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Visitor Experience as a Nexus of
Visitor-Museum Interactions: a Study on
Genres of Visit in Ethnographic Open-Air
Museums

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Social Sciences,
Information and Communication (S 008)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BSMFARL	The Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle
EES	Event Experience Scale
LOAM	The Lithuanian Open-air Museum
RGS	Rhetorical Genre Studies

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	10
1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: VISITOR EXPERIENCE AS A NEXUS OF VISITOR-MUSEUM INTERACTIONS THROUGH GENRE PERSPECTIVE.....	29
1.1. Theoretical Development of Visitor Experience in the Museum Context.....	29
1.2. Genre as a Structural Unit of Visitor-Museum Interactions.....	38
1.3. Model “Visitor Experience as a Nexus of Visitor-Museum Interactions: Genre Approach”.....	42
1.4. Building Blocks of Visitor Experience.....	44
1.4.1. Visitor Personal Context.....	44
1.4.2. Museum Visiting Context.....	45
1.4.3. Genre of Museum Visit.....	46
1.4.4. Outcomes of Visitor-Museum Interactions.....	48
1.5. Conclusions.....	50
2. THE CONTEXT OF ETHNOGRAPHIC OPEN-AIR MUSEUM AND ITS VISITING GENRE REPERTOIRE.....	52
2.1. Institutional and Physical Contexts of an Ethnographic Open-air Museum.....	52
2.2. Taxonomy of Genres of Museum Visit.....	57
2.2.1. Non-Guided Genre of Visit.....	60
2.2.2. Guided Genre of Visit.....	61
2.2.3. Special Event Visit.....	64
3. METHODOLOGY.....	67
3.1. Research Paradigm: Social Constructionism.....	67
3.2. Research Strategy: Mixed-Method Approach.....	69
3.3. Data Analysis.....	71
3.4. Ethical Considerations.....	73
4. EMPIRICAL STUDY ONE: VISITOR EXPERIENCE IN A GUIDED GENRE OF MUSEUM VISIT.....	74
4.1. Museum Visiting Context.....	74
4.2. Personal Context.....	77

4.3. Method and Material.....	78
4.4. Data Analysis.....	79
4.5. Findings.....	84
4.5.1. Findings From Visual Thematic Analysis.....	85
4.5.2. Follow-Up Interpretations and Meaning-Making as Antecedents of Visitor Experience.....	96
4.5.3. Structure of Visitor Experience.....	117
4.6. Discussion and Conclusions.....	126
5. EMPIRICAL STUDY TWO: VISITOR EXPERIENCE IN A GENRE OF SPECIAL EVENT VISIT.....	130
5.1. Museum Visiting Context.....	130
5.2. Method and Material.....	133
5.3. Data Analysis.....	137
5.4. Findings.....	137
5.4.1. Personal Context.....	137
5.4.2. Visitor-Museum Interactions during Special Event Visit	147
5.4.3. Visitor Perceptions as Antecedents of Experience.....	151
5.4.4. Structure of Visitor Experience.....	156
5.5. Discussion and Conclusions.....	162
CONCLUSIONS.....	166
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	172
APPENDICES.....	188
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCES.....	194
ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	197

INTRODUCTION

Rationale for Research: Over the past five decades, museums have evolved from acting as predominantly artifact-focused repositories to social agents of change, accommodating a broad spectrum of responsibilities and agendas. Provoked by a plethora of changes in structures and values that affected and complicated the nature of visitor-museum relationships, this gradual transition placed audiences on equal footing with museum collections. With the establishment of *New Museology* (Vergo, 1997) and its further transition into *Sociomuseology* (Moutinho, 2016), the role of a visitor in the museum context has gradually transformed from that of a passive observer of highly normalized spaces to that of an active agent, a co-creator, and a stakeholder in cultural institutions.

Along these lines, understanding the visitor experience and its antecedents has become increasingly important to museums. Museums must appear as more meaningful, responsive, and creative institutions that constantly search for ways to enhance the accessibility and relevance of their agendas for diverse contemporary audiences (Axelsen, 2006). As de Rojas and Camarero (2008) claim, “The visiting experience has become more than simply an inspection of exhibits, but an opportunity for further elaboration of visitors’ understanding”¹. Accompanying these trends, the scope of museological research has been directed towards visitors and ‘visitor experience’ as a key instance through which museums establish long-term relationships with multiple audiences, enhance social impact, and facilitate meaning (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006; Nielsen, 2015; Falk and Dierking, 2016; Anton et al., 2018).

In scholarship, visitor experience is generally conceptualized as a contextual, dialogical, multidimensional, and idiosyncratic phenomenon (Roppola, 2013; Packer and Ballantyne, 2016). Research into experience broadly acknowledges its physiological underpinnings, encompassing cognitive, affective, and physical realms (Getz, 2012; de Geus et al., 2016). However, the nature of these dimensions is not extensively scrutinized (Barrett, 2011). Despite the general scholarly acknowledgment of the importance of visitor studies and visitor experience for the advancement of museum operations, museum practice at large lacks solid empirical investigations into visitor experience and its antecedents (Roppola, 2013;

¹ De Rojas, C., & Camarero, C. (2008). Visitors’ experience, mood and satisfaction in a heritage context: Evidence from an interpretation center. *Tourism management*, 29(3), pp. 525-537, retrieved online 2022-12-12, via <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0261517707001471>.

Schorch, 2013). In this line, the first rationale for this research is derived from a need for an empirically grounded understanding of visitor experience and its antecedents in the museum context.

The second rationale for this thesis is promoted by the increased complexity of visitor-museum interactions, facilitated by the recent shifts in museology and associated with democratization processes, as well as the extensive differentiation of museum agendas. These transformations have significantly diversified, sophisticated, and complicated visitor-museum encounters. Thus, multiple scholarly pundits (Allen et al., 2007; Macdonald, 2007; Kirchberg and Tröndle, 2012; and Schorch, 2013) repeatedly express a need for a conceptualization of visitor experience that embraces the complexity of visitor-museum interactions and provides a more systematic approach to them. Until present, museum scholarship and practice tend to focus on museum spaces and visitors as two separate instances in the visitor experience framework, which has resulted in a fragmented understanding of the visitor experience and its components. This thesis aims to address this conundrum by conceptualizing the visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions in a structured and systematic way.

Lastly, by acknowledging the importance of museum context and its affordances for visitor interactions, the empirical setting of this study includes ethnographic open-air museums as a particular type of museum milieu for visitor-museum interactions. The choice of this particular museological domain is motivated by several reasons. Firstly, ethnographic open-air museums constitute a hybrid space with the shared qualities of an indoor museum and a park, where ethnographic collections and architectural heritage embedded in natural landscape to showcase vivid image of vernacular everyday lifestyle and cultures in pre-industrial times. Compared to conventional in-doors museums, the hybridity of institutional context of ethnographic open-air museums significantly enhances affordances for visitor interactions and a variation in types of visit. Secondly, despite the popularity of this type of museum in the Eastern and Northern Europe, the scholarship into visitors in the context of ethnographic open-air museums is fragmented (Ciolfi and McLoughlin, 2011). Little is known about how contemporary audiences experience, perceive and create meaning of complex spaces of ethnographic open-air museums. Understanding the visitor experience and its antecedents can assist museum professionals and cultural policymakers in designing outreach activities that resonate meaningfully with diverse audiences and reflect the multifaceted nature of the visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions.

Along these lines, the relevance of the thesis is determined by theoretical and empirical underpinnings. From the theoretical perspective, this thesis contributes to a more holistic understanding of visitor experience in dynamics of visitor-museum interactions. This unveils of the complexity of visitor-museum encounters and provides a more nuanced understating of a structure and antecedents framed in different types of visit. By adding a fresh qualitative perspective to the outcomes of visitor-museum interactions, including visitors' perceptions and meaning-making processes, the proposed method solves the drawback of seeing visitor experience as a static and quantitative instance. The study on visitor experiences in the setting of ethnographic open-air museums is currently fragmented, and significant empirical studies of visitor experiences in museum practice are scarce (Forrest, 2015).

Given the general lack of knowledge about visitor-museum interactions and facilitated experiences in ethnographic open-air museums, this thesis employs a collective case study design that incorporates the three largest ethnographic open-air museums in Sweden, Lithuania, and Belarus: Skansen, the Lithuanian Open-air Museum, and the Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle. This methodology produces knowledge about ethnographic open-air museums and their audiences outside of particular national, political, and cultural contexts. The case studies will be described in greater detail later in this chapter.

Previous Research: To comply with the above-mentioned agenda, the section examines the current state of scholarly research and theory regarding a) visitor experience in the museum domain; and b) research into ethnographic open-air museums and visitors in general, and in the context of the chosen museums.

Visitor Experience in the Museum Domain: The formation of *New Museology*, which emphasized the significance of communicative functions and a visitor-centered paradigm, facilitated the scholarly interest in the visitor experience. Early conceptualizations of visitor experience in the museum sector were influenced by the ideas of John Dewey (Dewey, 1938/1963; Hein, 2004), who advocated a museum education philosophy and positioned museums as integral providers of visitor experiences within educational theory. Initially, the focus of visitor studies was on visitor behavior and learning outcomes, and methodologically driven studies utilized information about the socio-demographic characteristics of visitors (Roppola, 2013). The democratization processes in the heritage and museum spheres inevitably raise concerns about visitor agency and institutional infrastructure, and more generally about the power configurations in

particular cultural contexts (Foucault and Deleuze, 1977; Foucault and Deleuze, 1986). In this train of thought, Macdonald (2002) paid special attention to the active audience and examined a variety of interpretive repertoires and visitor-museum engagements. Importantly, she contends that visitor experience must be understood beyond socio-demographic variables through broader cultural framings, which inform a museum visit, and specific cultural accounts generated by visitors' actual engagements within museum spaces. In the thesis, I will elaborate on this statement and investigate visitor experience through broader conceptualizations of museum-visitor interactions.

To access an interplay between visitors and museums, researchers have started to explore visitor experience as a processual rather than as a stable category (Macdonald, 2002; Schorch, 2013). Consequently, visitor experience has been understood both as a multifaceted concept (Packer and Ballantyne, 2016) and as a process of value co-creation during the pre-visit, on-site, and post-visit stages of interactions (Anton et al., 2018). The on-site visitor experience entails physical and cognitive involvement and social interactions with multiple agents in every aspect of the encounter, and thus museological context plays a vital role in framing visitor experiences (Roppola, 2013; Forrest, 2015). From a visitor perspective, experiences entail meanings and perceptions that occur as participants draw on objects and spaces, link encountered cultural phenomena with existing cognitive models, and engage in embodied practices during the visit. Therefore, experience puts into interplay a set of cognitive, affective, and corporeal (physical) dimensions of a visitor's engagement and novelty at a given time and place (de Geus et al., 2016). Notwithstanding, the nature of these dimensions in the museum context is not explicitly investigated, and more research is needed.

Along these lines, the scholarship emphasizes the vital role of exhibition and institutional context in shaping visitor experiences. Different visitors perceive and experience the same cultural environments differently depending upon their background, previous experiences, motivation, structure, and social context (Bitgood et al., 1990; Bitgood, 2014; Bourdieu, 1993; Falk, 2010). Because the process of visitor experience creation takes place on so many levels and encompasses multiple facets, a holistic approach to the phenomenon is burdensome. Embedded within the disciplinary boundaries, many pundits have developed various models, typologies, and dimensions of a visitor's experience (Kirchberg and Tröndle, 2012). This, in turn, has led to an evident lack of consensus regarding the ontological, epistemological, and axiological nature of experience and promoted further

methodological hurdles for empirical research in practice. In order to fill this void, I will describe the conceptual evolution of visitor experience in the context of museological paradigms that have broader implications for museums and visitors.

In the review of the studies on visitor experiences, Roppola (2013) concludes that a limited understanding of visitor experiences is due to the prevalence of theoretical frameworks and the lack of extensive empirical investigation in different museological contexts. This gap supports the rationale of the thesis for empirical investigation of visitor experiences in the museological context of ethnographic open-air museums. According to Stylianou-Lambert (2010), the research on visitors and their experiences is frequently conducted using “minute and measurable” quantitative approaches, with attendance figures and the social characteristics of the participants serving as the primary facilitators of the phenomenon. Although adopting a quantitative approach can be useful for evaluating organizational goals and determining the profile of target audiences, it is insufficient for comprehending the qualitative aspects of experience, its antecedents, and the overall meaning-making mechanisms. Along these lines, the purpose of this thesis is to apply a complex approach that integrates qualitative and quantitative methods to visitor experience in order to reveal the compositional structure and various layers of visitor experience antecedents.

Given the long-standing legitimacy of museums as informal learning institutions, the vast majority of research into museum experience has focused solely on educational benefits (Roberts, 1997; Hein, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999; Hein, 2004, 2005; Falk et al., 2006; Sabiescu and Charatzopolou, 2018). Andre et al. (2017) note that this trend is especially evident in studies involving minors and organized school groups. Notwithstanding, Schorch emphasizes (2013), “[...]the museum experience does not solely consist of learning processes but also involves embodied engagements between visitors and the material world, as well as their relationships to questions of identity, memory, and history, among others”². This limitation demonstrates the need to broaden the scope of research beyond the educational foundations of visitor experience and employ a more systematic approach to study the perceptions, meanings, and personal benefits of visitor-museum interactions.

Designed in accordance with rigorous methodological approaches and research agendas, the existing scholarship on visitor experiences is

² Schorch, P. (2013). Museum encounters and narrative engagements. *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies*, p. 441.

excessively task-oriented and posits disciplinary biases, focusing on the elements museums or researchers need to comply with established agendas rather than naturalistic research into visitor-museum interactions. Allen et al. (2007), Macdonald (2011), Kirchberg and Trondle (2012), and Schorch (2013) express the need for a more empirically-driven approach that prevents simplistic reductions, embraces the complexity of visitor-museum encounters, and employs multi-dimensional methodology to gain a more nuanced and holistic understanding of visitor experiences and their antecedents.

This concise review of prior research has revealed a number of gaps that this thesis will seek to address. First of all, a lack of consolidated theoretical and methodological conceptualization and an overall fragmented understanding of the visitor experience, its structure, antecedents, and outcomes of visitor-museum interactions. In turn, this explains the existing methodological constraints and scarcity of empirically grounded investigation in museum research and practice. Along these lines, the thesis will discuss the conceptual development of visitor experience in the broader context of museological paradigms and their implications. Secondly, the dominant quantitative approach to visitor experience provides a snapshot of visitor experience structure; however, it lacks generate a qualitatively more developed comprehension of the nature of visitor experience and its antecedents, which is essential for the development of relevant and meaningful outreach programs. Consequently, an exploratory mixed-method approach that amplifies qualitative analysis into the structure of the visitor experience and quantitative investigation into the meanings and perceptions of the visitor experience, will be incorporated into this study. Thirdly, given the long-lasting pedagogical rhetoric, the scope of museum research into visitor experience is dominated by learning outcomes; hence, in line with the contemporary diversified museum, this perspective provides a limited understanding of visitor experience and facilitated outcomes of visitor-museum interactions. This thesis will attempt to address the existing limitations and conceptualize the visitor experience as an interplay between visitor agency and museum settings, configured by genre as a structuring unit of visitor-museum interactions. Furthermore, a proposed framework will be empirically evaluated in the context of ethnographic open-air museums. Therefore, the focus of the following section shifts to existing research on ethnographic open-air museums and their visitors.

b) *Research into (Ethnographic) Open-air museums, Visitors, and Experiences:* The overview of the existing scholarship about ethnographic open-air museums demonstrates that the existing research addresses

predominantly historiography, museum collections and objects, and preservation of wooden vernacular architecture. The research on visitors and experiences is limited. Below, I will present and discuss several studies that specifically address the context of ethnographic open-air museums.

To start with, it should be mentioned a seminal study by Rentzhog (2007), who for the first time attempted to develop the genesis of open-air museums during the 20th century in different geographical contexts. This book intends to provide a holistic meta-perspective on the institutional evolution and unveil the general trend of museums transformation in line with the broader political, social, and cultural milieu. In addition to this international review, considerable research has been conducted at the national level on the historiography of ethnographic open-air museums and their collections. For example, the study by Levickaitė-Vaškevičienė (2016), outlines the history and transformation of the exhibition of the Lithuanian Open-air Museum from the institution's inception up until 2016. Similarly, Lokotka (2014) investigates the methods and technology used to create open-air museums in Belarus and the Baltic states. In the article, the establishment of a network of ethnographic open-air museums during the Soviet era and the use of wooden vernacular architecture in nation-building are given special consideration.

With the gradual development of *New Museology* (Vergo, 1997), along with the increased interest in the social history and materiality of the lifestyle, the focus of scholarly debates has gradually shifted to the nuances of representation and communication of heritage in museums. In particular, the recent scholarship addresses the issues of heritage production, authenticity, and commodification of ethnographic open-air museums. Goulding (2000, 2001), for instance, is primarily concerned with negotiations of authenticity in the reconstructed spaces of open-air museums. Young (2006) examines open-air museums through the lens of heritage, delineating the three primary functions of cultural institutions: to provide visitors with a time travel experience, to validate the authenticity of relocated objects, and to honor the pioneers and history. Given the prevalence of educational discourse in visitor studies, Мірончык (2007) and Гармацкая (2009), makes inquiries into the learning outcomes from the educational visit to the ethnographic open-air museum in Belarus.

The further advancements of cultural economy have promoted the research on open-air museums as service providers. For instance, Pawlikowska-Piechotka et al., (2015) analyzed catering facilities and visitor satisfaction in the open-air museums of Poland.

With the development of globalization processes, a scholarly interest in identity-related issues emerged. This can be observed in the corpora of research by Aronsson (2011), Hillström (2012), Vukov (2012), and Bäckström (2014). Inspired by the ideas of *Sociomuseology*, Krstović (2017) reveals ontological foundations of the Serbian open-air museum by comparing it to an eco-museum and investigates the implications of community-building around the museum.

Lastly, in conjunction with the integration and advancement of digital technologies in the museum domain, a scholarly interest in the capabilities of digital technologies for information dissemination and visitor interaction began to emerge. Ciolfi and McLoughlin (2011), for instance, studied how interaction design can add value to living history museums by facilitating an engaging experience for diverse visitors.

Given the empirical context imposed on the Swedish, Lithuanian, and Belarusian ethnographic open-air museums included in the study, a comprehensive literature review was also conducted within the context of the chosen institutions³.

In relation to Skansen, the desk analysis revealed a corpus of scholarly publications that were primarily museum-focused, such as on museum collections and historiography (Aronsson, 2007; Hillström, 2005), intangible heritage (Kaijser, 2017), preservation and reconstruction techniques (Edman, 2008; 2018), fauna (Svanberg, 2012; 2014; 2016), vernacularity and role of museum in identity-building processes (Hillström, 2012). Regarding visitors and experiences, the review demonstrated only a few publications. Lidén (2008), for instance, discusses the outcomes of collaboration between Skansen and schools and outlines the need for a richer learning experience from museum visits. Several articles (Ahn Lund Berg, 2014; Bäckman, 2014) provide a description of educational activities for children provided by the museum. Furthermore, the recent studies by Abbasian (2021) and Abbasian et al., (2021) investigate how festival attendees evaluate Skansen as a venue

³ The desk analysis was performed in the national academic repositories, for example, in Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library (eLABA), e-catalogue of the National Library of Belarus and DiVA - the Swedish Digital Scientific Archive. Since the scholarly interest to visitors in the museum domain was facilitated by the introduction of the New Museology (Vergo, 1997), it therefore the time framework was limited to the period from 2000 to 2023. Further to that, the focus was placed only on academic publications, including conference proceedings, reviewed articles, and book chapters. The names of the museums in the national languages, specifically “Skansen” (*Swedish*), “Беларускі дзяржаўны музей народнай архітэктуры і побыту” (*Belarusian*), and “Lietuvos liaudies buities muziejus (*Lithuanian*)” served as the keywords for research.

for the Persian Fire Festival. The quantitative analysis focuses on visitor satisfaction, and the results indicate a high level of appreciation for Skansen as a venue that provides visitors with positive feelings, meanings, attachment, place identity, and a sense of place.

In the context of the Lithuanian Open-air Museum, desk research reveals a comparable pattern. Specifically, the majority of the publications deals with historiography of the museum and its exposition (Morkūnas, 2010; Levickaitė-Vaškevičienė, 2016; Snieškienė et al., 2017), collections (Nenartavičiūtė, 2006; Kumpikaitė et al., 2014), preservation and reconstruction of architectural heritage (Bertašiūtė, 2004; 2009; 2011), museum communication, overall educational agenda (Olechnovičienė, 2008, 2016; Šermukšnytė, 2020). Rindzevičiūtė (2011) describes the history of state formation and the museum's involvement in this process. The only paper by Charapan (2018) pertaining to visitor studies and experience research empirically discusses visitor interaction in the context of ethnographic open-air museums. The study demonstrates how cultural communication fosters a variety of visitor scenarios and perceptions of ethnographic open-air museums as cultural heritage sites, natural parks, and entertainment venues.

In terms of the Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle, the desk research showed a wide range of topics, including museum management and museum marketing (Барткова, 2010; Лакотка, 2010; Черепан, 2016), museum collections and exposition (Барткова, 2011; Гуд, 2010; Курановіч, 2018; Локотко, 2009), museum historiography (Гармацкая 2016); wooden architecture and preservation (Міцкевіч, Ганчарова, Капіч 2011) educational activities (Мірончык, 2007; Гармацкая, 2009) and intangible cultural heritage and reconstructions (Курановіч, 2019). As for visitor studies, the research by Жукова (2010) who provided an overview of educational activities for adults. The investigation on the experiences of children was conducted by Charapan (2019). The findings of the paper demonstrate that institutional settings of ethnographic open-air museums determine a context-specific situational interest, which facilitates and defines the nature of exhibit-, nature-, and socially-determined memorable experiences of diverse audiences.

In summary, the existing research into ethnographic open-air museums is predominantly focused on the museum collections and historiography, management and marketing from the institutional perspective. Concerning visitors, the scope of analysis has been focused on learning experiences and educational activities, in addition to service satisfaction. Overall, the desk review highlights a deficiency in the extensive empirical studies on visitors

and visitor experiences in Swedish, Lithuanian, and Belarusian museums (with the exception of Abbasian (2021); and Charapan, (2018), (2019).

Research Goal, Object, and Objectives: The literature review of visitor experience in museum scholarship revealed task-oriented, disciplinary-biased inquiry that lacks a holistic, empirically driven understanding of visitor experience to embrace the complexity of visitor-museum interactions promoted by recent museological transformations. In addition to that, the review reveals a lack of comprehensive research that assesses and analyzes visitor experiences and how visitors encounter, perceive, and make meaning of ethnographic open-air museums in a diversity of visiting scenarios and encounters. To structure complex visitor-museum interactions, I employ a lens of genre approach and introduce the concept of a genre of museum visit as a tool for systematizing visitor-museum interactions that shape the visitor experience and its antecedents.

Paraphrasing Bazerman's (1997) conceptualization of "genres as forms of life, ways of being, frames for social action", the focus will be placed on genres of museum visit as ways of visiting and interacting with and within museums. In the thesis, genre is utilized as a component of the value-laden navigation system that imposes specific agendas, activities (Russell, 1997), and expectations and allows systematization of museum practices through recurrent situations with similar structures of visitor-museum interactions. In this account, following Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), a genre of museum visit is conceived in terms of rhetorical action and its affordances rather than a substance or form; however, the form and structure of interactions are also taken into consideration. Despite the differences in content and intent that different museum practices may have, the scope of interest is placed on the structure of visitor-museum interactions and similarities in facilitation of interaction, agency of visitors, mediational means, and form of interactions, which simultaneously co-produce recurrent encounters in museum settings. Thus, I conceptualize the genre of museum visit as an organized and purposefully mediated activity that has a socially recognized form and is embedded in institutional practices. As a rhetorical action, a genre of museum visit instills particular social and institutional arrangements, which produce forms of activity guided by the visitor's agendas and ideologies of these arrangements, and affect visitor experiences.

In this vein, the following questions are posed: how does visitor experience evolve in the dynamics of visitor-museum interactions, and what are the implications of personal and institutional contexts as well as genre conventions for the phenomenon and its antecedents? Keeping these

concerns in mind, I intend to demonstrate the dialectical nature of a visitor experience, which simultaneously combines visitors with their intrinsic agendas and museum institutional context. In addition, I argue that visitor experience and its antecedents are interconnected and influenced by the dynamics between visitors and museums, which can be analyzed and systematized through the lens of a genre of museum visit.

The object of the research – visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions, framed by genre(s) of museum visit.

The aim of the research – to conceptualize theoretically visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions, framed in different genres of museum visit, and investigate it empirically in the context of ethnographic open-air museums.

Objectives:

1. To systematize the conceptualization of visitor experience in line with broader museological paradigms and transformations (Section 1.1).
2. To develop a framework of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions through a genre perspective (Sections 1.2 and 1.5).
3. Stemming from the contextual nature of visitor experience, to define the institutional and physical contexts of an ethnographic open-air museum (Section 2.1).
4. To provide a taxonomy of genres of museum visit and describe their characteristics (Section 2.2).
5. To empirically investigate the structure of visitor experience (affective, cognitive, physical, and novelty realms) and its antecedents in guided and special event genres of visit in the context of ethnographic open-air museums (Chapters 4 and 5).

I hypothesize that a genre of museum visit, as a normative and communicative force, has direct effects on how museum visitors act, experience, and construct the meaning of cultural heritage. Consequently, it determines the structure and essence of the visitor experience. In the thesis, I empirically examine the genres of visits that involve external facilitation of visitor-museum interactions (such as by means of a guide or in accordance with an event program). Consequently, the empirical analysis is limited to the guided and special event genres of visits in the context of ethnographic open-air museums. The decision to use data from guided and special event visits is based on the assumption that the implications of genre forces will be more apparent on the experiences that were exposed to external facilitation of interactions than in non-guided visits, where visitors select ideological

positions from museum's mediating resources and have supreme control over the character and nature of interaction.

The suggested genres of museum visit are approached as a complex instance or in accordance with Bakhtin (1986), *secondary speech genres*, developed in highly organized cultural communication of the museum context, with shared structures but different in content.

Statements for defense:

1. A genre of museum visit as a structuring unit of visitor-museum interactions provides avenues for systematic analysis into how visitors accomplish encounters with and within museum spaces and create experiences by aligning personal agendas with institutional affordances.

2. Visitor experiences framed in a particular genre of visit have a similar structure. As a rhetorical action with shared configurations, the genre of museum visit defines the structure of the visitor experience and the disposition of affective, cognitive, physical, and novelty realms in it.

3. Antecedents of the visitor experience have a contextual nature. Despite the resemblance in structure, the antecedents of visitor experience realms are simultaneously co-produced by personal and museum visiting contexts.

Research Design and Methodology: The research design of the thesis lends itself to an exploratory framework, which permits empirical examination of the proposed approach to visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions structured through the lens of genre, where various types of data and methodologies bolster the confidence in the study's validity. It should be noted that the purpose of this thesis is not to develop an explicit understanding of visitor experience in the context of ethnographic open-air museums, but rather to empirically examine the proposed conceptual model of visitor experience in the context of ethnographic open-air museums. Therefore, the empirical investigation is conducted only within the context of two genres of museum visits. Consequently, the method of data acquisition was determined by the visitor-museum interactions during a guided and special event visits. This includes school groups on a guided tour as well as participants of a special event - open-air music festivals. The data are collected by employing extensive ethnographic visitor observations, enhanced by visual analysis and follow-up interpretations from the participants of guided school visits, and on-site surveys of the attendees of open-air music festivals.

Overview of Empirical Context: Using a collective case study design, I investigate the central research question by analyzing Skansen (Sweden),

the Lithuanian Open-air Museum (Lithuania), and the Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle (Belarus).

The selection of museums was based on the principle of institutional homogeneity and similarity in terms of affordances provided for visitor interactions, and more specifically genres of museum visit. According to Bailey's (1999) classification, the three selected museums all belong to a group of national-scale ethnographic open-air museums with similar institutional and physical configurations, similar missions to communicate ideas about the past to contemporary audiences, and similar activities, events, and visiting scenarios. Despite the fact that the selected museums exist in diverse national, political, and social contexts, the focus of the research is on the micro-level, specifically, visitor-museum interactions and experiences defined in various visit genres and embedded in the specific institutional context. Therefore, the national, historical and political aspects that define the macro-perspective are not considered in the thesis. In contrast, the focus is placed on the institutional and physical settings and affordances for visitor-museum interactions. I will now detail the museums and their contexts involved in the study individually.

Skansen. Skansen is the world's first open-air museum, founded by Arthur Hazelius in 1891 on the island of Djurgården in Stockholm (Sweden). It occupies a site of 30 hectares, located in the central part of Stockholm. As a prototype model of an open-air museum, it displays relocated wooden buildings to demonstrate different social conditions under which people lived in various parts of Sweden from the 16th century until the first half of the 20th century. In addition to examples of vernacular architecture and ethnographic collections, Skansen houses a zoo with wild and domestic Scandinavian animals, an aquarium, and a circus. Moreover, in 2019, the Baltic Sea Science Center was opened to educate and research the Baltic marine ecosystem and sustainable development⁴. According to the mission stated on the website, the museum is not locked down in the past and keeps moving forward, aiming at infusing new “insights into Sweden's heritage and natural history relative to the present day and with an eye on the future”⁵. In this vein, the revitalization and dissemination of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as well as the demonstration of flora and fauna of Sweden

⁴ The Baltic Sea Science Center, retrieved online 2020-04-21.

⁵ Hillström, M. (2012, October). Nordiska museet and Skansen: displays of floating nationalities. In *Great Narratives of the Past Traditions and Revisions in National Museums: Conference Proceedings from EuNaMus; European National Museums: Identity Politics; the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen; Paris 28 June–1 July and 25–26 November 2011*, Linköping University Electronic Press, p.45.

and the Nordic region, receive considerable attention. Skansen provides a variety of educational programs with cultural-historical and zoological themes for its visitors. According to its website, Skansen positions itself as an exciting classroom beyond school walls, organizing 92 educational guided programs programs with diverse thematic scopes for children of various ages⁶. Group visitors may pre-order educational programs, which require additional planning and a reservation in advance. In addition, daily introductory guided excursions in English and Swedish are available for non-organized visitors.

As notices Hegardt (2015), Skansen conveys the idea of an idyllic village, “an imagined beauty existing in the past but conserved in the present and secured for the future”⁷. In doing so, Skansen arranges a variety of special events, such as reconstructions of rituals, festive events cherishing Swedish and Scandinavian traditions (for example, Walpurgis Night, Easter, Spring and Christmas markets, Norwegian National Day and the National Day of Sweden, Midsummer celebration), and music and/ or song festivals⁸. Allsång på Skansen (Sing-along at Skansen) is an example of a special event, a Swedish musical show held every summer in July and August on Tuesdays at the Solliden stage. The visitors are supposed to sing along with the musical guests. The show started in 1935 on a small scale; and nowadays it attracts around 10,000–15,000 people to each performance⁹. The variety of interactive activities and hybridity of the institutional environment of a park, a zoo, and a stage for social and cultural interactions make Skansen one of the most popular tourist destinations in Stockholm and Sweden, with over 1.2 million visitors per year¹⁰.

The second case is the *Lithuanian Open-air Museum (LOAM)*. Informally called as ‘the museum of the motherland’ (*tėviškės muziejus-Lt.*), the Open-Air Museum of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Liaudies Buities muziejus- Lt.*) was opened in 1966 with the aim to communicate “[t]he spatial and material identification of Lithuanian national identity as rooted in

⁶ <https://www.skansen.se/sv/skansens-%C3%B6vergripande-verksamhet>, retrieved online 2020-04-21.

⁷ Hegardt, J. (2015). 13 Time Stopped. The Open-air Museum Skansen of Artur Hazelius. In *Manufacturing a Past for the Present*, Brill, p. 288.

⁸ <https://www.skansen.se/en/this-is-skansen>, retrieved online 2020-04-21.

⁹ <https://www.skansen.se/en/alls%C3%A5ng-p%C3%A5-skansen>, retrieved online 2020-04-21.

¹⁰ Culture statistics 2019. Accessed online:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/10177894/KS-01-19-712-EN-N.pdf/915f828b-daae-1cca-ba54-a87e90d6b68b>, retrieved online 2020-05-12.

the countryside, landscapes, farmsteads, villages, and small market towns”¹¹. Located in Rumšiškės on the northern bank of the Kaunas water reservoir, 28 kilometers from Kaunas, the museum occupies 195 hectares and includes more than 140 architectural objects and a vast collection of ethnographic artifacts (188,000) to recreate the lifestyle of Lithuanian village and township in the 18th through the 20th centuries. The Lithuanian Open-air Museum features a cafe and tavern that offer traditional Lithuanian cuisine. In addition, a reconstructed 19th-century inn located in the Township sector of the museum grounds welcomes overnight guests. During the summer, in order to facilitate the influx of visitors from the closest urban center of Kaunas, it is possible to reach the museum by ferry.

To showcase the Lithuanian cultural and natural diversity in a miniature, the exhibition is grouped around five ethnographic regions of Lithuania: namely, Aukštaitija, Suvalkija, Samogitia, Dzūkija, and Lithuania Minor. In addition to a display of rural lifestyle and culture, the museum’s central section features a fragment of a 19th- to early 20th-century town, complete with a cobbled market square, the Holy Virgin Mary's Church, an inn, a primary school building, and merchant and craftsman homes. This is where visitors can observe the woodworking, pottery, jewelry, and textile production processes. The interior expositions are open to the public from May to October. During the off-season, the buildings are closed and the museum operates as a park¹². Similar to Skansen, the Lithuanian museum provides over 34 interactive educational programs and guided excursions for a variety of audience types¹³. Among them are reconstructions of family traditions and domestic duties (for instance, “Traditional Lithuanian games and songs”, “Bachelorette and Bachelor party”, “Wedding”, “Flax procession and linen production”, “Our Town”, “Bread production and bakery traditions”, “Festive gingerbread baking”, “Lighten and candle making”)¹⁴. Year-round, all guided excursions and educational programs can be reserved in advance. Moreover, the LOAM organizes over 20 special events annually, such as reconstructions of rituals and folk traditions (such as the Shrovetide Festival, The Celebration St. John, and the Day of Assumption, Easter, and

¹¹ Rindzeviciute, E. (2011). National museums in Lithuania: a story of state building (1855-2010). In *Building National Museums in Europe 1750–2010. EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen*, Bologna 28-30 April 2011. EuNaMus Report No. 1 (pp. 521-552). Linköping University Electronic Press, retrieved online 2020-06-12.

¹² <http://www.llbm.lt/en/opening-hours/>, retrieved online 2020-06-21.

¹³ Muziejų statistika, retrieved online 2020-06-22.

¹⁴ [http://www.llbm.lt/en/educational-programs/](http://www.llbm.lt/en/educationals-programs/), retrieved online 2020-06-25.

Christmas)¹⁵. In addition, Granatos Live is an electronic and pop music festival that has been arranged since 2013. The festival lasts three days and attracts between 15,000 and 18,000 visitors annually¹⁶. The rich combination of cultural, natural, and infrastructural assets of the museum constitutes a competitive advantage, positioning it in fourth place in terms of total visitors in Lithuania¹⁷.

