visitor numbers from the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum will prove how is, in fact, their seasonal pattern with up-to-date data.

In order to get an accurate comparison between the Van Gogh Museum, the Picasso Museum and the urban contexts that surround them, the data collection needed to be carefully selected in advance. More details will be given below on what was the criteria followed in choosing certain interviewees and also in deciding which documents would contribute the most to this study. The last section will illustrate how all the data will be analysed once collected and ready to be interpreted.

3.2. Data Collection.

As aforementioned, the data collected in order to tackle this thesis' research question can be divided into three categories. Nevertheless, there is one that monopolizes all the attention which is the interviews and that is because of the personal implication that they entail. Hence, this Data Collection section will start explaining the interviews, and the policy documents and secondary data will follow.

3.2.1. Interviews.

3.2.1.1. Interviews' structure and characteristics.

In the Spring of 2019, a total of eight semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to managers from both museums and officials from the two municipalities in question. They took place between the months of March and May in the city of Barcelona (in Spanish) and in Amsterdam (in English), and the average length of these interviews was of one hour. Even if the number of meetings was eight, the number of interviewees that finally participated in the research was eleven. That paradox can be explained because there were three double interviews. As for the names and positions of each respondent, they will be detailed at the end of this chapter (See Table 1).

The eight interviews were carried out in person and they followed a similar style, but different interview guides were used (See Annexs A, B, C, D for the interview guides). Considering the peculiar nature of this thesis, the interviews differed among them in relation to the role of the respondents. Thus, for each position (head of the visitor services, team manager, retail manager or municipalities' officials), the focus was similar and questions were made in consonance with their position. This correlation seeks for equivalent comparisons between the two museums and the two cities.

In this way, the interviews were conducted having a sequence of questions planned in advance, but the questions were not closed (Bryman, 2012). For this reason, the interviews are considered to be semi-structured because apart from the initial questions which were the key ones, some extra questions could be asked during the conversation. This gave more freedom to the interviewees and it led to greater improvisation and naturalness. Nonetheless, in general terms the scripts of the interview guides were followed although some unforeseen situations arose. For example, in some cases the time was limited so the priority questions had to be done before and this provoked a bit of disorder, or some secondary questions had to be dispensed with.

As regards the questions' typology, they varied from being more to less open questions. Depending on the context, the respondents were left with more space to reflection or also to express personal opinions from their specific professional position. This 'non-standardisation' made the successive analysis more difficult but, because of the respondents' different backgrounds and current responsibilities, every interview had to be personalised. Still, the interviewees working in similar departments but in different cities shared some key questions. Content of interviews are available under request.

3.2.1.2. Interviews: Municipalities of Amsterdam and Barcelona.

The interviews, as the whole thesis in broad strokes, can be split into two big categories: municipalities and museums. The first group to be explained will be the governmental side, which was not that easy to justify considering that museums were the main focus of the research. As stated before, their testimony is crucial to put into context urban tourism which in the end is congesting superstar museums. In addition to that, their more transversal point of view makes this study get a wider insight on the synergies between these cultural institutions and their respective municipalities, but also how they approach the challenging management of visitors from their respective positions. In this way, talking to people that are working in tourism management on a larger scale seems to be imperative to get the whole framework.

Therefore, four relevant policymakers and officials working in both municipalities were interviewed and asked about the footprint of tourism in the city. The procedure to find these professionals shared the same starting point which was the strategic plans that both cities have developed in relation to tourism and culture.

On the one side, the two Catalan city officials that were interviewed belonged to 'Direcció de Turisme' (Direction of Tourism) but inside a public organisation which is called 'Barcelona Activa'². This interview was one of the three double ones and it took place in their workplace at Barcelona Activa's offices. The Projects Coordinator Marta Tria Benito and the official responsible for the Strategic Tourism Plan 2020 (STP 20) Aina Pedret Santos were mainly asked about this STP20 and the management of the concept of so-called 'Crowded Spaces'. In relation to the Picasso Museum, some questions were focused on the area that surrounds the museum, and the measures that have been already taken in order to soften tourist pressure in the neighbourhood.

On the other side, the two interviews undertaken in Amsterdam were individual and to people from different organisations. Firstly, the Senior Cultural Policy Advisor at the Gemeente Amsterdam, Araf Ahmadali, set a general framework of how culture and arts are being managed and incentivized in the city, and also what is the situation of tourism inside the City Council's organigram. When the conversation focused on the spread of visitors among the city's wide offer of cultural assets, he introduced the role of 'amsterdam&partners'. He explained the cooperation between his Department for Arts and Culture and 'the new Amsterdam Marketing'³. Precisely, in this private-public organisation works the second interviewee, Nico Mulder, who is the Marketing Strategy Manager. The radical strategy change that the city has experienced in the last years in visitors terms remained omnipresent during the whole interview, but many topics were discussed such as the pursuit of a greater liveability for residents, or the dispersion of visitors throughout the territory. As it also happened in 'Barcelona Activa', the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 of amsterdam&partners was analysed and questions about its applicability in the area where the Van Gogh Museum is located were asked.

3.2.1.3. Interviews: Van Gogh Museum and Picasso Museum.

A total of seven museum managers were interviewed in their respective facilities in individual and double formats. The interviews can be divided into three groups which are correlated to

² 'Barcelona Activa' (barcelonactiva.cat/barcelonactiva/en) is a public organisation responsible for boosting economic policies and local development that belongs to the Ajuntament de Barcelona. They are focused on promoting employment in the city, encouraging entrepreneurship, and offering support to companies and businesses.

³ Amsterdam Marketing is the old name of the actual amsterdam&partners. This change took place in February 2019 and they made this decision because their mission had already changed some years ago and the 'marketing' word has a commercial nuance distant from the organisation's role nowadays.

the departments they belong to. Thus, the classification is the following: the Visitor Services, the Team or Staff Management, and Retail or Shops.

In this respect, the first interview in each museum was to the Heads of Visitor Services Department. Considering the research question focused on the measures applied by the museums to face congestion and unbalanced visitor's flows, the testimonies of these two key respondents can be considered as the pillars on which the rest of the data is based on. On the one hand, Jort Slingerland from the Van Gogh Museum shared a presentation about 'Capacity Optimization' that summed up all the research and studies they have undertaken, besides the measures they applied after having understood the recent phenomenon and its implications. Taking into account the particularity of this interview that was organised around a presentation, apart from the questions made that day, some extra questions were accurately answered by email. On the other hand, Deirdre Haughey Barquín from the Picasso Museum followed a more structured interview (Bryman, 2012) that covered all the subtopics, from audience analysis to a review of the main measures taken, especially in relation to the reduction of their facilities' capacity.

In connection with the analysis of the measures carried out to tackle congestion, staff management issues were somehow implied and mentioned by the Heads of Visitor Services. Thus, the managers in charge of these teams that have a direct contact with the visitors were interviewed. From the Van Gogh Museum, Azeglio Bartolucci who is one of its four Team Managers of the Visitor Services, was the representative interviewed. Among other duties, he prepares a team formed by floor managers and the rest of the employees that work directly with visitors. In the case of the Picasso Museum, in relation to this department, two people were interviewed at the same time who were a Supervisor and a Coordinator, Domenico Berardinelli and Laura Juncà Mier. In this museum, visitor services are externalised and Magma Cultura⁴ is in charge of it. This externalisation implies that these team managers do not have absolute control on, for instance, the number of employees that they can hire during the high season, because they have a contract with the museum to follow. These interviews had very similar questions and they can be grouped in three main themes: logistic issues to determine how many employees they need at a certain point considering the variable demand of tickets in such tourist attractions; which strategies they carry out to protect workers from burn out; and whether the visitors complain about congestion or not. This last part was focused on the customers' feedback and it was meant to assess if overcrowded facilities affect

⁴ Magma Cultura is a private company that is hired by cultural institutions to manage or execute different tasks related to visitor services. They are working now in more than thirty centres around Spain and France.

the visitors' experience as it has been pointed out by Hilary du Cros (2008) or Peeters et al (2018).

Last but not least, there are the representatives of the museums' commercial side that would be the Shop and Retail Managers. The interview to Marta Pujol Serra took place inside the Picasso Museum's bookshop itself surrounded by clients. In contrast, Peter Dusch was interviewed in the Van Gogh Museum's offices next to Azeglio Bartolucci. In both meetings similar questions were posed on congestion, differentiating between its physical consequences in terms of space and the effects of crowding on sales turnover. Also, in the world of retail, the contact that shop assistants can make with each potential client is vital to ensure sales, but congestion can decrease the clients' experience because of this lack of personal touch that one can expect in a shop. Finally, the increasing commercialisation of museums highlighted by Irina van Aalst and Inez Boogaarts (2002) and Stefan Toepler and Volker Kirchberg (2002) is revised through these interviews that show a relatively different opinion on overcrowding and big audiences.

Finally, below can be found a table with the name and professional position of each respondent that was interviewed:

Amsterdam	
Name	Position
Araf Ahmadali	Senior Cultural Policy Advisor (Gemeente Amsterdam)
Nico Mulder	Marketing Strategy Manager (amsterdam&partners)
Jort Slingerland	Head of Visitor Services (Van Gogh Museum)
Peter Dusch	Manager Retail (Van Gogh Museum)
Azeglio Bartolucci	Team Manager Visitor Services (Van Gogh Museum)

Barcelona	
Name	Position
Marta Tria Benito	Projects Coordinator (Barcelona Activa, Direcció de Turisme)
Aina Pedret Santos	Technician Strategic Tourism Plan 2020 (Barcelona Activa, Direcció de Turisme)
Deirdre Haughey Barquín	Head of Visitor Services and Events (Picasso Museum)
Marta Pujol Serra	Shop Manager (Picasso Museum, Llibreria Laie)
Domenico Berardinelli	Visitor Services Supervisor (Picasso Museum, Magma Cultura)
Laura Juncà Mier	Visitor Services Coordinator (Picasso Museum, Magma Cultura)

Table 1. List of all the respondents that were interviewed for the study.

3.2.2. Policy documents.

It is a fact that the interviews monopolized all the attention, but the data collection of this thesis has included the analysis of policy documents as well. These documents provided by the municipalities propose a bundle of measures and regulations related to tourism and its control. Actually, they are the aforementioned Strategic Tourism Plan 2020 made by Barcelona's 'Direcció de Turisme', the report City in Balance developed by the Gemeente Amsterdam, and the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 by amsterdam&partners. Broadly speaking, the three of them intend to cope with the nuisances caused by the unexpected and accelerated growth of visitors in recent years. Even if there are differences among the three documents and their mission and approach to the same challenging issue, there is a generalised new trend on how to manage mass tourism in cities. An example would be the measure focused on the spread of visitors that, as the report on overtourism by the UNWTO (2018) underlines, is one of the most preferred measures to be applied in Europe when trying to cope with mass tourism.

3.2.3. Museums' visitor numbers.

Finally, there is some additional secondary data that contemplates the number of visitors to both museums in a period of eight years, from January 2011 to December 2018 (See Table 2 and 3). Data were provided by the Heads of Visitor Services because it is their department the one that manages more directly these matters. Nevertheless, the first two and a half years requested were not facilitated by the Van Gogh Museum side. The reason why they could not do so is because according to Jort Slingerland, their visitor numbers data previous to May 2013 are not reliable enough. On that date the museum reopened their doors because they had been refurbishing their facilities for seven months and during that period of time their collection had been moved to the Hermitage Amsterdam. Still, the Annual Reports of the Van Gogh Museum of 2011, 2012 and 2013⁵ were checked and the annual visitor numbers of each year have been added in the analysis. They are not detailed monthly visitor numbers, but they allow to get a general idea of the attendance trend during those first three years in comparison to the more complete Picasso Museum data.

The initial request was the monthly number of visitors from 2011 to 2018 in order to see two things: the marked seasonality that both museums try to balance by attracting more visitors during the low season, and the unceasing increase of visitors over the last years. Many interpretations can be made from this data, but some trends are visible when analysing the numbers, as for instance the tourism boom in Amsterdam and Barcelona that coincides with the first evident neighbours' complaints.

3.3. Data Analysis.

One of the particularities of this research is the wide scope of the study that is focused on its research question about the response of museums to congestion, but also includes a wider perspective considering the municipalities' point of view. For this reason, diverse sources of information have been used and a proper analysis needed to be done with the right tools.

In order to obtain an objective and reliable comparative study, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) was used. In this case the program chosen

⁵ The Van Gogh Museum's Annual Reports are available online at the following links:

<http://annualreport2011.vangoghmuseum.nl>
<http://jaarverslag2012.vangoghmuseum.nl/en>
<http://jaarverslag2013.vangoghmuseum.nl/en>

was Atlas.ti 8 which compiles all the information and allows to classify each of the items into codes. By doing so, the coding process of the interviews assigns a label to each topic and classifies the text of the transcribed interviews in groups that share the same concepts or ideas (Bryman, 2012, p212, p577).

Therefore, the coding process that classifies the data in component parts leads to a link of ideas that facilitates the connection of the results obtained from the empirical research and the previous literature on the thesis topic. In the present study the main topics in which the data has been split are the same as the theoretical subjects reviewed in the analysis of the literature. Nevertheless, among these big thematic groups there are also specific measures set as codes because they represent common strategies like the spread of visitors throughout the city and the online sale of tickets.

Overall, this analytical procedure has allowed to put together all the data collected and to assimilate it properly. In order to get an in-depth comparison between the two museums and the way how they have faced the challenging phenomenon of mass tourism, interviews, documents and additional data have played a determinant role. After this, the similarities and the differences between the two cases come to light and the respective conclusions are drawn.

4. Results.

4.1. Tourism and municipalities.

Tourism is a global phenomenon that has grown exponentially for the last decades, exceeding some countries' expectations. As previously mentioned, the present thesis intends to analyse how tourism can affect cultural organisations considering the case of two museums. In order to study the complete scenario that contextualizes congestion in these cultural institutions, it is vital to consider the cultural tourism trend and the role of municipalities when trying to manage it. After that, attention will focus on the protagonists of this thesis considering the first-hand testimonies of the people working in two blockbuster museums: the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum.

The choice of these two museums has entailed the analysis of two cities where tourism has become a controversial issue: Amsterdam and Barcelona. These metropolis are often present in most of the articles and papers that analyse the newest tourism trends, but especially when the dark side of tourism wants to be evidenced. Tourism has benefited various destinations around the world. If the focus is Europe, many cities have exploited their attractiveness by developing strong city branding campaigns. Over the years, their visibility and related success increased pretty rapidly, but there was a turning point and the first nuisances started to show up. When tourism got massive, the terms popularly used were 'mass tourism' and 'overtourism' that have a negative nuance and put the blame on the individuals, the tourists, instead of considering it as a greater and more global issue. The position of municipalities towards this challenge is complex, but during the last elections in both cities, the population made a clear statement: tourism needs to be controlled. The parties that had stronger positions with regard to this issue won, and the municipalities changed their strategy in relation to the management of tourism and visitors' flows.

For this reason, the interviews to people in the municipalities were crucial to understand how the local government is approaching tourism and how it pretends to change the city's image that has been distorted and linked too much to leisure tourism in recent years. The way how the two cities have planned to modify such an abstract concept as the city's image is through using marketing and city branding. Although these tools were also the ones employed when cities were indiscriminately looking for tourists, now municipalities have revised them. So, the means that led cities to mass tourism are now tools to manage visitors flows, and they have become a communication channel with visitors too. It must be

stated that even if Barcelona and Amsterdam stopped promoting tourism a few years ago, the two cities know that visitors will keep coming and Aina Pedret from Barcelona Activa and Nico Mulder from amsterdam&partners are fully aware of this. As their goal has changed from a quantitative perspective to a qualitative one, they have a targeted visitor which could be considered as more qualitative and interested in arts and culture. Under these circumstances, marketing has many new uses and it adapts to the new city needs that entails also lowering the pressure on destination's icons and highlights. To achieve this, marketing can promote the wide offer of activities and places to visit. In this research, we are interested in looking how these strategies include museums, and how is the cooperation between municipalities and museums considering the two cases mentioned above.

Both cities had to rethink their previous strategies focused on attracting international visitors because tourism flows exceeded expectations. At some point, the nuisances caused by tourism started to be evident and the population began to complain about it. Gregory J. Ashworth already noted in 2013 that tourism can create high external costs for those individuals and businesses that do not benefit from it. The clearest example are the neighbours that cope with congestion and public space occupation, but they do not see clear advantages of living in a tourist area.

Even if that took place in different moments, Amsterdam and Barcelona changed the way they had been managing tourism and both municipalities started to work on the development of new actions to redirect the city's strategies. Over the years, the circumstances changed and even the perception that society had of tourism evolved in a negative way. Claudio Milano's report (2017) on 'overtourism' and 'tourismphobia' relates specifically on how the negative perception of Barcelonans in respect to tourism started to increase between 2012 and 2015. Even if in 2015 a new local government came into the City Hall with clear measures to cope with mass tourism, the beforementioned perception got worse and it kept increasing very remarkably between 2015 and 2017. Then, this context in Barcelona, which also Amsterdam experienced in its way, needs to be considered carefully to understand the reaction of the two municipalities. In both cases, the municipalities changed their mindset after the elections and very specific and disruptive programs were developed in the field of tourism analysis and management in order to readdress the situation. These plans that were the main subject of the interviews with the city officials are detailed next.

4.2. Municipalities' reaction to mass tourism.

The management of tourism has become an absolute challenge in recent years considering its great dimensions and the many implications it entails. Hence, it is an issue that has been widely studied and discussed because its assessment is complex. In these terms, many researchers like M. Velasco González (2009), Hwansuk Chris Choi and Iain Murray (2010) agree that long-term planning in advance and considering all the stakeholders are key aspects to get a more sustainable tourism. In this way, they state that plans should not be developed without the collaboration of everyone: from those agents that will implement the plan, to the ones that will be 'objects' of the plan, but also the directors of the plan. This full involvement of all the stakeholders is reiterated in theory but also the interviewees mention it, the four related to the municipalities, but also Jort Slingerland from the Van Gogh Museum. More details on this will be given when referring to each of the two cases.

That being said, the insistence of the local governments on working in coordination with the stakeholders is not only present in academic papers, but also the municipalities of Barcelona and Amsterdam share this intention. For example, according to Araf Ahmadali from the Gemeente Amsterdam, we cannot look at this complex situation from a cultural policy point of view only, because it requires an integrated approach. The most evident proof of this is that the City of Amsterdam does not have a department of tourism but different departments are involved on its management and there is a sort of coordination between them. Also, Aina Pedret, technician of the STP20 in Barcelona, insisted on the role of their department of tourism to keep tourism in every department's mind because it is intrinsic in every area of the municipality and it should be present in every department's agenda somehow. After explaining this, Marta Tria highlighted a quote of the STP20 (p17) that synthesises this idea which is the following one:

“Today's challenge is not just how to manage tourism in the city but also how to manage the city with tourism”.

This change on the municipalities' mindset implies a different way of facing tourism because they accept that tourism and the city are inseparable. Thus, tourism is inherent in our urban conception and it needs to be tackled in coordination with all the stakeholders involved, including the whole municipality structure. Next are developed each of the cities' actions in recent years to protect their citizens and find a balanced solution.

4.2.1. Barcelona: Pla Estratègic de Turisme 2020.

The current **Strategic Tourism Plan 2020** in Barcelona is the answer to a situation in which the city started to show signs of saturation, but its origin goes back to the years 2006-2007. Already thirteen years ago there were the first demonstrations and complaints about tourism pressure in neighbourhoods like La Barceloneta⁶, which has been historically one of the areas that has suffered the most this congestion. In 2010 the municipality developed a first strategic plan to be implemented by 2015 and it already had a sensitive approach considering that tourism had started to discomfort residents. Its innovative analytical study considered for the first time to set some boundaries and to work towards a softening of the first inconveniences (STP20, p12). For instance, one of the goals was to distribute tourism throughout the city and some areas not so well-known were promoted. Aina Pedret put the example of ‘el Turó de la Rovira’⁷ that was one of the areas promoted to reduce the pressure in the city centre and the rest of the tourist attractions. Notwithstanding, the result was that tourism got expanded, but it was not redistributed as expected.

Even though the municipality made an effort to improve the relation between tourism and the city, the phenomenon got worse. The emergence of new online renting platforms like Airbnb and the democratization of travelling, along with many other causes, made the visitors’ numbers increase and the pressure got accentuated. This situation led to a more unsatisfied population until municipal elections took place in 2015. During the campaign, tourism became one of the main topics of discussions among the political parties that were running to get to the City Hall. The ones that promised controlling tourism and the illegal holiday apartments were the party that won, with Ms. Ada Colau as the mayor until last May 2019 when new elections took place. The actual government issued a Strategic Tourism Plan that stands out for being the most transversal and integral work to date. Considering that it was conceived to be developed and applied from 2016 to 2020, even if its implementation is still going on, this research has some information provided by one of the officials who has been directly working on it.

The Strategic Tourism Plan 2020 is a participative guideline that pretended to cover a vast range of matters hit by tourism and transform this tourism into a more sustainable

⁶ La Barceloneta is a neighbourhood that has its own identity and is well known for being right in front of a beach area.