Lastly, the third institution is the *Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle (BSMFARL)*. The ethnographic open-air museum was opened in 1977 in Aziartso village, located four kilometers from Minsk. It occupies 151 hectares and represents three of Belarus's six ethnographic regions, including Northern, Central, and Eastern Belarus, but excluding Paniamune, Western Palesje, and Eastern Palesje¹⁸. In line with the ethnographic classificatory approach to layout, each sector showcases the regional peculiarities of vernacular architecture and rural lifestyle, embedded in natural premises. The exhibition features 25 objects of Belarusian vernacular architecture from the late 18th to early 20th centuries, illustrating the architectural characteristics of secular (such as union and orthodox churches) and public buildings (i.e. village barn, college), household constructions (such as smithy and windmill), and farmstead complexes¹⁹.

The mission of the museum is to revive the forgotten heritage of Belarusians, foster intergenerational connections, and produce new cultural knowledge²⁰. In this vein, the museum provides numerous educational programs and activities. Specifically, visitors are offered interactive tours and role-playing games on a regular basis (such as "Hello, Museum", "Wheat Spikelet", "Travel to the Past", "Live Stories of Museum Exhibits", "Soldier's Trunk", and "Icons")²¹. Additionally, the museum provides numerous educational and entertaining events for adults. It reconstructs rituals and exhibits family traditions and folk celebrations (for instance, the museum offers an interactive program entitled "Belarusian Wedding"), organizes thematic excursions, and stages historical reconstructions. To generate retention of visitor flow, the BSMFARL annually hosts more than

¹⁵ <http://www.llbm.lt/kalendorius/>, retrieved online 2020-06-25.

¹⁶ The data were provided by the administration of the LOAM on 2019-03-25.

¹⁷ <https://lrkm.lrv.lt/lt/veikla/kulturos-statistika/muzieju-statistika>, retrieved online 2020-05-28.

¹⁸ <http://en.etna.by>, retrieved online 2021-06-24.

¹⁹ <http://en.etna.by/collections>, retrieved online 2021-06-24.

²⁰ Strategic development plan of the Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle for 2015-2020, retrieved online 2020-06-28.

²¹ <http://en.etna.by/services>, retrieved online 2020-06-25.

20 special events, including music festivals, performances and re-enactments (for example, ethno-folk festival “Kamyanitza”)²².

The brief overview of the case studies allows me to conclude that the invited museums share institutional similarities in relation to the thematic scope, design and layout, interpretative strategies. Moreover, they offer vast affordances for visitor-museum interactions that go beyond the affordances of conventional indoor museums, including but not limited to guided tours and educational programs and a rich event calendar with festivals, celebrations, and rituals. In turn, this complexity promoted diversity of visiting scenarios and ambiguity in visitor experiences.

The Outline of the Thesis: The structure of the thesis corresponds to the logical progression of the investigation and development of the research problem. The introduction provides a concise overview of the context of this study in light of the purpose of the visitor experience research in ethnographic open-air museums. It presents the thesis’ research purpose and objectives, hypothesis, defense statements, methodology, and empirical context.

The first chapter contextualizes and incorporates theoretical discussions of a visitor’s experience within the paradigm shifts observed in museology. It seeks to construct a model of visitor experience as a nexus of museum-visitor interactions scrutinized through the lens of genre. It begins by examining the seminal approaches to experience conceptualization in museum scholarship in accordance with the evolution of museological discourse, outlining the key assumptions about visitor experience derived from extant research that will be elaborated upon in the thesis. The first chapter concludes with a model of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions and its essential components, which will be empirically investigated within the context of ethnographic open-air museums.

Stemmed from the importance of the museum’s context as a milieu for visitor-museum interactions, the scope of the second chapter is placed on the ethnographic open-air museums and affordances for visiting. Firstly, it outlines the peculiarities of the institutional context of an ethnographic open-air museum and its paramount organizational genre markers. Further to that, it defines the physical context and its affordances for visitor interactions. The chapter provides a taxonomy of genres of museum visits

²² <https://ru.etna.by/services/tradicionnye-meropriyatiya>, retrieved online 2020-06-22.

and ends with a description of non-guided, guided, and special event visits in the context of ethnographic open-air museums.

Following on from this, the third chapter discusses the methodological assumptions and provides a summarized view of the exploratory research design of the study and the selection of methodological choices, including the research paradigm, research strategy, overall approach to data analysis, and ethical considerations. Due to the contextual nature of the visitor experience, the following sections will provide a more in-depth description of the primary data collection and analysis procedures.

In accordance with the theoretical framework presented in the first chapter, empirical chapters four and five include a comprehensive description of the museum's visiting context and personal context. This is followed by an in-depth description of the research design, detailing the data collection and analysis methods. The sections empirically investigate the structure of the visitor experience in three museums and examine the affective, cognitive, physical, and novelty domains of the visitor experience from guided and special event visits in the selected ethnographic open-air museums. Each section concludes with a concise discussion of the results and some concluding remarks.

The thesis ends with final conclusions that demonstrate how the overall research objective and each objective have been met. The chapter describes the contributions of this thesis to the theory and practice of visitor experience conceptualization through museum-visitor interactions. In doing so, it demonstrates novel insights about genres of museum visit and implications for visitor experience research in accordance with the most recent transformations in museology, thereby making an original contribution to knowledge in research and practice. This dissertation concludes with a discussion of its limitations and a comprehensive agenda for future research based on its theoretical insights and empirical findings.

Significance and Contribution: Although visitor experience has been a central topic in Western museum scholarship for several decades, a significant portion of the research literature acknowledges a dearth of extensive empirical studies and a unified approach to the phenomenon that addresses the increased complexity of visitor-museum encounters. Through the development of a theoretical framework of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions, framed and systematized through a lens of a genre, the thesis contributes to the existing body of knowledge. This approach shifts its focus from a museum and/or a visitor as distinct instances to the dynamics of visitor-museum encounters and seeks to reveal the complexity of visitor-museum interactions. As an analytical instrument, a

genre enables one to encompass and structure a multitude of social interactions and to reveal the complexities of visitor interactions within the compound settings of ethnographic open-air museums.

In addition, the significance of the thesis is determined by an empirical investigation into visitor experience and a better understanding of its structure (affective, physical, cognitive, and novelty realms) and antecedents in the settings of ethnographic open-air museums (and specifically in the national contexts of the Swedish, Lithuanian, and Belarusian ethnographic open-air museums). This empirical study sheds light on how diverse museum audiences experience, perceive, and interact with the hybrid contexts of ethnographic open-air museums. Moreover, by providing a more nuanced understanding of meaning-making mechanisms and visitor perceptions, the thesis contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the visitor experience realms and implications of genre conventions, as well as personal and institutional contexts in experience-making. This dissertation serves as a foundation for future visitor experience research in other museological contexts, allowing museums to establish long-term relationships with multiple audiences, enhance social impact, and facilitate meaning.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: VISITOR EXPERIENCE AS A NEXUS OF VISITOR-MUSEUM INTERACTIONS THROUGH GENRE PERSPECTIVE

This chapter expands on previous research conducted in the museum experience domain. It aims to establish a framework that will serve for the scope of the thesis. The section begins by examining the seminal approaches to experience conceptualization in museum scholarship in accordance with the evolution of museological discourse, delineating the key assumptions about visitor experience that will be utilized and expanded upon in the dissertation. The focus of analysis is placed on visitor-museum interactions. More specifically, I suggest and elaborate on a genre of museum visit as an analytical unit that systematizes encounters, facilitates particular outcomes of a museum visit, and defines the structure of visitor experience. The chapter concludes with a model of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions framed through the lens of genre, as well as a description of visitor experience's primary building blocks.

1.1. Theoretical Development of Visitor Experience in the Museum Context

“Experience is a key practice through which museums deliver value to their visitors and society in general”²³.

A. Sabiescu

The quote from Amalia Sabiescu (2018) sets up a discussion on experience as a fundamental means of linking museums with their audiences. Over the last five decades, museums as public institutions have undergone radical transformations that have made them rethink their values and goals while renegotiating their relationship to and within society (Sandell, 2003). With the rapid pace of social and technological advancements and the evolution of the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1999), museums and cultural heritage institutions have been forced to become more visitor-centered and direct their activities towards the development of museum communities and meaningful interactions (Kotler and Kotler, 2000). The early conceptual delimitations of visitor experience frame a museum visit as a unit of analysis and consider that all visits provide the same type of experience, irrespective

²³ Sabiescu, A. (2018). A Critical Reflection on Three Paradigms in Museum Experience Design. In *Museum Experience Design*, Springer, p. 261.

of the context. For example, Graburn (1977) approached museum visits through the lens of their distinctiveness from mundane encounters, viewed them as out-of-the-ordinary experiences, and examined the meanings for general audiences. Although the framework differentiates between educational, associative, and reverential experiential benefits that museums provide for their audiences, their specificity has not been clarified.

Until the 1990s, with the dominant *Traditional Museology* (object-centered), the scholarship adopted an authoritarian perspective on a visitor in a museum network. Along these lines, visitor experience was homogenous and undifferentiated in museum research and practice (Uriely, 2005). The only difference was made between the daily ordinary and extraordinary experiences, and the context of the museum visit was not taken into consideration.

With the establishment of *New Museology* (Vergo, 1997) and its focus on communication and museum visitors, a drive for a more active role for museum audiences as both consumers of cultural content and controllers of curatorial function (Black, 2005) started to emerge. This, in turn, has facilitated a need for more systematic research into visitor experiences and visitors in general (Roppola, 2013). In line with the main ideas of *New Museology*, early research on museum experiences thought of a visit as an interactive experience with a variety of outcomes, most of which were based on the pedagogical rhetoric and traditional view of visitors as “empty vessels” to be filled with knowledge and truth that museums alone could provide. Along these lines, in 1992, Dierking and Falk designed an “*Interactive Experience Model*” to develop a more elaborated perspective on a visitor experience and its contextual instance. They suggested that the nature of experience is co-created by the personal, physical, and social contexts interacting with each other. Along these lines, the personal context is a psychological makeup that integrates the prior knowledge, experience, attitude, motivation, and interest of a visitor. The physical setting embeds the museum context, including objects and spaces, architecture, and the aura and ambiance of a building. Lastly, the social context entails the social environment of the visit, including those with whom a visitor attends the museum as well as the encountered museum staff and other visitors. At the intersection of the three spheres is an area created by the interaction of these contexts that constitutes an interactive experience (Dierking and Falk, 1992). Figure 1 visually depicts the model suggested by Dierking and Falk.

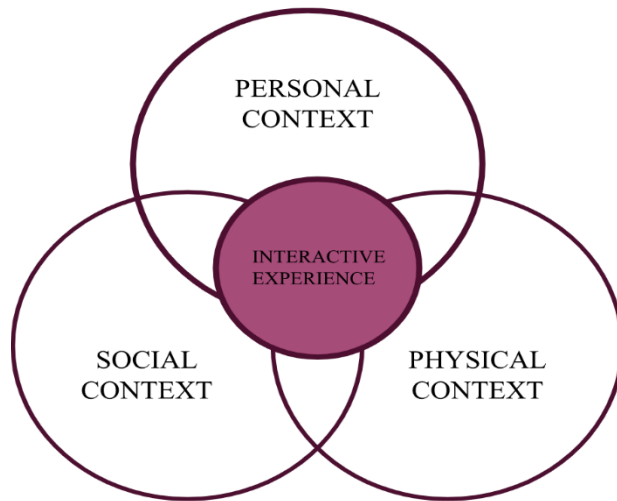


Figure 1. Interactive Experience Model. Source: Dierking, L. D., & Falk, J. H. (1992).

This model was the earliest attempt to implement a visitor-centered perspective and emphasize the distinctive nature of a visitor experience in a museum domain. Moreover, the approach began to conceptualize experience as a complex, contextual, and dynamic process between museum visitors, physical setting, and social context. Together with that, being more descriptive than predictive, the theorization fails to unveil a more nuanced understanding of the role of interaction between the three spheres and its direct implications on the experience. Initially, the model was not empirically investigated, and with its emphasis on personal experiences, it made it difficult to be broadly utilized in museum practice.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, Falk and Dierking (2000, 2009, 2013) and other researchers (Falk and Storksdieck, 2005; Chang, 2006; Christidou, 2012) elaborated and explored this seminal framework, which has served as the foundation for a significant portion of scholarly publications. Thus, in 2000, Falk and Dierking transformed the model into a “*Contextual Learning Model*”, adding the flow of time and its implications for learning during a museum visit. Consequently, in 2013, the authors added expectations and motivations in addition to learning and remembering as the main outcomes of visitor-museum interactions. Christidou (2012) suggested an institutional context as an additional important attribute of a visitor experience in the museum domain. She argued that museums, as highly ordered organizations, entail specific norms and affordances for action that affect visitor experience and meaning-making processes. This assumption

about the institutional context and its implications on perception will be further elaborated in the dissertation in relation to ethnographic open-air museums.

In line with the evolution of Service-Dominant (S-D) logic (Lusch and Vargo, 2014) in museum practices, Pekarik, Doering, and Karns (1999) elaborated on the concept of a satisfying visitor experience. According to this approach, experience was unveiled through a prism of expectations or “entrance narrative” that visitors bring into the museum and emphasized satisfaction as a major post-visit outcome. They suggested four elements of the visitor experience, including object, cognitive, introspective, and social experiences (Pekarik et al., 1999). The authors defined a continuum of experience motivations and pre-visit expectations as the antecedents of what constitutes the most satisfying visitor experiences. This theoretical milestone influenced the academic discourse to gradually abandon the predominant pedagogical rhetoric and to invite a shift towards pluralistic perspectives on the nature and facets of the experience and outcomes of a museum visit.

Furthermore, Joy and Sherry (2003) investigated an aesthetic experience in the museum domain within the concept of embodiment during visitor-museum interactions. The theory casts light into internal processes of the experience in making and reveals how visitors treat bodily perceptions through imagination. The structure of the concept resembles the model by Pekarik et al. (1999) and contains four elements of aesthetic experience, including perceptual, emotional, intellectual, and communicative dimensions. Although the model specifies the key structural components of an aesthetic visitor experience, it lacks a perspective on the factors that shape the structure of the experience and the relationship between the realms.

The development of the cultural market and the advancement of the concept of the experience economy into museum practice facilitated management- and marketing-driven research on visitor-museum interactions. Harrison and Shaw (2004) investigated the relationship between consumer satisfaction and subsequent intentions in the museum context, as well as the moderating effect of demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and education. They specifically scrutinized the connection between satisfaction with a range of museum service elements, and overall satisfaction with the experience. Chen and Shi (2008) aspired to understand the service quality and satisfaction of the Museum of Prehistory through the visitors’ experiences and quantitative research.

In tandem with the rise in visitor empowerment in the museum network, a multitude of psychological studies were conducted to foster a more nuanced understanding of the visitor experience. Consequently, the

phenomenon was conceptualized as a subjective personal response to the exhibit, provoked by the visitor's motivations, values, attitudes, and affective states of moods and emotions, which cognitively translated into a particular set of visiting outcomes. Unquestionably, the psychological approach offered a more distinct perspective on visitor experience; however, its complex structure and emphasis on individual connotations posed methodological obstacles for future empirical research. Later studies by Latham (2007), Packer (2008), and Packer and Bond (2010) expanded the variety of outcomes and benefits of a museum visit by incorporating the psychological concepts of flow, identity, attention, embodiment, and wellbeing into the visitor experience.

In lieu of advancements in phenomenology, Latham (2007) explores the numinous museum experience as a transcendental instance that implies deep emotional immersion or interaction with and within the museum space. Building on the previous research into what constitutes a satisfying experience, in 2008, Packer discussed psychological well-being as an element of the visitor experience. In a follow-up study, Packer and Bond (2010) proposed a concept of restoration and assessed the effects of restoration attributes (fascination, being away, extent, and compatibility) as important museum functions. These features contributed to a wider understanding of experience and its axiological implications beyond learning and recreation, emphasizing a trend towards personalization and diversification of the outcomes of museum visits.

Along these lines, Falk in 2009 suggested an identity-focused approach to the conceptualization of visitor experience in the museum context. The author presents five identities that a visitor can embrace during the visit: explorer, facilitator, professional or hobbyist, experience seeker, and recharger. The concept is based on the assumption that the way visitors shape their personal and group identities allows museums to manipulate the level of satisfaction with their services and facilitate meaningful entanglements. Hence, this rigid approach to visitor identity was criticized by Debenedetti et al. (2011), who stated that visitors could adopt different roles and identities simultaneously during the same visit.

In museum scholarship, the general recognition of a museum visit as a social practice began to emerge with the development of *Sociomuseology* as a museum paradigm. The expanded diversification of museum institutional agenda has promoted the complexity of visitor-museum encounters and the affordances of a museum visit. Under these premises, the emphasis of visitor studies shifted from individual interactions to continuous dialogical engagements and long-term relationships with museum communities

(Vermeeren et al., 2018). In this train of thought, visitor experience research began to acknowledge the significance of contexts and situations, thereby emphasizing the dynamic and intricate nature of visitor interactions with and within a museum.

Coffee (2007) initiated the first attempt to examine the museum experience as the result of social practice. His reasoning was based on the premise that the visitor experience is inherently dialogic and social. He defined experience as “[...]sets of actions and cognitive processes that are enacted in response to, and within, specific socio-cultural contexts and within specific social relationships[...]

²⁴. By examining these practices, the research demonstrates how visitors operationalize the communication function of a museum. Coffee (2007) argues that research into the sociocultural specifics of museum use and social practices across the spectrum of audiences can better equip practitioners to design and implement exhibitions and programs that engage museum visitors to a greater extent.

Following the increased scholarly interest into broader outcomes of a museum visit, the attention of visitor studies tended to concentrate on the meaning-making processes as important manifestations of the visitor experience. For example, Tina Roppola (2013) utilized a semiotic approach to explore the moment-by-moment transactions and situations that comprise intricate experiences of visitors in the museum context. Her in-depth, qualitative research offers advanced understanding of the interface between visitors and exhibition environments. Based on the analysis of visitors' meaning-making accounts in different museological contexts, she arrives at the conclusion that visitor experience is contingent upon four processes: framing, resonating, channeling, and broadening.

In line with this thread of thought, Schorch (2013) investigated meaningful experiences by employing narrative methodologies. He conceptualizes visitor experience through visitor-museum encounters and specifically addresses the nature of these engagements. In conclusion Schorch emphasizes the need for more qualitative research that will unveil embeddedness of meaning and visitor experiences in the museum context.

To tackle the complexity of visitor experience, Packer and Ballantyne (2016) review the concept of visitor experience and suggest that experience is “[...]an individual's response to an activity, setting, or event, open to influence from a range of external elements, including attributes of the activities, events, and environments that are offered to visitors, which are

²⁴ Coffee, K. (2007). Audience research and the museum experience as social practice. *Museum management and curatorship*, 22(4), p. 377.

perceived through the filter of visitors' internal perceptions[...], and lastly is narrated, interpreted, and transformed by the individual leading to outcomes that may be beneficial for the individual"²⁵. In addition, they delineate the physical, sensorial, restorative, introspective, transformative, hedonic, emotional, relational, spiritual, and cognitive dimensions of an experience (Packer and Ballantyne, 2016). Although this conceptualization acknowledges dialogical, contextual, and multifaceted visitor experience attributes, the model does not address nor empirically investigate the relationship between the principal attributes and facilitated domains.

With the advancement of ICTs into the museum sector, the research into visitor experience acknowledges the importance of mediation and affordances of technology in creating immersive interactions (Jung et al., 2016; Flavian et al., 2019). The work of recent pundits has approached visitor experience's design in hybrid digital and analogue settings. For example, Vermeeren et al., (2018) focuses on visitor experience associated with museums reaching out to crowds, the experimentation with novel technologies, and the conceiving of experiences as embedded in connected museum systems and large institutional ecosystems. Research by Sim et. al, (2018) unveils how visitor experience is produced, co-created, and disseminated through innovative technological interventions. In the latest book "*Hybrid Museum Experiences: Theory and Design*" by eds. Waern and Løvlie (2022), the hybridity in museum experiences is unfolded through incorporating the digital and the physical; creating social, yet personal and intimate experiences; and exploring ways to balance visitor participation and museum curation.

In summary, the arc of progression in the conceptualization of a visitor experience in museum studies has devolved in line with the broader shifts in museological paradigms. They have had a significant impact on how visitors were conceptualized and empowered in visitor-museum networks, and what societal agenda was introduced for museums as a cultural and public institutions. Specifically, the review reveals that in *Traditional Museology*, with its focus on curatorship and pedagogical rhetoric, visitors and visitor experiences were hardly examined, and the primary scholarly focus was on the learning outcomes. The evolution of *New Museology*, which transferred the emphasis from collections to audiences and communication, has generated a demand for visitor studies and led to the expansion and

²⁵ Jan Packer & Roy Ballantyne (2016) Conceptualizing the Visitor Experience: A Review of Literature and Development of a Multifaceted Model, *Visitor Studies*, 19:2, p. 135.

differentiation of the concept of visitor experience and its various approaches. These ideas have not only led to a more inclusive and differentiated perspective, but they have also increased the complexity and subjectivity of the visitor experience and facilitated outcomes. This has made creation, administration, and systematic empirical research of visitor experiences challenging in practice. With the advancement of *Sociomuseology*, digitalization, and diversification of museum agendas, the scholarship has shifted its focus to the dialogical, digital, and inclusive dimensions of visitor-museum interactions, as well as the understanding of a visitor's experience within a broader museum ecosystem, where visitors, museum spaces (both digital and analog), and museum staff co-create the visit and its outcomes. As a result of the empowerment of visitors within the museum network, the role of museums has shifted to that of mere facilitators of museum milieu as a stage of visitor interactions.

Despite the considerable research into the visitor experience over the last several decades, the scholarship continues to call for a deeper, empirically grounded understanding of the visitor experience (Roppola, 2013), with a growing sensitivity to the complexity of visitor-museum interactions (Schorch, 2013) and the ambiguity of the outcomes of a museum visit. This could be explained by the constantly changing relationships between museums and visitors in line with the ongoing shifts in museological paradigms affected by broader institutional and societal developments.

In accordance with the broader implications of three dominant museological discourses, this section outlined the significant milestones in the conceptualization of the visitor experience in museum scholarship. As depicted in this section, Figure 1 graphically depicts the conceptual development of visitor experience within the broader context of museum paradigmatic shifts.

Paradigm/Year	Conceptualization
Traditional Museology	
1977	Distinctive from mundane (Graburn, 1977)
New Museology	
1992	Interactive Experience Model (Falk and Dierking, 1992)
1999	Multiple stages and realms of experience (Pekarik, Doering and Karns, 1999)
2000	Contextual Learning Model (Falk and Dierking, 2000; Christidou, 2012)
2003	Aesthetic experience (Joy and Sherry, 2003)
2004	Satisfactory experience (Harrison and Shaw, 2004; Chen and Shi, 2008)
2007	Phenomenological experience/ Social action (Lantham, 2007, Coffee, 2007)
2008	Psychological approach (Paker, 2008; Packer and Bond, 2010)
2009	Identity-focused approach (Falk, 2009; Debenedetti et al., 2011)
Sociomuseology	
2013	Meaningful experience and meaning-making (Schorch, 2013; Roppola, 2013)
2016	Multifaceted model (Paker and Ballantyne, 2016)
2018	Digital/ IT-mediated (Vermeeren et al., 2018; Sabiescu, 2018; Jung et al., 2016; Flavian et al., 2019)
2022	Hybrid experience (Waern and Løvlie, 2022)

Figure 2. Conceptual evolution of visitor experience in museum paradigms.
Source: Developed by author.

To conclude, based on the presented conceptual evolution of visitor experience, it is essential to define the key theoretical assumptions that will serve as the conceptual basis for the thesis and be elaborated upon further. Specifically,

1. *Experience is an outcome of interactions that occur between a visitor and the setting of a museum visit; thus, it is contextual and situated in nature.* Packer and Ballantyne (2016) acknowledged that both what the museum provides (activities, events, and environments) and what the visitor brings (previous experience, knowledge, expectations, and motivations) have a dual impact on the visitor experience. Therefore, to unveil its nature, it is vital to scrutinize personal and museum visiting contexts and affordances for interactions.

2. *Experience is a complex and multidimensional instance, and it facilitates diverse outcomes.* Stemmed from the contextual nature of an experience, different events or activities during the visit shape the structure of it (Walls et al., 2011) and result in multiple outcomes of visitor-museum interactions. In scholarship (Pekarik et al., 1999; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Packer and Ballantyne, 2016), visitor experience commonly encompasses novelty as well as cognitive, physical, and affective realms. However, the nature of their connection and antecedents has not been empirically scrutinized (de Geus et al., 2016). Thus, to address the structural complexity of a visitor experience, extensive empirical research is needed into different interactions occurring in different situations and types of museums.

3. *Power over the outcome of visitor-museum encounters neither belongs to a visitor nor a museum but resides in the nexus of visitor-museum interactions.* As posits Schorch (2013), to unveil the outcomes of a visitor experience, the scope of research should include the dynamics of visitor-museum interactions and their implications on the outcomes of museum visits. Thus, the scope of the next section is placed on interaction and genre as structuring units of visitor-museum interactions.

1.2. Genre as a Structural Unit of Visitor-Museum Interactions

This section aims to unveil the origins of the genre approach and its application in existing museum research. It concludes with an argument about the relevance of a genre approach for studying miscellaneous visitor-museum interactions and facilitated experiences.

By interaction(s), I imply a visitor's direct involvement with and within the environment of the museum visit. In this line of reasoning, interaction is

simultaneously co-produced by the visitors and the settings and results in a visitor experience. As Getz (2012) argues, interaction is influenced by expectations and motivations, whereas the museum setting can be regarded as an experiential platform on which interactions with peers, the physical context, and the service environment take place. Given the increased diversification of the museum agenda and provided visitor services, there is a need for a more holistic and systematic approach to this experiential platform and its affordances for encounters.

Along these lines, I employ a genre approach as an organizing principle that structures visitor-museum encounters and thus provides a more systematic view of the visitor experience and its realms. According to Yates and Orlikowski (2002), genre is particularly useful in studying interactions and how people use sequences of communicative actions to coordinate their activity over time and space in a particular situational context. In this vein, a genre will be utilized to study visitor interactions in the museum setting and how diverse museum audiences employ sequences of communicative actions embedded in museum practices to facilitate experiences.

The origins of genre theory are associated with literary and media studies. Since the middle of the 1980s, it has developed in rhetoric and composition. Initially, genres were identified based on their similarities in form and content (Yates and Orlikowski, 2002). Specifically, form refers to physical and linguistic characteristics, and content to the themes and topics of the genre. The linguistic approach to genre is predominantly associated with the theory of Swales (1990), who described the rationale for genre in terms of communicative purpose, or more specifically, the reasons why members of the discourse community used language in particular ways or forms.

In addition, a central aspect of the RGS's approach is the emphasis on the dynamic aspects of genre (Lomborg, 2011; Speicher, 2017) and the situated action that genre performs in the social context of the situation. Miller (1984) specifically approached genre through social action and emphasized that genre must be conceptualized in terms of rhetorical action and conventionalized social motives that are found in recurring situation types rather than substance or form.

Later on, with the emergence of the functionalist approach to genre, the scope of attention shifted to how genre is used and what genre conventions accomplish for a user in a given context of use. Along these lines, Andersen (2015) defines genre as: “[...] interlinked with a genre-led activity that appears because particular social and institutional arrangements produce forms of action guided by the particular interests and ideologies of these

arrangements. Any action and interaction of these arrangements materialize in a communicative form, the users of these must act in accordance with²⁶. This approach conceptualizes genre through the affordances of action and thus emphasizes the importance of a visitor as an agent who behaves in accordance with the specific social and institutional arrangements. In this thesis, I will employ this functionalist approach to systematize museum practices and define genre-led activities (or genres of museum visit) to further scrutinize visitor experiences.

From a visitor perspective, Berkenkotter and Hacking (1995) explore the concept of genre knowledge or genre assumptions that direct the contexts in which users frame their behavior in accordance with the specific institutional settings and situations. Similarly, when visitors enter a museum and select the scenario of the visit (for example, by attending a guided tour or a workshop), they construct their perception of the institutional and social arrangements and act in line with the genre competence (or previous experience and existing cognitive models), and particular norms pertinent to the specific context. All together, the premises of genre theory provide avenues for conceptualization of visitor-museum interactions and visitor experience by combining the visitor's agency and personal context on the one hand and the museum visiting context, including social, physical, and institutional realms, on the other. In turn, this resonates with the recent ideas of *Sociomuseology* and allows one to advance the understanding of visitor experience in terms of the hybridity and complexity of the museum milieu.

While most genre studies are focused on professional and workplace practices, genre analysis has generally not gained solid footing in the realm of museum practices, and there are only a few studies that utilize the genre approach. Macdonald (2007) claims that genre in museum scholarship is not well articulated; however, this does not imply "[...]that visitors do not make 'genre assumptions' or 'genre evaluations', although more research is needed to understand what these may be and how they operate[...]"²⁷.

Specifically, the existing research is primarily grounded in linguistic-functional or rhetorical genre theories, and the textual analysis of exhibits employs traditional methods. For instance, Ravelli (2007) employs a linguistic understanding of genre to interpret museum exhibitions as

²⁶ Andersen, J. (2015). What Genre Theory Does', *Genre Theory in Information Studies* (Studies in Information, Volume 11) (pp. 1-12). Emerald Group Publishing Limited, p. 4.

²⁷ Macdonald, S. (2007). Interconnecting: museum visiting and exhibition design. *CoDesign*, 3(S1), 149-162, retrieved online 2022-10-12, via <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15710880701311502>

communicative texts. Although this approach sheds light on the relationship between the register configurations and constitutive texts of an exhibition, it lacks a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and situated nature of visitor-museum encounters and the outcomes of museum visits. In addition, the study does not elaborate on how genres are constructed, enacted, and negotiated by museum visitors in various contexts.

In the book *“Museum”* (2009), Eriksen uses the concept of genre adopted from literary studies to define museums as institutions that entail particular genre markers that distinguish them from other cultural outlets (for example, a library, an archive, or a theater). The proposed perspective differentiates museums as places with their own genre markers and physical and institutional contexts that simultaneously impose certain norms of behavior, expectations, and presumptions regarding museum settings. In terms of visitor experience, this means that genre markers enhance and distinguish the museum experience from that of any other leisure or cultural institution. Consequently, the concept of genre markers plays a crucial role in the structuring of visitor-museum encounters, influencing how visitors experience, interact with, and construct meaning from the visit.

While genre is most often defined in regular usage as a means of classification of practices or as an object based solely on formal characteristics (such as literary genres, social media genres, or cinematographic genres), Lomborg (2011) understood it in terms of institutional conventions and users’ agendas, which adds a social perspective. In accordance with this line of thinking, museums, as highly ordered and normalized cultural institutions, provide a variety of services and products that, collectively, serve as the institutionalized template for social behavior during a museum visit. As informal learning institutions, museums, for instance, typically offer guided tours to various types of visitors and organize lessons in schools. They organize special events, interactive programs, and hands-on seminars to retain more visitors. Each of the aforementioned types of museum practices involves repeated interactions with its most prominent form, function, flow, and social context. I conceptualize the museum visit as a rhetorical situation between a museum and its visitors, whose experiences are generated and framed in specific configurations of events and activities that can be systematically analyzed through genre optics.

In conclusion, the section demonstrates that the genre approach is utilized to examine interactions in various disciplines. The overview reveals, however, that it is most commonly used to define institutional conventions and norms (Macdonald, 2007; Ravelli, 2007) or genre markers (Eriksen,

2009), rather than visitor actions and social perspectives. Consequently, the purpose of this thesis is to narrow the scope of analysis and employ the optics of genre at the micro-level. The focus is placed on the interaction between museums and visitors in genre configurations that facilitate experiences and provide a more organized and systematic approach to the analysis of visitor experiences in various museum visit events. I conceptualize the museum visit as a rhetorical situation between a museum and its visitors, whose experiences are produced and framed in particular configurations of events and activities that can be systematically analyzed through genre optics.

The decision to employ the genre approach as a tool for scrutinizing visitor-museum interactions and facilitated experiences rests on the following premises. Firstly, as claimed by Huvila (2019), this approach provides a meta-perspective on the shared characteristics of categories rather than addressing particular attributes or realms of visitors and museums individually. Along these lines, given the ontological ambivalence of visitor experience, the genre perspective might contribute to a more holistic understanding of visitor-museum interactions and facilitated experiences in different events of museum visits and contribute to a broader view of the museum ecosystem. Secondly, in line with Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), a genre as an analytical lens is well-suited for scrutinizing social actions and, specifically, shifting environments and new forms of interactions. This perspective introduces avenues for framing the visitor experience in terms of the hybridization and diversification of museum agendas and the complexity of outreach programs that evolve over time. The recurrence of similar features that entail a generic form creates a relatively stable interpretative and behavioral framework for the investigation of diverse visitor-museum interactions and facilitated experiences. Therefore, by understanding the dynamics of visitor-museum encounters in different genres of visit, both visitors and museum professionals can develop a mutual understanding of the value and outcomes of interactions. Thirdly, the genre's perspective shifts its conceptual focus from the museum or visitor to the interactive process through which visitors accomplish their agendas, embedded in the institutional fabric of a museum and the social context of the visit. Visitors' recurrent interactions, as well as certain expectations, behavioral norms, and institutional conventions combined, constitute various genres of museum visit, which in turn shape the character and outcome of visitor experiences and develop a more comprehensive approach to the complexity and ambiguity of visitor-museum interactions. All together, these arguments build a basis for the development of a framework of visitor experience as a

nexus of visitor-museum encounters framed in different genres of museum visit that will be explicitly described in the next section and empirically investigated in the thesis.

1.3. Model “Visitor Experience as a Nexus of Visitor-Museum Interactions: Genre Approach”

In this section I describe a model of visitor experience as the nexus of museum encounters, structured through the lens of a genre of museum visit and incorporating the personal context associated with visitors and the museum visiting context, which integrates institutional and physical settings. It is based on the major assumptions about visitor experience generated as a result of the literature review as presented in the previous section. Figure 3 depicts a model of a visitor experience.

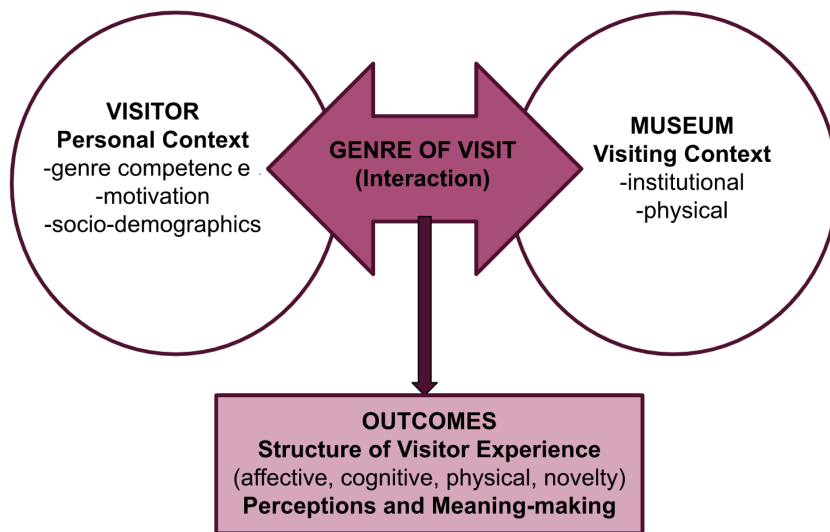


Figure 3. Model of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum encounters: genre approach. Source: Developed by author.