⁷ El Turó de la Rovira is a hill in Barcelona that has a panoramic view of the city and it has become a tourist spot that needed to be controlled for security reasons. On it there are anti-aircraft batteries from the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

one. Apart from the programmes working on mobility, accommodation, economic redistribution, taxes and funding, etc., the one that interests most this thesis is the so-called 'Espais de Gran Afluència' (EGA), **Crowded Spaces** (CS) (STP, p100). This label is used to denominate those congested areas that are attractive for containing a monument, a place of interest or where people converge because they are a meeting point of visitors and residents. In this sense, Aina Pedret remarked that they did not categorised them as tourist places on purpose because these spaces are crowded by international visitors but also residents and inhabitants from all around the province. Moreover, the reason why these areas have been differentiated is because these CSs have different characteristics. Hence, they need to be managed separately because they can be a specific monument like 'la Sagrada Família', a boulevard like 'Les Rambles' or an entire neighbourhood like the Gothic Quarter. In total there are fifteen CSs but the one where the Picasso Museum is located is called 'Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera'. It must be stated that among all the CSs, seven of them are considered to be a priority, and the one protagonist of this research is not one of them. This implies that the CS has not been developed as much as those seven urgent cases, or for example not so many measures have been implemented.

What is more, these Crowded Spaces have specific work groups that should have a plural representation of the different players involved in that area in particular. This group of stakeholders includes public and private institutions but also tourist and activity operators (STP, p101), in order to create a space where initiatives can be proposed, or where measures can be co-designed by all the representatives present in these work groups. Once again, the involvement of every player of the area is emphasised in order to get to action measures that benefit all the parts that play a role in there, in line with the position of M. Velasco González (2009), Hwansuk Chris Choi and Iain Murray (2010). Going back to the specific case studied for this thesis, the Picasso Museum is actually the main focus of attraction of the CS where it is located. Even if 'Sant Pere, Santa Caterina i la Ribera' is not a priority right now, the Head of the Visitor Services at the Picasso Museum, Deirdre Haughey Barquín, recognised that they had attended some of these meetings in relation to the Strategic Tourism Plan 2020 but they were expecting to see what would happen in the municipal elections in May 2019. Depending on the results, a similar approach to tourism would continue or not. Nevertheless, Deirdre Haughey knew for sure that the museum must be present in this kind of strategic plans so they would be open to participate actively in these work groups developed around the CSs.

4.2.2. Amsterdam: Stad in Balans.

The City of Amsterdam has experienced a similar situation concerning tourism for the last years. What started to be a promising source of employment and economic development finally ended up as a controversial issue to tackle before the situation would become totally unbearable. According to Thomas de Jager from the Department of Economic Affairs in Amsterdam (UNWTO, 2018), tourism was mainly supported by Amsterdammers after the financial crisis in 2008. This generalised support to tourism during those years was a broad trend that Garau-Vadell et al. (2018) probed and justified because the residents' perception of the impacts of tourism had decreased during and after the recession. For that period of time, tourism was seen as something positive because of the economic prosperity it entailed. Considering the economic uncertainty caused by the crisis, tourism was seen as a source of wealth and employment. Nevertheless, around 2014 when the economy had already recovered from the crisis and the visitor's numbers did not stop growing, the nuisances from tourism started to change people's opinion about it.

In this sense, three of the interviewees from Amsterdam that participated in this research stated that between 2013 and 2016 there was a change in mentality. Jort Slingerland, Head of the Visitor Services of the Van Gogh Museum, explained that already in 2013 they started to see that the demand for tickets did not stop growing until reaching their maximum capacity. When their facilities were usually congested and it started to affect the visitor's experience and satisfaction, they developed a plan to face the situation⁸. Similarly, Nico Mulder affirmed that amsterdam&partners changed their mindset in 2015 when the forecast arrival of visitors kept increasing, and residents had already complained about the discomfort that such an amount of visitors was causing to them. Their previous promotion of the city as a tourist destination evolved to their current mission focused on improving residents' liveability, next to a better management of visitor flows and a studied guidance of visitors throughout the city and the metropolitan area. Finally, Araf Ahmadali from the Department for Arts and Culture in the municipality suggested that it was in 2016, approximately, that tourism started to be in their agenda.

Nevertheless, the dissatisfaction of certain citizens kept growing at the same pace as the pressure of visitors in the city became more and more evident. Then, in 2018 there were municipal elections and similarly to what happened in Barcelona, the party that had promised

⁸ The plan called 'Capacity Optimization' will be summarised in the subsection on Visitor Services in this same Data Analysis chapter.

stronger measures to face mass tourism and diminish its negative consequences was the one that won. Since that moment several decisions and measures have been implemented but probably the document that tackles more directly this issue is a report called **'Stad in Balans'** (City in Balance).

The municipality of Amsterdam prepared this report that delved into the effect of tourism in the city and how the population perceived its pressure. The usage of the verb 'to perceive' is not arbitrary because it appears in the document itself and also Araf Ahmadali commented the nuances that this expression has in this context. He indicated that when citizens feel that the city is too dense or crowded, perception and behaviour play an important role and that sensation can be diminished by guiding visitors properly and it also depends on how you design public space.

Focusing now on the report and the measures derived from the study that are being implemented, there is one that stands above which is the spread of visitors. Both the Marketing Strategy Manager and the Cultural Policy Advisor insist on this dispersion of visitors throughout the city and the region as a mean to distribute geographically the large amounts of tourists that are now concentrated in the city centre and the Canal Ring. The tools to guide visitors are basically linked to marketing but Araf Ahmadali also put the focus on how an intelligent programming can encourage visitors to explore more the city beyond the city centre. Continuing with analysing this specific measure on spreading crowds, it is not only Amsterdam, of course, the city that is doing so because Peeters et al (2018, p15) pointed out that the most frequent measures taken by local governments when facing congestion are based on this dispersion of visitors in time and space, which means to reduce seasonality and expanding the area where visitors move around. Thus, even though it might not be an innovative measure, it has worked so far in Amsterdam because according to Nico Mulder from amsterdam&partners, over the last ten years there has been an increase of like 10% more people moving towards the neighbourhoods outside the city centre and the metropolitan area. Nevertheless, as Peeters et al (2018) and M. Velasco González (2009) reiterate, there are no general measures to be applied to all the congested cities, but they need tailor-made solutions to match the particularities of each case. The case of the dispersion of visitors applied to Barcelona and Amsterdam is an example that a similar measure does not work in the same way in two cities experiencing basically the same situation with very large number of people occupying the public space every day.

Apart from this main measure that fundamentally interests this thesis because it is more directly connected to the superstar museums cases, the report City in Balance entails a

long list of experiments and strategies. For instance, the new local government announced the following measures: they will increase tourist taxes; the tourist economy and the souvenirs shops will be put under control; a regulation of tourist activities will take place, etcetera. In general terms, Barcelona and Amsterdam share a similar perspective on how to approach tourism from now onwards.

Finally, there is an omnipresent will throughout the sections of this thesis dedicated to the municipalities' role in managing visitors flows, which is the importance of working with all the stakeholders together. In order to face such a multiple and cross-cutting reality that is tourism, Velasco González (2009), Choi and Murray (2010) and even the UNWTO (2018) defend repeatedly how important is cooperation to achieve a more sustainable tourism activity. In this regard, the City of Amsterdam promoted a taskforce in 2017 aiming to group all the stakeholders involved somehow in tourism: hotels, cultural institutions, tourist attractions companies, amsterdam&partners, several departments from the local government, etcetera. On this matter, both Araf Ahmadali and Nico Mulder exposed their opinion on this coalition which has the goals to coordinate joint actions and measures. Joining forces is not easy considering the wide variety of stakeholders participating in this taskforce and since the new local government has such a strong opinion on tourism, the relation might not be so fluid.

4.2.3. Municipalities' new marketing strategies.

Tourism is a global phenomenon that cannot be controlled or stopped. For this reason, municipalities are fully aware that even if they do not promote the destination as they used to do five or six years ago, international visitors will keep coming. Once this is clear, they use marketing as a management tool (STP20, p78) to change the city's image and the behaviour of visitors. At the same time, they also use it as a communication tool to get to these visitors when they are already in the city, but also before they arrive so visitors' expectations match with the new kind of tourism sought by municipalities.

Therefore, municipalities do not look for more tourists but for "better" ones. Taking into consideration that visitors will keep coming, the marketing strategies need to be realistic and try to change the type of visitor that finally spends some days in the city. Also, the visit typology comes into play because longer stays are preferred. When trips are not short, and visitors take a longer period of time to visit the city, they can explore more in-depth the

possibilities and cultural offer that the destination has. Therefore, it is preferable to have a controlled number of visitors that will spread their economic footprint on a wider area than a massive one focused only on the city centre where the must-see spots are located. For instance, Nico Mulder made this remark when explaining amsterdam&partners main goals:

“We focus on a certain type of visitor, so we do not want to have more visitors in total, but different types of visitors. So, rather people that stay longer, instead of people that only visit for one night, for instance.”

This rethinking is linkable to a warning that Monika Murzyn-Kupisz (2012, p121) did in relation to this matter:

“The policy of attracting the greatest possible number of short term, mass visitors by low prices may thus not be truly profitable to a given site in the long term.”

Furthermore, following this logic she added that paying more attention to cultural tourists would be more advantageous. This argument reaffirms the preference for cultural tourists that has already been pointed out in the theoretical framework and supported by many researchers (Frey, 2019; Jovicic, 2014; Nicolau, 2010). Also from the Amsterdam side, when Araf Ahmadali who is a Cultural Policy Advisor, was asked about cultural tourism, he emphasised their obvious preference for those visitors that are interested in culture, and he highlighted the variety of institutions and attractions that the city and the region have in this sense.

Nevertheless, in order to see how marketing strategies have changed over the years, it is better then to focus on each city and their respective plans.

Amsterdam has made a big change in marketing terms especially since the first nuisances of tourism appeared. Amsterdam Marketing⁹ was the organisation that was in charge of the tourist promotion of the city but as time went by, their mission changed and also their priorities. Since 2015 they started to work towards improving the liveability of the city and their role was wider because they focused on residents and businesses as well apart from visitors. Despite this, considering that this research is focused on tourism, the measures

⁹ Amsterdam Marketing is nowadays named amsterdam&partners.

linked to it are the ones that will be highlighted here. As stated earlier, there was a moment when they were not any more interested in attracting more visitors but certain types of visitors. When this change took place, they focused on a more qualitative visitor that stays longer but also on those visitors that are repeating their visits to the city. Once the visitors have already seen the highlights, they look for something else and then amsterdam&partners is there to guide them to the wide offer of activities and places to visit that the city has apart from the main attractions. This organisation that is mid public and mid private knows that leaving the city centre quiet is impossible, but they are working in order to spread this pressure out of the city centre but also the economic expenditure around the city. About these visitors that are visiting the city for the second time at least, R. A. Stebbins (1996) labels them as 'specialized cultural tourist' and these people need to know what the city can offer them without considering the massive tourist attractions.

In this sense, amsterdam&partners has a new mission that remains in big terms the same, whereas every three to five years they develop a new strategic plan. The most recent one is the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 but they are working on a new plan. The current one delves into this idea of spreading visitors throughout the whole city and the metropolitan area (UNWTO, 2018) but they have also changed the type of visitor they are targeting. Now they prioritise some visitor profiles like the cultural tourist or the business-like visitor because they are considered to be more qualitative and sustainable.

In addition, amsterdam&partners also works a lot on city branding and one of their main goals is to improve the city's image and its reputation. By doing this, they aim to make their citizens feel proud of the city and also to attract different kinds of visitors.

Meanwhile Barcelona is developing a new Tourism Marketing Strategy of Barcelona's Destination. The plan is now in process, specifically on the diagnosis phase, but Marta Tria from the Municipality explained a bit what are the intentions of this plan. Differently from Amsterdam, this plan is not so focused on spreading visitors out of the city centre, but they want to change the type of visitors that are coming to the city. In this way, they do not look for more tourists but for 'better tourists'.

Another aspect that both cities share is the intention to improve the worldwide city's image. Barcelona wants to show that the city has a lot more to offer apart from the icons, such as gastronomy, culture, heritage, traditions, history, etcetera. As Ashworth develops in his article on uniqueness of places (2013), it is vital not to lose one's identity and avoid being simplified to a few attractions, so it is important to widen the city's offer scope and for

instance museums can be place identifiers as well. Finally, on this idea to keep the identity of cities, Nico Mulder insisted in not losing the Amsterdam DNA because global tourism can lead cities to look all the same.

On the whole, still the main icon attractions of Amsterdam and Barcelona have to deal with the consequences of mass tourism. In the next section the strategies that have been put in place by the two superstar museums will be analysed and compared.

4.3. Two case studies: Van Gogh Museum and Picasso Museum.

The two blockbuster museums chosen to illustrate how tourism has accentuated visitors' pressure on certain cultural organisations have turned out to be two very well-prepared examples. For the last years, both institutions have already taken control of the matter, but they also know that there is still space for improvement. The visitors' numbers from the last eight years show a generalised increasing trend (See Table 2 and 3), and tourism does not seem to be diminishing in the coming years, so extra measures will be needed. This study has interviewed various managers from both museums and different departments. Through this multifaceted analysis, the comparison between the two museums gives a snapshot of what is being done and through the similarities, differences also emerge.

Van Gogh	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Jan				86,378	101,649	144,978	138,471	131,334
Feb				89,579	106,479	118,443	129,600	133,183
March				115,464	139,011	160,820	167,250	167,195
April				167,417	178,086	190,115	224,147	202,578
May			157,465	168,809	179,383	187,014	209,832	211,525
June			128,935	142,341	157,962	173,918	202,617	211,877
Jul			154,040	161,736	186,128	210,927	237,271	228,326
Aug			165,572	182,805	194,274	221,831	238,723	211,876
Sep			131,582	129,547	150,443	166,123	181,800	175,897
Oct			133,467	142,635	207,894	183,817	193,966	191,374
Nov			101,886	106,821	156,937	147,504	164,098	152,018
Dec			95,979	109,859	150,498	158,286	155,110	143,977
Total:	1,600,298	1,486,281	>1,400,000	1,603,391	1,908,744	2,063,776	2,242,885	2,161,160

Table 2. The Van Gogh Museum's monthly visitor's numbers from 2011 to 2018.

Picasso	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Jan	58,267	47,443	41,306	47,164	47,709	50,470	58,483	57,127
Feb	62,554	60,353	55,714	53,939	61,162	62,059	66,088	64,590
March	93,82	83,132	82,334	76,481	79,040	83,487	85,228	82,194
April	113,581	113,023	92,263	94,459	104,497	93,391	112,122	81,055
May	101,846	100,733	98,241	93,209	102,034	90,553	105,739	82,713
June	95,771	83,322	83,397	79,334	90,849	85,035	94,413	83,452
Jul	110,591	93,050	92,965	99,322	102,874	99,167	112,439	90,987
Aug	104,563	93,102	96,624	96,438	95,602	91,369	109,044	101,016
Sep	93,556	84,453	77,845	82,476	91,598	86,534	99,571	96,159
Oct	102,613	85,276	89,558	94,363	97,281	103,516	88,461	105,223
Nov	62,559	60,527	58,495	59,453	67,739	64,076	60,017	73,338
Dec	57,678	44,455	46,484	43,176	67,740	56,726	54,585	60,629
Total:	1,057,399	948,869	915,226	919,814	1,008,125	966,383	1,046,190	978,483

Table 3. The Picasso Museum's monthly visitor's numbers from 2011 to 2018.

In this section, the interviews will be reviewed and they will be split in three main categories. First of all, we consider the heads of visitor services that have studied in-depth the issue and work towards finding solutions. The measures proposed by the formers need to be materialised, so the team managers of the visitor services staff bring a more pragmatic and daily point of view. Last but not least there are the shop managers who have different goals, so their position towards congestion differs.

4.3.1. Visitor Services.

The interviews to the Heads of Visitor Services of both museums seemed to be the two most relevant ones for this research from the very beginning. The truth it that the amount of information provided by their part has exceeded all expectations and their transparency has been much appreciated. The conversation structure followed in the two cases had a first half focused on the study of their visitors, the so-called audience analysis, and a second half more related to congestion and tourism.

As already mentioned, these interviews proved how in-depth the two museums study their visitors. In order to approach such a complex issue like congestion in museums, it is vital first to know how the audience you have is. In this matter, the two museums are exemplary cases because they have conducted very extensive studies. For instance, Deirdre Haughey specified that in the Picasso Museum every two years a study of their audience was undertaken that not only collected demographic data but also focused on a wider variety of aspects such as people's motivations to visit museums, their cultural habits, what is their

accommodation while staying in the city, etcetera. Obviously, the majority of visitors are international tourists, in both cases around 80% of the total visitors, and the rest would be locals. This shows that an important part of these museums' audience is made of tourists, and that ratifies their superstar museum condition because one of the main characteristics of this type of museums is their tourist nature (Frey, 1998).

This unbalanced composition of the audience that with little participation from **local visitors** is one of the main concerns of the two museums at hand, but it can be applied to any other cultural institution that has become a tourist attraction and a must-see for foreigners. Therefore, both museums have in their minds the mission to attract more local visitors and to engage them by organising activities designed exclusively for this purpose. The promotion of cultural participation is a matter that also concerns the municipalities that aim to bring culture closer to citizens. In the case of these superstar museums the issue is that locals do not see that museum as a cultural option anymore but as a tourist attraction intended only for international visitors. In this sense, Deirdre Haughey stated that locals feel that they do not have a place in their museum because it is seen as a tourist space. From the municipalities' side, for instance Araf Ahmadali showed awareness of this distance between residents and certain museums and they work towards an improvement in cultural participation to also change situations like this. In this line, M. Velasco Gonzalez (2009, p251) underlined that one of the most immediate consequences of the rapid growth of tourism and the diversification of tourist products is that cultural heritage assets are now considered as tourist resources, for the tourist sector but also for the citizens themselves.

Changing the image that residents have of their own museum is difficult and it entails time and also marketing strategies. Both heads of visitor services pointed out locals as a clear target. A successful way to achieve it is through activities, like for example the family activities carried out every weekend, or specific events that can be related or not to the temporary exhibitions. The Van Gogh Museum makes a considerable investment to attract locals by welcoming for free the owners of a Museumkaart. Also, this museum has targeted more specifically young Amsterdammers by reducing the ticket entrance fee for students every Friday. Alternatively, the Picasso Museum sets activities and special events that prioritise locals by announcing them only in Catalan and Spanish, for instance the Big Draw¹⁰. In similar terms to the Museumkaart, the Picasso Museum created a card to give annual access to their collection for a low price in order to engage locals with the temporary exhibitions.

¹⁰ Big Draw is an annual event that invites families and children to draw and paint inside the facilities of the Picasso Museum.

Nevertheless, both museums are aware that there is need for more actions to balance the uncompensated ratios of locals and residents, that for example in the Picasso Museum correspond to only a 12-14% of the total amount of visitors.

Coming back to these studies around audience analysis, the Van Gogh Museum goes beyond because they have developed a full programme on Capacity Optimization. In fact, the interview to Jort Slingerland was around its presentation but it turned out to be crucial to understand how the Van Gogh Museum has approached this issue since 2013. The programme consists of an in-depth analysis of the museum's previous congested condition. Next to this, it also contains various studies that analyse the visitors' behaviour and monitor them through the buildings, allowing the museum to understand which itineraries the visitors follow, so the institution can guide them in a better way according to their interests. Among these studies, there is one that stands above which is an algorithm to forecast the visitor numbers. The Erasmus Quantitative Intelligence department from the Erasmus University Rotterdam developed a formula that allows the museum to predict visitors' flows. Thanks to this precise tool they can adapt better the resources needed to the demand of tickets, like for example the number of employees can be better adapted to such a variable demand. As Nico Mulder, the marketing strategist manager in amsterdam&partners stated: "The Van Gogh Museum is always one step forward".

These studies and research showed during the first part of the interviews demonstrate how aware the museums are of the growing issue of tourism in cities. For the last six to eight years, both the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum have experienced in first person how the visitors' flows have been increasing steadily. Nevertheless, they had to experiment serious crowds to start reacting. This congestion was evident in the long queues that both museums used to have every day in front of their entrances, or the bottlenecks created inside their buildings and especially the crowds around certain paintings. Again, another particularity from superstar museums (Frey, 1998) arises which is the expectation created by a reduced selection of artworks considered to be masterpieces. In this case, when this interest on some highlights is taken to an extreme, the institution's infrastructure may present signs of saturation around them.

Henceforth, the Picasso Museum and the Van Gogh Museum started to take action and to implement some specific measures to tackle congestion. Even if these measures have different applications, and results are expected to be more immediate or in a more long-term basis, the goals are in essence similar. Next are detailed the most relevant measures carried out by the two museums in recent years to cope with congestion.

First of all, the measures related to the **online sale of tickets** have been a turning point for museums. The advanced booking of tickets through the Internet has led to a reduction of the queues that visitors had to suffer for hours before getting in. The Picasso Museum had been selling online tickets for several years but it was between 2014 and 2015 when they pulled for this online ticketing system and they improved the website and the whole system. That process entailed an extensive study in order to sell tickets through three canals: the ticket offices, in-advance online ticketing, and bookings. Now they are selling online 30% of the total tickets but they would like to increase that percentage. Also, they are aware that if they would sell tickets through third parties as the Van Gogh Museum does, they would be able to sell a higher number of online tickets in advance compared to what they do right now. Apart from this, according to Deirdre Haughey, the option of only selling tickets online and shutting down the ticket offices has been present for some years but they have not decided to implement such an aggressive policy yet. On the other side, the Van Gogh Museum had been selling tickets online for some years too, but they decided to evolve into an exclusive online ticketing system. In March 2018 the museum stopped selling tickets in their ticket offices and only some exceptions can do it now. Before that, they had been preparing the scenario for two years by working on the online ticketing system and marketing to encourage visitors to prepare the visit in advance and buy their tickets online. Throughout the years, the percentage of tickets sold online had been increasing from a 10% in 2013 to above 60% when they switched to only online ticketing.