In line with the model, visitor experience is understood as an outcome of interactions between a visitor and the museum environment (institutional and physical contexts), shaped by a genre of museum visit that entails peculiar genre configurations and leads to particular experiences and outcomes. The present model is grounded in the key conceptual assumptions presented in the previous section. It specifically integrates the visitor experience conceptualizations put forth by Falk and Dierking in 1992, which include personal context through observation of motivations, genre competence

(previous experience, frequency of visit), as well as socio-demographic characteristics, on the one hand, and museum visiting context, including institutional context (norms and genre markers associated with a particular type of museum and its scope), and physical context.

To study visitor experience structure and facilitated outcomes, I adopted the Event Experience Scale (de Geus et al., 2016), which specifies four experience dimensions, including affective, cognitive, physical, and novelty. This approach was previously empirically and qualitatively investigated in different contexts, which makes it a reliable tool for the scope of the thesis. According to Figure 3, visitor-museum interactions are framed by conventions of a genre of visit and result in a visitor experience with its salient structure (affective, cognitive, physical, and novelty dimensions) and outcomes (facilitated meanings, perceptions, and ideas). Step by step, I will provide a more detailed description of the key components of the conceptual model in the next section.

1.4. Building Blocks of Visitor Experience

1.4.1. Visitor Personal Context

The personal context is defined by a visitor's identity, which is unique to each individual as it incorporates physiological aspects such as interests and motivations (Dierking and Falk, 1992; 1994; Christidou, 2012); cognitive attributes, including existing knowledge (Dewey, 1938/1963; Hein, 2004); socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, and place of residence); and lastly, genre competence of a museum visit, including previous experience from a museum visit and knowledge of museum genres. Collectively, these factors shape the so-called “entrance narratives” (Pekarik et al., 1999) that museum visitors carry with them, including their attitudes, expectations, and behavioral norms. Genre competence, defined as the capacity to comprehend genre identifiers, plays an essential role in defining the scope and nature of visitor interactions within museum spaces. It results from prior knowledge and familiarity with museum settings, interaction opportunities, and various categories of activities or events that occurred during the visit. Therefore, the frequency with which an individual visits an event or museum has a direct bearing on their genre competence.

The personal context drives and shapes visitors choices about the type of museum to visit and the form and flow of visitor-museum interaction. As a result of this interaction, the experience is narrated, interpreted, and transformed by the visitor. It leads to outcomes that may be beneficial and

meaningful and to perceptions about the museum and the content encountered during the visit. In museum studies, it is widely acknowledged that systematic research into the personal context of museum visitors could provide museum professionals with valuable insights into how to improve the outcome of museum visits and facilitate meaningful interactions. Despite the highly subjective and individualized nature of personal context, the implications of genre configurations that involve shared motivations and structures may facilitate comparable outcomes of visitor-museum interactions and facilitated experiences.

1.4.2. Museum Visiting Context

Stemming from the situational and contextual nature of visitor experience as an outcome of visitor-museum encounters, a museum with its genre markers, including norms and conventions, affordances, and limitations, acts as a milieu for visitor interactions and experiences. While previous research into visitor experiences by Falk and Dierking (1992, 2000), Christidou (2012), and Forrest (2015) acknowledged the importance of the museum context, the studies by Falk and Dierking (1992, 2000) and Christidou (2012) differentiated between the institutional, physical, and social settings as separate instances of visitor experience and failed to explore them holistically from the perspective of the activities and interactions that take place in them. In this thesis, I apply these interconnected settings that simultaneously constitute the context for a museum visit that is bound in time and space and shaped by the genre of museum visit with particular arrangements of personal, social, and institutional contexts.

The previous research (Christidou, 2012; Roppola, 2013) demonstrates a strong influence of institutional context on visitor performances and facilitated experiences in museum settings. In this framework, the institutional context will be approached in line with the previous conceptualizations of Christidou (2012), who understood it as a setting that “[...] reflects the norms, practices and expectations generated by the type of each museum, which is an institution having specific goals and aims”²⁸. Consequently, despite the fact that museums have shared norms, agendas, and genre markers that distinguish them from other cultural institutions (Eriksen, 2009), institutional arrangements permit one to gain an

²⁸ Christidou, D. (2012). *Does “pointing at” in museum exhibitions make a point? A study of visitors’ performances in three museums for the use of reference as a means of initiating and prompting meaning-making* (Doctoral dissertation, UCL (University College London)), p. 328.

understanding of the significance of various types of museums, their affordances and limitations for visitor-museum interactions, and the experiences they facilitate. Institutional context is crucial for determining the established practices and types of activities offered to museum visitors in relation to the type of museum visit constituting the core of the proposed model.

Unlike the institutional context that encompasses established norms and genre markers, the physical context of a museum is less rigid and offers a material perspective on the museum environment (Christidou, 2012). It includes the organization of space, architecture, exhibition design, labeling, and orientation. Additionally, physical context acts as a trigger for sensorial interactions with and within the museum spaces. Given the fact that a museum's layout is subject to change in line with new exhibitions and agendas, the physical context of a museum visit is situational and bound to the time and space of visitor-museum encounters.

1.4.3. Genre of Museum Visit

To serve the agenda of the present model, a lens of genre is utilized for the purpose of structuring visitor-museum interactions and recurrent activities that in turn facilitate the visitor experience. Along these lines, I draw from Yates and Orlikowski's (1992) structuralist approach to the form of interaction as one of the key conventions of the genre of museum visit. This sole perspective, however, excludes any reference to a visitor or affordances for action. Thus, I integrate it with the rhetorical approach to genre that enables me to consider social action and the personal context of visitors (Miller, 1984; Russell, 1997).

From the museum's point of view, organizational forms of production give visitors and the museum material, technological, and symbolic contexts for their interactions. This institutional template for visitor interactions is called the visiting genre repertoire in the thesis, and it includes various forms of museum visits. Using Giddens's (1987) structuralist point of view, Yates and Orlikowski (1992) developed a genre approach to studying organizational communication through the lens of genres as social structures made up of people's ongoing communicative practices that are embedded in the institutional context. Similarly, visitor-museum interactions represent an ideal domain in which sociocultural dynamics come into force, arising from established museum practices and visitors' agendas. Following Orlikowski and Yates (1992), communicative genres are "[...] socially recognized types of communicative actions habitually enacted by organizational members to

realize particular communicative and collaborative purposes”²⁹. Through such enactments, genres become institutionalized, fixed frameworks that shape visitor-museum interactions and facilitate visitor experiences. In line with Swales (1990), Russell (1997), and Andersen (2015), genre provides expectations about interaction for museum visitors, on the one hand, and allows museums to enhance interactions in line with established practices and recurrent forms, on the other.

Genre is broadly defined through particular conventions of form (including structure and style), socially recognized purpose, and media (Orlikowski and Yates, 1998). The form of interaction itself refers to the readily observable features, including structure and mediational means (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992). Translating this in the context of the thesis, I differentiate between the forms of visitor-museum interactions that impose certain norms and regulations for visitors responses and actions during the visit and thus affect how the agency of visitors evolves in different recurrent situations and museum practices. Along these lines, when defining a genre of museum visit as a lens for studying visitor experience through a nexus of visitor-museum interactions, I take into consideration the structural elements of the form of visitor-museum encounters, involved mediational means, and level of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions as core registers. The form and level of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions provide valuable tools for structuring museum practices and exploring visitor experiences in a systematic way.

It is widely acknowledged that museum visits are influenced by visitors' expectations and motivations (Getz, 2012), whereas the museum visiting context can be viewed as a stage for interactions and visitor experiences (Morgan, 2008; de Geus et al., 2016), facilitated by external facilitation and mediational means. A genre of museum visit provides certain principles of engagement, norms of action, and anticipation of the visit, which may influence the experiences and outcomes of interactions from the perspective of a visitor. In addition, the rhetorical approach emphasizes that genre positions those who engage in interaction, and that this positioning implies various response and action possibilities (Miller, 1984; Russell, 1997; Andersen, 2015). This perspective reveals the connections between a genre as a communicative and regulating force, institutional, and personal contexts.

²⁹ Yates, J., & Orlikowski, W. J. (1992). Genres of Organizational Communication: A Structural Approach to Studying Communication and Media. *The Academy of Management Review*, 17(2), p. 299.

In this study, I approach the social context of the visit as a determinant of a museum visit genre, which alludes to social interactions with other visitors and museum personnel (Dierking and Falk, 1992). In museum research and practice, it is widely acknowledged that visitors rarely visit museums alone, and in various social contexts (with families, school groups, and small groups of friends). In addition, depending on the social context, visitors behave and experience museum visits differently (Hooper-Grinhill, 2006; Coffee, 2007). Specifically, the study by Tolmie et al. (2014) demonstrates that group museum visitors experience museums as social units where group interests and motivations frequently take precedence over individual preferences. Consequently, I pay special attention to the social arrangements of various genres of museum visit and their effects on a visitor experience.

According to the presented model of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions, a genre of museum visit is defined by combining structural elements of form of interaction, level of facilitation, and mediational means on the one hand, and visitor agency and social context of interactions (according to the RGS) on the other. By focusing on how people navigate and experience museums, a genre of museum visit could assist audiences in framing their understanding of the museum's affordances to meet their visiting agendas and personal needs. This conceptual perspective on museum visits opens avenues for exploring the nuances of visitor-museum interactions and visitor experience as a dialogical and contextual phenomenon.

1.4.4. Outcomes of Visitor-Museum Interactions

The previous research into experiences demonstrates that visitor-museum interactions produce diverse outcomes that encompass emotions, satisfaction, cognition, behavior, and perceptions. These outcomes are commonly reflected in the structure of the visitor experience as realms of granular of visitor experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; de Geus et al., 2016; Packer and Ballantyne, 2016). In line with the provided model, I presume that the structure of the visitor experience is shaped by a genre of museum visit, which also nests particular perceptions and meaning-making processes about the encountered museum spaces and the visit in general.

To begin with, I investigate the structure of the visitor experience in line with previous studies by Getz (2012), de Geus et al. (2016), and Richards (2020), who acknowledge and differentiate between the four key realms of

an experience, including novelty, cognitive, affective, and physical realms. Below, I will briefly provide a description of each of the categories.

Stemming from the intrinsic museum's educational agenda and Dewey's seminal theorization of experience through a pedagogical rhetoric, learning is considered to be one of the foregrounding components of a visitor experience in museum scholarship (Dierking and Falk, 2000; 2010). Specifically, cognitive elements have been broadly observed and studied in previous research into visitor experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Packer and Ballantyne, 2016). In this line of reasoning, this thesis conceptualizes the cognitive component of the visitor experience as a process of acquiring new knowledge, skills, intellectual development, and reflectivity, among the key outcomes of a museum visit.

Secondly, the affective realm of visitor experience is associated with psychological attributes of visitor interactions, that entail emotions, feelings, and sensorial impressions stimulated during the museum visit. In line with de Geus et al. (2016), the affective realm is understood through excitement, emotional energy, intimacy, a sense of adventure, and personal value creation. It should be pointed out that the affective realm integrates both positive and negative feelings and sensations that emerge during the visit and thus defines the level of satisfaction with the museum visit and its outcomes. This, in turn, signifies a strong presence of personal context in the affective realm of a visitor experience.

Thirdly, the physical realm of a visitor experience is revealed through the outcomes of visitors' corporeal entanglements with and within museum settings, such as active hands-on participation and stimulation of the senses (taste, scent, hearing, smell, and touch), which result in significant and memorable associations with the visit. Pine and Gilmore (1999), who emphasized the agency of a person and differentiated between active and passive interactions as important components of experience, acknowledged the physical realm of the visitor experience.

Lastly, the dimension of novelty is intrinsically derived from the essence of experience as non-mundane and out-of-ordinary activity, and it defines the uniqueness of the event of a museum visit, the (un)familiarity with the context and activity, and the distinctiveness of the event of a museum visit. In accordance with the genre theorization, genre competence, as a set of prior knowledge and experiences of the museum visit act as a strong facilitator of novelty in the structure of the visitor experience.

All together, the four mentioned components constitute the structure of a visitor's experience. Following the presented model of visitor experience, I hypothesize that regulative and communicative forces of genre affect how

these components appear and behave in the overall structure of visitor experience. Therefore, the study aims to unveil the character of visitor experience structures observed in different genres of museum visit. In so doing, the structural analysis of visitor experience provides a general snapshot of the phenomenon. Even so, the input into perceptions and meaning-making processes will add valuable qualitative insights about the origins of the presented components and help understand the different layers of meaning behind the structural composition of the concept that co-create visitor experiences.

1.5. Conclusions

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the conceptualization of visitor experience in line with the main transformations in museology and to highlight the key assumptions that formed the foundation of a model of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions. The review of the literature revealed that the conceptual and methodological evolution of visitor experience in museum contexts developed in close relation to the main ontological and epistemological transformations promoted by the three museological paradigms. Specifically, the earliest studies on the visitor experience in museum scholarship emphasized its novel and non-mundane nature and addressed the educational goals of museum visits. The peak of conceptual diversification was observed in line with *New Museology*, accompanied by the strong immersion of the ideas of marketing and experience economy in museum research and practice. During this phase, the research scope expanded to emphasize the significance of individual interactions, communication, and visitor agency in co-creating experiences. Following the assumptions of the recently introduced *Sociomuseology*, the discussion arrived at the viewpoint of a visitor experience as a dialogical, multidimensional, and idiosyncratic phenomenon that results from the complexity of museum-visitor encounters and involves particular perceptions and meaning-making processes. To accommodate the flexibility, heterogeneity, and dynamism of contemporary visitor-museum encounters and to comprehend the fluid nature of visitor experience, I employed the premises of genre optics and devised a framework of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions.

Consequently, visitor experience is understood through the dynamics of the ever-changing visitor-museum encounters that are embedded within the institutional contexts of museums and framed by genre configurations. The proposed conceptual model theoretically expands upon experience theory

and contributes to knowledge by employing the lens of a genre to systematize visitor-museum interactions and examine facilitated outcomes. Focusing on the action and visitor-museum interactions that a genre is utilized for paves the way for visitors to be conceptualized as active agents within the museum network. This method is consistent with the growing significance of participation, social interactions, and activity theory and adheres to the tenets of *Sociomuseology*. The tendency towards activity theory during the last decade has elevated the thinking of genre into fixed planes of human interactions and how these activities both configure and are constituted dialectically by means of genre as mediating assets between visitors and museums. Therefore, the context of a museum visit is not simply defined by the physical environment and institutional configurations but by the affordances for interactions (social actions), dynamics, and activities that take place during a particular genre of museum visit.

Given the dialogical and contextual character of the visitor experience embedded in institutional configurations, the following chapter will examine the settings and opportunities for interactions within the context of an ethnographic open-air museum. It seeks to structure and systematize institutional practices and visitor interactions within the framework of a genre repertoire.

2. THE CONTEXT OF ETHNOGRAPHIC OPEN-AIR MUSEUM AND ITS VISITING GENRE REPERTOIRE

This chapter unfolds the peculiarities of the institutional and physical contexts of ethnographic open-air museums as a particular setting for organizing visitor interactions and facilitating experiences. As argued by Christidou (2012), the institutional context reflects the norms, practices, and expectations generated by the type of museum. In other words, the institutional setting determines a museological ecosystem that constitutes affordances for visitor-museum encounters operationalized through museum practices. Along these lines, I start with the characteristics of the institutional context of an ethnographic open-air museum and its paramount organizational genre markers. Furthermore, I will define the physical context and its affordances for visitor interactions. In addition, to structure and systematize visitor-museum interactions in the context of ethnographic open-air museums, I suggest a taxonomy of genres of museum visits (or a visiting genre repertoire), and provide a detailed discussion of their features in the context of an ethnographic open-air museum.

2.1. Institutional and Physical Contexts of Ethnographic Open-air Museum

An ethnographic open-air museum belongs to a larger and well-established group of open-air museums that combine (ethnographic) museum collections with an outdoor display. According to van Mensch (2015): “Open-air museums are another type of museums where museum value and use value are reconciled, also with the intention to preserve the craft(s) behind the object”³⁰. Further to the intention to preserve and display both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, ethnographic open-air museums constitute a museological genre that focuses on the exhibition of translocated structures: architectural heritage and ethnographic collections of pre-industrial times, embedded in vast natural landscapes and revitalized by interpretations and storytelling (Young, 2006; Rentzhog, 2007). These museums display a *tableau vivant* from the past and offer an immersive experience where: “[...]authentic three-dimensional rudiments of the past create an atmosphere of standing in the middle of the ‘history’ ... By combining the visual

³⁰ van Mensch, P (2015) The Guardian and the Tiger: Reflections on the Sustainability of Heritage, retrieved online: 2018-11-12, via https://www.academia.edu/32555084/Peter_van_Mensch_The_Guardian_and_the_Tiger_Reflections_on_the_Sustainability_of_Heritage_in_L%C3%A9ontine_Meijer_van_Mensch_ed_Collecting_and_Collections_2015_COMCOL_Annual_Conference_National_Folk_Museum_of_Korea_Seoul_2017_38_46.

impression and sounds, smell and the possibility to ‘touch the past’, the visitors through the use of all senses create images”³¹. With its focus on living history, an ethnographic open-air museum reconstructs a trans-locative cultural environment where visitors are invited to travel in time and space. In this thesis, I deliberately utilize “ethnographic”, to differentiate museums of wooden vernacular architecture and lifestyle from archeological museums and other exhibitions in the open air. Moreover, I acknowledge the importance of both “ethnographic” and “open-air” attributes as important genre markers that frame the institutional template for visitors’ interactions.

To unveil the features of the institutional context of ethnographic open-air museums, it is crucial to discuss the intrinsic motives for establishing this type of cultural institution and the key ideas behind them. The first ethnographic open-air museum, established by Arthur Hazelius in 1891 in Stockholm, aimed to preserve wooden vernacular architecture in the aftermath of fast-pacing industrialization and reconstruct the vivid images of Sweden in miniature. Skansen eventually became a prototype model that flourished extensively in Eastern and Central Europe in the 20th century.

According to Rentzhog (2007), an ethnographic open-air museum was originally conceived as an integral part of the ideological creation of a modern nation, giving the inhabitants of its abstract community a sense of common origins and roots. In Northern Europe, ethnographic open-air museums were seen as the repositories of the symbolic collective memory of the nation, fueled by the ideas of romantic nationalism and operationalized through the images of rural life and the materiality of folk lifestyle. In relation to the institutional functions and agenda, the scope of an ethnographic open-air museum is placed on collection, preservation, display of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, communication, and facilitating ideas about the culture and lifestyle in pre-modern times for diverse contemporary audiences.

In line with Christidou’s (2012) conceptualization of physical context that denotes the peculiarity of space composition, exhibition design, labeling, and sensorial stimuli, ethnographic open-air museums entail a shared approach to structure, layout, exhibition design, and labeling. As previously noticed by Bitgood et al. (1990), Psarra (2009), and Bitgood (2014), the spatial layout, architectural, and compositional qualities of the museum convey meaning to visitors and are crucial to the formation of a visitor

³¹ Zipsane, H. (2009). Lifelong learning through heritage and art. In *The Routledge International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, ed. Peter Jarvis, London: Routledge, p. 175.

experience and the value of a museum visit. Architectural features and space organization frame the flow of the museum visit and thus impact the way that visitors interact and attach meaning to things (Psarra, 2005; 2009). Along these lines, an ethnographic open-air museum has a complex compositional structure that can be compared to a molecule, incorporating several layers of assets (atoms), including cultural, natural, and infrastructural resources.

Figure 4 depicts the compositional structure of an ethnographic open-air museum and the interrelationship between the main layers and elements. This complexity facilitates diverse interactions and promotes hybridity of institutional identity, combining vast natural resources, cultural tangible and intangible heritage, and tourist infrastructure.

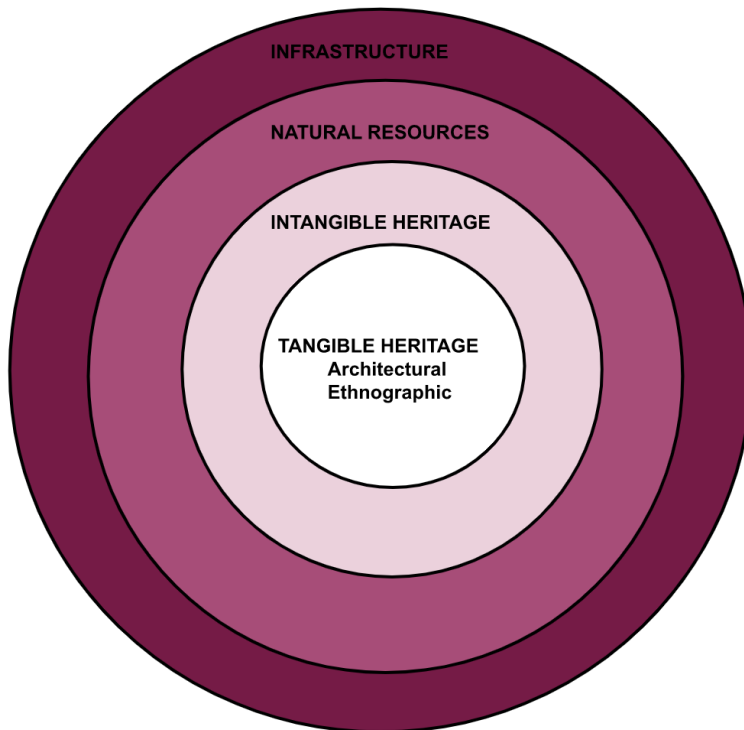


Figure 4. Composition of an ethnographic open-air museum. Source: Developed by author.

Along these lines, an ethnographic open-air museum is made up of ethnographic and architectural artifacts integrated into thematically organized assemblages: ethnographic regions. The basic element of this level belongs to an ethnographic object embedded in the reconstructed

interiors of the relocated buildings (Shaferlich, 1994). Ethnographic objects, thus, serve as exhibits on display and simultaneously constitute the interiors of the rooms or buildings and facilitate ideas about the lifestyle and traditions. In line with the intrinsic idea of recreating living environments, the exhibits are not displayed in glass boxes but are displayed in line with their functional application. For example, a reconstructed interior of a kitchen entails items that were commonly used for cooking and serving food. Furthermore, the labels with basic information about the object are not created for each of the ethnographic artifacts as commonly used in art and natural history museums. Instead, exhibit labels are often provided for the whole building, outlining functionality, origin, architectural value, and other features.

Consequently, the second component of tangible cultural heritage assets consists of architectural objects, such as households and public buildings, that recreate immersive 3-D environments and depict past living conditions. Following the principal *modus operandi* of an ethnographic open-air museum, the constructions with architectural or aesthetic value were disassembled and relocated to the museum grounds in order to illustrate the regional ethnographic and architectural peculiarities. Moreover, these examples of architectural heritage serve both as museum artifacts on display and as infrastructure (for example, a hotel, restaurant, cafe, or venue for seminars or educational activities). The buildings are grouped according to a geographical principle, showcasing displaying different ethnographic areas of the country (Young, 2006). Gailey (1999) defines municipal, regional, national, and supranational open-air museums based on the scale of the exhibition. Specifically, the local museums adopt “[...]in situ preservation of single buildings or farms with or without additional translocated structures[...]”³². The regional ethnographic open-air museums demonstrate regional peculiarities of lifestyle and culture. In this line of thought, the exhibition of national-scale ethnographic open-air museums depicts ethnographic and architectural collections from different ethnographic regions of one country, showcasing unity in diversity and “[...]developing presentations that could be seen as encouraging feelings of national identity”³³. The focus of the thesis is on the national ethnographic open-air museums. They represent a particular interest due to the complexity of museum exhibitions, diversity of outreach programs, and variety of visiting scenarios..

³² Gailey, A. (1999). Domesticating the Past: The Development of Open-Air Museums. *Folk Life*, 38(1), p. 17.

³³ *ibid.* p.19.

According to Figure 4, intangible heritage constitutes the second layer in the compositional structure of ethnographic open-air museum (Figure 4). To demonstrate production processes, ethnographic open-air museums apply a living history approach, inviting third-person interpretations, storytelling, and reenactments (Naumova, 2015). In addition, museums often hold fairs, markets, festivals, and other events to introduce visitors to a revitalized vernacular culture. The implementation of living history and reenactments significantly enhances the entanglements between different museum layers, constituting a symbolic ethnosphere, as posited by Gumilev (1970). Tangible objects and intangible cultural reenactments collaboratively enhance the immersive environments that stimulate the senses (for example, the smell of wood or cooked food) and invite visitors for hands-on interactions with cultural artifacts. Altogether, ethnographic open-air museums facilitate an experience of getting very close to days gone by, to what had become “exotic” (Vaessen, 2008).

The third level includes vast natural premises that distinguish this type of museum from an indoor display. Specifically, in conventional room-size museums, the relationship between the building and exhibition is influenced by architectural ideologies and the principles of indoor design. However, in an ethnographic open-air museum, the compositional layout is determined by a landscape that resembles the natural resources of an ethnographic region and constitutes an additional level in the museological structure (Figure 4). The incorporation of the natural landscape (along with demonstrations of fauna and flora in their natural habitats) blurs the conventional norms of room-size museums and expands the opportunities for visitors to interact in the open air (Charapan, 2018). Incorporating immense natural landscapes into museum displays increases the seasonality of a museum’s operations and makes a visit to an ethnographic open-air museum highly dependent on weather conditions. Consequently, some ethnographic open-air museums implement reduced working hours or interior exhibition closures during the off-season (generally from October to May), when a museum operates as a park (for example, the Lithuanian Open-air Museum). In turn, this has a substantial impact on the institutional configurations and opportunities for visitors engagements with ethnographic exhibitions during the low-season.

Lastly, ethnographic open-air museums often include a developed tourist infrastructure (Figure 4), which differentiates them from other types of museums. In addition to catering facilities, typical for museums, ethnographic open-air museums also incorporate infrastructure for accommodation (several houses are used as boutique hotels with reconstructed environments) and recreation (including locations for picnic

and grill sites as well as stages for performances). Furthermore, Skansen, for instance, also has a zoo with Nordic animals and an aquarium. This kind of developed infrastructure and hybridity of the compositional layout significantly diversify the affordances for a visit, transforming an ethnographic open-air museum from a cultural intuition that collects, preserves, exhibits the lifestyle of the past into a self-sufficient multifunctional destination with a variety of services and facilities that attract both local visitors and tourists.

The combination of cultural (tangible and intangible), natural, and infrastructural layers simultaneously co-creates *tableaux vivant* of the past and transcends the boundaries of conventional room-size museums. Specifically, it lifts the ban on visitor behavioral restrictions commonly imposed by conventional museums (for instance, it is prohibited to run, eat, talk loudly, hold a picnic, etc.). On the contrary, the institutional context of an ethnographic open-air museum promotes these diverse entanglements by providing infrastructure for recreation and entertainment. In turn, this substantially expands the affordances, agendas, activities, and genres of museum visit, which are discussed in greater detail in the following section.

2.2. Taxonomy of Genres of Museum Visits

This section introduces a taxonomy of genres of museum visits (or a visiting genre repertoire) as a sequence of visitor-museum interactions embedded and operationalized in the institutional context of an ethnographic open-air museum. Similar to the genre registers described in Section 1.4.3, the classification criteria for constructing a taxonomy of museum visit genres will integrate the structuralist perspective and the rhetorical approach. Specifically, the following criteria will be utilized for defining museum visit genres: form of visitor-museum interactions, level of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions, mediational means, visitor agency, and social context of interactions. On the basis of the preceding, I differentiate between non-guided, guided, and special event genres of museum visits. I will introduce the aforementioned criteria one by one.

Orlikowski and Yates (1994) define form as observable structural characteristics, communication media, and the language or symbol system of an interaction. In the context of a museum visit, this means that a form reveals the structure or flow of visitor-museum interactions. Translating this in the context of a museum visit, a form unveils the structure or flow of visitor-museum interactions. Consequently, the flow of a non-guided visit

has no rigid structure and is entirely determined by the visitor, who has complete control over the visit's content, scenario, and duration. A guided visit, in contrast, is based on a predetermined scenario and scripted interactions that a physical guide or museum educator externally enhances and facilitates. Therefore, the visitor's agency in defining the nature of interactions and the course of the visit is constrained and passive. Lastly, a special event visit has a semi-structured form of interaction that is framed by the program of the event. Hence, it often integrates several options for encounters and diverse activities happening simultaneously during the event, which allows visitors to define the scope and scenario of interactions in line with the event program. In addition, by attending a special event, a visitor becomes a part of the performance and co-creates the event through active participation.

The second criteria embraces mediational means actively employed for the production and operationalization of a genre of museum visit. Thus, in a non-guided visit, participants follow the signage (maps, other direction indicators) as well as labels with information about an artifact to navigate the museum spaces. Along these lines, in a non-guided genre of visit, the information about artifacts and exhibition is undifferentiated and non-personalized. As a result, visitor-museum interactions are not facilitated externally by museum staff or an event program and entail flexibility. Unlike a non-guided visit, in a guided genre of visit, a physical guide (a museum docent or an educator) acts as the main means for communication of information and facilitation of visitor experience. In this case, the communication is differentiated and adjusted to the scope of the visit and/or visitors' profiles. Lastly, during the special event visit, the event program acts as a template for visitor-museum interactions and provides a variety of choices for visitors to engage with. In this case, visitors are invited not only to strictly follow the script of a guided visit but also to immerse themselves in and co-create the event by joining different activities.

In line with the implications of the rhetorical approach to genre (Miller, 1984; Russell, 1997), when defining genres of museum visits, I consider the attributes of how visitors socially engage with peers, staff, and the museum's spaces in the framework of a genre visit. When delineating the social dynamics of a genre, special consideration is given to the visitor's agency in the visitor-museum network and the social context (for example, the size of the group). The first dimension concerns the way in which visitors are empowered to act and respond during the museum visit, in line with the action theory. In this respect, the visitor's role can be active, passive, or participatory during the visit. Considering the visitor experience as a social

practice, the social context and social roles are essential for defining the purpose of the visit and the flow of interactions. Along these lines, a non-guided genre of museum visit is common for individual visitors or small groups (for example, with friends and/or families). They often prioritize socializing and recreation over the educational benefits of a museum visit. The guided genre of visit invites a small or medium-sized groups of visitors (approximately, 10 people) and/or occurs in the specific social context (of a school group, for example). Lastly, the social dynamics of a special event visit are often characterized by a large number of people (or a crowd), including both known and unknown people, united by shared interests and attracted by a particular event.

The following table (Table 1) depicts the taxonomy of genres of museum visits and summarizes their key attributes that will be examined in the thesis.

Table 1. Taxonomy and characteristics of genres of museum visit. Source: Developed by author.

Genre of visit/ Attribute	Non-guided visit	Guided visit	Special event visit
Form of interaction	Unstructured	Structured/ pre-defined by the itinerary	Semi-structured/ staged
Level of facilitation	No	Enhanced by a guide	Immersive or enhanced by program
Mediational means	Museum signage, labels, audio guides, and mobile applications	Guide (museum docent, school teacher)	Event organizers, performers, signage
Visitor agency in interaction	Active	Passive	Participatory
Social context	Individual or small group	Small or middle-sized group	Large group or crowd

The presented taxonomy of genres is applicable to the museological context in general and, therefore, can be easily identified in various categories of museums. The suggested framework (or visiting genre repertoire) is

conceived of as a set of complex or secondary genres (in accordance with Bakhtin, 1986), existing in highly organized cultural contexts with shared structures and rhetorical situations. Given the scope of analysis focused on ethnographic open-air museums, the following sections will present and discuss in detail the developed taxonomy of genres of museum visits in this particular museological context.

2.2.1. Non-Guided Genre of Visit

According to the proposed taxonomy, the first group of visitor-museum interactions invites a non-guided or self-guided visit. As posited by Roberts et al. (2014), “[...]non-guided interpretative programs are developed in a way so that visitors do not have physical interaction or discourse with a guide, but rather connect through different objects, media and resources[...]”³⁴ and personal context (for example, interests and motives). Along these lines, the form of visitor-museum interactions has no rigid structure or pre-determined itinerary, while the flow of the visit fully rests on the visitor’s choices as well as the situational affordances of the institutional context. As previously noted, ethnographic open-air museums incorporate vast natural areas that, on the one hand, extend the affordances for visitor-museum interactions in comparison with conventional room-size museums, but, on the other hand, evoke seasonality and limited access to cultural heritage during the low season. In this case, non-guided visitors may opt to explore only the exteriors of the buildings, encounter flora and fauna, and use the museum infrastructure (for example, to take a walk in the open air, have a picnic, or visit a restaurant) or, on the contrary, explore every object from the exposition.

To navigate the ethnographic open-air museums, non-guided visitors are encouraged to use various types of mediational means. These include museum signage (including maps and direction indicators), labels with descriptive information about an artifact on display, pamphlets and book guides, audio guides, mobile applications with interactive maps, website information, and social media. Despite the variety of different sources, the communication during a non-guided visit is undifferentiated and might facilitate hurdles in understanding the museum’s message and ideas about the past.

³⁴ Roberts, M., Mearns, K., & Edwards, V. (2014). Evaluating the effectiveness of guided versus non-guided interpretation in the Kruger National Park, South Africa. *Koedoe: African Protected Area Conservation and Science*, 56(2), 1-8, p. 2.

In addition to the conventional mediational means typical for a museum, an ethnographic open-air museum also incorporates a living history approach to communication. For example, houses with reconstructed interiors typically have a host. This function is performed by a museum docent or staff member, costumed in a manner consistent with the regional and historical context. The host may demonstrate certain activities or production processes and/or provide additional information about the history of the house. Thus, non-guided visitors are encouraged to interact with the host and ask questions about the exhibition in order to personalize their experiences. In a non-guided genre of visit, communication is neither differentiated nor personalized to the needs of non-guided audiences.

The social dynamics of a non-guided genre of visit often occur in a small group of family or friends and/or individually. Therefore, in comparison with a guided genre of visit, the visitor experience from a non-guided visit has a more idiosyncratic character, determined by personal choices or preferences of the small group of people. Accordingly, a visitor actively participates in decision-making processes regarding the flow, itinerary, and duration of a visit. Due to the lack of a predefined structure of a visit and the institutional hybridity of an ethnographic open-air museum, the purpose of a self-guided museum visit evokes pluralism and diversity and may result in recreation, socialization, and knowledge creation, among other benefits of a museum visit. Consequently, the outcomes of museum-visitor interactions are equivocal and heavily influenced by the personal context and situational affordances of a museum visiting context.

To conclude, the democratization processes in the museum domain, which granted visitors more freedom and autonomy when interacting with museum spaces, have considerably boosted the development and popularity of non-guided museum visits. In accordance with the most recent sociomuseological trends and the increased role of museums as places for socialization and family visits, the non-guided genre has become one of the most popular visitation scenarios, generating a substantial visitor flow in ethnographic open-air museums.

2.2.2. Guided Genre of Visit

In line with the long-established pedagogical rhetoric in museum studies, person-led guided tours and excursions constitute one of the most popular and prevalent educational activities in the museums (Specht and Loreit, 2021). Along these lines, this thesis pays a particular attention to a guided genre of museum visit as separate genre of visitor-museum encounters. In

line with the proposed taxonomy, a guided genre of museum visit integrates interactions that are facilitated by a physical guide. Therefore guided genres of museum visits share a common form of visitor-museum interactions, but differ in content and substance.