Similarly to this measure there are the **time-slotted tickets**. It consists in selling tickets with a specific time to get inside the museum. In this way, the visitors are better spread throughout the day and the demand for tickets is more adapted to the offer without having to wait until there is enough space in the rooms. This system helps to distribute visitors in time and it is especially evident in their website because the visitor can choose the day and the hour he or she prefers to go to the museum and there is a calendar that specifies if there are enough tickets or not. In this sense, both museums have a similar system and they specify if there are many tickets or only a few of them colouring the day number in red or green. The only difference would be that the Van Gogh Museum always has the hours between 11:00 and 16:00 in red,¹¹ because these are their peak hours and they prefer people to buy tickets during the rest of the day.

¹¹ Red means that there are a few tickets available but, in this case, it is just a measure to spread visitors to the less popular hours. When checking the website even three or four months in advance, the same five hours are in red but it does not mean that it is true and they are probably fully available.

The next big category is related to the museum's maximum capacity and its adaptation to the context and the needs of the organisation. There are different courses of action in this sense when the demand for tickets has exceeded the offer available and the museum gets sold out. In order to reduce the pressure of visitors inside the museums' facilities, there is the **limitation of the museum's maximum capacity**. The goal of this measure is to soften congestion and to improve the quality of the visitors' experience in the museum that will derive into a better feedback. At the end of the day, it must not be forgotten that the visitors' satisfaction can encourage a positive word of mouth that implies with it a better reputation (Mavragani, 2018). So, even if the museum earns less money by reducing the number of visitors per hour, this is a way how they can protect the artworks and also the visits. In this way, both institutions did reduce the number of visitors that they were accepting per hour or per day. In the case of the Picasso Museum, they decided to welcome only 400 people per hour instead of 600, which is a 33% less. According to Deirdre Haughey, almost all the measures they applied to put a solution to congestion were somehow related to the reduction of the museum's capacity. In the Van Gogh Museum, considering the fire regulations they could have up to 2300 people inside their buildings but in reality, their limit of visitors varies from 1500 to 1800 depending on the temporary exhibition of the moment.

Additionally, the museum can decide to **expand its facilities**. By enlarging the building's surface, the museum can welcome more visitors at a time and its capacity increases. Both museums have grown a lot in this sense since they opened for the first time, but they have different contexts as well. On the one side, the Picasso Museum is located in a historical building formed by five palaces from the XV century approximately. This condition makes very difficult to expand the museum and even to restore anything because it is considered heritage and before making any changes, they need certain authorisations. Even so, they have considered purchasing another palace next to their museum in Montcada Street, but they have not reached an agreement yet and it also depends on the Municipality and the new local government.¹² On the other side, the Van Gogh Museum has evolved significantly through the last years with the latest addition of a new wing dedicated to the temporary exhibitions. Jort Slingerland affirmed that eventually they will have to consider enlarging their buildings again.

Furthermore, the heads of visitor services can count on another variable which are the **opening hours**. The two museums have different opening hours throughout the year

¹² Considering that the Picasso Museum is a Foundation and 51% of its board belongs to the Municipality.

because they adapt it to the demand of tickets. As it happens in every tourist company, the year has certain months with more visitors than the rest of the year, so there is a very marked **seasonality** in terms of the sale of tickets. The months that Europe has more tourists is during Summer, coinciding with the holidays. So, when tourist cities are more crowded is from mid-spring, depending on Easter, until October and it is called high season. So, during the high or peak season, the demand for tickets in museums is much higher and the superstar museums usually get sold-out and visitors need to book with some weeks in advance. For this reason, museums open more hours during the summer months in order to welcome as many visitors as possible. However, in the case of the Picasso Museum and the Van Gogh Museum that are experiencing the enormous tourist boom in their respective cities, the high season has been expanded. What started to be applied strictly during the summer months, has turned into a high season of around seven to nine months a year, depending on the museum. For instance, the Van Gogh Museum has four different opening hours all along the year depending on which season they are at the moment. Their opening hours were established after studying to what point they kept being effective and the management team decided the current ones (See Table 4). The Picasso Museum, though, is now experimenting with an extension of their opening hours during high season. So, they used to close every day at 19:00 (except for Thursdays that they closed at 21:30), but since last high season (May-October 2018) they stayed opened until 20:30. This year they are trying again but they started the high season sooner and instead of beginning on the 1st of May, this year they started on the 15th of March. The managers consulted consider that it is too early to evaluate if the audience has answered as expected to this new opening hours but the direction's intention was to spread the visitors throughout the day by opening more daily hours. Apart from these measures about time, they also started to open on Mondays with a reduced timetable and it has been an absolute success because it has softened the pressure that there used to be on Tuesdays after a day being closed.

Van Gogh Museum: Opening hours.	
29 April – 20 June 2019	9 am to 6 pm, Fridays 9 am to 9 pm
21 June – 1 September 2019	9 am to 7 pm, Fridays and Saturdays 9 am to 9 pm
2 September – 27 October 2019	9 am to 6 pm, Fridays 9 am to 9 pm
28 October – 22 December 2019	9 am to 5 pm, Fridays 9 am to 9 pm
23 December – 31 December 2019	9 am to 7 pm, Fridays and Saturdays 9 am to 9 pm

Table 4. Seasonality in the Van Gogh Museum's opening hours.

To conclude with this list of the major measures applied by museums to reduce congestion of visitors, the concept of seasonality must be analysed again but from a different perspective. Then, museums are trying to distribute their visitors in time throughout the day but also throughout the year. For instance, the way to spread visitors along the whole day and not during the peak hours is by selling the time-slotted tickets, but how can museums reduce the unbalanced situation of visitors from low season to high season? On this matter, the Capacity Optimization programme of the Van Gogh Museum presents some measures and strategies to lower the seasonality. So, the main goal is to attract visitors during the low season and they pretend to do it by programming stronger exhibitions in low season months and reduce the ticket prices also during that time. Moreover, they have been working on several agreements with third parties to promote the sale of tickets in low season instead of July or August and in general they have developed marketing campaigns to reduce the huge difference of visitor numbers between January and Summer. This cooperation between museums and third parties can be crucial in promotional terms and, for instance, Mavragani (2018) also mentions these important links.

Earlier in this section there were two tables (See Table 2 and 3) showing the monthly visitor numbers from the two museums. This data evidences this seasonality, but there are some variations that need to be considered like, for example, in 2015 the Van Gogh Museum inaugurated the new exhibitions wing, or in the Autumn of 2017 in Barcelona there was a tourist kind of crisis due to the instability caused by the referendum of Catalunya's independence. Nevertheless, in both museums it can be seen how the audience has been growing non-stop for the last years and even if they have already reacted for some years now, it is urgent to keep working on it.

4.3.2. Staff management.

In every organisation that is sufficiently large there needs to be a certain organisational structure of managers that act as intermediary between the decision-making power and the lower taskforce. In the case of museums, the visitor services staff is adapted to the number of visitors that the institution welcomes. For this reason, the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum have a relevant Visitor Services Department that embraces everything related to the customers, who in this case are the visitors.

Apart from the heads of this department that were interviewed in the beginning of the research, also three middle managers participated: Azeglio Bartolucci, Domenico Berardinelli and Laura Juncà Mier. They were asked about more practical issues related to team management to see how the decisions made by the museum are being executed.

As already mentioned, even if the Heads of Visitor Services are trying to reduce **seasonality**, the difference in visitor numbers between high and low season remains and this needs to be translated into an increase of employees to support the team. In both museums the rise is around 50% in order to face such an increase of visitors in high season. The Van Gogh Museum extends the opening hours gradually from the low to the high season (See Table 4), but the Picasso Museum is in an exceptional position because they are experimenting with new opening hours and the change is more abrupted. This situation has led to a necessary readjustment of the visitor services staff. For instance, managers had to split working days into part-time shifts.

In addition, another measure that affected more directly team managers was the online ticketing because it reduced considerably the queues and it derived into more satisfied visitors. For the Van Gogh Museum, the moment when they decided to only sell tickets online supposed a challenging situation for everybody. Especially for some staff members that did not know how visitors would react and if everything would go well, they experimented some uncertainty during the first month after the measure had been implemented. Once that period of time had passed, the feedback from visitors was positive but also workers appreciated the improvement it implied for them as well. This transition happened because the Van Gogh Museum made the definitive decision to only sell tickets online, so it cannot be compared to the Picasso Museum because they still sell the majority of their tickets through the ticket offices.

Furthermore, as a result of the improvements driven by the measures taken to reduce congestion, the aforementioned feedback of the visitors also changed. According to the team managers interviewed, the **complaints on congestion** before these major changes took place were not many in both museums. Now the few complaints they receive are different in each case. On the one side, the Picasso Museum used to be criticised for the long queues in the street and the inconveniences that it implied. Now, the complaints are mainly focused on the lack of seats to rest during the visit to the collection. Nevertheless, these comments about the seats are not new. When it comes to complaints related to an excess of visitors, that only happens when groups are too noisy or there is more than one group in a room at the same time. On the other side, the Van Gogh Museum keeps getting sporadic complaints

on how some rooms are too full. Interestingly, the negative feedback they received on the queues before, has now changed and relates to the impossibility to buy tickets in the ticket offices.

Finally, the two museums were asked how they managed **stress** from the staff that works with these crowds every day. In order to prevent these employees from getting burned out, the strategies in both organisations are similar and, for instance, they both work with rosters and there is a constant rotation among different tasks and positions. Breaks and rest days take much relevance and managers try to create a good environment through empathy and by taking care of each other in stressful situations.

4.3.3. Museums' shops.

The commercialisation of museums should not be reduced to the shops' activity, but they are its highest expression. As Frey exposes in his article on superstar museums (1998), one of the main characteristics of these massive and famous museums is their capacity to fund themselves, or at least partially, through the profits obtained from merchandising sales. Nonetheless, the coexistence between culture and commerce is not that easy but necessary and some research has been done on this issue (van Aalst & Boogaarts, 2002; Pawlikowska-Piechotka, 2014). Following the argument by Greg Richards on the importance of commercialisation not to depend on subsidies (1996, p58), Peter Dusch from the Van Gogh Museum also insisted that museums and retail need each other because it makes the organisation stronger and more independent from the government or alternative ways of funding like crowdfunding.

There are still opinions contrary to the commercialisation of museums that disapprove it and they regard retail with disdain like Stefan Toepler and Volker Kirchberg (2002). But the reality is that museum shops and bookshops have an important role in these institutions and should be seen as a partner instead of an enemy. Nevertheless, this is not the case in the two museums studied here, because the relationship between the two sides seems to be cordial.

The interviews to the two top managers of the museums' shops were done with the intention to see congestion from another (close) point of view. At the end of the day, shop assistants have direct contact with visitors and they also experience crowds in person. Also, they face an interesting dichotomy towards having the shops crowded. Even if it is desired

to have such an amount of clients in order to make as much more profits as possible, when these crowds are excessive and lead to congestion the potential sales can decrease. That may happen because if customers' satisfaction decreases, it can lead to a drop in sales as well. In this regard, the shop managers from the two museums are aware that the line between both scenarios is thin and they think that the customer service needs to be prioritised.