Furthermore, a guided genre of visit invites particular social arrangements that impose certain rules and norms for visitor behavior. Eriksen (2009) implied that participants in a guided visit should adhere to the socially accepted standards of conduct in museums. For example, they should not interrupt a guide, misbehave, or distract other participants. Despite the fact that the premises of the institutional context of ethnographic open-air museums lift many behavior bans typical for conventional room-size museums, the communicative and regulative configurations of a guided genre of museum visit still acknowledge certain rules and regulations. Similarly, visitors are expected not to interrupt a guide or talk loudly during the visit. This signifies the ultimate power of genre arrangements on visitor-museum interactions despite the affordances of the institutional context.

In addition, a number of studies (Tinio et al., 2010; Specht and Loreit, 2021) show that person-led guided visits fulfill the primary communication function of conveying information and interpretive content while mediating interactions between visitors and museums. According to Wearing and Wearing (2007), guided interpretive programs are designed to make use of direct contact between the public and an interpreter or guide, who acts as a mediator in an effort to bridge cultural and cognitive differences between visitors and museums and facilitate meaningful experiences (Mathisen, 2012). This is especially relevant for ethnographic open-air museums that depict artifacts and transcend ideas about phenomena that do not exist in contemporary discourse. Therefore, a guide plays a crucial role in bridging a cognitive gap and providing additional pertinent information for diverse audiences. More importantly, the guide's function in this genre of visit is to create opportunities for social interactions and facilitate emotional bonding between the visitors and the museum settings (Arnold and Price, 1993). Specifically, by incorporating theatricalization and reenactments, ethnographic open-air museums promote various levels of visitor engagement and emotional attachment to museum spaces. In conclusion, a broad application of a living history approach and storytelling in ethnographic open-air museums places interpretive programs at the center of the museological agenda of ethnographic open-air museums, highlighting the importance of a guided genre of visit.

The social dynamics of a guided visit often include the familiar context of a small to medium group, comprising peers and/or teachers as in the case of a school visit. Justified by its relevance to specific thematic scope or educational goals, the purpose of a guided visit often has pedagogical foregrounding and is orchestrated externally by museum guides or docents. Therefore, from a personal perspective, the participants of a guided tour often play a passive role in defining the scope and flow of the visit. Unlike a non-guided visit, where visitors are invited to encounter hybrid settings of ethnographic open-air museums and define the level and duration of the museum visit, a guided visit is commonly defined by the agenda, duration and script of the program. Although the guided genre of visit gives the impression of being restrictive and monological, as acknowledged by Linell (1998), guided visits may be “more or less open” depending on unfolding activity in different situated social encounters and or level of external facilitation, as suggested in the thesis.

Along these lines, a guided genre of museum visit acts as a discursive and social practice where personal context comes into play and exchange with museum spaces and peers on the one hand and also as a response to narrative (Pierroux, 2010) on the other. In person-led guided visits, a guide a guide determines the order of activities, the itinerary of the visit, and the themes that are presented. Thus, the outcomes of the visit and facilitated experiences depend on how interaction is orchestrated externally by a guide.

Given the importance of an educational agenda in the context of ethnographic open-air museums, a particular focus of the thesis is placed on extracurricular activities and educational programs for schoolchildren, which comprise a significant segment of a guided visitor flow. As Coffee (2007) posits: “A distinct from recreational visitation, school groups come to the museum as part of a structured learning experience”³⁵. Therefore, an empirical investigation of visitor experiences in the context of a guided visit will be performed with schoolchildren.

In conclusion, the guided museum visit genre evolved from the inherent educational mission of a museum as a cultural institution to disseminate knowledge and educate audiences. The criteria for classification of visiting genre repertoire are particularly evident in the guided genre of visit (for example, school groups) and extra-curricular activities, where a museum visit aims to develop new knowledge and complement the school curriculum. Despite pedagogical rhetoric and rigid form of interaction, the

³⁵ Coffee, K. (2007). Audience research and the museum experience as social practice. *Museum management and curatorship*, 22(4), p.381.

involvement of a physical guide and tailored communication make this genre particularly important for ethnographic open-air museums in their attempt to convey ideas about the past and bridge the knowledge between the past and present.

2.2.3. Special Event Visit

The last category in the taxonomy belongs to a genre of special event visit or activity organized by a museum on temporary premises. In the museum literature, special events are frequently contrasted with conventional museum practices of guided and non-guided visits. In particular, special events are infrequent, different from the museum's usual activities (Getz, 1997), and aim at creating new reasons for retention and developing new museum audiences (Barbosa and Brito, 2012).

In relation to ethnographic open-air museums, special events are closely embedded in institutional context due to the incorporation of intangible cultural heritage and the overall museum's mission to reconstruct rituals and traditions practiced in the past. Specifically, ethnographic open-air museums arrange different events and activities, including seasonal holidays, demonstrations of rites and family traditions, music festivals and historical reenactments, and markets on an annual basis. Therefore, in the domain of ethnographic open-air museums, the genre of a special event visit is more integrated and diversified than in conventional room-size museums, where events are often related to a new exposition or special occasion..

As a complex secondary genre (Bakhtin, 1986), the special event visit genre incorporates encounters that are facilitated by an event program and entail similar visitor-museum interactions. As a result, its content and substance vary according to the target audience. A special event visit is organized by a team or museum professionals in accordance with an event's schedule, similar to a guided type of visit. This generates opportunities for social interactions and emotional bonding between museum visitors and the museum's environment. In addition, the museum-visitor interactions are aligned with the outline or program of the event. The visitors are invited to participate in a staged program that incorporates a variety of activities and, as a result, provides options regarding the visit's duration, content, and level of interaction.

Drawing on the specific focus or content of the event, the genre of a special event visit facilitates an informal atmosphere in the museum (Tobelem, 1998) and transforms visitor behavior. Following Andreasen (1991), Axles (2007), and Axelsen (2006), special events remove some

behavior bans and blur institutional norms, which in turn increase and diversify audience participation in conventional museum terms. For example, visitors are invited to stay overnight in specially-designated camping areas and swim in the water reservoir during the music festival Granatos Live in the Lithuanian Open-air Museum, or sing along during the Allsång på Skansen festival held at Skansen.

In accordance with this logic, a genre of special event, as opposed to a guided tour, encourages a greater degree of participation and enables visitors to act as co-creators of the event. The social dynamics of a special event visit occur in the setting of a large group of people, or a crowd. In turn, this imbues a particular vibe of neo-tribal attachment (Morgan et al., 2010) or *communitas* (Turner, 1969), which is especially evident in the case of music festivals as a special event category of museum visit within the context of ethnographic open-air museums.

The communication of a special event type of visit has a targeted nature and is directed at specific audiences with similar interests and behavior patterns. Consequently, a variety of media channels are used to disseminate information about the event. In addition, during the special event visit, event organizers frequently provide visitors with information about the event.

The purpose of a special event visit combines amusement, recreation, and socialization (Prentice and Andersen, 2003; Axelson, 2006). The thematic scope of the special event genre of museum visit is characterized by a variety of themes and programs that facilitate differentiation of museum services and significantly alter conventional visitor-museum interactions.

To conclude, a genre of special event visit was established in response to the advancement of *New Museology*, and increased need for diversification of museum services to generate retention and attract new museum audiences. Unlike a guided genre of museum visit with its rigid structure, a genre of a special event visit promotes a more informal and immersive environment for visitor-museum interactions and broadens the institutional identity of a museum.

Given the inherent purpose of ethnographic open-air museums to integrate intangible cultural heritage and promote vernacular traditions and rituals, the special event visit occupies a prominent place in the repertoire of visiting genres at an ethnographic open-air museum. The scope of the analysis will be placed on the open-air music festival as a special event visit in ethnographic open-air museums. According to Masesoli (Maffesoli, 1996), open-air music festivals are perceived as stages where different identities are performed and enacted through corporeal and cognitive transformation.

The purpose of this chapter was to define the peculiarities of institutional context and the visiting genre repertoire of an ethnographic open-air museum, which serves as an institutionalized template for shaping ongoing visitor-museum interactions and creating visitor experiences. The presented taxonomy of genres of museum visits and revealed configurations of museum visits will be further utilized for scrutinizing visitor experiences in the context of Swedish, Lithuanian, and Belarusian ethnographic open-air museums.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodological underpinnings of the thesis, including the selection of the research paradigm, design, and methods. With the overall aim of investigating visitor experience and meaning-making processes facilitated in the context of different genres of ethnographic open-air museums, the study positions itself in the exploratory framework. It begins by discussing the choice of the underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions of social constructionism as a foregrounding research paradigm. In addition, the chapter introduces an overview of the research design, specifying the research process with a detailed description of data collection, sampling strategies, and data analysis processes. The chapter concludes with ethical reflections on the research method and process.

3.1. Research Paradigm: Social Constructionism

According to Goulding (2005), Creswell and Poth (2017), a research paradigm is congruent with the nature of reality of the study. It pertains to certain philosophical assumptions that define the fundamental belief system that governs not only the selection of the methods, but the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underlie the thesis. Given the previously acknowledged idiosyncratic and contextual nature of a visitor experience, as well as increased complexity of visitor-museum encounters, the present study positions itself within the social constructionism paradigm.

Social constructionism is a theory of knowledge in sociology and communication theory that examines the development of jointly constructed understandings of the world that provide a basis for shared assumptions about reality (Crotty, 1998; Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). Thus, social constructionism is primarily concerned with understanding how phenomena are socially constructed (Crotty, 1998). It rests on the presumption that meanings are developed in coordination with others rather than separately within each individual. The rationale for this choice is grounded in ideal support for visitor experience as a socially and culturally configured construct, forged through a myriad of structured interactions via genres of museum visit, occurring in the institutional settings of ethnographic open-air museums. Consequently, this preposition entails engagements between a museum and a visitor configured in the framework of the genre of visit, where a museum facilitates the milieu for interactions, but at the same time they are enacted and co-created by the visitors.

Social constructionism, unlike traditional schools of thought, recognizes multiple realities (Neuhof, 2014). In this vein, I propose a reference to distinct types of museum visits that will contextualize the multiple realities of ethnographic open-air museums encountered by various museum audiences. From an epistemological standpoint, the interpretative framework of social constructivism holds that reality is co-constructed by the inquirer and the phenomenon as they intertwine and interact (Creswell and Poth, 2017). In this discourse, the genre of museum visit imposes certain communicative and regulatory rules that define visitor-museum interactions and result in visitor action. Genre of museum visit, whether used explicitly or implicitly as organizing structure, influences beliefs and actions, enabling and restricting meaningful engagement between museums and visitors. The methodological choices of the study were initially determined by extensive observations of visitors and further enhanced by a qualitative approach adjusted to the context of visitor-museum interactions.

Over the course of the last five years, I have conducted extensive participant observations of visitor-museum interactions at Skansen, the Lithuanian Open-air Museum, and the Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle on various occasions. The time spent on the sites observing visitors *in situ* permits me to trace and define the peculiarities of structures, elements, and social dynamics that set the stage for the introduction of the museum visit genre as a structuring unit of visitor-museum interactions and visitor experiences. This approach allows us to scrutinize the visitor experience as a nexus of personal visitor context and affordances from a museum for interaction. In addition to participant observation, multiple formal and informal conversations with guides, museum staff, and marketing specialists provided valuable insights into the existing museum outreach programs and museum practices.

The process of selecting a theoretical approach was influenced by the exploratory inquiry and heuristic agenda to generate “a unified theoretical explanation”³⁶ and scrutinize the structures of visitor experiences occurred in highly compound and hybrid environment of an ethnographic open-air museum. On this basis, the study adheres to the tenets of the experience theory approach by employing a prism of visitor-museum interactions framed within various genres of visit.

³⁶ Strauss, A., and Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, p. 107.

3.2. Research Strategy: Mixed-Method Approach

A mixed-method approach serves as the research strategy for the thesis. The reason for this choice comes from the exploratory nature of the study, which aims to conceptualize and empirically study visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum encounters.

Over the past decade, the mixed-method approach has been increasingly advocated in social studies (Creswell and Poth, 2017). Specifically, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides methodological freedom for scholars. In addition, Morse (2010) advocates for a broader conceptualization of the methodology, delineating the choice based on the subject of study, population, data types, and approaches. Amplifying the qualitative approach with quantitative methods is particularly suitable in the context of the study due to the following reasons. Firstly, a quantitative approach allows me to investigate the mechanisms and patterns in the structure of visitor experience (disposition and appearance of experience realms). In addition, a qualitative method enables the development of a nuanced understanding of visitor perceptions and meaning-making processes during different genres of visits to develop a nuanced understanding of the antecedents of the visitor experience.

The overall sampling strategy was motivated by both the exploratory inquiry into the genres of museum visit and my intrinsic desire to include diverse audiences and their voices in the study. It should be noted that the thesis does not seek to develop an explicit understanding of visitor experience in the context of ethnographic open-air museums; rather, it empirically investigates and tests the proposed conceptual model of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions framed by the optics of genre.

Along these lines, the purposive sampling procedures and the nature of visitor-museum interactions influenced the data collection and methods. Thus, the unit of analysis entails a group of individuals who have shared interactions framed in line with a genre of museum visit. As previously discussed in Section 1.4.3, homogeneity of visitor-museum interactions was achieved through the similarity in genre attributes. Together with that, the revealed differences in the dynamics of visitor-museum interactions and the content of the visit fueled the heterogeneity of the samples, which will be discussed explicitly in the following chapters containing empirical analysis.

Despite the fact that the data were collected to investigate visitor experiences in three genres, due to the lack of time and complexity of the analysis, the thesis includes only the analysis and findings from the guided

and special event genres of museum visits. The above-mentioned genres share similar structured form of interaction, facilitated externally by a guide or event program. Along these lines, the total sample includes the primary school children participating in interactive educational programs and/or excursions, observed during the guided genre of visit, and attendees of the open-air music festivals as informants of the special event visit across Skansen, the Lithuanian Open-air Museum, and the Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Sampling strategy of the thesis. Source: Developed by author.

Genre of visit	Profile	Method	Sample, N		
			LOAM	Skansen	BSMFARL
Guided, N=58	Primary school children	Participant observation, visual analysis, and followed-up interpretation	23	11	24
Special event, N=473	Attendees of open-air music festivals	On-site survey	165	147	161

Respectively, the thesis utilized data from 58 pupils during the guided school visit and 473 participants of the open-air music festivals.

The study of visitor experiences during special event visits was determined by the date of the event: open-air music festivals are arranged in August - early September. During the open-air music festivals, I conducted surveys at three museums with minimal contact with respondents. As for the guided school visits, the duration of contact with the interlocutors was lengthened because of the selected methodology, which integrates participant observation, visual analysis, and subsequent interpretations of the drawings (Table 2). The fourth and fifth chapters will define the research design and selection of methods and procedures for data collection and analysis in explicit detail.

3.3. Data Analysis

The Event Experience Scale (EES) was developed and empirically investigated by de Geus et al. (2016) to scrutinise the structure and dimensions of visitor experience in a variety of genres and contexts. I adopted their methodology to examine the structure and dimensions of visitor experience across genres and contexts in ethnographic open-air museums. Specifically, this framework was employed as a coding schema to elucidate the affective, physical, cognitive, and novelty dimensions of a visitor experience. The choice for the instrument was determined by its extensive empirical testing at a number of cultural events in different contexts by members of the ATLAS Events Group (Colombo and Marques, 2019; Marques et al., 2021). In particular, to unveil the structure of visitor experience, de Geus et al. (2016) proposed 18 items grouped in four categories, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. EES measurement instrument. Source: de Geus et al. (2016).

Experience dimension	EES and its's main components (de Geus et al., 2016)
Affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Excitement] I was excited • [Emotional energy] I got emotional energy/got emotionally recharged • [Intimacy] I experienced intimacy • [Adventure] I felt a sense of adventure • [Value(s) (creation)] I was aware of my own values • [Recollection]I wanted to relive this later (talk about it with others and show pictures)
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Interpretation]I was explaining/interpreting things for myself • [Cognition/thinking] I was thinking • [Intellect] I used my intellect • [Learning] I learned something • [Knowledge acquisition] I acquired new knowledge • [Reflexivity] I reflected on ideas that I got and discussed this with others

Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Behavior] I was active • [(Active) participation] I did not actively participate (RV) • [Creativity]I was not being creative (RV) • [Multi-sensory (elements)] all my senses were stimulated (taste, scent, hearing, smell, and touch)
Novelty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Distinctiveness] I had the impressions that the events were different from others • [Unfamiliarity] I experienced things unknown to me were / I was outside my “normal life” • [Uniqueness]I thought this was unique

This method was utilized to define and measure the dimensions of visitor experience in chosen genres of museum visits. The methodological sections of the forthcoming chapters provide a more detailed explanation of the elaboration and application of the model in the context of this study.

To address the limitations of the quantitative approach of the EES model, I adopt a qualitative analysis, employing thematic content analysis to examine visitors’ interpretations and meaning-making processes. This qualitative approach enables me to extract and investigate meaningful patterns from the transcripts of the interviews and investigate the key themes emerged in the perceptions about the ethnographic open-air museums from the visitors. This approach allows me to investigate patterns across the structural composition of visitor experience and facilitated perceptions or meaning-making processes.

The above methodological reflexivity allowed me to adjust the research design towards the dynamics of visitor-museum interactions. The exploratory inquiry fine-tuned the research design to the attributes of the interlocutors and the museum visiting context during the guided and special event genres of visits. Consequently, the processes of data acquisition and analysis prioritize the sequential nature of diverse visitors’ behavior and the manners in which they engage, experience, and interpret hybrid museum environments.

Everything that occurred during and as a result of museum-visitor interactions was emergent, contingent, and produced by the participants in moment-by-moment (Meisner et al., 2007). Therefore, what visitors experienced was not prescribed, rehearsed, or staged. Instead, the data consisted of natural and unprompted responses observed and recorded during

the studied genres of museum visits in the context of ethnographic open-air museums.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

Given the naturalistic character of the study, it is essential to outline the main ethical considerations relevant to this thesis. Before beginning participant observation and on-site interviews, the administration of the museums granted permission to conduct ethnographic research. In addition, the preliminary phase of data collection included the negotiation and scheduling of convenient times and locations for participant observations and interviews.

Further to the formal procedures, the major ethical concern was related to the interlocutors, who should be protected from physical and psychological harm, including loss of dignity, and provided with autonomy and self-esteem. In the case of the guided visits involving children's research, guides and teachers were notified in advance and gave their consent via email. In addition, children were informed beforehand about the research and verbally consented to participate. The participant observation and follow-up interviews with children were conducted in the museums and classrooms under the supervision/ assistance of teachers. Only children whose legal guardians consented to their participation and who were present at schools on the day of the interview were included in the study.

Throughout all phases of the research, I carefully observed my responsibility to support the confidentiality and privacy of the respondents. The participants in closely observed interactions, such as those at open-air music festivals, were required to verbally consent to their participation. All respondents were informed of the research agenda and invited to contribute to the study from the outset. Observations were conducted in a natural manner at the sites and only in public situations where visitors would expect to be observed. In order to protect confidentiality, only minimal personal information was collected from the respondents. All participants have been assigned fictitious names to ensure anonymity.

4. EMPIRICAL STUDY ONE: VISITOR EXPERIENCE IN A GUIDED GENRE OF MUSEUM VISIT

Drawing on the intrinsic endeavor of an ethnographic open-air museum to pursue a rich educational agenda and convey knowledge about the past, primary school pupils from three countries were invited to join the study. This chapter uses data from three samples to look at the structure of the visitor experience and what makes up the affective, cognitive, physical, and novelty realms of the visitor experience during a guided visit in the context of ethnographic open-air museums. The layout of the chapter adheres to the logic of the conceptual model as described previously and thus includes a comprehensive description of the personal context and museum visiting context, as well as a summary of the shared generic characteristics and peculiarities of three guided tours. In addition, it provides a comprehensive overview of the research design, including procedures for data collection and analysis.

4.1. Museum Visiting Context

In Skansen, the study was conducted in March 2017, when a group of primary school children from Stockholm took part in the interactive program “Children in Town”, and spent free time on the playground in the museum. During the 90-minute program, pupils were introduced to the daily lives of the working and middle classes in Stockholm and told about the routines, games, and childhood at the beginning of the 19th century. In the Lithuanian museum, the data were obtained in June 2017. More specifically, the study includes participant observation of a group of schoolchildren from Kaunas who joined the smith workshop and had a guided tour around the museum, conducted by a school teacher. At the end of the visit, children had a picnic on the grounds of the museum. Lastly, a group of schoolchildren from Minsk were studied in May 2017 during an interactive journey to a reconstructed village of the early 20th century in the BSMFARL and had free time after the excursion. The theme of the 90-minute tour, “Wheat Spikelet”, was centered on bread and bread production processes as a symbol of life, and pupils were invited to participate in the whole production process from seed to loaf. The narrative of the tour was rooted in Belarusian mythology, telling the story of the adventures of a character called the House Spirit.

The overarching objectives of three visits stemmed from educational premises, as the tours were planned as extracurricular activities and organized by school teachers. According to the classification criteria and

suggested taxonomy of genres of museum visits, all three examples belong to the guided genre of museum visit, as they share similar characteristics regarding the structure of museum-visitor interactions. Specifically, the programs have an organized form in line with the script, were facilitated externally and orchestrated by a physical guide. As for the social context of the visit, interactions occurred in the milieu of a school group. Lastly, children had a low level of agency in determining the flow, content, and structure of the visit. Together with that, a deeper insight into the content of the programs reveals several distinctions. Specifically, the guided visits vary in the type of guidance, level of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions³⁷, and structure of the visit. Table 4 summarizes the distinctive contextual characteristics of the studied guided visits.

Table 4. Distinctive characteristics of the guided school visits across three museums. Source: Made by author.

Characteristic	Case Study		
	LOAM	Skansen	BSMFARL
Guidance	Teacher	Museum staff	Fictitious character
Level of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions	Low	Average	High
Structure of visit	Workshop and guided tour	Animated educational program and picnic	Animated interactive educational program and free time

³⁷In the context of this study, facilitation is conceptualized in line with Mossberg et al. (2013), who outline the relationship between guide performance and visitor immersion. Accordingly, the level of facilitation that describes guide performance is in direct relationship with visitor immersion in the interaction and museum setting. They differentiate between below-basic, basic, and plus guide performance and three types, including without immersion, unaffiliated, and facilitated immersion.

Specifically, in the LOAM, the guided visit was arranged by the school teacher, and the overall level of facilitation of children's interaction with the museum was comparatively low. Acting as a guide and mediator of knowledge, the teacher provided general information about the objects and the museum, but the elements of role-playing and theatricalization were not observed during the visit. From the perspective of the structure of the visit, it started with the children's participation in the hands-on activity: a workshop for making souvenirs. It was followed by a walking tour around the museum. In addition to that, the school visit occurred in early June, during a summer day, and the group spent most of the time out-of-doors. The group followed the itinerary defined by the teacher, and therefore, children's agency in decision-making processes about the flow and content of the visit was limited.

In the case of Skansen, museum personnel acting as Stockholm residents from the early 20th century led the guided tour. The program involved storytelling and depicted the reconstruction of scenes from the lifestyle and childhood of the early 20th century. The structure of the visit entailed hands-on group activities (for example, children were asked to fold a hat from a newspaper or try-on clothes from the beginning of the 19th century), storytelling, and some elements of theatricalization, but no role-playing or teamwork activities were integrated into the visit. Therefore, the level of facilitation was average (Table 4). In addition, children's agency during the visit was limited to active gazing over the performance of museum educators. Hence, the tour included elements of hands-on activities and haptic interactions with the artifacts. The structure of the visit to Skansen included an excursion and a picnic on the playground. Given the time of the visit in early March, most of the visit was arranged inside the houses, where children were introduced to the peculiarities of the lifestyle and interiors of houses of the working and middle classes.

Lastly, the children from Minsk participated in an animated interactive excursion, where the plot of the visit was developed around the adventure of a fictitious hero, a House spirit, who introduced children to the process of bread baking and the overall lifestyle of peasants in the past. Through engaging storytelling, social interaction, teamwork, and role-playing, children were invited to immerse themselves in the museum settings as introduced by the House spirit during the museum visit. The participants were invited to perform different tasks to help the hero accomplish his goal and make bread. They acted as a team to complete the quest and do all the tasks as suggested by a guide. Therefore, the overall level of facilitation is characterized as high. This further promoted immersive interactions between

the participants and the museum. During the visit, information was transmitted by the fictitious hero in the form of a fairy tale. After the excursion, the participants had free time to visit the museum shop and buy souvenirs. The visit to the Belarusian museum occurred on a sunny day in May, and children spent long enough time outside and inside the museum buildings.

4.2. Personal Context

Stemming from the theoretical perspective on visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum encounters, this section aims to describe the personal context of the participants of the guided school visits to ethnographic open-air museums. To ensure generalizability of the results, I deliberately included in the research sample the participants with the shared characteristics.

Firstly, the respondents were selected to meet similar socio-demographic requirements as they belonged to the same age group and lived in large urban centers (Minsk, Kaunas, and Stockholm). Therefore, a visit to an ethnographic open-air museum facilitated novel experiences outside of “normal context”, enhanced by cognitive and physical translocation in time (from the present into the past) and space (from urban areas into rural areas). Secondly, the visits were arranged by the school teachers as extra-curricular activities and intertwined with pre- and post-visit assignments in the classroom. The purpose of the visits was embedded in the educational agenda, and social interactions during the event were framed in the context of a school group, where participants were invited to act as a team. Thirdly, to eliminate the noise from the previous museum visits and scrutinize the importance of genre competences and expectations on meaning-making processes, only the respondents that visited guided tours in the ethnographic open-air museums for the first time were enrolled in the study. Thus, this interaction and activity were new to them. Lastly, from ethical considerations, only the children whose legal representatives provided their consent with participation and who were at the schools on the day of the interview were included in the sample.

Keeping this in mind, in the final stage, a total of 58 schoolchildren, including 11 from Stockholm (Sweden), 23 from Kaunas (Lithuania), and 24 from Minsk (Belarus), contributed to the study. There were altogether 22 boys and 36 girls. The age of the children ranged from 5 years to 7 years. Despite the fact that 8 Stockholm pupils had previously visited the open-air

museum with their parents, they were all invited to participate in the research because it was their first time attending the guided program at Skansen.

4.3. Method and Material

Given the pre-arranged order of a guided genre of visit, the respondents were recruited through museum educators as the gatekeepers of the visitor flow. Teachers were informed about the research activities and invited to participate in the study. In the case of acceptance, teachers obtained the parents' oral consent with the participation of their children in the survey. Before the beginning of the observation, children express their consent to participate in the study. The right to withdraw from the process at any stage was articulated prior to any activity. In addition, the interlocutors were constantly instructed about the goals, tasks, and their contribution to the research.

To empower children to express their ideas and expand on their experiences, different types of data were collected and analyzed. Specifically, the process of data collection included three successive phases, depicted in Table 5 below, including *in situ* participant observation and shadowing, visual ethnography (Rose, 2012), and follow-up interpretations of the drawings. Table 5 summarizes the data collection processes and generated material. Step by step, I will provide a detailed description of the main stages and progression of the sample development across three museums.

Table 5. Guided genre of visit: method and material. Source: Developed by author.

Stage	Sample (N) and material (n, m)		
	LOAM	Skansen	BSMFARL
STAGE 1: Participant observation, N =71	N=24	N=15	N=32
STAGE 2: Collection and analysis of visual data(drawings), n= 60	n=23	n=12	n=25
STAGE 3: Collection and analysis of followed-up verbal data (interpretations), m=58	m=23	m=11	m=24

In the first stage, the ethnographic observation was conducted as participant observation *in situ* (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). I shadowed the groups

as they progressed through museum spaces. The field notes from the observation provided me with the structure of the guided tours and the children's immediate reactions to different scenes and activities during the visit (Rose, 2012). Accordingly, a total of $N = 71$ schoolchildren, including 15 from Stockholm (Sweden), 24 from Kaunas (Lithuania), and 32 from Minsk (Belarus), attended three guided visits and were involved in participant observation (Stage 1, Table 5).

In the second stage, the children were asked to make drawings associated with the visit. Specifically, the assignment was formulated in a broad frame, asking participants to think about the visit and their overall experience from it and depict it graphically. I purposefully invited pupils to draw since the act of drawing, according to Driessnack (2006), shifts the focus away from the research context and empowers respondents to develop a personal child-centered perspective to express their experiences (Horstman et al., 2008). To eliminate the impact of group dynamics on visual material production (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2014), the interlocutors were asked to prepare one drawing at home and bring it to school the next day. Because the children's participation in the research was voluntary, not all the participants contributed with the visual material, and thus $n = 60$ drawings (12 from Sweden, 23 from Lithuania, and 25 from Belarus) were received from three groups, generating an 80% response rate (Table 5).

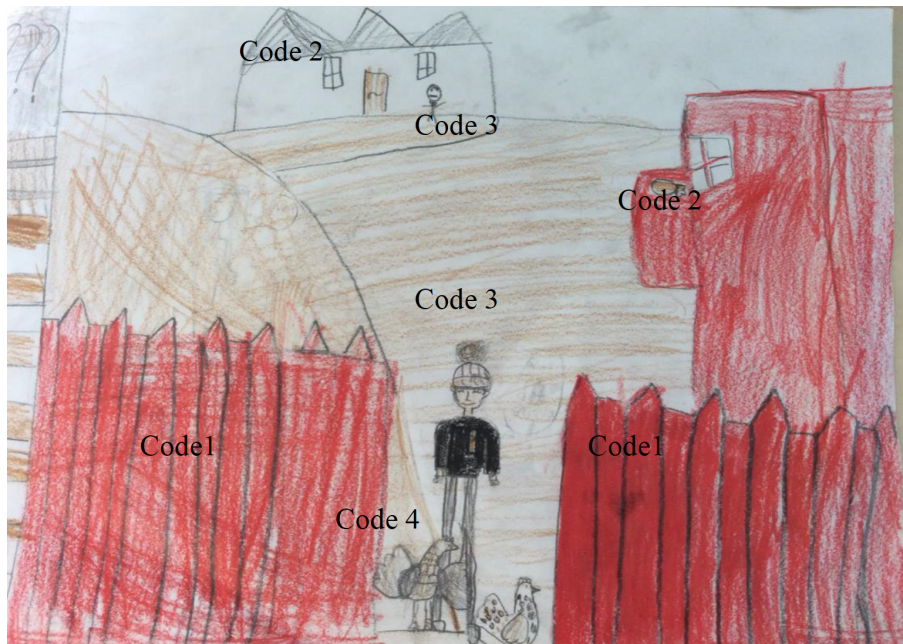
In the third stage, to grasp the essence of experiences and meaning-making processes, I invited respondents to provide interpretations of their drawings and talk about their experiences (Kuhn, 2003; Rose, 2012). I applied the participatory method of visual ethnography to empower and engage visitors in a meaningful way (Pink, 2013). The discussion of the drawings took place in a familiar environment—on the school premises, with the teacher present. As is shown in Table 5 (section 3), in total, 58 interpretations were collected from three groups. The collected data were subjected to quantitative frequency analyses (visual material) and qualitative content analyses (verbal material).

4.4. Data Analysis

The data analysis was guided by the logic of the data collection process and consisted of three main phases, as previously described in Table 5.

Phase 1. The visual data analysis was performed to scrutinize the frequency of objects appearing in the drawings and to provide a more detailed comparative analysis in relation to the interaction and context of the visit. Firstly, the scanned pictures were coded *in vivo* and added to the SPSS

software. Henderson (1991) referred to this stage as the discovery stage, which allows for the unveiling of new classifications and concepts, search for new patterns and realms of the phenomenon. In the second step, the *in vivo* codes were clustered thematically. As a result, the following clusters were revealed: in relation to the museum's physical setting and overall visiting context, the findings incorporate two major groups, including a) depictions of artifacts and cultural objects and b) natural phenomena (for example, birds, animals, trees, grass, sun, etc.); the second group of codes is associated with the personal context and involves the self-image as well as social interactions (imagery of human beings, fictitious characters from the guided tour); and lastly, d) textual denominations (for example, symbols, words). An example of the coding process is presented in Figure 6.



Code 1: fence (thematic cluster: cultural object). Code 2: house (thematic cluster: cultural object). Code 3: human (thematic cluster: social context). Code 4: chicken. (thematic cluster: natural phenomenon).

Figure 6. Coding process of visual material. Source: Made by author.

Phase 2. The obtained material with codes and thematic clusters was transferred into the SPSS software (Version 27). Each drawing has been supplied with information about what thematic categories it contains (the following binary coding was applied: 0 = not present, 1 = present at least

once). All themes in each drawing were counted. The information about the frequency of the objects was input into the database as a total score. First, a quantitative frequency analysis was done on three guided tours to find the minimum and maximum number of themes and measures of central tendency, such as the mean, median, and mode. This was done to find out how interaction affected children's ability to remember the visit and the overall experience. The comparative analysis was performed between the parameters in relation to the content and structure of a guided visit as well as the level of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions across three museums. The thematic analysis of visual data was conducted for each sample individually, and the main groups of objects as well as clusters within each sample were revealed. Further to that, a comparison was made between the disposition of the main thematic clusters as well as the percentage of drawings that included the item and theme across the three museums. This unveils genre implications, specifically the level of facilitation in the guided visit that produced memorable experiences from the visits.

Phase 3. In the third stage of the data collection process, children were asked to provide interpretations of the drawings. Therefore, the scope of the third phase of the data analysis is determined by the verbal data, which unveiled higher-level antecedents of meaning-making processes and provided a snapshot of the structure of the visitor experience. The process of verbal content analysis began with the creation of a full transcription and translation of material from Russian, Belarusian, Lithuanian, and Swedish into English. The data were entered into and added to one dataset in NVivo (Version 12), 2022, for the further qualitative analysis of experience dimensions and meaning-making processes from the guided visit to ethnographic open-air museums.

The Event Experience Scale (de Geus et al., 2016) was utilized as a classification schema for content analysis in order to reveal the dimensions of visitor experiences. Table 6 illustrates the main components of the Event Experience Scale and the constituent dimensions of the visitor experience, including cognitive, affective, physical, and novelty dimensions. Since the model was originally developed for quantitative research of event experiences, I adopted it to the context of a guided school visit and children's encounters within the museum. Table 6 provides a summary of the primary coding categories and sub-codes revealed by the content analysis of children's interpretations according to the Event Experience Scale method.

Table 6. Coding schema (adopted from the Event Experience Scale, 2016).
Source: Developed by author, based on de Geus et al. (2016).

Experience realm	EES and its's main components (de Geus et al, 2016)	Applied Coding: Sub-codes and Key Words
Affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Excitement] I was excited • [Emotional energy] I got emotional energy/got emotionally recharged • [Intimacy] I experienced intimacy • [Adventure] I felt a sense of adventure • [Value(s) (creation)] I was aware of my own values • [Recollection]I wanted to relive this later (talk about it with others and show pictures) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Excitement] I was excited/ it was fun • [Hedonism] I liked it/ I enjoyed it • [Dreaming] My dream will come true • [Adventure] It was adventurous • [Recollection of activity/ phenomenon] Used to play/ do/ engage with
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Interpretation]I was explaining/interpreting things for myself • [Cognition/thinking] I was thinking • [Intellect] I used my intellect • [Learning] I learned something • [Knowledge acquisition] I acquired new knowledge • [Reflexivity] I reflected on ideas that I got and discussed this with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Cognition/thinking] I was thinking • [Learning/ Knowledge acquisition] I learned something
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Behaviour] I was active • [(Active) participation] I did not actively participate (RV) • [Creativity]I was not being creative (RV) • [Multisensory (elements)] all my senses were stimulated (taste, scent, hearing, smell, and touch) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Behavior] I was active • [Hands-on participation/bodily engagement] I did something with / played/interacted with an object (for example, climbed, baked) • [Creativity]I created • [Multisensory (elements)] Description of stimulated sense(s)

Novelty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Distinctiveness of event] I had the impressions that the events were different from others • [Unfamiliarity] I experienced things unknown to me were / I was outside my “normal life” • [Uniqueness] I thought this was unique 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Distinctiveness of engagement] It was my first time I saw, played, encountered • [Unfamiliarity] I experienced/ engaged with things unknown to me
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In addition, the excerpt below contains an example of the coding process:

Author (N.C.): Please tell me about your visit to the museum and the drawing. What is it?