In the field of shops, the two museums are quite different because the Picasso Museum has only one shop inside the palaces but its entrance is allowed without a ticket, so their clientele includes non-visitors. However, the Van Gogh Museum has four shops and only one of them is outside in the street. Apart from this basic disparity, also the relation they have with the museum differs because the Picasso Museum belongs, in fact, to an external company which is a famous bookshop brand in Barcelona, Laie Llibreteria, but the Van Gogh Museum is managed by the commercial department of the museum. In this way, the Van Gogh Museum does not have any intermediaries in-between.

Despite these differences, both managers broadly shared the same opinions and concerns. Referring to congestion, they agreed that the customer service is at risk, as well as the quality of the shopping experience. Even so, the crowds only happen in certain peak moments of the day and queues also take place in determined situations but not all day long. In relation to this, improving and fastening up the paying process seems to be a priority and it is seen as a proper solution.

Finally, in order to see how the Visitor Services measures and strategies could affect retail somehow, they were asked about it. In this way, they both experienced the moment when the respective museums opted for the online sale of tickets. The shops benefited from that and sales increased, but they mentioned different reasons. The Van Gogh Museum noticed that visitors were spending more money because they bought the tickets in advance and that expense was behind. Contrarily, in the Picasso Museum, Marta Pujol affirmed that time-slotted tickets allowed people to make time inside the shop before they could get inside the collection, so sales increased. Also in Barcelona, the shop benefited from the extension of the museum's opening hours and they noticed that the clients were more spread in time.

4.4. Final remarks.

The results of this research have shown that the two museums and both municipalities are approaching the same issues in a similar way. On the cultural side, the Van Gogh Museum

and the Picasso Museum have equally implemented some strategies like the online ticketing or the limitation of their maximum capacity. The interviewees from the two museums are aware that more measures will have to be taken in the future, but they have already started to react. The congestion situation they used to have has now improved thanks to the many actions taken. At the same time, they are studying their audience very profoundly, so they know better how to attract the visitors they are more interested in, such as the local visitors.

On the other hand, both municipalities are struggling with tourism and the issue is much more complex for them. It seems that planning in advance is the key to approach such a challenging phenomenon. Next to this, considering all the stakeholders involved has been proven to be the best way to face and manage this polemical matter.

Overall, Amsterdam and Barcelona, and the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum share more similarities than differences. Therefore, they could learn from each other in several aspects and improve all together the way how they are managing their respective issues.

5. Conclusion.

The peculiar nature of this thesis has led the study to become a double comparison between the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum's way to face congestion, but also between Amsterdam and Barcelona municipalities' performance in dealing with tourism. By contextualising the two museums in the tourist scenario of such trendy destinations, the scope of the research has been considerably widened.

In some way, the issue of mass tourism visible in cities has moved also into the museums' facilities. In this regard, blockbuster museums could be seen as a reflection of what is happening with tourism in the urban context, but in a smaller scale. Nevertheless, in the case of the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum they were already popular before the most recent tourist boom, so the increasing numbers of visitors in the cities have acted as an accelerator that has led to the current saturation.

Therefore, Amsterdam and Barcelona have gone through a drastic shift in how they are approaching tourism now and how they used to promote the city five years ago. A very clear example of this is the rename of Amsterdam Marketing that now is called amsterdam&partners in order to remove the promotional nuance of the institution's name. Apart from this anecdote, both municipalities experienced the same sequence of events but with three years of difference, Barcelona in 2015 and Amsterdam in 2018. That is, after the first complaints from certain residents on tourism nuisances, elections took place in each city and the results made a clear and explicit statement: tourism needed to be regulated.

From that moment onwards, the municipalities developed strategic plans and reports to diagnose and analyse the situation. Despite the particularities of each case, at the end of the day they shared a common framework and similar intentions. For instance, both institutions think that tourism needs to be managed from an integral approach and every area of the City Council has to be aware of it. Also, the involvement of all the stakeholders, including also the museums, proves the imperativeness of studying altogether the museums' issues next to the municipalities' strategy.

Consequently, the cities of Amsterdam and Barcelona have been working to manage such a complex challenge by improving the liveability of the city by, for instance, trying to spread visitors in time and space away from the highlights. Regarding this dispersion of tourists, it is crucial to distribute them more equitably, so the congested icons and their surroundings do not get to be saturated. Given that the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso

Museum have become cultural flagships of their respective countries, the power of attraction they have has led them to a situation of congestion. Therefore, returning to the research question posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum have been working thoroughly to soften the congestion externalities so far. The first positive results from the measures they have implemented are starting to emerge. For instance, the disappearance of the long queues in front of their buildings, and the improvement of the visitors' satisfaction indicators prove that museums have begun to take control of the situation although it can be still improved. Also, the visitor numbers forecast predicts that tourism will keep rising in both cities, so the pressure on these two cultural organisations will grow as well.

In summary, since museums noticed that their facilities were witnessing more and more congestion episodes, the departments in charge of the visitor services had to take action on the matter. Starting with the research that both institutions periodically undertake on their audiences, museums have gained much awareness of the issue at hand. Nevertheless, the Van Gogh Museum has developed a programme itself to optimize its capacity with several studies and research on it. It summarises in an extensive plan the wide approach to what used to be a big issue for the museum with crowds and long queues. Whatsoever, they are an exemplary case and it cannot be compared in such manner to the Picasso Museum, also because the Van Gogh Museum doubles their size and their economic resources vary as well.

And this leads us to one of the initial questions around the choice of these two museums which is if they are, in fact, comparable or not. Initially, they seemed to be pretty similar and in general terms they are because both museums host painting collections from two worldwide-known artists, they attract millions of visitors yearly, and at a certain point the two museums became overcrowded. So, they share some characteristics but their measures are different in number of workers and also at a budgetary level. For instance, the Van Gogh Museum doubles in visitor numbers the Picasso Museum and it has a much wider organisation. For this reason, because of the differences on the resources that every museum has to face congestion, the two cases cannot be fully compared. For instance, the Van Gogh Museum has a full team working towards these issues, while the Picasso Museum's offices team is quite small.

Going back to the measures implemented to face the massive presence of international visitors in the museums' facilities, both cases have managed the situation using similar tools. Nevertheless, the most revolutionary measure to better manage visitor flows has been without a doubt the online ticketing. It gives visitors the opportunity to book in

advance and avoid the queues in the ticket offices, apart from distributing visitors throughout all the opening hours thanks to the time-slotted tickets.

Secondarily, the readjustment of the opening hours to better fit the demand for tickets has been essential because it is an adaptation to the characteristic seasonality of the tourism industry. Moreover, in order to improve the visitors' experience, the maximum capacity of the buildings has been diminished to soften the sensation of density inside the facilities. In this way, the measures are mainly focused on tackling overcrowdings and bottlenecks. But, at the same time, it is of vital importance for the museums to make the visitor feel better and the stay in the collection more enjoyable.

In addition, the commercialisation of museums has been proven to be necessary and the retail managers from both museums affirm so, confirming what has been concluded by some researchers like Frey (2019), van Aalst and Boogaart (2002), Toepler and Kirchberg (2002) and Pawlikowska-Piechotka (2014) who remark its role in funding museums. In relation with congestion, the museum's shops find themselves in a dichotomy because having so many clients is positive in terms of sales and profits, but at the same time, it can be counterproductive. That is because when the number of clients inside the shops is too high, the shopping experience can be decreased and affect the business' turnover.

In this way, the combination of the data obtained from interviews to relevant managers and policymakers, the analysis of key documents and the addition of up-to-date data on visitor numbers has led to an extensive study on the current situation of the Van Gogh Museum and the Picasso Museum. Nevertheless, on account of the limitations that this study has presented during its development there is one that stands above the others. The choice of two museums from different countries and sizes makes the comparison more difficult because there are some aspects that are inequivalent. Despite this, it has been proven thanks to the research that both museums share the same tools when approaching such an issue of congestion in their facilities. So, even if the Van Gogh Museum is much larger than the Picasso Museum in terms of the organisation size and the number of visitors, the strategies to soften the pressure of mass tourism are similar. At the end of the day, the way how the two institutions are facing crowds in their buildings shares the same principles. For instance, the measure that has been proven to be most effective has been the online ticketing and both museums have implemented it but on a different scale. So, the Van Gogh Museum got to implement an integral online system but the Picasso Museum still combines online and standard sale of tickets. Therefore, they are tackling congestion following the same lines of action but with slight differences.

A similar situation happens when comparing how the two municipalities are coping with mass tourism. In essence, both cities share similar concerns and they have developed extensive plans to improve the liveability of their residents by decreasing the nuisances caused by tourists. They might have differences in specific issues but the way how they are approaching tourism is very similar and both municipalities insist on the importance of cooperation. According to the strategic plans analysed for this study, it is crucial to work together with all the stakeholders such as hotels, municipalities, museums and all the companies and organisations related to tourism. Even if in theory this cooperation is mentioned by everyone, in reality, it seems to be not that easy to put in practice. Therefore, in the case of superstar museums that are attracting millions of visitors, the relation between these institutions and the municipalities should be closer. In order to get to successful solutions to reduce massification and crowds, both sides should be more transparent and work together in a more direct way.

As regards to future research, the potential effects of congestion in such cultural institutions have not been studied much in-depth. So, it would be interesting to get an insight into the impact that tourism is causing to museums. That could be of help for the organisations to gain awareness on the risks that crowds can entail to the collection or to the visitors' satisfaction. Moreover, the relation between museums and municipalities could also be studied in order to improve communication between them. For instance, the analysis of the results highlights the preponderance of working all the stakeholders together but still there is no specific research delving into this concern from the cultural policy point of view. Therefore, future studies could fruitfully explore this issue further by analysing how synergies between museums and municipalities could be improved.

Along the same lines, despite the concern that this particular topic causes to museums there is still much research to be done. In this sense, for instance, studies could be conducted on how overcrowding can affect the visitors' experience. Alternatively, it would be compelling to evaluate further implications from pushing visitors to prepare in advance their holidays by booking every ticket to visit attractions, museums or any kind of monuments.

Overall, the present thesis has been an attempt to draw an outline of the current situation in superstar museums that are facing waves of visitors every day. Therefore, it has been largely proven the importance of this subject of study and how the measures to cope with congestion cannot be reduced to visitors' distribution in time slots. In this way, further strategies and measures will need to be undertaken considering the increasing visitor numbers forecasted for the next years.

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Appendix A. Interview Guide to Visitor Services.

A. Museu Picasso. Misión y objetivos.

- 1) ¿Cuál es vuestra **misión** como museo?
- 2) ¿Es alguno de vuestros **objetivos cuantitativo** en relación al número de visitantes anuales? ¿Aspiráis a superar un mínimo de visitantes por año?
- 3) ¿Qué papel juegan las **redes sociales** a la hora de cumplir vuestros objetivos y vuestra misión?

B. Estudio del público.

- 4) ¿Analizáis cómo es vuestro público? Los **segmentos** que abarca, su perfil medio.
- 5) ¿Tenéis como objetivo modificar la actual composición de vuestro público (en términos demográficos incluyendo edad, nacionalidad, etc.)?
- 6) ¿Cuál sería la ratio de **visitantes turistas y visitantes nacionales** en relación al número total de visitantes?
- 7) Analizando **cuantitativamente** a los visitantes, ¿prevéis una continua tendencia al alza del número de visitantes para los próximos años?
- 8) Si es así, ¿tenéis algún método para prever el número de visitantes en un plazo de tiempo medio y/o largo? ¿Alguna fórmula o algoritmo?
- 9) ¿Cuál sería la capacidad máxima de visitantes que presenta vuestro museo hoy en día? (Con o sin contar los patios y espacios donde se ofrecen otros servicios como la cafetería o la tienda).
- 10) Respecto a esta **capacidad máxima**, ¿llegáis a alcanzarla? ¿Intentáis mantener un margen para preservar un mínimo nivel de comodidad para el visitante?
- 11) ¿Tenéis algún control de cuantas personas llegan a haber dentro de las salas de la colección en un momento determinado?
- 12) ¿Cómo monitorizáis en directo el número de visitantes que hay en el museo cada momento?
- 13) ¿La evolución del número de visitantes que recibís durante todo el año muestra un esquema típico de **estacionalidad**?
- 14) ¿Se percibe una diferencia notable entre la temporada de verano (alta) y la de invierno (baja)?

- 15) ¿Se repite este mismo esquema cada año? ¿Podríamos decir que existe un patrón de la distribución de visitantes a lo largo del año que se vaya repitiendo anualmente?

C. Estrategias y medidas para gestionar al público.

- 16) ¿Diferenciáis entre cómo atraer a nuevos públicos (*audience development*) y cómo afianzar a los ya existentes (*audience engagement*) para que vuelvan?
- 17) En relación a la presunta estacionalidad, ¿cambia vuestra **estrategia de márketing** según en qué temporada os encontráis? ¿Los segmentos de visitantes a los que os dirigís cambian?
- 18) Volvamos a la composición de vuestro público. Hay espacios en la ciudad tan asociados como atracción turística que los habitantes los evitan y ni se plantean visitarlos. ¿Utilizáis estrategias de márketing para atraer al segmento de visitantes locales/nacionales?
- 19) ¿Organizáis actividades enfocadas a la **comunidad local** para atraerlos y que sientan el museo como propio? Ya sean actividades familiares o eventos concretos como el Big Draw o la Noche de los Museos.
- 20) Aunque seáis un foco de atracción turística, ¿desarrolláis igualmente campañas de márketing enfocadas al público extranjero?

D. Turismo masivo y sus consecuencias. Congestión.

- 21) El turismo masivo evidente en ciudades como Barcelona es un acontecimiento global. Aun así, se manifiesta a pequeña escala como por ejemplo a través de la congestión de espacios determinados. ¿Consideráis que vuestro museo presenta signos de **congestión**?
- 22) Siendo uno de los museos más visitados de Barcelona, ¿creéis que estáis sobrellevando satisfactoriamente esta presión de turistas?
- 23) ¿Qué puntos del museo consideráis más críticos donde se crean cuellos de botella (*bottlenecks*)? Por ejemplo, la cola para comprar entradas, la segunda cola para subir a las salas expositivas con la colección de pintura, la sala del guardarropa (*lockers*), los baños, la cafetería o la tienda.

- 24) De entre las salas expositivas, ¿cuál consideraréis más problemática por motivos de espacio? Ya sea por albergar las estrellas de la colección o por ser una sala especialmente estrecha, etc.
- 25) ¿Qué **incidentes** podríais mencionar dentro de las salas debido al alto número de personas que llegan a acumularse?
- 26) Tal y como ocurre en las zonas turísticas de la ciudad y debido a las masas de gente, ¿se producen en vuestras instalaciones pequeños hurtos por parte de los llamados ‘carteristas’?
- 27) ¿Creéis que esta congestión de turistas dentro del museo afecta a la calidad de la experiencia del visitante, incluyendo la de los propios turistas? O lo que sería lo mismo, si este aspecto repercute negativamente al grado de satisfacción global de los visitantes.
- 28) ¿Cómo podéis **evaluar la satisfacción** de vuestros visitantes? ¿Es a través de encuestas in situ dentro del museo, a través de las redes sociales o mediante medios alternativos?
- 29) ¿Muestran los visitantes insatisfacción o irritabilidad por las colas que se producen para comprar entradas? ¿Y por la aglomeración de personas en algún espacio en concreto?
- 30) ¿Recibís **quejas** explícitas por parte de los visitantes sobre la congestión? Ya sea sobre posibles aglomeraciones en pasillos, salas o dentro de la tienda.

E. Estrategias y medidas para reducir la congestión y paliar los efectos del turismo masivo.

- 31) ¿Qué medidas podríais detallar que hayáis implantado ya para **contrarrestar la congestión** de visitantes?
- 32) ¿Tomáis medidas específicas para rebajar la desigualdad del número de visitantes que el museo acoge a lo largo de los meses del año?
- 33) Durante la historia del museo y su Fundación, las instalaciones han ido ampliándose hasta llegar a su forma actual. ¿Consideráis que será necesario en el futuro tener que ampliarlas todavía más? ¿Creéis que será necesario eventualmente **ampliar la superficie del museo** o remodelarlo para poder acoger a más visitantes?

- 34) Una medida muy popular entre los museos es la de **ampliar el horario de apertura** durante la temporada alta para poder absorber la ola de turistas que quieren visitar vuestra colección sin aminorar la calidad de la experiencia del visitante. ¿Aplicáis vosotros también esta estrategia? ¿Da buenos resultados? Mediante esta medida, ¿quedan las visitas bien distribuidas durante el día o hay mayor congestión durante una franja determinada de tiempo?
- 35) En relación a la venta de entradas según unas franjas horarias establecidas (*time-slotted tickets*), ¿habéis consultado a vuestros visitantes si les parece bien esta limitación? ¿Es para vosotros una herramienta útil para distribuir mejor a los visitantes? ¿Podrías decirme si detrás de este tipo de medidas también hay motivos de conservación de las obras de arte?
- 36) También para atraer a mayor público durante los meses más tranquilos, hay museos que desarrollan su **programa expositivo** teniendo en cuenta esta marcada estacionalidad típica de servicios vinculados al turismo. ¿Desarrolláis vosotros también vuestro programa expositivo para atraer a más visitantes en determinados meses del año?
- 37) Dentro del abanico de medidas que disponéis para gestionar la demanda de entradas, ¿está también la **subida del precio** de las entradas para reducir la demanda? ¿Qué opináis de esta opción? ¿Dónde está el límite y a partir de qué punto llega a ser discriminatorio? ¿Puede chocar con el objetivo del museo de dar a conocer la obra de Pablo Picasso al público lo más amplio y variado posible?
- 38) Si habéis considerado subir el precio de las entradas, ¿lo habéis hecho de manera generalizada para todo el año o según si se trata de temporada alta (mayor demanda) o temporada baja (menor demanda)?
- 39) Referente al sistema de venta de entradas, ¿cuándo empezasteis a hacerlo **online**?
- 40) ¿Creéis que la venta por internet ha reducido las colas para acceder a las taquillas?
- 41) ¿Cómo maneáis la **gestión de vuestro personal** para adaptaros a una demanda no lineal? ¿Contratáis a un refuerzo para la temporada alta?

F. Relación con el ayuntamiento.

- 42) ¿Mantenéis de manera directa contacto con el Ayuntamiento de la ciudad?
- 43) ¿Tratáis de manera conjunta con el Ayuntamiento asuntos relacionados con el **turismo**?

- 44) Existe un **Programa Estratégico de Turismo 2020** y ahora mismo están desarrollando un **Plan de Márquetin de la Destinación de Barcelona**. ¿Formáis parte de los agentes culturales que tienen en cuenta a la hora de diseñar estos planes?
- 45) ¿Hasta qué punto tenéis capacidad de influir o de intervenir/participar en el PET 20?
- 46) Dentro del PET 20 se establecen unas zonas sensibles de mayor atracción turística y congestión que llaman **EGA (Espacio de Gran Afluencia)**, ¿estáis satisfechos de cómo planean organizar el EGA donde se os incluye?
- 47) ¿Creéis que el PET 20 está bien planteado?
- 48) ¿Son estos planes útiles o necesarios para gestionar al turismo y convertirlo en uno más sostenible?
- 49) ¿Creéis que mediante este PET 20 se va a conseguir una mayor **redistribución del público** en las distintas instituciones culturales de la ciudad?
- 50) Teniendo en cuenta que la cola para comprar entradas ocupa parte de la **calle Montcada** que es bastante estrecha, ¿existe alguna normativa o acuerdo con el Ayuntamiento para su regulación? Considerando también motivos de seguridad.
- 51) ¿Tenéis **acuerdos con agencias de turismo** (públicas o privadas) para atraer a nuevos visitantes? Como campañas promocionales conjuntas o pactos determinados.

G. Servicios complementarios: tienda y cafetería.

- 52) ¿Forma parte la **tienda** de la misma organización que la del museo?
- 53) ¿Qué relación mantenéis con la compañía que lleva la tienda?
- 54) El contrato que existe con la tienda, ¿considera también la cesión de derechos de imagen de las pinturas de Picasso y **branding** vinculado?
- 55) La **cafetería** la reabristeis el año pasado. ¿Está funcionando acorde con el alto número de visitantes que tiene el museo?

Appendix B: Interview Guide to Shop Managers and Staff Managers.

A. Introduction.

- 1) Could you explain your positions in the museum? For instance, your main responsibilities or tasks.

B. General questions: Van Gogh Museum and Amsterdam.

- 2) In Barcelona, most of the cultural institutions externalise many of the services they offer. So, museums usually have external companies that are in charge of the shops and the cafés inside them, but also the staff from the ticket offices and the cloakroom belong to these companies. What is the situation here in the Van Gogh Museum? Do all the employees work for the museum without intermediaries?
- 3) Would your organizational structure be the most common model in the rest of the Amsterdam museums?

C. Shops and bookshop: clients.

- 4) How many shops does the museum have? Are all of them accessible from outside if you do not have a ticket?
- 5) How many shop assistants do you have working in the shops?
- 6) Does the type of customer change if the shop has access from the street or not? If so, what are the differences?
- 7) How is your clientele? Are the majority of them international visitors/tourists?
- 8) Could you distinguish any nationality that in average spends more money than the rest?
- 9) Do local clients spend more or less money than the average of clients?
- 10) Not all the visitors come into the shops when visiting the museum, are international visitors the most willing to enter and buy?

D. Shops and bookshop: mass tourism and consequences.

- 11) Do you experience crowds inside the shops?
- 12) A museum congested by lots of visitors, does it benefit or hurt your business?