Daria: It is a stile next to the house. I learned [*sub-code: learning, code: cognitive*] that it was used to keep domestic animals close to the house. I climbed [*sub-code: hands-on participation, code: physical*] over the stile with other children... and it was such fun [*sub-code: excitement, code: affective*]! Besides, it has magic power and will make my dream come true [*sub-code: dreaming, code: affective*], because I climbed over it [*sub-code: hands-on participation, code: physical*].

Due to the revealed differences in content and flow of the three guided tours, as well as the size of the sample, the content analysis was performed for each sample individually. This process resulted in four groups of codes and 13 sub-codes, obtained from three samples. Table 7 provides a summary, while the full coding outline is included in Appendix 2.

Table 7. The summary of Nvivo coding structure for visitor experience realms from the guided museum visits across three museums. Source: developed by author.

Item/Sample	LOAM	Skansen	BSMFARL
N Sources	23	11	24
N References			
Affective	24	16	40
Cognitive	14	12	24
Physical	14	8	30
Novelty	22	10	22

According to Table 7, the first row gives the number of references per sample that have resulted from the analysis. The second row of the table lists the key experience dimensions and provides the number of references revealed in the material across three samples. Finally, based on the number of references revealed in the data, the compositional structure of the visitor experience and shares of the realms (%) were calculated for each museum and compared to develop broader conclusions about the character of the visitor experiences in the guided genre of museum visit.

To scrutinize meaning-making processes associated with ethnographic open-air museum visits, I utilized an empirical phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994; Aspers, 2009). An important premise of empirical phenomenology is that scientific explanation must be grounded in the first-order construction of the actors. Therefore, analysis must be free from predetermined categories about mental faculties and human behaviors. Following Aspers (2009), to develop an understanding of the first order of construction from the visitors lived experience, the previous findings were put in brackets. To generate first-order constructs associated with revealed thematic clusters that appeared in the previous phase of analysis, I complied and referred to different types of material, including transcribed data from interpretations, a drawing itself, and my personal notes made during the participant observation of the guided visits. After the data had been refined and transferred in Nvivo, it was coded according to the first-order constructs in a process to move to second-order construction (Aspers, 2009). In this process, some change took place as several categories of meaning-making processes showed overlap and new ones emerged. Lastly, the evidence was discussed in relation to the scientific literature on children's visitor studies in museums.

4.5. Findings

The structure of the findings section complies with the research agenda and follows the logic of the data collection process, as described previously. Along these lines, it includes the following sections. The first one outlines the results of the thematic analysis of collected drawings and presents how personal and museum-visiting (physical and institutional) contexts are embedded in the memorable recall from the guided genre of visit. Given the differences in level of facilitation as observed in three guided programs, the focus of the analysis is also placed on the themes revealed in the visual data. The second one shifts its focus to mechanisms of meaning-making processes during the guided genre of visit, based on the analysis of children's

follow-up interpretations studies the structure of visitor experiences and the disposition of the key components in the guided genre of museum visits. The last section unveils the structure of visitor experiences and disposition the main realms.

4.5.1. Findings from Visual Thematic Analysis

Based on the inherent characteristic of a guided genre of museum visit with its structured form of visitor-museum interactions and the differences in content revealed between the programs, the scope of the frequency and thematic analysis was placed on the key themes and their occurrence across the three samples of the drawings.

In the preliminary phase, the prerequisites for the calculation of parametric tests are validated. Consequently, the Kolmogorov-Smirnow normality test for the object frequency on a drawing indicates that the data are normally distributed ($p > 0.2$). In the initial stage, a quantitative frequency analysis of the dispersion indicators was performed. Regarding the level of facilitation and frequency of the three visits, the findings are discussed and compared. The outcomes are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Findings from frequency analysis. Source: Made by author.

Museum/ Index	LOAM	Skansen	BSMFARL
Level of facilitation	Low	Average	High
Sum	25 (11%)	105 (40%)	125 (48%)
Min	1	1	2
Max	5	9	11
Mean	2,6	4	5,4
SD	1,6	1,92	2
Mode	1	4	4
Median	2	4	5

The frequency analysis of the number of objects in drawings revealed 226 object categories in 58 drawings (Table 8). In particular, the results indicate that children who participated in educational guided programs with the high

level of facilitation, such as Skansen and the BSMFARL, drew more objects than those who attended a tour with a low level of facilitation, such as the case of the LOAM. Table 8 reveals that the plurality of themes (40 and 48 %, respectively) were generated by children from Sweden and Belarus. This pattern is also observed in relation to the maximum value: from 5 in the case of the Lithuanian Open-air Museum to 9 in Skansen to 11 in the Belarusian sample, the highest number of objects in a drawing gradually increases. Indicators of central tendency were also considered: the mean, median, and mode indicate that central tendencies in the Swedish and Belarusian groups are nearly identical. The majority of children in both groups drew between four and five objects, and the value of the mean varies between four and seven (Table 8). In the Lithuanian group, however, the mean and median values were half as high as in the previous two groups. On average, children drew two objects. In relation to the mean, the coefficient of standard deviation reveals how dispersed the data are. Table 8 displays a consistently increasing coefficient from the LOAM value of 1,6 to the BSMFARL value of 2. These findings reveal a direct correlation between the level of interaction facilitated during a guided tour and the distribution of objects and motifs on the drawings. Specifically, the analysis reveals that participants of interactive animated programs with theatricalization, teamwork, and role-playing tend to have a more vivid experiences from the visit and draw more categories of objects than participants of an excursion with a low level of facilitation or immersion during the visit.

The second phase of the analysis was to determine the thematic scope and breakdowns of each sample. Due to differences in the structure, content, and themes of the guided excursions, as well as the number of drawings from each case study, the analysis of the emerging codes was conducted independently for each sample. I was particularly interested in the thematic division and proportion of each category among the total number of objects depicted (n), as well as the proportion of children who drew it.

Keeping this in mind, I will begin with a summary of the findings from the Lithuanian museum, then the Swedish one, and conclude with the outcomes from the Belarusian case study. The results from the Lithuanian museum are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9. Key themes and frequency of their appearance in the drawings from the Lithuanian Open-air Museum. Source: Made by author.

Theme/ Cluster	Frequency	% of all objects drawn	% of all drawings
Windmill	10	8,00	43,48
Wooden building	7	5,60	30,43
School	1	0,80	4,35
Fence	3	2,40	13,04
Swing	3	2,40	13,04
Souvenir	1	0,80	4,35
Bus	1	0,80	4,35
Total: Cultural Realm	26	20,80	-
Bird (stork)	9	7,20	39,13
Frog	2	1,60	7,80
Butterfly	4	3,20	17,39
Grass and flower	20	16,00	86,96
Sun	19	15,20	82,61
Cloud	16	12,80	69,57
Water reservoir	5	4	21,74
Tree	10	8	43,48
Total: Natural Reaml	85	68,00	-
Self-image	3	2,40	13,04
Total: Social Realm	3	2,40	13,04
Symbol	2	1,60	8,70
Text	3	2,40	13,04
Emotions: smiley faces	6	4,80	26,09
Total: Other	11	8,80	-

The results show that the most popular categories of objects represented in the drawings from the Lithuanian Open-air Museum are related to the natural thematic cluster, including examples of flora, fauna, and meteorological phenomena (Table 9). More precisely, they account for $n = 68\%$ of the total number of objects, and they were chosen by 64–86% of the participants from Kaunas. This finding is particularly interesting given the fact that the discourse of the guided tour was solely developed around the cultural heritage and lifestyle of the past, and children's encounters with fauna (for example, storks, frogs, and butterflies) were not facilitated by the teacher. Instead, they occurred unexpectedly during the visit. This result exemplifies the idiosyncratic character of experience, the importance of individual identity work (Rounds, 2006), and the significance of the museum visiting context, and particularly natural realm of an ethnographic open-air museum visit as a trigger for experiences.

Regarding the cultural thematic cluster, the most frequently observed object was a windmill, which was depicted by $d = 43\%$ of the participants and appeared 10 times in the sample. This was then followed by depictions of timber structures ($d = 31\%$ of children) and a swing ($d = 13\%$). According to the references documented in the notes, all of these items were expressly explained by the teacher. In addition, children had direct contact with them during the visit. For instance, the LOAM participants created souvenirs (a necklace) and played with the swing. In relation to the scale of the image, it is interesting to observe that the drawings depict only wooden house exteriors and a windmill. This is because the majority of the group's time during the visit was spent outdoors and participating in the workshop.

Thirdly, regarding the social thematic cluster, which includes the depiction of the self, the group, a teacher, and/or a fictional character, only 13% (d) of children drew themselves during the school trip to the Lithuanian Open-air Museum. The comparatively low level of self-portraiture indicates children's shallow immersion in the museum context during the guided tour, as a result of the low level of external facilitation of visitor-museum interactions during the visit. In fact, a lack of theatricalization, teamwork, and engaging storytelling leads to a shallow level of sensory and cognitive immersion. In addition, the sample from the Lithuanian Open-air Museum does not depict social interactions between a teacher and students. The low level of group dynamics during the visit can explain this. In particular, the teacher provided only general information about objects and the museum, while peer interactions were not greatly stimulated. Instead, children passively consume information about the museum as part of an extracurricular activity organized and directed by the teacher.

The last group of codes comprises wording as well as depictions of emotions and symbols (almost 9% of all objects). The most exposed item in the group is a smile or smiling sun, drawn by 26% of the sample. Havigerová et al. (2021) claim that a sun or smiling sun is a common item in the drawings from many children at the age of 7 because of their developmental tendencies in psychology and neuropsychology. Together with that, it is considered to be a sign of positive emotions and safety experienced during the visit.

With this in mind, the flow of the discussion is directed to the findings from Skansen, where children joined the animated educational program “Children in Town” with elements of theatricalization and storytelling. The results of the thematic analysis of the drawings from Skansen are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. Key themes and frequency of their appearance in the drawings from Skansen. Source: Made by author.

Theme/ Cluster	Frequency	% of all objects drawn	% of all drawings
Windmill	2	6,9	18,18
Wooden building	5	17,24	45,45
Stove	1	3,45	9,09
Newspaper	1	3,45	9,09
Bed	2	6,9	18,18
Fence	1	3,45	9,09
Chest of drawers	3	10,34	27,27
Total: Cultural Realm	15	51,73	-
Bird (chicken)	2	6,9	18,18
Total: Natural Realm	2	6,9	-
Self-image	1	3,45	9,09
Group	2	6,9	18,18
Hero from a guided tour	7	24,14	63,64
Total: Social Realm	10	34,49	-
Text	2	6,9	18,18
Total: Other	2	6,9	-

In Skansen, the cultural thematic cluster is the most prevalent in the sample (n = 52% of all objects belong to this cluster). Similar to the findings from the LOAM, children tend to depict artifacts that were described and contextualized during the guided tour. The second greatest thematic cluster is associated with the social encounters of the guided school visit, with n = 63% of children reproducing images of a past lifestyle that were reconstructed and interpreted by museum professionals during the visit. During the tour, children learned about the poor living conditions of the middle class by observing infants sleeping in a chest of drawers. Consequently, 27% of children drew a chest of drawers, while 18% drew a bed. During the guided tour, 18% of participants at Skansen represented their school group and encounters with cultural realm during the visit. In contrast to the LOAM, where the tour had a low level of facilitation, children's interactions with the museum during Skansen's guided tour were augmented by joint hands-on activities (such as making a newspaper hat) and haptic engagement (trying on clothes and playing with toys from the past). This has a positive impact on social interactions and interpersonal nature of experiences, as vividly illustrated in Table 10.

Flora and fauna are one of the least represented thematic categories in the sample from Skansen (only 7% of all items). This could be explained by the weather and the flow of the guided tour. Specifically, the tour was arranged in early March, and the children spent the majority of the visit inside the buildings. Consequently, the participants drew interiors and ethnographic artifacts (such as a stove, a newspaper, and a bed) more frequently than exteriors when depicting their visit. In addition, the overview of the nature-led thematic cluster revealed that 18% of the children recalled chicken as a memorable experience from their visit to Skansen. This finding verifies a similar pattern observed in the LOAM and demonstrates the significance of children's encounters with live birds and animals in their natural habitat as a significant trigger for children's experiences.

The overview of the results of thematic analysis is concluded with the findings from the Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle. In this case, the participants joined the animated educational program led by a fictitious character, House Spirit, who acted as a mediator of the visit and facilitated children's encounters with peers (for example, bread baking or playing) and museum spaces. Table 11 encompasses the findings from the analysis.

Table 11. Key themes and frequency of their appearance in the drawings from the the BSMFARL. Source: Made by author.

Theme/ Cluster	Frequency	% of all objects drawn	% of all drawings
Windmill	8	7,62	33,33
Church	3	2,86	12,50
Wooden building	11	10,48	45,83
Stove	5	4,76	20,83
Bed	2	1,90	8,33
School	2	1,90	8,33
Fence	8	7,62	33,33
Souvenir	1	0,95	4,17
Stile	2	1,90	8,33
Loaf of bread	5	4,76	20,83
Total: Cultural Realm	47	44,75	-
Grass and flower	13	12,38	54,17
Sun	3	2,86	12,50
Cloud	4	3,81	16,67
Water (reservoir)	1	0,95	4,17
Tree	8	7,62	33,33
Total: Natural Reaml	29	27,62	-
Self-image	4	3,81	16,67
Group	7	6,67	29,17
Teacher	3	2,86	12,50
Hero	10	9,52	41,67
Total: Social Realm	24	22,86	-
Text	4	3,81	16,67
Emotions: smiley faces	1	0,95	4,17
Total: Other	5	4,76	-

According to Table 11, the thematic analysis of the drawings from the Belarusian case study reveals the following breakdown of the main groups of objects. The biggest category ($n = 44,75\%$) represents the cultural thematic cluster. In second place are images of the natural environment ($n = 27,67\%$), followed by depictions of the social thematic cluster ($n = 22,86\%$). The least exposed group consists of wording and imagery of emotions ($n = 4,76\%$). Similar to Skansen, children prefer to depict cultural heritage objects over natural phenomena or social interactions as the most memorable aspect of the visit. Its high visibility could be explained by the character of visitor-museum interactions that occur during the visit. Particularly, the encounters were staged and orchestrated by the House Spirit, and children collectively explored the main stages of bread production from seed to loaf. Similar to the LOAM, the visit took place on a sunny day in early May, when children spent equal amounts of time outdoors and inside. As a result, many participants incorporated images of flowers, butterflies, and insects into the drawing. In addition, a high proportion of illustrations contained greenery ($d = 54\%$ correspond to the code "*grass and flower*").

The overview of the compositional structure of the visual material shows that children utilize both scattered and focused gazes and depict scenes from both interior and exterior surroundings. With respect to the most frequently appearing items (Table 11), $d = 45\%$ of all drawings include an image of a wooden buildings, followed by the images of the windmill ($d = 33,33\%$ of participants drew it) from the cultural heritage cluster, and greenery (grass and/or flowers, $d = 54\%$) from the natural realm. In addition, 41% of children depicted a House Spirit, a fictitious character that acts as a guide during the visit. This pattern is consistent with the findings from Skansen, where children included in the pictures figures of people and scenes that were staged by the museum staff during the visit. One more interesting observation from the Belarusian sample is the imaginary of different social activities and tasks that children performed during the visit as a group. In turn, this facilitated interpersonal experiences and social interactions. Specifically, $d = 30\%$ of children drew a group of peers baking bread ($d = 20,83\%$ of children drew the stove), playing on the ground or leaping over the stile ($d = 8\%$ of children included in the drawing), and entering the windmill ($d = 33,33\%$). Moreover, $d = 16\%$ of children included a self-portrait in their artwork. Intriguingly, the self-portrait was frequently exhibited in the context of hedonistic activities during the visit, such as souvenir shopping ($d = 4,17\%$ of children drew it), eating ice cream, or tasting bread ($d = 20,83\%$ of interlocutors included a loaf of bread in the drawing). The frequent depiction of a group or self-image indicates a deep

immersion on a personal level into the museum context, which is circumscribed by the configurations of a guided school visit with a high level of external facilitation from a guide. Similarly to Skansen, the guided tour in the Belarusian museum actively evoked senses (such as making dow and sampling bread) and incorporated elements of haptic engagement and theatricalization, promoting both hedonistic and interpersonal experiences during the visit.

The above-mentioned findings in relation to each of the case studies were compiled together to develop a more holistic comparative perspective on the correlation between the level of facilitation in the three guided visits and the appearance of thematic clusters in the drawings. For this purpose, the previously calculated shares of the main thematic clusters were exported from Tables 9–11 into the diagram, displayed on the horizontal axis in Figure 6. The vertical axis indicates the level of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions (low, average, or high) observed during the guided visits in the selected museums.

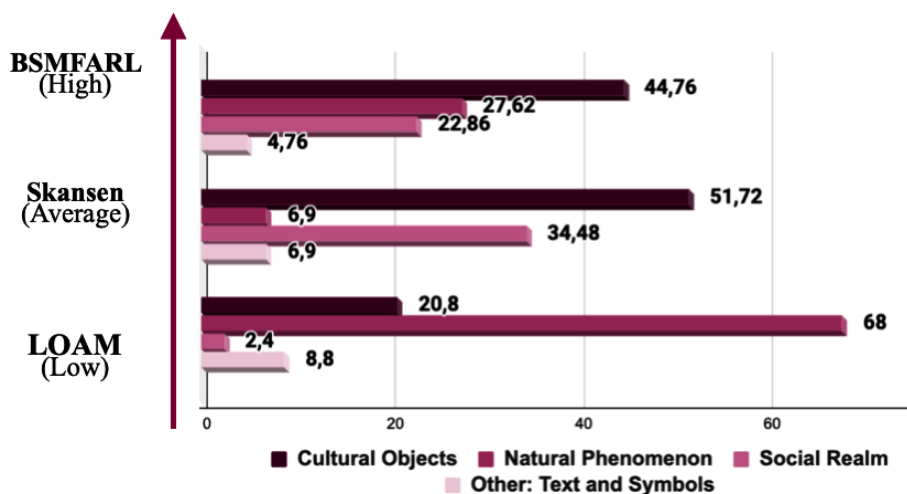


Figure 6. Distribution of main thematic clusters across three museums in relation to the level of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions. Source: Made by author.

The results show that items from the cultural thematic cluster prevail in the visual material from Skansen and the BSMFARL (51.72% and 44.76%, respectively). Average and high levels of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions promote children’s immersion into the museum context. In relation to the LOAM, where the overall level of external facilitation was

low (Figure 6), children chose objects from the thematic cluster "Natural Realm" more often (68%). This is particularly interesting given the fact that the scope of the excursion and the provided information were developed around the cultural heritage and lifestyle of the past. This exemplifies the ultimate anthropological significance of natural encounters as a trigger for children's memorable recall without additional external facilitation. This observation supports the previous findings by Dohn, Madsen, and Malte (2009), who state children readily identify and interact with animals in their natural habitat due to the ability to identify animals and plants they have acquired from toys, books, pictures, and popular media. In this case, the previous knowledge about the natural phenomenon has facilitated a stronger memorable recall than the encountered buildings and objects, which were novel and were not communicated by means of theatricalization or interactive storytelling.

A similar pattern emerges with regard to the social domain of the visit, specifically the depictions of the self, the group, and a fictional character or a teacher. The respondents from the Belarusian and Swedish museums, who participated in animated guided programs with a high level of interactivity and facilitation of interaction, covered a much broader range of codes from the social realm (34% and 22,86) than the 2,4% from the Lithuanian museum, as shown in Figure 6. The results indicate that the orchestration of the visit by external agents (such as fictitious characters or costumed museum professionals) has a positive influence on children's memorable recall of social interactions, which promotes more intense interpersonal dynamics during the visit and facilitates visitor experiences. In addition, the participants in the LOAM, led by the school teacher, only include self-portraits, indicating more idiosyncratic encounters and an absence of social interactions with peers. Finally, children utilize text to designate distinct objects and to convey symbols and emotions. The data indicate that this category is evenly distributed across three samples and accounts for between 5 % and 9 % of the entire sample.

In conclusion, the frequency and thematic analyses of the visual material indicate that the facilitation of children's interaction with and within the museum context has a significant effect on how participants create meaning and value from the museum visit and what they depict as key elements of their experience from these interactions. Specifically, in highly interactive animated program, participants are exposed to more intense interpersonal and cultural encounters, and the majority of the drawings depict cultural heritage objects and social interactions that encountered during the visit. Along these lines, the frequency analysis of visual data

demonstrates equally high frequencies of themes in the drawings from the Swedish and Belarusian samples (40% and 48% of the whole items, respectively). In general, through the revealed codes of cultural artifacts and their incorporation into the structure of the visit, the overall theme of the visit can be traced in the themes reproduced by children. This is also relevant in terms of the social interactions that occurred during the visit. The data demonstrate that children who participated in the guided visits and encountered teamwork and play tend to recall the moments of social interactions with peers in the drawings more frequently than the participants of the guided visits with a low level of external facilitation by a guide.

Together with that, the findings demonstrate that a low level of facilitation results in more idiosyncratic visitor-museum encounters, determined by the personal context (interests and hedonistic sentiments). For example, the findings from the LOAM demonstrate twice lower number of themes in the visual analysis, and depictions of encounters with natural environment and self-portray despite the scope of the guided tour placed on cultural heritage and lifestyle in past.

Due to the fact that the visit to Skansen took place on a cold day in early March 2017 and that the children spent the majority of their time inside the buildings, the majority of their drawings depict the interiors of houses, and the natural realm is conveyed through interactions with animals (such as chickens). In contrast, participants from Kaunas and Minsk spent the majority of their time outdoors, resulting in a high diversity of nature-determined codes and their high frequency in the corresponding samples.

The analysis of visual materials demonstrates that the hybrid institutional context of ethnographic open-air museums, which combines cultural, natural, and infrastructural areas, serves as a crucial catalyst for memorable experiences during guided museum visits. Specifically, the clusters that appear most frequently in the visual material are cultural objects and natural phenomena encountered during the school field trip. In addition, the results demonstrate that the social dynamics and level of facilitation provided by a guide have a significant impact on the disposition of the aforementioned categories. Specifically, the outcomes of the detailed thematic analysis indicate that children who participated in interactive animated excursions tend to include more themes associated with cultural and social encounters. Overall, they demonstrate a higher level of immersion in the museum context than the participants of the excursion with a low level of interaction, who clearly prefer to draw examples of flora and fauna. This exemplifies identity work in experience-making. The following sections seek

to shed additional light on the structure of visitor experience and meaning-making processes within the context of the guided visit to the ethnographic open-air museums.

4.5.2. Follow-up Interpretations and Meaning-making as Antecedents of Visitor Experience

For contemporary children from urban centers, the discourse of an ethnographic open-air museum with its scope on pre-industrial wooden vernacular architecture full of artifacts that are non-existent in the present context is novel and difficult to understand without additional personalized communication and information support. Therefore, guides act as mediators that not only contextualize information about the display and museum spaces but also orchestrate visitor-museum encounters and enhance meaning-making processes. To illustrate how first-time participants with no prior cultural knowledge and genre competence perceive and make meaning of ethnographic open-air museums, I will discuss the vignettes documenting children's interpretations of the drawings. Following the outcomes of the visual analysis, the structure of this section aims to unveil meaning-making processes as well as antecedents of visitor experience realms.

Cultural Heritage: Re-contextualization

The results of the visual analysis indicate that cultural heritage objects comprise the largest group in samples from Belarus and Sweden, where museum docents actively facilitated children's encounters through theatricalization, play, and group activities. The revealed objects are categorized according to the main themes and topics discussed during the guided tour (such as bread-making processes, windmills, and childhood in the past). The subsequent interpretations of the drawings with the cultural heritage objects disclose the higher-level antecedents that illustrate the mechanisms that children employ during the guided visit to create meaning.

The content analysis reveals that the cultural heritage of ethnographic open-air museums acts as a vital source of meaning-making practices. In this section, I will discuss the recurring patterns and mechanisms employed by children to construct meaning from the visit. Therefore, the material includes only 18 drawings and their interpretations.

The data show that first-time visitors to ethnographic museums often choose cultural heritage objects that are personally relevant, stimulate the

cognitive domain (through surprise or contrast), and invite active haptic engagement. In the following sections, I will support the above-mentioned mechanisms with excerpts from children's interpretations of the drawings.

Given the idiosyncratic nature of visitor experience and meaning-making processes, the analysis reveals that children actively depict in their drawings objects that constitute personal importance and value. Specifically, when creating links between past and present, children actively employ re-contextualization to translocate the encounters from the museum into contemporary socio-cultural discourse. In doing so, the participants actively engage existing knowledge and personal interests that integrate the unfamiliar object or phenomenon into their existing cognitive schema. For example, Annika from Stockholm shares experiences co-created through her engagement with a newspaper (Figure 7):

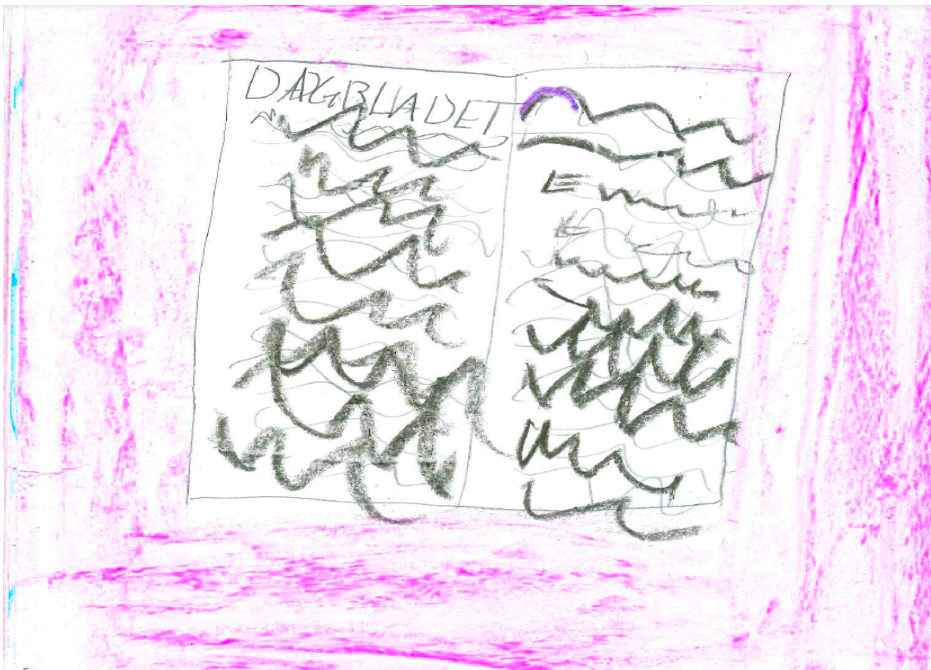


Figure 7. Drawing # 4 from Skansen.

Author (N.C.): Let's talk about the picture and your experiences. Please describe your drawing [Figure 7] for me.

Annika (interpretation of drawing 4, Figure 7, Stockholm): I drew the newspaper Dagbladet. My grandfather usually reads this newspaper, so we have plenty of them at home, but this one is different from those we usually have.

Author (N.C.): How does it differ?

Annika (interpretation of drawing 4, Figure 7, Stockholm): Well... The Dagbladet from the museum does not have any pictures at all. It is not so bright and even boring; that is why I added a bright pink background to it.

The girl highlights her previous familiarity with the artifact (“my grandfather usually reads this newspaper, so we have plenty of them at home”) and at the same time stresses the surprising novel features of it (“it does not have any pictures”) that caught her attention and make it meaningful due to the previous encounters in real life. This excerpt demonstrates how Annika does not simply draw on existing knowledge about the newspaper but employs creativity in order to bridge the gap between two items (by adding a bright background). This example demonstrates how the existing knowledge in combination with the constructing features highlight aspects of the artifacts that otherwise would have conveyed very little personal meaning.

A similar pattern can be observed in the case of the drawing and the primary school from the guided visit in the LOAM and a story from Monika:



Figure 8. Drawing # 31 from the LOAM.

Author (N.C.): Tell me about your visit to the museum. What is on the drawing [Figure 8]?

Monika (interpretation of drawing 31, Figure 8, Kaunas): Together with a school group, we visited the school in the museum as it was in the past. It looks different from my school, but I liked the bright colors.

Author (N.C.): How does it differ?

Monika (interpretation of drawing 31, Figure 8, Kaunas): It is blue and made of wood. The desks are too low and uncomfortable to sit at. I like our school better.

The above-mentioned vignette demonstrates how a combination of contrasting physical attributes of the school building together with haptic engagement (“desks are too low and not comfortable to sit at”) and social identity—a pupil visiting a school—play in combination to create personal relevance of the object and constitute a memorable effect. These examples showcase that familiarity with the phenomenon beyond the museum visit enables children to relate on a cognitive level, which in turn stimulates learning and facilitates strong, memorable recall of the cultural encounters. Further to re-contextualization, the content analysis of interpretations indicates that children eagerly include in the drawings the items that trigger their personal interest and curiosity because of their strange shape and physical attributes.

Respondents from three sites express astonishment over unknown objects with a strange form and construction (Figure 9):



Figure 9. Drawing # 2 from the BSMFARL.

Author (N.C.): Please tell me about the experiences of the visit to the museum and your drawing [Figure 9].

Olga (interpretation of drawing 2, Figure 9, Minsk): Here you can see a windmill, a church, and a wooden house. I was mostly impressed by the beautiful windmill.

Author (N.C.): Why? Please, explain.

Olga (interpretation of drawing 2, Figure 9, Minsk): It is very big, with huge wings, as in a fairy tale. It is incredible how it transforms seeds into flour. I have never seen it before in my life.

According to the findings, children repeatedly assert that windmills' unique shape, size, and construction facilitate the experience of novelty and astonishment. It is interesting to note that, regardless of the level of interaction and thematic focus of the guided program, windmills are one of the most frequently depicted objects in the visual data across all three samples. For instance, in the LOAM and the BSMFARL, a school teacher and a House spirit presented information about the windmills and their functionality. However, in Skansen, pupils only passed it by and played near it after the guided part of the visit. In this case, the information about a windmill was not conveyed by the guide, but a school teacher briefly mentioned it. In spite of the lack of additional contextualization during the tour, the following drawing and excerpt from Niclas' interview demonstrate how three-dimensional architectural objects revitalized by play and encounters with fauna initiate meaningful interactions (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Drawing # 6 from Skansen.

Author (N.C.): Tell me about your experiences from the museum visit. What did you draw?

Niclas (interpretation of drawing 6, Figure 10, Stockholm): I like the red windmill. It is incredibly huge and looks different from the other buildings in the museum.

Author (N.C.): How?

Niclas (interpretation of drawing 6, Figure 10, Stockholm): Because it is big and has a strange shape. We met chickens there.

Along these lines, Niclas expresses his fascination with the size and shape of the windmill as well as unexpected encounters with chickens as an important trigger of surprise, which serves in many drawings as an iconic landmark of an ethnographic open-air museum. Overall, this observation confirms the earlier research by Anderson et al. (2002), claiming that children commonly memorize life-size or large-scale exhibits in diverse museum settings. In addition to that, I argue that the materiality and physicality of an artifact in itself are not always sufficient to facilitate meaning and personal value. Instead, the haptic interaction and interactive story-telling revitalize the object and makes it meaningful for audiences.

Another important trigger for meaning-making processes is hands-on engagement with cultural heritage objects that enhances personal physical engagement. For example, during the guided tour at Skansen, children played with replicas of toys from the early 20th century, tried on clothes, and made a hat from a newspaper. Likewise, in the Belarusian ethnographic open-air museum, visitors learned how to use the stove and bake bread. The visual analysis indicates that a newspaper, a stove, and a loaf of bread are the most frequently appearing items in the visual material from Belarus and Sweden.

The following vignette from Daria (interview 27, Figure 11) explains the reasons for depicting a stile (*a construction used for keeping cattle in the yard—author*) as a core part of the visiting experience to the Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle in terms of meaningful haptic engagement.

Author (N.C.): Please tell me about your visit to the museum and your drawing. What is it?

Daria (interpretation of drawing 22, Figure 11, Minsk): It is a stile next to the house. I learned that it was used to keep domestic animals close to the house. I climbed over the stile with other children, and it was such fun! Besides, it has magic power and will make my dream come true because I climbed over it.

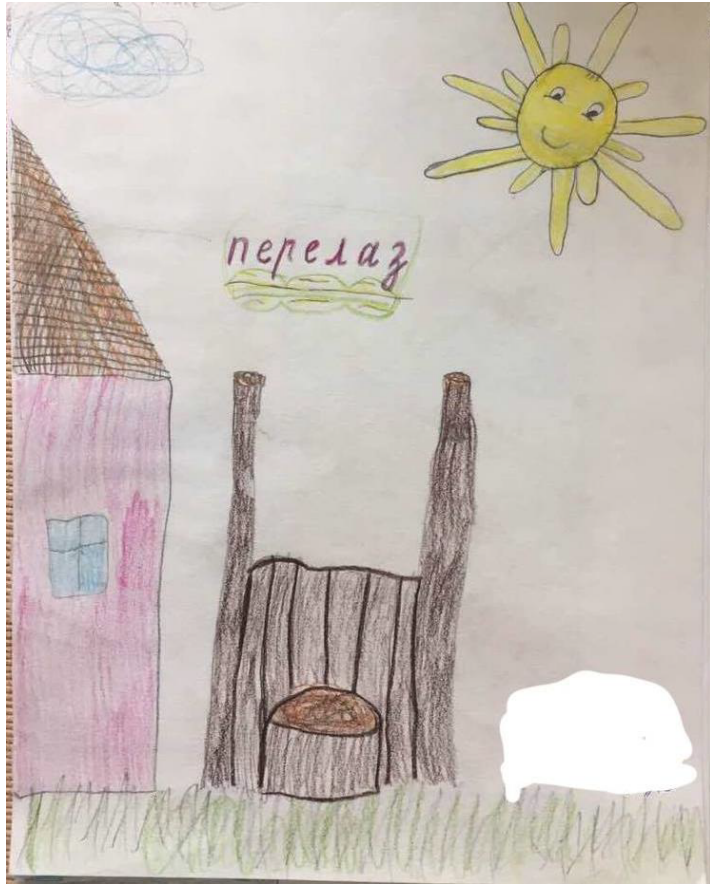


Figure 11. Drawing # 22 from the BSMFARL.

This episode supports previous findings by Anderson et al. (2002), emphasizing the role of physical interactions in creating memories of a museum visit. Together with that, the data suggest that children create meaningful connections with cultural heritage objects when physical interactions are enhanced by personal relevance (in the case of Daria, it is dream-making), which adds symbolic personal meaning to the physical encounters with the cultural heritage.

A similar pattern could be observed in Ugné's interpretation of the drawing with a depiction of a souvenir, which she produced for her mother and siblings (Figure 12):



Figure 12. Drawing #13 from the LOAM.

Author (N.C.): Please tell me about your museum experiences. What is on the drawing [Figure 12]?