- 13) The experience of visiting a museum can be deteriorated if the rooms are too full of people. Does the same happen in the shops? If visitors see the shop crowded, will they feel welcomed to get inside?
- 14) So, could mass tourism or crowds cause a decrease in sales?
- 15) Have you experienced that congestion is such that people have difficulty to walk inside the shops?
- 16) Are there any bottlenecks in your shops? For instance, if there is a corridor that is usually crowded, or the entrance hall is narrow.
- 17) Do you usually have long lines at the cash register?
- 18) When the museum went online at selling tickets, your restaurant/café lost customers that consumed while waiting in the queue. Did that revolution affect you as well?

E. Shops and bookshop: security.

- 19) Focusing on the shop that is located outside, do you have security agents there?
- 20) Do you have pickpockets in that shop? Taking advantage of the accumulation of people...
- 21) In general, do you suffer significant losses from shoplifting?

F. Staff management. Seasonability.

- 22) We start with an obvious one. Does the number of employees vary according to high or low season?
- 23) There are some patterns of the number of visitors that are repeated every year due to an evident seasonability. How do you adapt the number of customer service's employees depending on these peaks and lows?
- 24) Do you repeat approximately the same number of employees from one year to the next one? Or do you have a mechanism to predict how many workers do you need in those circumstances?

G. Staff management. Employees.

- 25) Considering that these positions face thousands of visitors every day, and not always nice visitors because you can also find rude people, how do you intend to avoid that your employees do not burn out?
- 26) Do you have a shift system or rotations?

H. Staff management. Online ticketing.

- 27) Did you experience the moment when the museum started to sell tickets online?
- 28) How things changed from your point of view?
- 29) Do you think is possible that eventually only online tickets will be sold? Causing the disappearance of ticket offices?

I. Staff management. Feedback from visitors.

- 30) The customer service staff is the closest one to the visitors. Do they receive direct complaints from the queues and crowds? For example, that visitors cannot fully enjoy the paintings because there are too many people in front of them or that there is too much noise.

Appendix C: Interview Guide to Marketing Strategy Manager.

A. Introduction: amsterdam&partners. Marketing and tourism.

- 1) Could you describe me what is amsterdam&partners?
- 2) What is your position here? General tasks?
- 3) What are the main goals of amsterdam&partners nowadays (in comparison to what you used to be when you were Amsterdam Marketing)?
- 4) When did you stop looking for more tourists?
- 5) If you are not promoting the city like that anymore (to increase the number of visitors), what is your role now?

B. City Hall and Tourism.

- 6) According to Araf Ahmadali, the City of Amsterdam does not have a Department of Tourism, but this issue is inherent in many departments. Even if you try to focus on a balance between residents, visitors and businesses, part of your goals are linked to what we understand as tourism. Is it correct when your organisation is still considered a tourist marketing tool?
- 7) Araf also explained me that in December you started to discuss how to deal with tourism in a joint table with all the stakeholders involved. Since you are also part of this coalition/group, what is your point of view? Is it working to your benefit?

C. Relationship with the Van Gogh Museum and surroundings.

- 8) From your organisation, amsterdam&partners, are you in direct contact with the Van Gogh Museum?
- 9) If so, what kind of issues do you discuss? Is it related to the visitors' management? Maybe about programming of both the city and the museum?
- 10) The Museumplein is a tourist attraction as a whole. How do you balance the attention that it causes in comparison with less congested cultural institutions? How can you guide visitors to also go to the rest of the museums?

D. Strategic Plan 2016-2020.

- 12) How is this plan structured? Is it a theoretical proposal or it has specific and practical measures defined and ready to be applied?
- 13) How is it conceived? As a guideline or just in terms of strategy?
- 14) Have you developed it by yourself or other stakeholders have participated?
- 15) Is it only focused on marketing and city branding? Or is it more generic in terms of tourism management?
- 16) If the plan is from 2016 to 2020, is it still on process? What is its current state?
- 17) Before this one, did you have a previous Strategic Plan with similar characteristics?
- 18) Are you planning to develop a new one to face the challenges of the future? Considering that tourism is expected to keep growing in the following years.
- 19) In your website there is a booklet in English that summarises the strategies behind this plan. Some of the terms that are more repeated in there are: the distribution of tourists (in place and time), that you want to guide the visitor, the protection of the residents by finding a balance, programming more targeted activities... Could you explain me how these ideas can be translated into facts? Maybe through examples.

E. Strategies, measures and tools to manage visitors. Research.

- 20) Related to the last question. It seems that spreading tourism is one of the main strategies undertaken by most of the congested cities. In order to soften the pressure provoked by mass tourism, it makes sense. But, how can you influence the visitors' decisions? How do you guide visitors to expand the area they visit? There are some areas that are mandatory to visit when exploring the city for the first time.
- 21) There is the HollandCity program that pretends to spread tourism in a national scale. They present the Netherlands as a big metropolitan area because they want to encourage visitors to move around the country. Do you know about this program?
- 22) What marketing tools can you offer to smaller cultural organisations that ask for your support to attract more visitors?
- 23) What marketing tools do you use to spread your message? Website, adverts, visitor centres, hotels...?

24) Your website (iamsterdam.com) is a referent when a visitor plans to come to the city. Focusing on museums, there is a vast variety of options displayed in the website. Are all of them partners of your organisation? Do they have to pay in order to appear in there?

25) I suppose you study the visitors' behaviour in order to predict their movements and improve their staying in the city. How do you get that information? Surveys, monitoring them by artificial intelligence or algorithms, etc.

26) How can this data be useful? How can it be translated into further actions?

F. Visitors and residents/citizens.

27) How do you approach the citizens of Amsterdam and the Metropolitan Area, so they recover some spaces and institutions that are now full of international visitors?

28) Do you have a separate strategy for citizens/national visitors and for international tourists?

G. Reputation management.

29) When overtourism is studied, Venezia, Barcelona and Amsterdam are always cited as clear examples of this phenomenon. What are you doing to change this crowded and negative image of the city?

30) How can you build up a renewed city branding image?

31) In Barcelona is common to see in the streets groups of noisy people celebrating hen and stag parties. I suppose you also have this kind of tourism, which is not the desired one. From your point of view, how is it possible to unlink this binge-drinking tourism from our cities?

32) In relation to the last question, the trend is to prioritize instead a qualitative tourism, that sometimes is focused on the cultural tourist. How can you get to attract this target?

H. Cooperation between cities.

33) Have you been in contact with other cities to discuss issues related to tourism? Maybe when attending congresses, fairs or meetings in general?

34) Are you in contact with the City Hall of Barcelona or their Department of Tourism?

35) Did you know about their Strategic Tourism Plan 2020?

Appendix D: Interview Guide to Officials of Municipality.

El **Pla Estratègic de Turisme 2020** té un parell d'apartats vinculables al tema que estic estudiant. Estaria molt bé tenir una mica més d'informació al respecte per poder desenvolupar tot el que s'està realitzant per part de l'Ajuntament de Barcelona en matèria turística, encara que sigui superficialment. Potser encara és massa aviat i la fase d'implementació està a mitges però seria interessant conèixer en quin punt ens trobem ara mateix.

Encara que sóc conscient que el PET20 és un pla de caràcter molt general i abasta diversos camps, a mi m'interessa en especial el Programa estratègic de gestió d'espais (núm. 6). Segons el pla:

“L'activitat turística fa un ús intensiu de certs espais i barris de la ciutat, cosa que fa necessari conciliar-la amb la vida quotidiana i permanent a la ciutat. En aquestes àrees es desplegarà una bateria de mesures i instruments acordats amb tots els agents públics i privats que hi intervenen, per reduir la pressió generada pel volum de visitants i mantenir el teixit comercial de proximitat. S'hi activaran polítiques per contrarestar la pressió al mercat immobiliari. Generarem un nou model de gestió estable al voltant dels espais de gran aflluència, que apliqui millores consensuades entre les diferents parts i que generi riquesa distribuïda, justa i sostenible.”

Dins del programa 6 sobre gestió d'espais, hi ha el que anomenen Espais de gran aflluència (EGA). Per començar us preguntaria si el Museu Picasso en formaria un tenint en compte el nucli d'atracció de turistes que deu conformar conjuntament amb Santa Maria del Mar i El Born Centre Cultural, entre d'altres.

El punt 6.2 del mateix programa menciona uns plans de mesures implantades als EGA. S'ha tirat endavant la implementació d'alguna d'aquestes mesures o potser és massa aviat? (Tal i com ha passat amb el desenvolupament de la nova estratègia de màrqueting turístic de la destinació de Barcelona que va derivar del PET20).

Un dels elements a tenir en compte a l'hora de gestionar els espais (M.6.2.2.) és el següent: '**Dinamització comunitària**: promoció d'activitats per l'apropiació comunitària dels espais, programació cultural, etc.'

Per tal d'incentivar l'ús dels espais comunitàriament, se suggereix promocionar-ne les activitats. La promoció s'acordaria amb la institució que la organitza o l'ajuntament (o l'òrgan públic que pertoqui) faria simplement d'altaveu?

A continuació, es menciona la creació **d'un ens específic per coordinar la gestió dels EGA**. La meua pregunta seria si ja s'ha creat.

La mesura M.6.2.4. considera la creació d'unes **taules de treball específiques per a cada EGA** que haurien d'abraçar tots els diferents agents del territori, per ser el més transversal possible. Suposo que entre aquests agents hauria d'estar present també algú en representació del Museu Picasso (tenint en compte el meu cas d'estudi), no? A part del museu, quins altres agents formarien part específicament de les taules de treball? Podria ser que depengui de cada cas en particular i del tema a tractar?

Per acabar i a mode de resum, em seria útil tenir informació una mica més específica i detallada en relació a l'EGA que englobaria l'entorn geogràfic del Museu Picasso. Desconec en quin punt es troben la creació de l'ens específic dels EGA o si s'han organitzat ja les taules de treball, però seria interessant poder descriure com el nou pla estratègic de turisme s'ha vist traduït a la realitat i aplicat a la zona que ateny la meua recerca.

Respecte de la nova **Estratègia de Màrqueting Turístic de la Destinació de Barcelona (EMTDB)** que s'està desenvolupant en l'actualitat, crec que seria bo també que consti per demostrar que s'estan duent a terme grans replantejaments sobre el turisme a la ciutat. Com que aquest full de ruta està a mig fer, entenc que molts aspectes deuen restar indeterminats però tenir una idea general podria ser suficient. Així doncs, de manera global ens trobaríem davant d'un replantejament de la marca de la destinació de Barcelona (ciutat i comarques). A part d'insistir en conceptes com un turisme més sostenible, quan es determinin els criteris i prioritats de màrqueting i promoció de la destinació, es contemplarà eixamplar els límits turístics geogràfics que ara estan bastant limitats a la ciutat? S'intentarà, doncs, desconcentrar la pressió que congestiona alguns espais de la ciutat per dispersar els turistes i així també repartir el retorn social del turisme a la societat?