Ugnė (interpretation of drawing 13, Figure 12, Kaunas): In the museum, we attended a smith's workshop and made souvenirs. I made necklaces for my sisters and mother. The yellow one has the shape of a heart and is designated for my mom. The second one has the shape of an apple, and I made it for Agnė (a sibling). The third one is for my older sister, Erika.

In examples such as these, the haptic encounters with cultural heritage and hands-on activity, induced with personal relevance (expressed through dreaming or doing souvenirs for loved ones), allow children to re-contextualize the scope of the guided tour and museum visit into familiar context by establishing a connection from the museum visit to what comes after it. This observation interlinks with the previous findings of Dohn et al. (2009) and Horstmann et al. (2008), stating that even if students enjoy interactions with objects during informal learning sessions, interest and memorable experiences are not fostered if there is a lack of relevance and connection to the lifestyle beyond the museum visit.

In addition to the cultural heritage realm, the previous excerpts demonstrate the importance of encounters with the natural realm of the

museum, which revive cultural heritage objects by triggering situational interest. With this in mind, the next section moves its focus to children's interpretations of drawings depicting encounters with flora and fauna during the guided genre of ethnographic open-air museums' visits.

Natural Realm: Serendipity

The second thematic cluster revealed in the visual material is associated with the natural environment of the ethnographic open-air museums. It should be pointed out that natural or environmental topics were not included in the excursions. However, children easily construct the meaning of the museum visit through their interactions with flora and fauna in the open air. In comparison with the cultural encounters, externally staged and stimulated by the guides, the children's natural encounters during the visit were spontaneous and unexpected for the respondents.

Since the participants were from urban centers, the visit to the ethnographic open-air museum with its vast natural premisses created a geographical translocation from a city to vast natural landscapes and open-air premisses. The data suggest that, when making meaning of natural encounters, children use mechanisms involving serendipity and strong sensorial engagement. Specifically, feelings of joy, surprise, and excitement enter into a play.

In the interviews, respondents frequently expressed their fascination with the interactions with animals and birds in their natural habitat on the museum's grounds. For example, Mindaugas's first encounter with storks in their natural environment during a guided tour of the LOAM prompted a strong memory recall and framed his overall museum experience (Figure 13). In the interview, the boy frequently expressed his excitement at the idea of observing a live bird at the museum:

Author (N.C.) : What is your highlight from the visit? How can you describe your experience shown in the drawing [Figure 13]?

Mindaugas (interpretation of drawing 29, Figure 13, Kaunas): I saw storks walking on the field and hunting for frogs. I have never seen storks in real life. I read about them only in books. They were so close to us. I did not expect to meet them in the museum.



Figure 13. Drawing #29 from the LOAM.

The example depicts the interplay between the perception of a museum visit (genre competence) and unexpected encounters with storks in their natural habitat. This finding points to a previous study by Scheersoi (2015) proposing that children readily identify and interact with animals in their natural settings within reconstructed environments due to their ability to identify them from previous encounters in books or reality. Similar comments were reported from Skansen, where children interacted with chickens for the first time during the museum visit. For example, Hans (Interview 6, Figure 14, below) expresses a sentiment of joy and play with chicken as a part of the museum experience.

Author (N.C.): Please tell me about your visit to the museum and your drawing [Figure 14].

Hans (interpretation of drawing 13, Figure 14, Stockholm): Here I am playing with chickens next to the big red wooden house. I have never played with chicken. They are bright and run fast. I could not catch them.



Figure 14. Drawing # 13 from Skansen.

This excerpt demonstrates how interacting with live birds during the museum visit stimulates immediate situational interest, which turns the scope of attention from facilitated encounters with cultural heritage objects to a free play with birds.

A similar pattern is observed in the case of Monika and her interpretation of the drawing depicting a bird and a windmill from the Lithuanian Open-air Museum (Interview 29 and Figure 15):

*Author (N.C.) What is in the drawing? Tell me about your visit to the museum.
Monika (interpretation of drawing 29, Figure 15, Kaunas): We went to the museum with a school group and saw a big white bird near the windmill. The bird's name was... Uhh I do not remember. It was walking around the pond with fish. The bird was eating fish!*



Figure 15. Drawing #29 from the LOAM.

In examples such as these, children from urban areas articulate the significance and personal relevance of natural encounters experienced at the museum. The absence of strong external facilitation by the guide has enabled children to depict natural phenomena that resonate with their individual interests and arouse inquiry. In other words, the live birds and animals encountered in their natural habitat prompted a stronger memorable recall than the static cultural heritage objects during the guided visit with a low level of external facilitation by a guide.

The following excerpt from Darina's conversation demonstrates how the hybridity of institutional context resonates with children's expectations (genre competence) and questions the institutional identity of an ethnographic open-air museum:

*Author (N.C.): Tell me about your memorable experiences at the museum.
What is in the picture?*

Darina (interpretation of drawing 33, Figure 16, Minsk): We visited the museum on a nice summer day and spent much time in the open air. I painted trees, meadows, a blue sky, and a windmill. It is a strange museum. It has a park full of greenery. It is nice to have a walk there.



Figure 16. Drawing # 33 the BSMFARL.

In this example, Darina reframes her previous perception of a museum as a solely cultural institution and builds on what the museum provides for her on individual level (“*it’s nice to have a walk there*”), creating a hedonistic experience of a museum visit. Her reasoning for including the natural phenomenon in the drawings confirms the previous findings by Dohn, Madsen, and Malte (2009) that animal encounters generate an immediate sense of connection and strong emotional feedback, resulting in a memorable experience. Also, interactions with fauna and flora were not incorporated in the thematic scope of the visits. Moreover, children's interactions with the natural realm happened during the unguided part of the museum visit. The

high diversity and frequency of nature-related codes in the drawings and future interpretations suggest that these codes have a strong personal relevance for children from the urban areas. In addition, the study reveals that children often do not associate the outdoor activities with a traditional indoor museum visit, and their encounters with nature add value to the visit and facilitate an overall hedonistic experience of an ethnographic open-air museum.

Social Realm: Group Withholding and Personal Distancing

The final group of codes that appeared in the visual data is associated with the social dynamics of the guided school visits. Particularly when respondents describe their perceptions of a museum visit in terms of their social interactions with peers, museum guides, teachers, and characters from the guided program. The data from the visual analysis of the three samples reveal that the thematic cluster of social dynamics includes depictions of self-portrait or self-representation, a school group, a personage or protagonist of the guided program (such as the House Spirit in the case of the Belarusian museum, and/or a guide and a teacher), and/or a self-portrait or self-representation.

The findings from children's interviews suggest that social context, specifically being a part of the group, acts as an important trigger for collective learning. Specifically, in the construction of meaning, children often recall group activities and teamwork, facilitated by museum professionals, and moments of play that simulate cognitive, sensorial, and physical engagements. It is interesting to note that some drawings show a self-portrait and display the activities carried out personally by a child or a group of classmates during the visit (in the cases of the LOAM and the BSMFARL). Altogether, this shows a deep immersion with the content during the guided genre of museum visit. At the same time, other drawings offer a distant gaze on the past, depicting scenes staged by museum professionals.

The incorporation of the House Spirit and other fictitious characters in the guided program invites the children's imagination and revitalizes the museum display, facilitating intense immersion with and within the museum's cultural content. For example, the sample from the BSMFARL entails the image of the House Spirit as one of the dominating elements in the visual material (Figure 17).



Figure 17. Drawing #40 from the BSMFARL.

Author (N.C.): Let's talk about your visit to the museum and the drawing [Figure 17] that reflects your visit.

Veronika (interpretation of drawing 40, Figure 17, Minsk): Here is the House Spirit, who lives in the museum, and I drew him next to the wooden house.

Author (N.C.): Can you tell me more about it?

Veronika (interpretation of drawing 40, Figure 17, Minsk): It is a person who takes care of the house; he invited us to visit his house, and we baked bread together. The bread was fresh and tasty.

In the excerpt, Veronika emphasizes the role of the House Spirit as a facilitator of group activity (bread baking), which further results in a more hedonistic and sensorial personal experience of bread tasting and constitutes meaningfulness.

During the interactive program in the Belarusian museum, children were actively involved in teamwork and play (for example, when rolling dough or doing quizzes from the House Spirit). This, in turn, has resulted in a frequent depiction of the school group in the drawings in the case of the Belarusian museum. For example, the drawing from Zlata shows the schoolmates as well as the teacher during the process of baking bread (Figure 18):

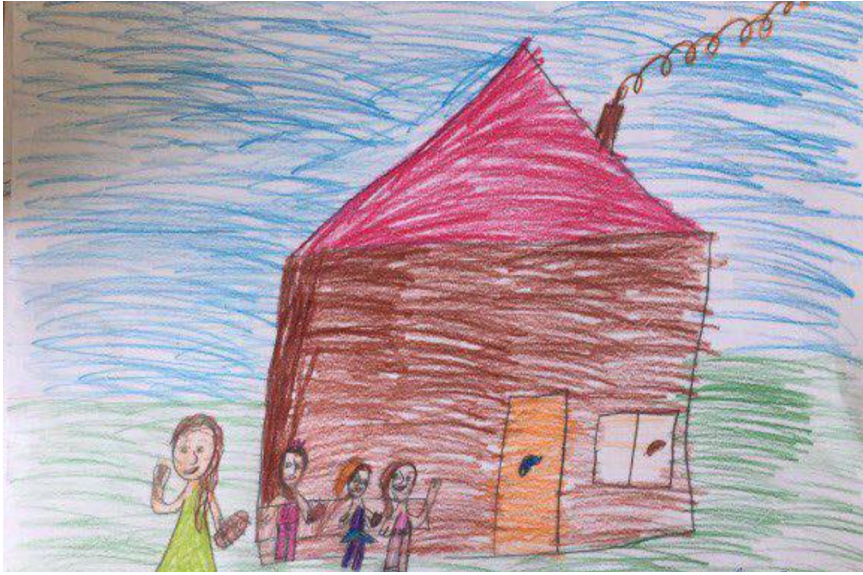


Figure 18. Drawing #41 from the BSMFARL.

Author (N.C.): Let's talk about your visit to the museum and the drawing [Figure 18] that reflects your visit.

Zlata (interpretation of drawing 41, Figure 18, Minsk): It our teacher, who carried a loaf of bread, and my classmates. We baked and ate bread together. Before the visit, I did not know that bread was made of flour and water.

Author (N.C.): Did you like it?

Zlata (interpretation of drawing 41, Figure 18, Minsk): Yes, it was one of the tastiest breads I have ever tried in my life, and what is more, we made it all together with the House Spirit.

The interpretation from Zlata exemplifies the value of teamwork and social dynamics as a part of the overall experience. This vignette depicts how social involvement and interpersonal encounters can enhance meaningful relations between the participants, and facilitate the personal value of the interactions. In turn, this provides a form of social stimulation by encouraging children to gain new knowledge collaboratively in a meaningful and entertaining way.

The analysis of children's interpretations suggests that when interactions during the visit lead to positive personal emotions of joy and hedonism, children produce self-images and eagerly share their first-hand

stories. For example, the drawing from Karina (Minsk, Belarus) has four sections that provide a detailed view of the activities that trigger hedonistic or joyful emotions experienced during the group interactions (Figure 19):



Figure 19. Drawing #35 from BSMFARL.

Author (N.C.): Let's talk about your visit to the museum and the drawing [Figure 19] that reflects your visit.

Karina (interpretation of drawing 35, Figure 19, Minsk): I divided the picture into four parts with my favorite moments of the visit. Here, you can see me climbing over the stile. In the past, it was used to keep the domestic animals enclosed in the yard, but we jumped over it one by one. Then I draw our group playing games outdoors with the cute House Spirit, who also baked bread with us. The third part shows me and O.P. [a teacher - N.C.] walking hand in hand in the museum when I was tired. And finally, you can see souvenirs that I bought in the museum.

Author (N.C.): What was the most exciting moment during the visit?

Karina (interpretation of drawing 35, Figure 19, Minsk): Oh... I liked playing games out-of-doors and buying souvenirs. I bought a cute toy dog for my mom and chocolate-flavor ice cream for myself.

The data from the vignette confirms the clear division of the museum's memorable recall into parts relating to the sequential flow of the visit. In the above transcript and drawing, it is evident how the complexity of the flow of the visit leads to a fragmentation of the child's experience and that the

best-recalled activities involve socializing and entertainment, tapping into familiar socio-cultural aspects of daily life (for example, buying souvenirs) that are easily retrieved from memory. This observation corresponds to previous research by Birch (2018), who states that children often recall the experiences in accordance with the flow and scenario of the visit.

In addition, the findings highlight the importance of personal relevance in social interactions for memorable recall. It is through the recognition and performance of familiar practices from modern daily life (e.g., shopping or cooking), which are replicated in the reconstructed context of open-air museums (e.g., by baking bread), that children most readily make meaning of the cultural heritage sites. Moreover, Karina's example demonstrates the importance of personal identity work in meaning-making processes: the dogs and ice creams have been drawn with an impressive level of detail (Figure 19). The verbal analysis shows that the act of buying souvenirs as entertainment repeatedly appears in the sample from the Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle. Similarly, in the case of Skansen, the children recall the outdoor play and group interactions (as mentioned by Niclas in interview 6).

Similar patterns can be observed in the findings from the LOAM, where interlocutors portray themselves in the settings of the ethnographic open-air museum and describe their positive encounters with and within museum spaces. The drawings by Nida (Figure 20) and Èglè (Figure 21) contain images of the girls during the guided visit:



Figure 20. Drawing #16 from the LOAM.

Author (N.C.): Please, describe your experience of the visit [Figure 20].

Nida (interpretation of drawing 16, Figure 20, Kaunas): In the middle of the picture, you can see me. During the visit, we attended a workshop (dirbtuvė- Lit.) and saw a stork for the first time. It was hunting for frogs in the pond. So it is me and a stork next to the workshop house.



Figure 21. Drawing #18 from the LOAM.

Author (N.C.): Tell me about your visit to the museum. What is on the drawing [Figure 21]?

Èglė (interpretation of drawing 18, Figure 21, Kaunas): It is me (aš -Lit.) in the museum. I was playing with swings and walked around the wooden houses where our ancestors lived. I had a great time being outdoors with my classmates!

In both cases, the girls associate themselves with the museum and have positive memories of meeting a stork, riding a swing, and being outdoors with classmates. In instances such as these, children develop rich sensorial and affective relationships with the museum's content and enthusiastically recall the moments of delight, amusement, and enjoyment during the guided school visit.

In contrast, the Skansen's sample and subsequent interpretations revealed the opposite pattern. In particular, children differentiated and distanced themselves from the phenomenon or story that evoked negative or

unpleasant connotations (for example, poor living conditions, a difficult lifestyle, and children's labor) as the topic evolved to encompass various living conditions and childhood in the past. In this instance, the recall is prompted by surprise and negative personal connotations, and the drawings depict the scenes introduced by the guides. For instance, Figure 22 depicts the impoverished living conditions of the past, with an entire family sleeping in a single bed.

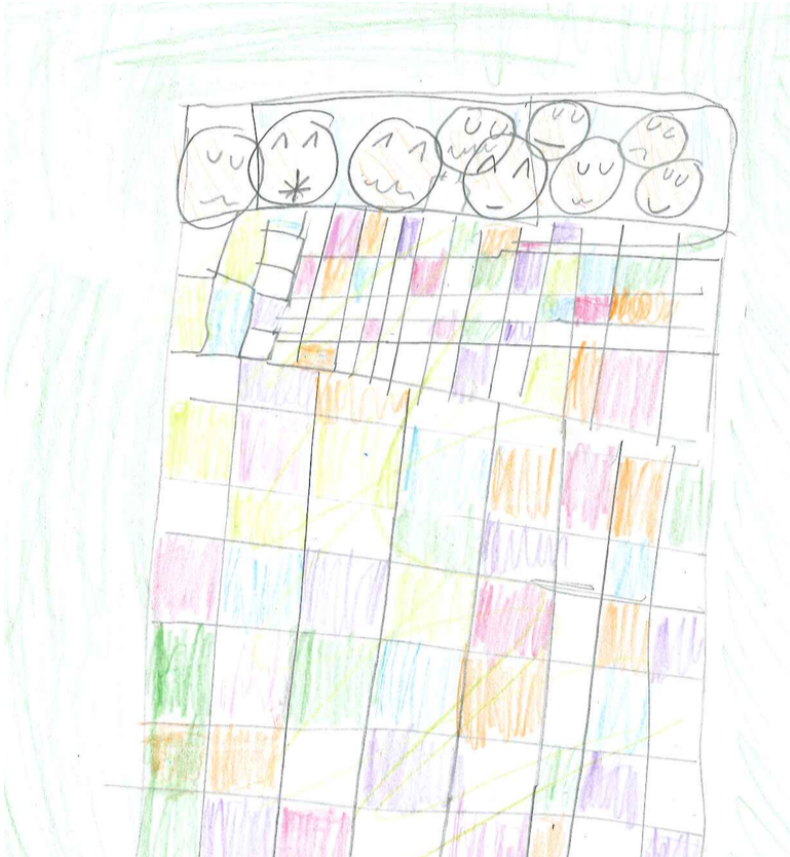


Figure 22. Drawing #11 from Skansen.

Author (N.C.): What is displayed in the drawing [Figure 22]?

Jan (interpretation of drawing 11, Figure 22., Stockholm): During the visit, I learned that people slept together on the couch due to the lack of space and poverty. I made a drawing about the family sleeping together in one bed. I was surprised to know that people had to share a bed! It might not be comfortable to sleep all together. I sleep alone in my bed.

This excerpt resonates with the previous findings showing that the contrast

that appears between the existing cognitive schema and the phenomena encountered during the guided tour triggers memorable experiences and facilitates knowledge about the past. At the same time, the evoked negative feelings (“*it might not be comfortable*”) do not promote further personal translocation into the context of an ethnographic open-air museum, keeping the visitor as an isolated observer during the guided visit.

The analysis of the drawings as well as the subsequent verbal interpretations show that children involve personal distancing from the museum content that leads to negative emotions, drawing and describing “the others” and their stories, that were interpreted during the guided program. A similar pattern is also observed in the drawing from Ulrika, depicting a chest of drawers with a sleeping toddler as a memorable experience from the guided tour in Skansen:

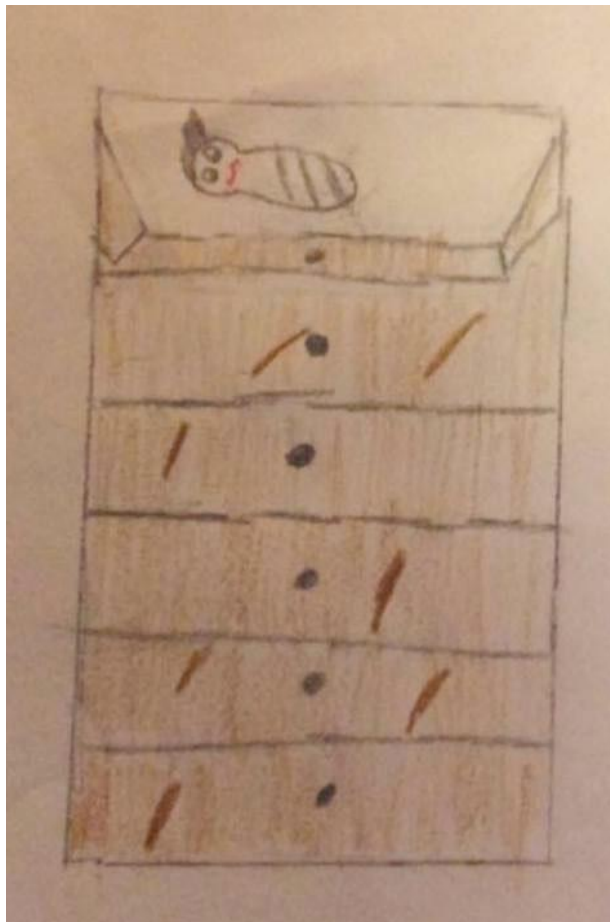


Figure 23. Drawing #12 from Skansen.

Author (N.C.): What is displayed in the drawing [Figure 23]?

Ulrika (interpretation of drawing 12, Figure 23, Stockholm): Here is a toddler sleeping in the chest of drawers. His family is so poor that they could not buy a crib for him. I was shocked. It might be difficult to sleep there.

Although the contrast and affective engagement have been recognized as important means for enhancing memorable experiences of the museum visit, the above mentioned fragment denotes that negative emotions or discomfort increases further children's distancing from the museum content. In the above mentioned fragment Ulrika incorporates the story about the toddler to disassociate herself with the displayed living conditions in the past.

Considering the social interactions during the guided visit, the findings show that the most emergent codes are associated with the activities and social encounters that were facilitated and stimulated externally (for instance, baking bread, making souvenirs, or playing traditional games) and entailed personal value for participants. In addition, social configurations associated with a school group visit ("*being a part of the group*") co-create a feeling of safety and familiarity with the museum and its novel environments, which in turn promotes further immersion and translocation into the context of the museum visit.

Children frequently recall group activities and moments of pleasure, surprise, and hedonism that simulate active bodily and cognitive engagement when constructing meaning. Overall, the findings indicate that activities that align with children's schemas and daily routines promote positive emotions and contribute to personal immersion and self-representation. Nonetheless, when the communicated information about the object or phenomenon creates a sense of surprise or a strong negative connotation, respondents frequently dissociate themselves from the depiction in relation to the visit. Both positive and negative connotations make the museum visit and the children's encounters unique and memorable. Therefore, while depicting a lifestyle in the past, the content and interactions should leverage familiar practices and cognitive schema to foster the development of new knowledge and meaning-making processes.

4.5.3. Structure of Visitor Experience

To unveil the structure of the visitor experience, a content analysis of children's interpretations was performed. Following the EES theorization by de Geus et al. (2016), the scope was placed on the cognitive, physical

(conative), affective, and novelty dimensions of children's experiences during the guided genre of museum visits. Table 7 includes the summary of codes revealed as a result of a content analysis. These data were used to define the share of experience realms in the overall structure.

Given the differences in facilitation of visitor-museum interactions across the three guided visits, I start with the presentation of the structure and percentage disposition of dimensions in each tour individually. This is followed by a comparative analysis and overall discussion about the structural composition of visitor experiences revealed across three museums.

Figure 24 visually depicts the compositional structure and respective shares of cognitive, physical, affective, and novelty dimensions revealed based on the content analysis of children's interpretations from Skansen.

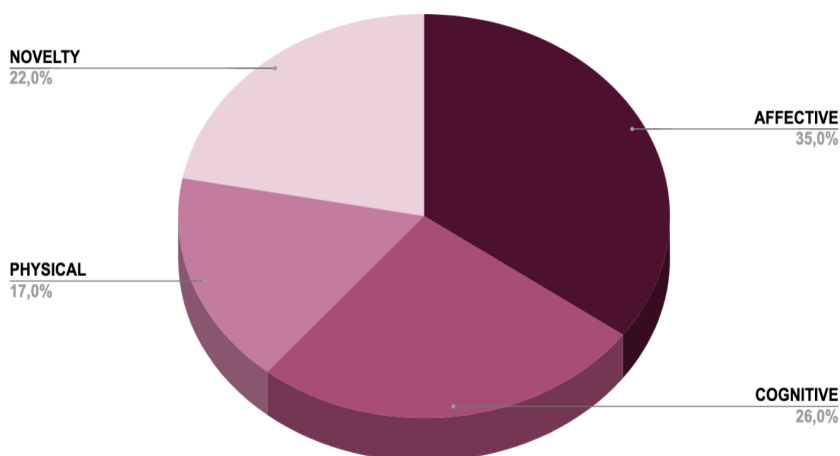


Figure 24. Structure of the visitor experience from the guided visit to Skansen. Source: Made by author.

According to Figure 24, the distribution of the main experience realms and their respective proportions is nearly equal, ranging from 17% to 35%. The data reveal that the affective domain accounts for the largest proportion (35%) and has the greatest influence on the participants of the guided school trip to Skansen. The strong presence of the affective realm can be explained due to the attributes of visitor-museum interactions framed by the genre configurations of the guided visit. Furthermore, the live encounters with flora and fauna, as well as the hybridity of the physical context of ethnographic open-air museums, contributed to the occurrence of serendipitous feelings during the museum visit. Lastly, during the guided visit, children were exposed to positive (hedonistic) and negative emotions associated with the lifestyle in the past. In turn, this has facilitated the prominence of the affective dimension in the overall visitor experience

structure. As documented in the preceding sections, children frequently recall feelings of astonishment or even shock when discussing their experiences during follow-up interpretations. This exemplifies how visiting content (and specifically the hybrid physical context of ethnographic open-air museums) as well as external facilitation of visitor-museum interactions instill strong emotional recall, which promotes a substantial share of the affective domain within the structure of the visit experience.

The second most dominant realm is associated with cognitive engagement (26%, Figure 24), which is consistent with the initial educational underpinnings of a guided school visit. In line with the proposed conceptual framework of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions, the cognitive realm of experience encompasses learning and acquiring new knowledge and skills, intellectual development, and reflectivity among the key outcomes of a museum visit. The findings demonstrate that a guide's role as a mediator of new knowledge and facilitator of children's encounters with museum spaces is highly crucial for the advancement of cognitive engagement and meaning-making processes. Previous studies that emphasized the significance of cognition in the overall structure of the visitor experience (Dewey, 1938/1963; Falk and Dierking, 1994), and particularly in the interpretive programs (Mossberg et al., 2018), have generally supported this assumption. In addition, the findings from the content analysis of children's interpretations demonstrate that participants actively employ a re-contextualization mechanism that allows visitors to translocate the past into the present. Furthermore, re-contextualization enables them to integrate new knowledge and ideas about the past into the existing cognitive schema. Lastly, given the importance of a personal context for learning outcomes in museums, the data reveal the importance of children's interests and the incorporation of haptic engagement for creating new knowledge and meaningfulness.

Novelty occupies the third position in the structure of the visitor experience with 22%. In visitor experience theorizing it can relate to the content, whether new information or elements are incorporated into the program or location, as well as to the visitors and their prior experience and genre competence. In this particular instance, the respondents were first-time visitors to the ethnographic open-air museum. Therefore, both the visiting setting and the museum's overall content were novel to them. In addition, the familiar social context of the visit (being part of a school group on a guided tour) and contextualization of the information provided during a guided program lessen the overall impact of novelty on the visitor's experiences. In this vein, the follow-up interpretations suggest that children frequently recall

feelings of novelty in relation to cultural heritage objects that were not necessarily included in the narrative by a guide but were triggered by a personal interest (as in the case of the windmill and its extraordinary shape) and have nested personal value.

The final component of the experience is physical engagement, which accounts for only 17%. In spite of the fact that children were engaged in hands-on activities (such as folding a hat or trying on clothing from the past), the findings indicate that the physical domain does not comprise a substantial share of the structure of experience. Additionally, its low presence can be attributed to unfavorable weather conditions as an external factor affecting the physical domain of the visit. Specifically, the visit to Skansen occurred in early spring, and children spent the majority of their time inside the houses, resulting in fewer outdoor interactions than during the Lithuanian and Belarusian museum visits.

Further to the results from Skansen, I will present and discuss the findings from the LOAM. The compositional structure of the visitor experience from the guided visit to the Lithuanian museum is presented in Figure 25.

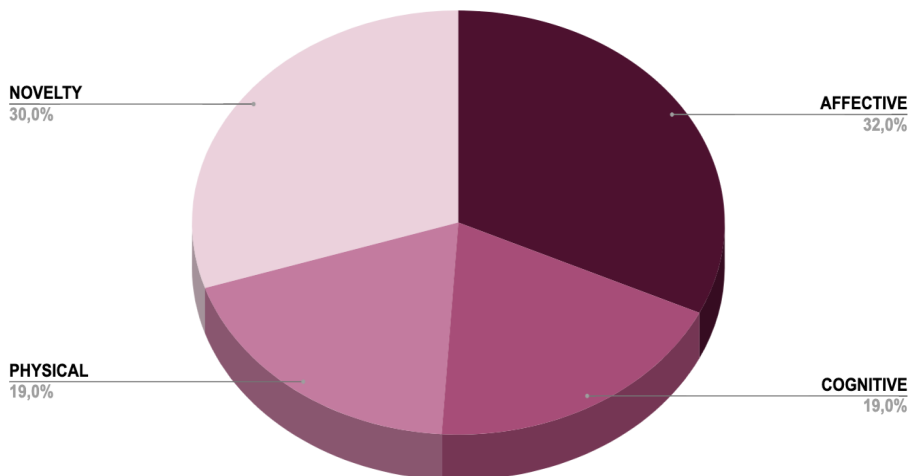


Figure 25. Structure of the visitor experience from the guided visit to the LOAM. Source: Made by author.

According to Figure 25, the distribution between the main dimensions of the visitor experience ranges from 19% to 32%, indicating that the overall structure is well-balanced. Similar to the Swedish case study, the affective domain comprises 32% of the visitor experience structure during a guided tour of the LOAM. Consequently, the remaining three components appear to

be arranged differently. Specifically, novelty (30%) is the second most dominant realm, while physical and cognitive dimensions each received 19%. This could be explained by the teacher's low facilitation of visitor-museum interactions during the guided tour of the Lithuanian museum. In addition, the thematic analysis of children's interpretations revealed that the natural settings of the ethnographic open-air museum and unanticipated encounters with flora triggered visitors' memorability and sensorial engagement. In the context of ethnographic open-air museums, the findings demonstrate that institutional context itself acts a powerful facilitator of the affective domain of visitor experience.

Novelty (30%) occupies the second position in the structure (Figure 25). This share of novelty in the overall visitor experience from the LOAM can be explained due to the peculiarities of interactions during the visit and the level of facilitation of visitor-museum encounters. During the visit, the teacher supplied general information about the cultural heritage objects, and the tour did not include elements of play, theatricalization, or teamwork (unlike Skansen and the Belarusian museum). In turn, this has promoted the increased novelty resulting from the ethnographic open-air museum's unfamiliar context. Moreover, due to the fact that children were visiting the museum for the first time, their interactions with and within museum spaces differed significantly from the familiar settings of contemporary lifestyle. Therefore, the findings suggest that novelty is not solely provided by the visitor's personal context (prior experience and knowledge), but can be enhanced by physical settings and the level of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions during the guided genre of museum visit.

Lastly, cognitive and physical components each received 19% of the structure of the visitor experience from the guided museum visit to the LOAM (Figure 25). These components comprise the least dominant shares. This can be explained by the nature of museum-visitor interactions and the flow and structure of the visit to the Lithuanian museum. Intriguingly, despite the fact that the visit was embedded in the educational agenda, the low level of facilitation and/or orchestration of visitor-museum encounters provided by the teacher has led to shallow cognitive and physical engagement with cultural heritage and museum spaces. Children commonly expressed feelings of serendipity and surprise (as antecedents of the affective realm) resulting from encounters with the natural settings of the ethnographic open-air museum.

Finally, Figure 26 graphically outlines the compositional structure of the visitor experience from the guided tour to the Belarusian museum.

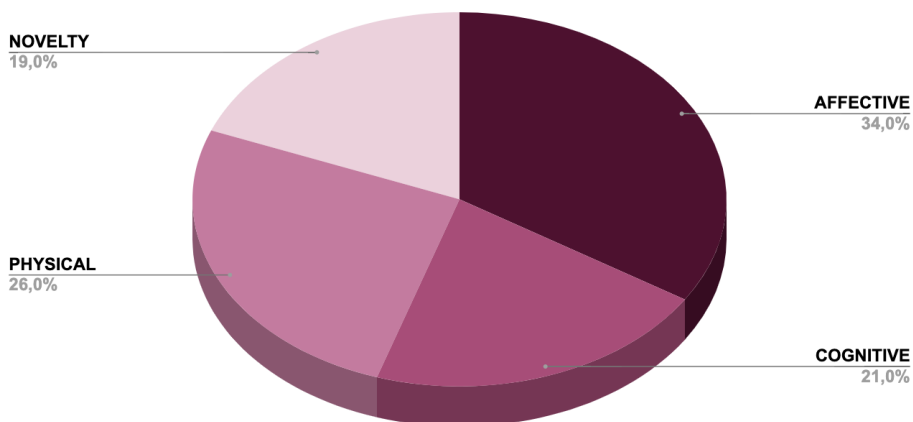


Figure 26. Structure of the visitor experience from the guided visit to the BSMFARL. Source: Made by author.

The structure of the visitor experience, as depicted in Figure 26, is dominated by the affective domain, comprising 34% of the share, which is consistent with the findings of the previous guided visits. Nevertheless, the composition differs marginally from the Swedish and Lithuanian examples. In particular, the physical realm ranks second with 26%, followed by the cognitive realm with 21%, and then novelty with 19%. In the Belarusian museum, where children’s interactions with cultural heritage and museum spaces include elements of play, interpersonal encounters, and theatricalization, the findings suggest that participants recall positive emotions from the moments of joy and fun during the adventurous journey to the past. Furthermore, the episodes that integrate play and teamwork (such as the process of bread baking) elicit hedonistic feelings. Overall, these results are consistent with the findings of Mossberg et al. (2018), who found that the high performance of a guide (or high level of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions) had a direct impact on the level of immersion. The data demonstrate that high degree of immersion produces a strong affective presence within the overall structure of the visitor experience.

A similar flow of argumentation is pertinent to the physical realm of visitor experience, which constitutes 26% of the total share. In particular, the variety of activities that a guide (or in this case, House Spirit) facilitated promoted multisensory stimulation and active bodily involvement. Both visual and verbal material confirm the high impact of physical engagement with cultural heritage during the animated guided visit to the museum, which

has led to a strong presence of the physical realm in the structure of the visitor experience.

Cognitive engagement comprises the third largest fraction of the experience's structure (21%, Figure 26). This observation is consistent with the findings from Skansen, where museum personnel actively facilitated visitor-museum interactions by contextualizing museum artifacts through storytelling and role play. Consequently, the results demonstrate that children more freely create knowledge about the phenomena they encounter that resonates with their cognitive schema and constitutes personal value. Therefore, to enhance the cognitive realm of the experience, museums should create interpretative programs that link past with present, as in the case of ethnographic open-air museums, or provide anchors and links to the contemporary discourse.

Figure 26 reveals that the novelty dimension comprises the smallest share (19%) of the visitor experience's compositional structure. Such a disposition resonates with the patterns from the previous case studies, where novelty appears differently depending on the level of external facilitation of visitor-museum interactions by a guide. For example, in the case of immersive interactions (as observed in the Belarusian and Swedish case studies) with engaging storytelling and theatricalization, the share of novelty in the overall structure of the visitor experience is comparatively low. Specifically, the interlocutors from the Belarusian museum recall novelty in relation to their unfamiliar encounters with House Spirit, a fictitious character known from the books, but never encountered in real life.

In addition to an overview of the compositional structures of visitor experiences presented individually for each museum, I also include a broader comparative perspective to develop more delineated conclusions about the common patterns observed in the structures of visitor experiences from the guided museum visits. Along these lines, Figure 27 integrates the findings from Figures 24–26 and visually depicts the disposition of the key dimensions. Furthermore, based on the obtained data, I also calculated and added a median value to understand a common thread.

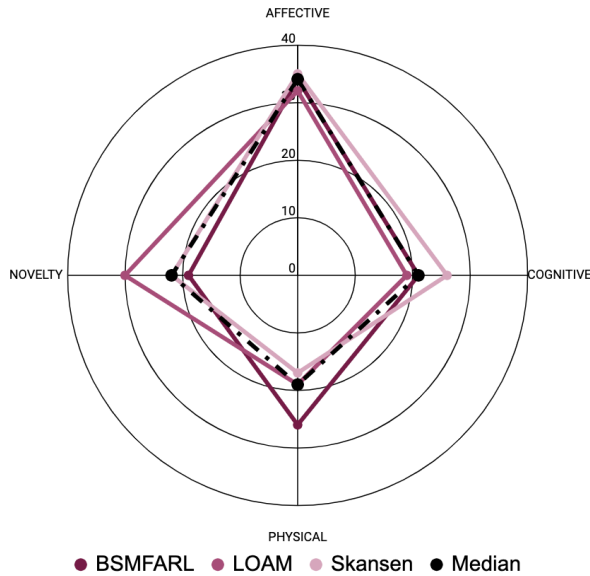


Figure 27. Integrated structure of visitor experiences from the guided visits across three samples. Source: Made by author.

As shown in Figure 27, affective engagement yields the maximum experience share across three guided visits (with a median of 34%, 35% in Skansen, 34% in the Belarusian case study, and 32% in the LOAM). This corroborates the recent research that highlights the significance of the affective domain in the overall structure of experience (de Geus et al., 2016). In addition, the comparison of three samples reveals a direct relationship between the strength of the affective realm and the level of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions during three guided visits. Specifically, the higher level of facilitation and immersion (as in the case of the Belarusian and Swedish museums) has fostered a stronger presence of the affective component in the material (Figure 27). This dependency appears to be a result of the children's intense involvement in the museum's context during the guided tour, which was promoted by theatricalization, play, and teamwork. In addition, the findings indicate that the affective realm of experience is central to the guided genre of museum-visitor interactions that are orchestrated and augmented by a physical guide.

The comparative perspective reveals that the median values of novelty, physical, and cognitive domains range from 19 to 22% (Figure 27), and their proportions in the visitor experience structure are directly related to the

degree of facilitation that occurred during the guided visits. Specifically, the study reveals that novelty has a greater impact on children's experiences at the Lithuanian Open-Air Museum, where school teachers facilitated visitor-museum interactions to a lesser extent than they did in interactive educational programs in the Swedish and Belarusian cases. Therefore, for a first-time visit to the ethnographic open-air museum, a low level of external facilitation of visitor-museum interactions contributes to a substantial impact of novelty in the overall visitor experience composition.

Regardless of the fact that the guided visits were arranged as extracurricular activities by school instructors and incorporated into the educational process, the findings indicate that the cognitive realm was not the experience element that had the greatest impact on the schoolchildren during the three museum visits. The distribution of values on the scale (26% in the Skansen, 21% in the BSMFARL, and only 19% in the LOAM; median: 21%) demonstrates a direct relationship between the degree of external facilitation and share of cognition in the structure. Specifically, the cognitive domain has a greater significance in guided visits with theatricalization elements, such as animated interpretive programs. Along these lines, cognitive engagement is most pronounced in Skansen (26%). This is followed by the guided visit to the Belarusian museum with 21%, which is only 5% lower. In the instance of the Lithuanian museum, the level of cognitive engagement is the lowest.

Moreover, drawing on the mechanism of re-contextualization that children used to create new knowledge about the cultural heritage of ethnographic open-air museums, the relevance and familiarity of the themes and phenomena presented during the guided visit simultaneously stimulated the cognitive realm. This may be essential to consider when developing new themes or guided programs that draw on the existing knowledge of diverse museum audiences and enable visitors to easily make cognitive connections between museum exhibits and the contemporary sociocultural context. Despite the overall educational agenda of the guided school visit, the cognitive domain is not necessarily the dominant dimension of the children's experience, as demonstrated by these findings. In contrast, the appearance of the cognitive domain exemplifies the individual and idiosyncratic nature of visitor experience, as well as the significance of individual identity work and personal context (including prior knowledge, interests, and sociocultural context) for knowledge creation. This observation suggests a need for more critical view of the established pedagogical rhetoric within the context of museum scholarship.

Lastly, the physical domain is the most frequently mentioned element of experience by Belarusian museum visitors (26%, Figure 27). This appears to result from the dynamics of museum-visitor encounters and the extent of their facilitation by a physical guide, as previously described in relation to affective engagement. For instance, in highly interactive and animated programs (like those observed in Skansen and the BSMFARL), haptic interactions with museum artifacts stimulate profound multisensory engagement. In addition, the results demonstrate that the physical context of museum visits and the season (time) of the visit have an immediate impact on the physical realm of the visitor experience in the context of ethnographic open-air museums. In the LOAM and BSMFARL, for instance, the visits occurred on a warm, sunny spring day, and the children spent considerable time outdoors engaging in physical activity. Consequently, both cases disclose a high level of physical engagement (26% and 19%, respectively). In addition, the visit to Skansen occurred in early spring, so children spent the majority of their time indoors, resulting in a 17% appearance of the physical realm in the visitor experience structure.

4.6. Discussion and Conclusions

The first empirical study sheds light on the structural composition of visitor experiences in the context of a guided museum visit and investigates meaning-making mechanisms that shape a more nuanced understanding of the nature and antecedents of visitor experience. Nearly 60 primary-school pupils from Sweden, Lithuania, and Belarus participated in three guided school visits and contributed to this research with drawings and verbal interpretations.

The findings from the analysis of the structure of visitor experience reveal that the affective realm is the most dominant across three samples, which confirms previous research (Mossberg et al., 2018; de Geus et al., 2016), emphasizing the role of feelings in experience-making. From a genre perspective, visitor-museum interactions in all three cases were operationalized in the social context of a school visit externally facilitated by a physical guide, who acted as a content provider, mediator of knowledge about the past, and facilitator of children's interactions during the visit.

One more important observation relates to the implications of the emotions provided by the content and narrative told by a guide. Previous research has emphasized the importance of emotions as a trigger for a memorable recall and meaningful personalized experience of the visit (Bastiaansen et al., 2019). Accordingly, when the information provided

about the lifestyle in the past facilitated positive feelings, children depicted themselves in the drawings. On the contrary, when the story triggered negative emotions, the respondents employed the mechanism of self-distancing from the museum content and depicted the protagonists of the past instead of themselves or the group. As a result of the guided museum visit, children repeatedly express feelings of excitement, surprise, sadness, hedonism, adventure, and affection. Also, the implications of genre configurations, and specifically the differences in form and level of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions have led to different disposition of cognitive and physical realms across the three cases. The findings state that the interactive guided visits with elements of theatricalization have spurred a greater level of physical and cognitive engagements than those with low levels of facilitation.

In addition, the study reveals that the realm of experiencing novelty is predominant when the level of facilitation offered by a guide is low. This, in turn, leads to shallow children's immersion in the museum's context and frames an unfamiliar setting for interactions. The observations from the empirical data correspond with the previous theorization by Mossberg et al. (2018), stating the direct relation between the performance of a guide and the level of visitors' immersion in the context of the visit. Similarly, in the context of the guided visit, the low level of facilitation (or guide performance) has resulted in a strong presence of novelty during the guided visit to ethnographic open-air museums.

Despite the overall educational framework of guided visits, children do not emphasize the cognitive realm as the dominant attribute of the overall experience of a school visit to an ethnographic open-air museum. This exemplifies the ultimate role of personal identity work and children's agency in experience-making. The findings suggest that the external factors of genre configurations and museum visiting context may enhance experience realms but not fully define them.

In addition to showing how genre configurations affect the structure of the visitor experience, the detailed analysis of meaning-making processes led to a more nuanced understanding of the factors that affect the visitor experience realms. Along these lines, the results of the visual analysis indicate that the museum visiting context, social encounters during the visit, and personal context all serve as significant sources for the antecedents of visitor experience's realms. Specifically, the cognitive realm of visitor experience was promoted by the interactions with the cultural objects contextualized and presented during the excursions. Despite the myriad of stories and artifacts encountered during the visit, the participants construct

cognitive and sensorial connections with the museum and its exposition by actively employing the strategy of re-contextualization. This allows visitors to bring up their previous knowledge and assign the new ideas or reflections to their existing cognitive schema. Furthermore, the findings suggest that personal context (for example, interest and motivation) play the dominant role in framing the value of the visitor experience and lead to memorability of the encounters. For example, a content analysis of the interpretations shows that children remember artifacts that make them think and move, that have something to do with their own interests or culture (like habits and values), and that are new or different from what they already know. Along these lines, to facilitate intricate meaning-making and cognition, museum educators and teachers should employ communicative strategies that do not simply transcend information about the lifestyle in the past and provide physical interactions, but strongly resonate with the contemporary socio-cultural context, tapping into the existing cognitive schema.

The data indicate that ecological and environmental themes (associated with the physical context of ethnographic open-air museums) contribute to the development of the affective realm of experience when children's immersion in the cultural context of the visit is weak. Specifically, the more time children spent outdoors during the visit, the more frequently they drew images of flora and fauna. This demonstrates the significance of the visiting context and, more specifically, how seasonality and weather conditions have a direct effect on visitor-museum interactions and facilitated experiences in the context of ethnographic open-air museums. Given the significant impact of the natural environment on children's ability to recollect their museum visits, it is recommended to incorporate the natural affordances of the physical context into the guided agenda as an important attraction for contemporary audiences from urban areas.

The results from the verbal interpretations contribute to an understanding of how social dynamics and the position of the guide contribute to the creation of experiences in the guided visit genre. For instance, when a guide functions as a co-creator of the social dynamics of the visit, children eagerly include themselves in the drawings. In cases where interpersonal encounters were not programmed or actively orchestrated by a teacher or guide, the experience had a stronger idiosyncratic essence than a socially embedded character (as in the case of the Lithuanian Open-air Museum), and therefore children rarely drew the group, the guide, or themselves.

To sum it all up, findings from the guided genre of museum visit contribute to the existing knowledge about the dialogical, contextual, and

idiosyncratic nature of a visitor experience. In particular, the study shows how genre configurations of a guided visit foster communicative and regulating effects on children's encounters with and within the context of ethnographic open-air museums, creating a certain structure of a visitor experience. The analysis shows that affective engagement is the most dominant dimension in the composition of visitor experiences in a guided museum visit. It is facilitated by the animated and interactive programming or serendipity that comes from unexpected encounters with flora and fauna. Despite the pedagogical foundation of the visit, the cognitive dimension of the experience has a lower share in the structure of the visitor experience. In particular, visitors are more likely to develop new knowledge in the settings of ethnographic open-air museums when they can apply familiar behavioral patterns and cognitive frameworks from their usual contemporary environment. The cognitive realm can be also enhanced by means of interactive storytelling provided by a guide. The effect of novelty in the guided museum visit could be regulated by the level of facilitation and guidance that bridges the gap between the unfamiliar contexts and existing cognitive schema.

In conclusion, the first empirical study shows that the conventions of a guided genre of museum visit, and specifically the structured form of visitor-museum interactions externally facilitated by a guide, along with the low level of children's agency in interactions and the uniqueness of the social context (a middle-size group), produce visitor experiences with similar structures in different contexts. In addition, the insights from the content analysis of children's interpretations contribute to a deeper comprehension of the higher-order antecedents of the cognitive, affective, physical and novelty domains and, consequently, a more nuanced understanding of the visitor experience.

5. EMPIRICAL STUDY TWO: VISITOR EXPERIENCE IN A GENRE OF SPECIAL EVENT VISIT

Special events play an essential role in differentiating and harmonizing museums' agenda. According to Axelsen (2006), events provide an educational experience with varying degrees of subtlety, a sense of urgency, and a one-of-a-kind limited-time encounter. Special events at a museum are intended to retain visitors and attract new and existing target audiences. A rich spectrum of events and celebrations, organized in ethnographic open-air museums, determines the rationale for the exploration of visitor experience during one of the special events—open-air music festivals.

The participants of open-air music festivals from three countries were invited to join the study to unveil the structure of the visitor experience and the different layers of meaning behind these visitor-museum interactions. Conforming to the logic of the conceptual framework, this section includes a comprehensive description of the museum's visiting environment, delineating the shared generic characteristics and peculiarities of visitor-museum interactions across three events. It also includes a detailed overview of the research design, specifying data collection and analysis procedures. The section empirically investigates the personal context of the attendees, their motivations for visiting and socio-demographic characteristics. Finally, the section unveils the structure of visitor experiences across three samples and looks into the meanings behind visitor-museum interactions from a special event visit to ethnographic open-air museums.

5.1. Museum Visiting Context

The data were collected from three open-air music festivals, namely Allsång på Skansen, Granatos Live in the LOAM, and Kamyanita in the BSMFARL, in 2018. The events varied in duration, type of music, and program. Hence, they share generic attributes in relation to form of interaction, level of facilitation of visitor-museum interactions, mediational means, social context, and visitor agency. Below, I include a brief description of the context of each of them.

Allsång på Skansen (Sing-along at Skansen) is a Swedish musical show held every summer during July and August on Tuesdays at the Solliden stage in Skansen. The purpose of the festival is to revive old Swedish popular songs and collectively perform them. Visitors are expected to chant along with musical performers. Since 1935 (with the exception of 2020 due to the

COVID-19 pandemic), the show has attracted diverse audiences with prominent signers. Specifically, it attracts approximately 10,000 people per season (eight performances are held per season). The show lasts for 90 minutes, during which time visitors are situated in front of the stage; afterwards, they are free to explore Skansen and its grounds.

In the Lithuanian case study, the participants of the Grantos Live music festival were the focus of the research. Since 2013, the LOAM has hosted an annual event featuring electronic and popular music (with the exception of 2020 due to the COVID-19 lockdown). The festival lasts three days and attracts between 15,000 and 18,000 visitors annually. The purpose of the festival, according to its organizers, is to communicate cultural heritage and bridge the divide between the past and the present through electronic music. The event consists of multiple stages for musical performances, recreational areas, a food court, a campground, and a parking lot. During the festival, guests can freely move around the museum grounds and choose which performances and activities to participate in. In addition, the museum's exhibition is accessible during the festival, and attendees can also tour the houses.

In the Belarusian museum, the analysis was conducted with Kamyanitza Music Festival participants. Since 2009, the ethno-folk open-air music festival has been organized on the premisses of the BSMFARL in late August or early September. Folk bands and performers from Belarus and neighboring countries (Ukraine, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, etc.) play at the festival. The purpose of the event is to showcase traditional Belarusian culture and play folk music. The festival lasts ten hours, and visitors are invited to participate in performances, seminars, and entertainment activities (such as a clay workshop, archery, and a children's play zone) both outdoors and within the museum's buildings. As for the layout, the event is dispersed throughout the museum's grounds, and therefore, visitors are not concentrated in one area (as in the case of Skansen). For visitors' convenience, there is a food court and a market with handicrafts. Visitors in Belarusian national costumes (so-called "*vyshivanka*" (Bel.)) are welcome to attend the event for free. According to the BSMFARL, Kamyanitza attracts approximately 4,000 to 6,000 visitors annually.

Due to the shared similarities in form, purpose, mediational means, and social contexts, the aforementioned festivals are grouped together as one genre of special event visit based on the visitor-museum interactions that occur during the events. First, they are held once a year, providing participants with a unique, limited-time experience. Second, the event's concentration is on music and performance, with attendees acting as

co-creators of the show by singing along, wearing national costumes, and listening to the music. Consequently, visitors' interactions with the museum's environment is immersive and interactive. Despite the differences in the programs and lineup of the events, the attendees are empowered to determine the duration, flow, content, and level of their participation and involvement during their visit. Lastly, the social context of the festival includes a crowd and/or a large group of individuals (including acquaintances and strangers), united by shared interests and preferences (such as music).

Despite their shared generic characteristics, the three festivals differ in musical style, duration, and flow. Table 12 provides a summary of the main differences revealed in the studied music festivals.

Table 12. Characteristics of open-air music festivals in the three museums. Source: Made by author.

Characteristic	Case Study		
	Granatos Live	Allsång på Skansen	Kamyanitsa
Style of music (content)	Electronic	Popular	Ethno
Duration of event	3 days	90 minutes	10 hours
Flow	Visitors are permitted to move around and interact with museum exhibits	Audience is situated in front of the stage	Visitors freely move around and interact with museum premises

In accordance with Table 12, all three festivals are distinct in terms of musical style, which may facilitate and attract distinct audiences (Hansen, 2017), and their thematic connection to the content and context of ethnographic open-air museums in general. Granatos Live specializes specifically in electronic music, and according to the event's description, the primary target audience consists of young people from Lithuania and neighboring countries. Allsång på Skansen focuses on popular music and popularizing old songs by singing along with contemporary bands and

vocalists. Lastly, Kamyanița unites fans of ethno-folk music. This genre of music thematically resembles the scope of the open-air museum, placed on ethnographic cultural heritage. The varying durations of the three festivals, beginning with a 90-minute performance at Skansen, a 10-hour program at the Belarusian museum, and a three-day event at the LOAM, determine the level and length of visitor-museum interactions.

In terms of the flow of visitor-museum encounters during the event, the Belarusian and Lithuanian festivals share a format in which the museum grounds serve as a festival stage and visitors freely move between locations, stages, and activities during the event. Indeed, during Granatos Live, the museum exhibition is open for visitors, and attendees have the opportunity to explore it during the event. In the Belarusian museum, the exposition is also open for visitors, and what is more important, the buildings serve as venues for workshops and performances, attracting visitor flow to the exhibition during the festival. Unlikely, during *Allsång på Skansen*, visitors are seated in front of the Soliden stage and are welcomed to sing along the songs that used to be popular in the past. Therefore, during the festival, audiences have no opportunity to explore the exhibition, but are encouraged to do it after the show.

Despite the above-mentioned differences between the three festivals, it is essential to note that they are all held on the grounds of ethnographic open-air museums and thus serve to attract new visitors and communicate cultural heritage through music. Visitors are invited to co-create the vibrant atmosphere of the event by engaging physically and cognitively (by listening to music, reflecting, and immersing themselves in the event's liminal atmosphere).

Open-air music festivals as a genre of a special event visit are peculiar to the context of ethnographic open-air museums and differentiate them from other museums.

5.2. Method and Material

This section describes the data collection process as well as the steps taken to acquire material from the attendees of the music festivals. The primary method employed for this research was an on-site survey of festival attendees.

Initially, I requested permission from the administration of three institutions to conduct visitor studies during the event. Due to the peculiarities of event-management, the event organizing companies in Lithuania and Belarus (Bravo Events from Lithuania, BelWebBank from

Belarus, and “Speuny Choir” from Belarus) were informed of the intention to conduct research and granted a permission for the research³⁸. In the case of Skansen, the museum’s administration was informed about the research and provided access to the premises during the festival.

I used a random selection of prospective respondents to achieve the objectives of the study. The interlocutors were recruited *in situ*. Potential informants were approached and asked if they would be willing to take part in the study. If they declined the invitation, they were thanked for their time, and then I moved on to engage another individual in the immediate vicinity. If they agreed, the purpose of the study was verbally explained to prospective respondents to ensure informed consent.

Participants were also informed about the anonymity and confidentiality of the research and the possibility of withdrawing from the study process at any time. To minimize a sampling bias, at the Lithuanian and Belarusian open-air museums, the surveys were conducted in different museum sections. At Skansen, due to the compact placement of the attendees around the stage, I approached every fourth person willing to complete the questionnaire.

A total of 473 valid responses were collected across the three sites. The number of responses for each festival was calculated based on preliminary information about the population size, a confidence level of 80%, and a margin of error of 5%. The response rate from the special event attendees was equally high across three museums: 97% at Skansen, 93% at the Lithuanian museum, and 87% at the Belarusian museum. Among the 41 refusals, the most common reasons related to lack of time (for example, during Granatos Live, respondents had to move to another location to be in time for the performance), uncomfortable timing and place (in Skansen), and lack of interest. Table 13 presents a summary of the material collected across three museums.

³⁸ All three events were co-organized and managed by museums with the assistance of external companies. Hence, given their long history of festival I consider them as an integral part of museum’s outreach ecosystem, and important tool for facilitation of visitor flow to the museums.

Table 13. Number of responses collected across three festivals. Source: Made by author.

	Skansen	LOAM	BSMFARL	Total
Number of responses	147	165	161	473

The research was conducted in four languages: Swedish at Skansen, Lithuanian at the LOAM, and Russian and Belarusian at the BSMFARL. An anonymous, structured questionnaire with both open-ended and closed questions was used to capture the data. Appendix 1 contains the English translation of the questionnaire.

The two-page, multiple-item questionnaire was created to collect data pertinent to the study's objectives. The questionnaire consisted of nine questions divided thematically into three following sections. The first section of the survey asked about a series of items designed to measure motivations for visitation of the museum and the festival, as well as the frequency of visitation and the social context of visitation. These elements provided a basis for understanding visitors personal context and social dynamics, as well as the importance of previous experiences of both museums and festivals (genre competence).

To scrutinize the structure of visitor experiences, I employed the EES (Event Experience Scale) methodology and adopted the 18-item EES scale (de Geus et al., 2016) in the context of the event. Specifically, I minimized the number of items from 18 to 8 to shorten the length of the survey. In addition, the scale was adapted to the context of ethnographic open-air museums and the scope of the study (for instance, the novelty dimension was operationalized by the statement *“I found out more or learned something new about the museum”* to determine whether the special event has attracted new audiences). The main dimensions of the visitor experience according to the EES methodology and their operationalization through a list of statements are presented in Table 14.

Table 14. Key dimensions of visitor experience according to the EES methodology and its operationalization in the survey. Source: Made by author based on de Geus et al. (2016).

Experience dimension	EES and its main components (de Geus et al., 2016)	Statements used in the survey
Affective engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Excitement] I was excited • [Emotional energy] I got emotional energy/got emotionally recharged • [Intimacy] I experienced intimacy • [Adventure] I felt a sense of adventure • [Value(s) (creation)] I was aware of my own values • [Recollection] I wanted to relive this later (talk about it with others and show pictures) 	<p>I was emotionally recharged.</p> <p>I felt a sense of belonging to a community or nation (peers, family, nation).</p>
Cognitive engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Interpretation] I was explaining/interpreting things for myself • [Cognition/thinking] I was thinking • [Intellect] I used my intellect • [Learning] I learned something • [Knowledge acquisition] I acquired new knowledge • [Reflexivity] I reflected on ideas that I got and discussed this with others 	<p>I gained a better understanding of the past through music.</p> <p>I learned something new about history and culture.</p>
Physical engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Behaviour] I was active • [(Active) participation] I did not actively participate (RV) • [Creativity] I was not being creative (RV) • [Multisensory (elements)] all my senses were stimulated (taste, scent, hearing, smell, and touch) 	<p>I actively participated (singing and/ or dancing).</p> <p>I spent time in the open air.</p>
Experiencing novelty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Distinctiveness of event] I had the impressions that the events were different from others • [Unfamiliarity] I experienced things unknown to me were / I was outside my “normal life” • [Uniqueness] I thought this was unique 	<p>I met and made acquaintances with new people.</p> <p>I found out more or learned something new about the museum.</p>

The participants were invited to rate the statements using a 5-point Likert scale. To study meaning-making processes, respondents were asked to share their ideas about ethnographic open-air museums and open-air music festivals in free form. The last section of the questionnaire collected socio-demographic information, including age, gender, and place of residence.

5.3. Data Analysis

Due to the fact that the survey was designed in four languages, I translated the responses into English and entered them into an Excel database prior to data analysis. The data were then imported into SPSS (Version 27) for additional calculations. The process of data analysis and the employed methods were determined by the survey design, which was created in accordance with the research objectives of the thesis. I employed descriptive statistics, for instance, to reveal the demographic characteristics of the audiences and peculiarities of the visit in relation to frequency of visit, visitor-museum interactions during the festival, and motivation for visit.

Based on the emphasis on visitor experiences as the nexus of visitor-museum interactions, an investigation was conducted into the format of visitor-museum encounters during the special event visit, as well as whether and how visitors explored and engaged with the museums premises and exhibitions beyond the events' programs.

To develop a nuanced comprehension of perceptions and meaning-making processes as antecedents of visitor experience, a content analysis of the responses was conducted and world clouds were created for each museum.

5.4. Findings

To comply with the research agenda of the study, the findings will be discussed and presented in the following order: visitor personal context, peculiarities of visitor-museum interactions during the special event visit, facilitated meanings as triggers of visitor experience realms, and the structure of visitor experience.

5.4.1. Personal Context

This section seeks to examine the personal context of open-air music festival attendees by describing their socio-demographic characteristics, motivations for attending, and frequency of visits (genre competence).

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Table 15 provides a summary of socio-demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and place of residence.

Table 15. Socio-demographic profile of visitors. Source: Developed by author.

Category	Skansen		LOAM		BSMFARL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age						
18-25	38	26	83	50	36	22
26-35	16	11	55	33	92	57
36-45	11	7	8	5	23	14
46-55	26	18	13	8	10	6
56-65	29	20	5	3	0	0
>66	21	14	1	1	0	0
Missing system	6	4	0	0	0	0
Gender						
Female	119	81	68	41	115	71
Male	23	16	97	59	43	27
Other	0	0	0	0	1	1
Missing system	5	3	0	0	0	0
Origin of residence						
National	134	91	162	98	155	96
Foreign	8	5	3	2	2	1
Missing system	5	3	0	0	4	2

Step by step, I will provide an overview of the main characteristics from the table to define a profile of the audiences that were driven by the open-air music festivals to the ethnographic open-air museums.

In relation to age, the sample from Skansen includes visitors with a relatively equal age distribution, encompassing two dominating groups of 18–25 years of age (26%) and 56–65 years of age (20%) (Table 15 and Figure 28). This disposition may be explained due to the thematic scope of the festival, which combines popular old songs that attract representatives of the older generation with performances by contemporary popular singers that interest young people.

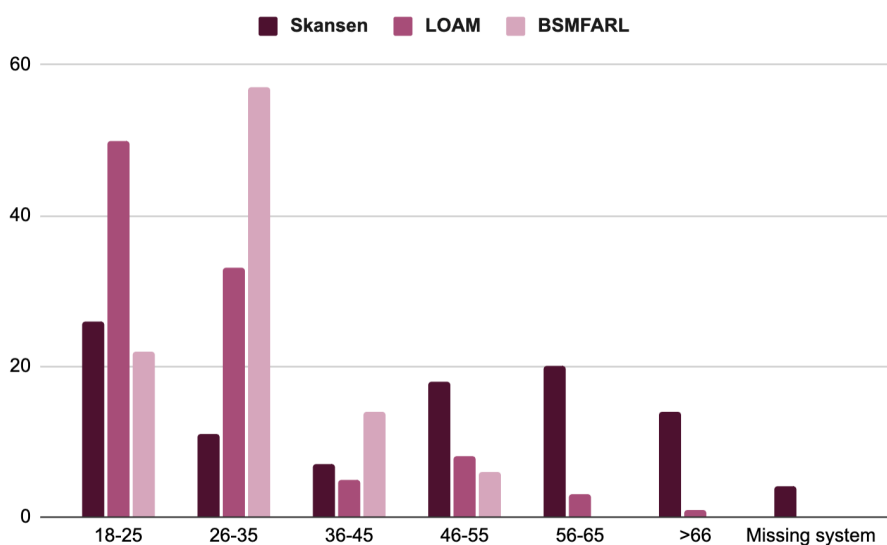


Figure 28. Age distribution of the participants, %. Source: Developed by author.

In the case of Granatos Live festival in Lithuania (Table 15 and Figure 28), with its scope on electronic music, the majority of the respondents represent two age groups: 18–25 (50%) and 26–35 (33%) years old, respectively. Similarly, the sample from Kamyantsa has the largest population of visitors 26–35 (57%) years of age. Thus, the samples from Lithuania and Belarus consist of predominantly young people aged 18–35, while the Swedish festival has a more evenly balanced population, uniting both representatives of the younger and older generations (Figure 28). This reflects the scope of the event and demonstrates how various musical genres attract audiences of a specific age group.

In terms of gender distribution (Figure 29), the majority of respondents from Sweden (81%) and Belarus (71%), respectively, were female. The higher participation of males (59%) in the Lithuanian festival (as depicted in Figure 29) can be attributed to the festival's characteristics: with its emphasis on electronic music and three-day duration, visitors are invited to stay on the grounds of the ethnographic open-air museum and immerse themselves in the music show. This confirms the previous findings of Hansen (2017), who observed that women are less attracted to electronic music performances than males.

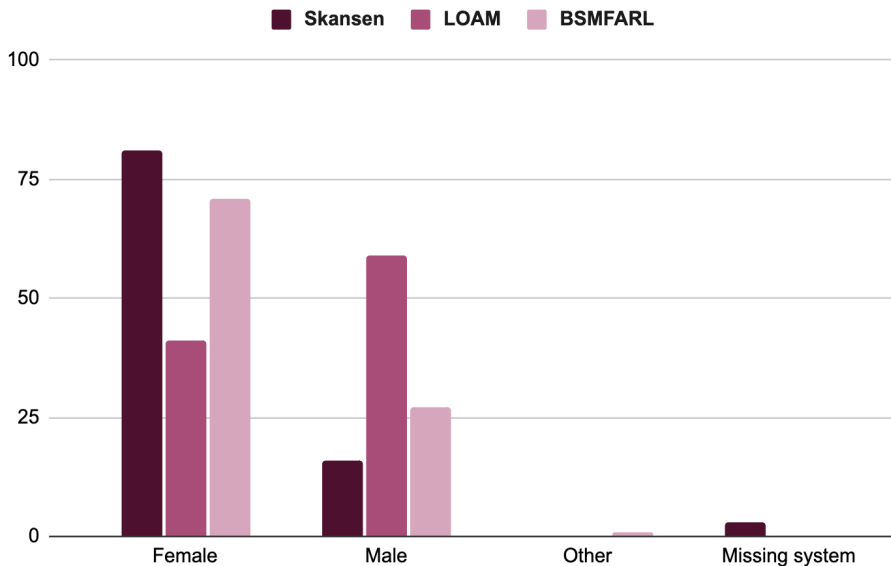


Figure 29. Gender distribution of the participants, %. Source: Developed by author.

According to Figure 30, there is a consistent pattern regarding the place of origin of festival attendees across three events. Specifically, more than 90% of the attendees are national residents. This demonstrates the popularity of the open-air music festivals among national visitors and emphasizes the potential of the special events for attracting national audiences.

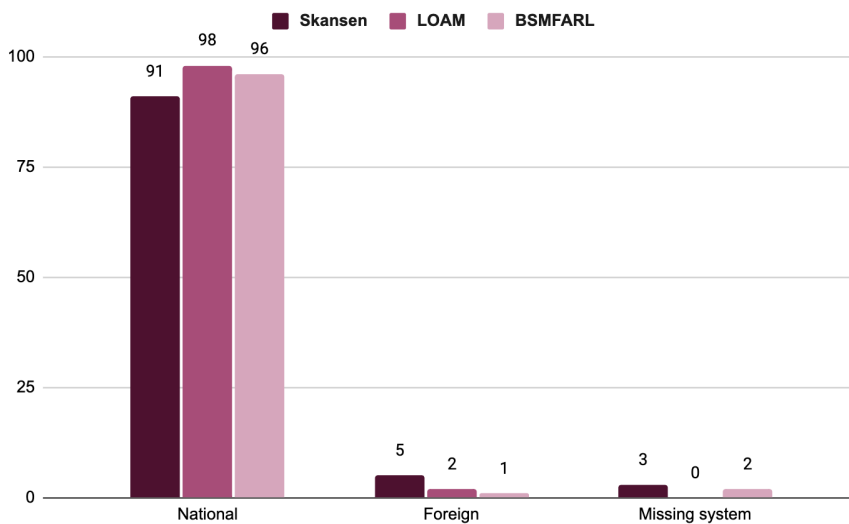


Figure 30. Origin of residence of the attendees, %. Source: Developed by author.

Skansen had a 5% influx of foreigners (Figure 30). This can be explained by the lengthy history and popularity of the show, which is broadcast throughout the Nordic region on Swedish television. The comprehensive analysis of the visitor profile confirms the hypothesis that the event was attended also by guests from Finland and Denmark. The samples of Granatos Live and Kamyanita consist primarily of national residents, 98% and 96%, respectively. This could also be attributed to the national scope of the festival.

To conclude, the overview of the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants revealed the following patterns across the three samples. Specifically, in relation to residence of origin, open-air music festivals attract national residents across three cases. Specifically, the share of national residents varies between 91% in Skansen and 98% in the LOAM. With regards to gender disposition, the findings confirm the previous research into the profile of music festival attendees by Hansen (2017), claiming that electronic music festivals generally attract more male than female visitors. Consequently, the LOAM attracts 59% of male visitors. Together with that, women comprise the majority of the sampling population in Skansen (81%) and the BSMFARL (71%), attracted by popular and ethno music genres. In terms of age distribution, the data reveal that in Belarusian and Lithuanian

museums, the 18–25 and 26–35 age groups make up the majority of the audience, which could be explained by the musical characteristics and context of the festivals. Specifically, in both museums, festivals are held on the expansive grounds of ethnographic open-air museums, and during the festival, the museum becomes an interactive venue for visitor interactions. In Skansen, however, the data disclose a more balanced structure of the audience composition, with both young and elderly individuals present. This is due to the event's context and format, which attracts older audiences with popular songs in the past and younger audiences with the contemporary bands or performers.

Motivation for Visit

In accordance with the genre theory approach, a purpose or motivation serves as one of the main determinants of genre (Miller, 1984) and facilitates the creation of personal value through visitor-museum interactions. Understanding the motivations for a visit, when approached from a value-laden perspective, enables me to draw conclusions about the key stimuli that attract audiences to both the special events and the museums. In order to comprehend the motivations for attendance, participants were asked to select their primary reasons for going to the festival. Figure 31 provides a summary of the motivations of visitors to open-air music festivals, as disclosed by data from the three museums.

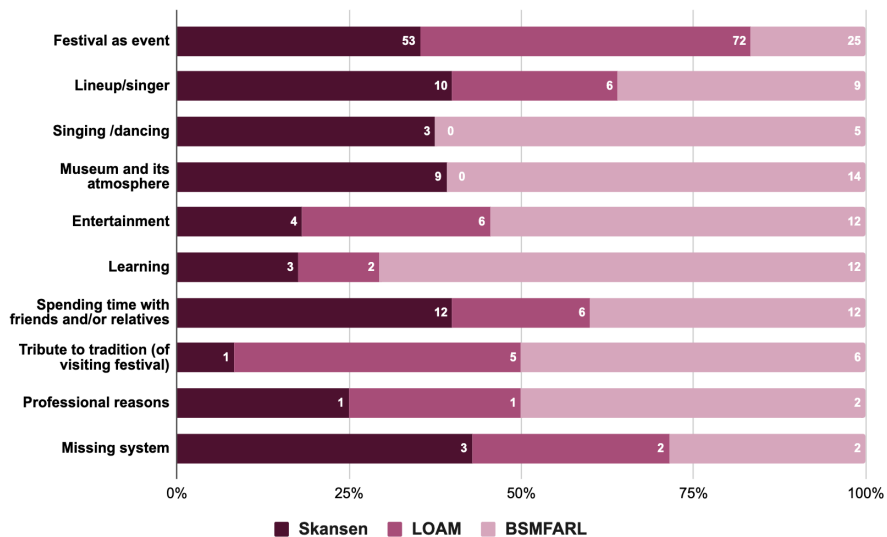


Figure 31. Visitors' motivations to attend the open-air music festivals (%). Source: Made by author.

According to Figure 31, the reasons for visiting can be thematically grouped into several broad categories associated with the event itself (for instance, festival as an event or lineup/singer), the museum's characteristics (museum atmosphere during the festival), and the perceived value of the event through personal benefits of entertainment, socialization, learning, and respect for tradition. These data provided a more nuanced comprehension of the key motivators behind the decision to attend the event.

A common thread observed suggests that a general intention to attend an open-air music festival as a special event (with a unique time-limited experience) is recognized as the primary motivation by the majority of the visitors (Figure 31). This is most evident in the cases of Granatos Live (72%), and Allsång på Skansen (52%). Further to that, the reasons associated with a festival program and a lineup are considered secondary drivers for attendance, which complies with the previous research by Marques et al. (2018). More precisely, in Skansen, 53% of the respondents attended the museum because of the show. The second most dominant reason was associated with socialization and spending time with family and friends (12%). Moreover, in third place was the motive to meet popular singers (for example, Sanna Nielsen, who was repeatedly mentioned by the visitors aged 18–25 years old) and enjoy their performances. At the same time, the representatives of the older generation emphasize the vibrant atmosphere of the museum during the festival and the possibility to experience nostalgia and enjoy unity with other people while singing along songs (9%).

A significant share of attendees (72%) at the LOAM stated that Granatos Live and its liminal atmosphere were the main motivating factors for attending the open-air music festival in the first place. The second reason was associated with electronic music and a lineup (6%). The third place was shared between the motivational dimensions of entertainment (5%), socialization, and reconnecting with the fan community of electronic music (5%). Lastly, 5% of the respondents expressed their adherence to the tradition of visiting the festival annually. It should be pointed out that the participants from the LOAM did not mention any reasons associated with the museum (Figure 31), and their main motives were developed around either a festival and its content or hedonistic benefits.

The sample from the BSMFARL depicts a more balanced disposition of visitors' motivations for attendance (Figure 31). However, in line with the previous findings, a quarter of the sample (25%) indicates that the folk festival was the most important reason for attending the museum, followed by the importance of the museum's special immersive atmosphere during the

event (14%). The third group of reasoning is associated with personal benefits and was shared between the motivational dimensions of socializing and spending time with family and friends (12%), being entertained (12%), and seeking new knowledge and experiences (12%), as shown in Figure 31.

The findings also reveal that motives for visiting museums and gaining new knowledge emerged in the responses from the Belarusian case (14% and 12%, as shown in Figure 31). In contrast, the respondents from Lithuania demonstrated low or no motivation associated with learning (2%) and visiting museums during the music festival. The motivational choices made across three samples support the hypothesis that this discrepancy is the result of a cognitive gap between the understanding of an electronic open-air music festival as casual leisure, which facilitates entertainment and overall hedonistic encounters, and the perception of a museum visit as serious leisure (Stebbins, 2006), which requires specific knowledge and certain behavior patterns. Specifically, the comments are similar to the ones by respondent #127 *“The main purpose of the visit is the festival. We are not interested in the museum; we came to party and have fun”* repeatedly appeared amongst the participants from Lithuania. In this example, a visit to a museum as a serious leisure activity is opposed to festival attendance as a genre. Interestingly, and in contrast to what de Geus et al. (2016) have found in their research, learning is not a prominent motive for attendance at an open-air music festival in the context of an ethnographic open-air museum visit. Although learning is still present, this demonstrates that motivations for attendance differ according to the type of event, which has also been revealed in the study by Marques et al. (2021).

Given the unique social context of open-air music festivals, which took place in the social context of a crowd or a large group of people with shared interests, the significance of social connectedness and being a part of a group or spending time with friends and family were frequently mentioned by visitors across three samples. In the Belarusian and Lithuanian cases, the strong presence of co-creation practices of belonging and bonding, as well as symbolic moments of immersion, connects well with the tradition of attending festivals. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of respondents have attended both festivals and museums in the past.

Overall, the results were found to be largely consistent with the previous studies into visitor motivations to music festivals undertaken by Bowen and Daniels (2005), Pegg and Patterson (2010), Rihova (2013), and Marques et al. (2021), who claim that music festival visitors are mostly driven by the

atmosphere of the event as well as personal hedonistic reasons (having fun or enjoying music) and/or social connectedness (sense of belonging and spending time together with friends and relatives). In addition to that, the socio-demographic characteristics of the visitors demonstrate a strong connection with the scope and form of the event, which exemplifies the connection between the personal context and genre configurations of the event.

Frequency of Visit

From the intrinsic purpose of a special event to attract audiences and generate visiting flow, on the one hand, and genre competence that determines visitors' expectations and behavior during the visit, on the other, the survey inquired about the previous experience of museum and festival visits as an important facilitator in framing genre-related expectations and behavior patterns during the visit. Thus, a distinction was made between first-time visitors to cultural institutions and festivals and recurrent visitors.

The analysis of the frequency of visits is particularly important for this study for several reasons. Firstly, it reveals the nature of the visiting flow (new audiences or repeat visitors) generated by the special event to museums. Secondly, it unveils genre competence associated with prior knowledge and experience of the event. Thirdly, in line with previous research (Boswijk et al., 2007; Marques et al., 2021; Richards, 2020), the high level of previous visits indicates a higher level of genre competence and different behavior patterns. Table 16 provides the summary of visits frequencies.

Table 16. Frequencies of visits to the museums and festivals. Source: Developed by author.

Category	Skansen		LOAM		BSMFARL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Frequency of museum visit						
First-time	20	18	75	45	21	13
Repeat	89	82	90	55	139	86
Missing system	0	0	0	0	1	1

Frequency of festival visit						
First-time	53	36	76	46	35	22
Repeat	86	59	88	54	113	70
Missing system	8	5	0	0	13	8

In line with the data from Table 16, the study demonstrates that open-air music festivals stimulate a bigger flow of repeat visitors than attract new audiences to the Belarusian and Swedish ethnographic open-air museums. For music festival attendees, the majority of the samples had attended the festivals previously: 70% of the Belarusian respondents and 59% of the Swedish sample. These findings demonstrate that visitors have previous experiences and genre competence with the festivals and ethnographic open-air museums and, therefore, might employ familiar behavior patterns salient to their previous visits. In contrast, only 13% of the respondents from Belarus and 18% from Sweden visited the museum for the first time during the festival (Table 16). The fact that repeated visits are this high suggests that these events are not only important for the respondents, but they are sometimes considered part of their cultural identity and embed personal value. This, in line with previous research (Boswijk et al., 2007; Marques et al., 2021), signifies a high level of visitor involvement in the event that promotes a heightened experience from the visit.

The findings from the Lithuanian Open-air Museum show a significant influx of first-time visitors (46% to the festival and 45% to the museum, respectively). This demonstrates the importance of the festival as a trigger for a considerable flow of first-time visitors to the museum. Together with that, the comparatively high level of first-time visitation to both the museum and the festival demonstrates a lack of genre competence and previous experience. This might result in a high level of novelty in the overall structure of the visitor experience.

To conclude, the overview of the personal context of open-air music festival attendees in the ethnographic open-air museums revealed the following profile. A resident female between the ages of 18 and 35 who was attracted to the museum by the open-air music festival as an event and who had genre competence regarding the museum and festival due to previous visits. This demonstrates how open-air music festivals as special events foster visitor retention to ethnographic open-air museums.

The revealed features of the personal context of the audiences allow museum professionals and event managers to design more engaging interactions that resonate on a personal level given the age, origin, gender, and motives of the dominated groups. Stemming from the goal of the thesis to conceptualize visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum encounters, the findings from this section will be considered in defining the implications of the personal context on visitor-museum interactions and facilitated experiences.

5.4.2. Visitor-Museum Interactions during Special Event Visit

This section focuses on the dynamics of visitor-museum interactions during the special event. It is of particular interest to me if and how visitors interact with and within the museum's exposition and cultural heritage during the genre of a special event visit. In this vein, the following survey question inquires whether respondents were able to visit or encounter museum exhibitions and other museum premises during the open-air music festival beyond the festival's program. In addition, if the response was affirmative, the participants were asked to provide a more comprehensive reply with specific examples of objects or locations encountered.

According to Figure 32 (below), the positive and negative responses for Skansen are evenly distributed (43% and 46%, respectively). In Lithuania, the majority of the respondents (72%) did not manage to visit the exposition during the electronic open-air music festival. Hence, only in the Belarusian museum more than half of the festival attendees (54%) have managed to visit the museum's exposition during the festival. This disparity in findings may be explained by the structural, temporal, and spatial peculiarities of the event program (associated with the visiting context) and individual context. These peculiarities will be presented in detail later in the section.

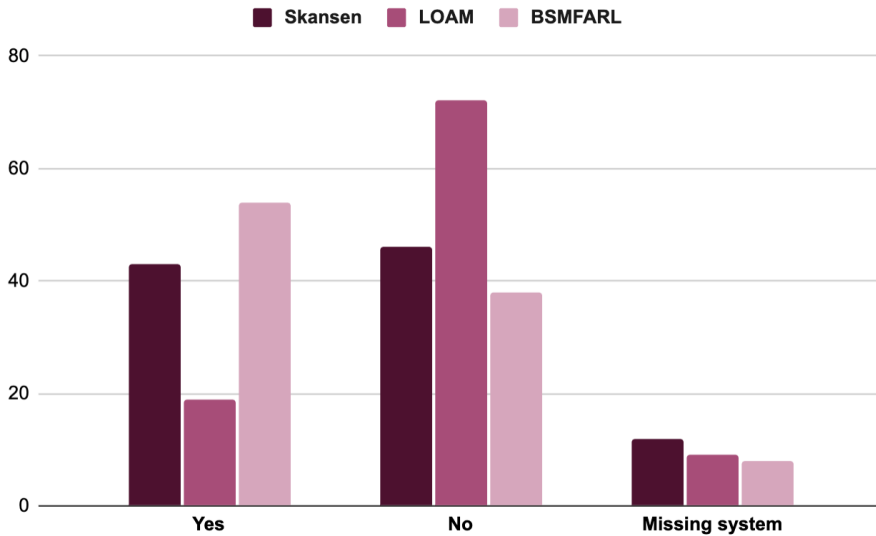


Figure 32. Overview of the results from the question: “*Have you managed to visit museum exposition during the festival visit?*”, %. Source: Made by author.

The Allsång på Skansen had the shortest duration (90 minutes), and visitors were situated in front of a stage for the show. In this instance, the participants were unable to explore the exhibition during the performance, which has a negative impact on visitor-museum interactions during the event. At the same time, following the findings from the personal context, and specifically the frequency of visit and motivations, the data revealed that genre competence about the museum and the festival did not prevent visitors from interactions with cultural heritage and museum exhibition after the show. In addition, the museum and its atmosphere during the music festival acted as strong stimuli for visitation and interactions. A similar observation is also relevant to the context of the Kamyantsa festival.

In contrast to the Belarusian and Swedish festivals, only 19% of visitors were able to investigate the exhibit in Lithuania, despite the fact that Granatos Live lasted for three days and visitors had more chances to visit the museum. The findings support the argument that personal context (specifically, interest and genre competence) has a strong influence on visitor-museum interactions during special event visits.

To gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena and/or areas that attracted visitor’ attention and facilitated interactions during the music festivals, I conducted a content analysis of the responses using open coding

to identify the themes that arose from the data. In particular, the findings disclosed two significant patterns. The first group of responses consisted of museum sections or buildings located near the main stage(s) or actively involved in during the festival. For instance, the Belarusian participants were particularly interested in the reconstructed wooden buildings and interiors of the houses that served as venues for seminars, workshops and performances. In this manner, a music performance revitalized wooden constructions and instills meaningfulness into museum exhibits. In the sample from Belarus, among the most common answers were the tavern (mentioned 45 times) where visitors had a meal and the Ruthenian Uniate church (mentioned 55 times), where the singing performance was arranged.

In their descriptions of the Kamyanitsa Festival visit, respondents repeatedly referenced their spontaneous interactions with and within the museum's exhibition during the event. This exemplifies the significance of space organization and the seamless integration of museum premises, in particular cultural heritage objects, into the open-air music festival's agenda and communication, which may facilitate more intense visitor-museum interactions and synergy between the tangible heritage and music during the visit.

In addition to their active physical participation in the performance, respondents frequently mentioned (40 times) the zoo with Nordic animals that they were able to visit at Skansen. While providing specific responses, interviewees provided general descriptions of Skansen's festive atmosphere during the event and emphasized the importance of interacting with and within the museum's natural surroundings during a visit. In contrast to the Belarusian case, in which visitors described in detail the sections and objects they encountered during the festival, interlocutors from Skansen frequently characterize their visit as "*a stroll among the wooden old houses and the beautiful park*" (respondent #55). In addition, identical to the Belarusian case, the Swedish attendees primarily explored the areas surrounding the festival's Solliden stage. For instance, 45 respondents mentioned the cafeteria located in front of the festival stage, where they purchased food.

Similarly to the Swedish and Belarusian cases, in the LOAM, 19% of the respondents who stated their interactions with the cultural heritage during the festival mentioned the areas close to the main stage. Specifically, the windmill (20 times) and the Township sector (15 times) were the most frequently appearing categories among the answers.

The findings disclose an additional noteworthy behavioral pattern. Participants who failed to engage with the exhibition during the special event visit supplied the reasons for their lack of interaction with museum

exhibition and cultural heritage. Specifically, one-third of respondents from Lithuania mentioned a dearth of information regarding museum exhibitions that could be explored and encountered during the festival.

In light of the fact that a significant portion of the festival's population visited the museum and festival for the first time, a dearth of communication about the museum and general information support might prevent first-time visitors from encountering the exhibition. In addition, many participants express reluctance to disturb the museum staff during the festival (respondent #78: "*we do not want to disturb the museum workers with our questions*"). In turn, this demonstrates how a lack of communication regarding the opportunities for visiting beyond the event program has led to a low level of visitor interactions with and within the museum's exposition and cultural heritage realm. In this instance, the Belarusian example, in which wooden constructions were purposefully utilized for performances and activities, may serve as a good illustration of how museums and their agendas could be better integrated into the scope of open-air music festivals. Lastly, a number of respondents from the LOAM stated that their prior experience and familiarity with the exhibition diminished their desire to visit and explore it again. Respondent #127, for instance, explains the lack of interactions with cultural heritage by stating, "*The exhibition has not changed significantly since my last visit*".

Furthermore, the respondents from the BSMFARL also mentioned a shortage of time for exploration of the museum exposition (mentioned 55 times) during the festival, prioritizing music performances over cultural interactions with the exhibition. In Skansen, 15 respondents (10%) explained a lack of opportunity to explore the museum because of organizational constraints. For example, as participant #23 stated, "*During the Allsång I do not walk around the museum, as I need to sit and keep my seat*". This excerpt showcases how the event settings imposes certain limitations on visitor-museum interactions.

To sum it all up, with regards to the genre configurations of special event visits as facilitators of visitor-museum interactions, the findings confirm the previous research acknowledging the dominating role of personal context in relation to the dynamics of visitor-museum interactions during the special event visit. Together with that, to stimulate visitors' interactions with museum exhibitions during the open-air music festival, the event organizers should employ a more seamless approach and elaborated communication, integrating the scope of the event with the museum's agenda. In addition, the priority should be given to the events are thematically, spatially, and conceptually embedded in the institutional

context of a museum. In turn, this will facilitate the synergy and promote meaningful visitor-museum encounters.

5.4.3. Visitor Perceptions as Antecedents of Experience

To investigate how the participants of open-air music festivals perceive and make meaning of ethnographic open-air museums and encounter spaces during the guided visit, the visitors were invited to complete the phrase “*The ethnographic open-air museum is the best place for...*”. This framing allows for shifting the scope of attention from the festival itself to a broader context of ethnographic open-air museums and the values assigned to visitor-museum interactions during the special event visit.

To reveal the most frequently appearing answers in the data set and visualize the findings, I developed a content analysis of the keywords and built word clouds for each of the cases. When developing word clouds, prepositions and articles were excluded from the corpus. Appendix 3 depicts the list of keywords, including the frequency of their appearance and their overall share. In relation to the length, visitors provided short comments consisting of 1–4 words (89%).

Figures 33–35 include the word-clouds that visually summarize the outcomes and depict the most frequently appearing connotations about ethnographic open-air museums, expressed by the participants of the open-air music festivals. Each cloud is followed by a short explanation with excerpts from the dataset.

Overall, the results demonstrate that “*festival*” is one of the most frequently appearing words in all three samples. Specifically, it has the highest frequency in the Lithuanian (32%) and Swedish (17%) cases. In the material from Belarus, it is the second most frequently mentioned code (10%), appearing after the personal value of recreation (28%). This resembles the primary motives for attending open-air music festivals, as previously discussed.

Specifically, 72% of visitors from the LOAM and 53% from Skansen were attracted to the museum because of the festival. The consistency between motivational choices and the revealed perception of a museum through the lens of a festival visit exemplifies the power of genre as a value-laden construct that instills a particular cognitive and behavioral frameworks.



Figure 33. Word cloud from the Allsång på Skansen. Source: Made by author.

Figure 33 and Appendix 3 indicate that the majority of visitors perceive Skansen as the best spot for the festival. It should be noted that the distribution of codes is well-balanced and varies between 17% and 1% in the Swedish case. The findings indicate that the predominant perception of the museum is consistent with the advantages of attending a festival. For instance, participants engage in the inclusive cultural practice of singing, which fosters social bonding and physical engagement.

In addition, by having contemporary singers perform popular songs from the past, the festival brings together younger and older generations and promotes synergy between the event and Skansen as an open-air museum that communicates ideas about the past for the benefit of the present. In this vein, the codes of “socialization” (spending time with family that unites various generations and friends) and “community” (Figure 33, Appendix 3) generate the second and third most common groups of responses. This also exemplifies the symbolic value of a museum visit for festival visitors (“community” - 11%, “family”- 8%, Appendix 3). This observation validates the prior research of Coffee (2007), which conceptualized the museum visit as a social practice and emphasized its ultimate value for audiences.

A deeper examination of the comments suggests that visitors view Skansen as a universal and inclusive space for the celebration of unity in diversity, where “everyone is welcome” (respondent #121). In addition, visitor #13 indicates that Skansen offers something for everyone: “for young

In contrast to the previous two examples, the keyword analysis reveals that the code “*recreation*” was mentioned by participants the most frequently (28%, as shown in Figure 35 and Appendix 3). This could be explained by a more balanced distribution of the primary motivating factors for festival attendance and the intense character of visitor-museum interactions during the event. Accordingly, the respondents view the ethnographic open-air museum as an ideal location for learning and spending time with family and friends in the vibrant atmosphere of the event, where tangible heritage is revitalized by folk music. In this vein, the code “*festival*” appears in 10% of the corpus, followed by “*culture*” (9%), “*learning*” (7%), and “*family*” (6%) (see Figure 35 and Appendix 3).

Interestingly, it is important to note that the difference in frequencies between the following codes: “*festival*”, “*culture*”, and “*learning*” is comparatively low, which demonstrates the equally strong influence of concepts in defining cumulative ideas about ethnographic open-air museums. This is also confirmed by the findings from visitor-museum interactions during the festival, where more than half of the attendees (54%) managed to explore the exposition beyond the program of the event.

Unlike Skansen and the LOAM, the study reveals that the majority of visitors to Kamyantsa construct the meaning of the museum through the personal benefit of recreation and being outside of urban Minsk with friends and family. For example, the visitors from Belarus articulate the value of the ethnographic open-air museum as a picturesque location in Minsk's neighborhood that provides “*an escape from city to nature*” (participant # 122). Similar answers are commonly found in the material from the Kamyantsa festival. Overall, the findings from the Belarusian case are aligned with the previous two cases, stating the importance of the value-driven perspective, including the benefits of attending a music festival, socializing, and recreation, as resembled in the analysis of the motives for visit. In addition, the findings demonstrate that personal identity work has a significant impact on how visitors make meanings of ethnographic open-air museums.

In conclusion, this section serves to cast light on how festival-attendees perceive ethnographic open-air museums during the open-air music festivals. The findings indicate that genre imposes a particular value-laden perspective and gaze on ethnographic open-air museums, which, in turn, influences visitor-museum interactions and behavior throughout the visit. The keyword analysis reveals, for instance, that the code “*festival*” was one of the most frequently occurring items across three samples. During a festival in an ethnographic open-air museum, visitors behave and encounter spaces in

accordance with the norms and configurations of an open-air music festival, which differ substantially from the norms of behavior in a conventional room-size museum. In addition, the findings indicate that the form and content of the special event visit serve as powerful stimuli for the personal value of the visit. Participants to the Granatos Live festival, for instance, were primarily motivated by festival-related factors such as lineup and performing bands. Consequently, from the beginning the attendees were not inclined to interact with cultural heritage or museum exhibition during the festival. Thus, visitors emphasize the value of an ethnographic open-air museum by emphasizing socialization, hedonism, and entertainment as the key benefits. In the case of Allsång på Skansen, respondents also recognize the significance of the museum as an inclusive space that unites various generations and celebrates Swedish history, nature, and culture. A similar pattern was observed among Kamyantisa festival participants in relation to the recreational and cultural connotations of the Belarusian open-air museum.

5.4.4. Structure of Visitor Experience

To unveil the structure of visitor experience in the genre of a special event visit, the respondents were presented with the festival experience items (in total, eight statements) and asked to rank them using a 5-point Likert scale. To scrutinize the dimensions of visitor experiences facilitated by three festivals, the EES methodology (de Geus et al., 2016) was used and adapted in the context of open-air music festivals. Specifically, the scope of analysis was placed on the affective, cognitive, physical, and novelty dimensions as the key components of a visitor experience. Table 17 outlines the list of dimensions, statements, rating scores across three festivals, and a summary of the total engagement score.

Table 17. Dimensions of experience scale and its median meanings across three festivals. Source: Made by author.

Dimension of experience	Survey Items	Allsång på Skansen	Granatos Live	Kamyantisa
Physical	I actively participated (singing and/ or dancing).	4,59	4,01	4,44
	2. I spent time in the open air.	4,5	3,92	4,42

Affective	3. I was emotionally recharged.	4,48	3,46	4,1
	4. I felt sense of belonging to a community or nation.	4,38	3,29	4,21
Experiencing novelty	5. I met and made acquaintance with new people.	2,8	3,25	2,9
	6. I found out more or learned something new about the museum.	3,54	3,28	3,4
Cognitive	7. I gained a better understanding of the past through music.	3,85	3,22	4,14
	8. I learned something new about history and culture.	3,85	2,8	4,17
Total scope		31,99	27,23	31,78

Drawing from Table 17, the Swedish festival receives the highest score, followed closely by the Belarusian festival (31,99 and 31,78). The Lithuanian festival receives the lowest score (27,23). Overall, the four realms are evenly scored across the three samples. In addition, Figure 35 visually depicts the commutative median meanings of cognitive, physical, affective, and novelty dimensions across three festivals.

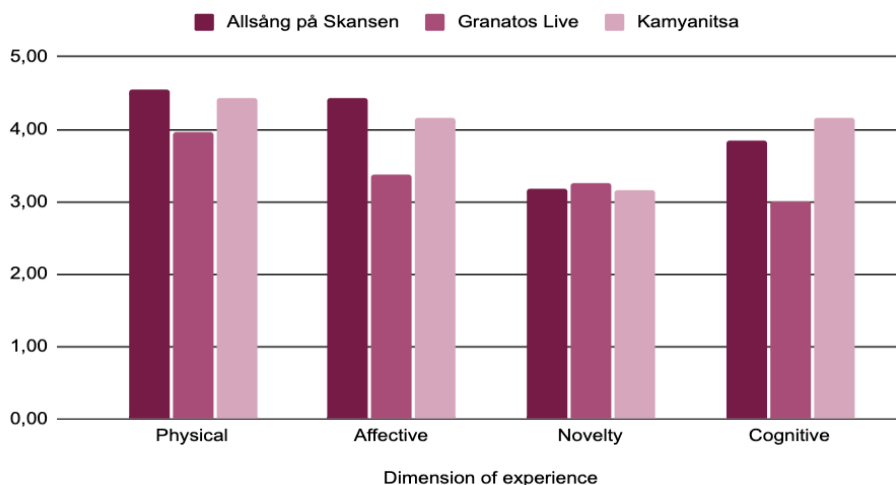


Figure 35. Dimensions of visitor experience scale and its median meanings from the three festivals. Source: Made by author.

Despite the revealed differences in the structures of visitor-museum interactions during the special event visits and the overall strong influence of personal context on encounters, the research in the structure of visitor experiences demonstrates a common pattern in the distribution of the key realms across the studied samples. In particular, Figure 35 indicates that the physical realm has the greatest influence on the structure of the visitor experience at open-air music festivals. Immediately following that is the affective realm, which is ranked second-highest by all three festivals' participants. Cognitive dimensions appear identically in Belarusian and Swedish materials, occupying the third position in the overall structure of visitor experience, while novelty has accumulated the lowest scores and occupies the fourth position. In the case of the Lithuanian Open-Air Museum, however, novelty has a slightly higher score than the cognitive realm, which can be explained by the frequency of visits and genre competence. Specifically, previous research indicates that first-time visits predominated in the case of Lithuania. Later on, I will provide a step-by-step overview of the primary components and discuss their behavior in relation to the larger personal and institutional contexts and genre configurations, in line with the conceptual framework of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions.

From the four different dimensions that compose the structure of experience, the *physical* dimension (Table 17 and Figure 35) is on average rated the highest in three samples. This could be explained due to the nature of the event in the open air and active bodily involvement of the participants during the festivals. Specifically, in the context of Allsång på Skansen, the statement “*I actively participated (singing and/or dancing)*” gained a score of 4.59 on a 5-point Likert scale (Table 17). Such a high rate is promoted by their active physical involvement during the visit, when audience is invited to sing along during the show. In addition, this activity was repeatedly mentioned as one of the reasons for attending the show. Similarly, in the case of Granatos Live, the active physical engagement of visitors is facilitated by music, singing, and dancing, spending much time outdoors. These activities were documented *in situ* during the observation and mentioned by the participants from the Lithuanian sample. In relation to the Kamyantsa festival, visitors emphasized the opportunity to dress in a national Belarusian costume (which also triggers tactile and affective engagements), spend time in the open air, sing songs, and participate in diverse hands-on workshops (for example, weaving and pottery) during the festival.

To conclude, the mentioned above examples of physical engagement showcase how the active haptic involvement facilitated by the program of the visit, on the one hand; and/or institutional context of ethnographic open-air museum, on the other, has resulted into a strong appearance of physical realm in the structure of visitor experience. Furthermore, during the festival in the Lithuanian museum, visitors utilize the venue of ethnographic open-air museum in non-conventional way (for example, for swimming, sunbathing, sleeping in a tent). This, in turn, removes some attendance barriers and blur conventional museum norms, imposing festival-led perceptions and behavior patterns during the visit.

Following the physical realm, affective engagement (Table 17 and Figure 35) is the second most frequently occurring dimension in the structure of experience. Specifically, the statement “*I was emotionally recharged*” ranks third overall (with average ratings of $M = 4.48$ in Sweden, $M = 3.46$ in Lithuania, and $M = 4.1$ in Belarus; see Table 17). These findings confirm the previous observations by Morgan (2008), Páez (2014), and Rimé (2014), who emphasized the significance of emotional engagement during cultural events. In line with the previous research, music events can expose the attendee to extremes of emotional or physical experience leading to greater self-knowledge as well as a rite of integration with others that consolidates shared cultural values and instills *communitas* (Turner, 1969). These patterns are depicted explicitly in the data.

The results of the survey indicate that the item “*I felt a sense of belonging to a community or nation*” received high marks from participants at all three museums. In Allsång på Skansen, however, the notion of belonging was operationalized through family and national ties. In addition, by singing along to the popular songs of the past, the attendees created a strong sensorial connection with one another and with the event itself. In the case of Granatos Live, however, *communitas* were influenced by emotional engagement and personal interest in electronic music, as discussed previously in the thesis. Consequently, the festival attendees from the LOAM demonstrated a relatively high level of connection with their peers and community. In the case of Kamyanytsa, visitors described their festival experience as a chance to celebrate Belarusian identity through reenactments, folk songs, wearing *vyshivanka* (Bel), and being among the reconstructed villages from the past. The aforementioned examples illustrate how the structural and social dynamics of genre provides the context for the development of strong sensorial connotations and a sense of belonging to a community, resulting in a solid presence of affective realm in the overall structure of visitor experience.

The cognitive dimension of visitor experience is associated with learning about culture and history, and shaping a better understanding of the past via contemporary music. This realm appears to be less significant than physical and affective dimensions across three samples (Table 17 and Figure 35). The data indicate that this pattern is particularly evident in the Belarusian and Swedish cases, where visitors were able to investigate museum exhibits during festivals. In contrast, the participants at the Kamyanita festival rated the significance of the cognitive dimension as relatively high. For example, the average score for the statement “*I learned something new about history and culture*” is 4.17. In addition, visitors agree to a high degree ($M = 4.14$; Table 17) that the festival promotes a greater understanding of the past through contemporary music. A similar trend is observed in the dataset from Skansen, where conative statements received a mean Likert scale score of $M = 3.85$ (Table 17 and Figure 35). The outcomes contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding the nature of cognitive dimension in the structure of the visitor experience by emphasizing a direct relationship between the structure of the visit and visitor encounters with cultural heritage during the event. The results identify the cultural domain of the ethnographic open-air museum as a significant factor that contributes to knowledge creation and learning during the visit.

The cognitive dimension has the lowest score in the visitor experience structure at Granatos Live. As shown in Table 5.4.5 and Figure 35, the interaction does not generate knowledge about the history and culture of Lithuania ($M = 2.8$). The intrinsic visitor motivation associated with the open-air music festival and the low level of visitor encounters with the cultural domain of ethnographic open-air museums (19% of audiences visited museum exhibitions during the open-air music festival) could both explain this. In addition, the low ranking of the cognitive statements could be attributed to personal factors (such as the perception of a festival as a form of entertainment that does not involve learning) and external obstacles (a shortage of communication about the exhibition during the event, lack of thematic integration between the event and museum context). Along these lines, to enhance the cognitive realm of a visitor experience, museums and event planners should assist visitors in interacting with the cultural realm of the institutional context of an ethnographic open-air museum (via programming, for example) and provide information about the opportunities for cultural encounters with the museum exhibition.

Lastly, the study reveals that *novelty* is the least significant dimension in the structure of visit experience (Table 17 and Figure 35). Specifically, the statement “*I found out more or learned something new about the museum*” gain average rankings closely to neutral score of 3 out of 5-point Likert scale, namely $M = 3.54$ in Sweden, $M = 3.28$ in Lithuania, and $M = 3.4$ in Belarus. This might stem from the character and frequency of both festival’ and museum’s visitation. In particular, the findings from the previous section reveal that the festivals generate retention of visitors, hence the largest influx of the first-time visitors was observed in the case of the LOAM. Thus, the data suggest a direct relation between the appearance of novelty and frequency of visit. This is particular evident in case of Granatos Live, where 45% of the visitors were first-time attendees. In this case, the participation in the open-air music festival as well as the context of ethnographic open-air museum were a novel to them. As a result, the ranking of the novelty in the LOAM is slightly higher than in the other two cases.

With regards to the participants from the Swedish and Belarusian festivals, the majority of attendees were repeated visitors to both the festivals and/ or ethnographic open-air museums. Therefore, they have developed previous expectations and knowledge (genre competence) about the museum and the festival and had a low level of novel encounters during the visit. This observation contradicts to the previous discussion by de Geus at al., (2016), hence complies with the latest research by Marques et al., (2021) that also drew a direct connection between the prior visits and novelty dimension in the structure of experience.

In addition, the statement “*I met and made acquaintances with new people*” (Table 17 and Figure 35) received negative average scores (below point 3.0 on a 5-point Likert scale) in Sweden and Belarus, namely $M = 2.8$ and $M = 2.9$. Unlike Granatos Live, where the festival encourages new acquaintances and interactions with strangers, these festivals do not stimulate new encounters. This can be explained by the event’s settings, and in particular, the flow and duration, as well as the social dynamics between attendees during the event. For example, during Allsång på Skansen visitors are seated in a single location, which limits their interactions to those with their immediate neighbors. Consequently, they do not travel around the venue during the event, and their interaction with other show participants is limited. Unlike Allsång på Skansen, visitors to the Belarusian open-air music festival are exposed to a variety of activities throughout the museum's premises. As a result, there are increased opportunities to interact with new

people or make new acquaintances during the festival. The low significance of meeting and making new acquaintances ($M = 2.9$) during the Kamyanyitsa festival may also be attributed to the social dynamics of the visit. The survey reveals that festival-goers frequently attend the event in couples or small groups and are hesitant to make new connections with other participants during the event. Lastly, the format and duration of Grantees Live seem to be more relevant for making new acquaintances. For instance, Granatos Live lasts for three days, and visitors are united by shared interests in music. Further to that, the young age of the participants promotes more freely occurring interactions with strangers during the event ($M = 3.28$, Table 17, and Figure 35).

To sum it all up, the study into the structure of visitor experience in the context of a special event visit suggests that the genre as a value-laden perspective has a direct influence on the key experience dimensions. Specifically, the rankings from Allsång på Skansen and Kamyanyitsa are very consistent in relation to most of the statements. More precisely, the items are highly rated and generate average meanings close to 4 points out of a 5-point Likert scale. The attendees of Granatos Live provided comparatively lower scores than their peers from Skansen and the BSMFARL, with the only exception being novelty, operationalized through the possibility to meet new people and make new acquaintances during the festival.

5.5. Discussion and Conclusions

The second empirical study aimed to unveil the structural composition of visitor experiences in the context of a special event visit—an open-air music festival—and investigate different layers of meanings and perceptions from the festival attendees. In total, 473 valid responses were collected from the participants of three open-air music festivals (specifically, Allsång på Skansen in Skansen, Grantees Live in the LOAM, and Kamyanyitsa in the BSMFARL). The detailed analysis of visitor-museum interactions supports the argument that visitor experiences at open-air music festivals are influenced both by the personal context (previous experiences, motivations, and perceptions of festivals as casual leisure) and the external factors associated with the visiting context of the festival and genre registers (specifically, form and program of the event).

In relation to the structure of the visitor experience, the findings reveal a balanced disposition and structural resemblance in the physical, affective,

cognitive, and novelty realms across the studied samples. Hence, in comparison to the compositional structure of the guided visit experience, the findings from a special event visit demonstrate a solid compositional consistency between the three events. Specifically, the results show that the physical realm is the most dominant across three samples, emphasizing the importance of active bodily involvement in experience-making during the open-air music festival. From a genre perspective, visitor-museum interactions in all three cases were operationalized in the social context of a large group of people (a crowd), and were externally enhanced by the event program. Notwithstanding, visitors were empowered to define the form, level, and duration of their interactions in line with their intrinsic motivations and interests.

The analysis of visitor motivations reveals that attendees are primarily motivated by a music festival as an event. Consequently, they perceive ethnographic open-air museums through the lens of a festival and actively adopt behavior patterns associated with participation in a music event. In turn, this contradicts the overall perception of a museum visit as an example of serious leisure activity (Stebbins, 2006). As a result, the participants are more inclined toward affective and physical engagement than cognitive and educational interaction with the museum premises. Visitors value social interactions that foster a sense of community and unity (while performing, chanting, or simply spending time together), which is salient and unique to a genre of a special event visit.

Despite the overall low appearance of cognitive realm in the structure of visitor experience, the detailed analysis into visitor interactions with cultural heritage during the event has demonstrated the following pattern. Specifically, the cognitive statements were ranked high in case when participants managed to visit the exhibition and interact with cultural realm of the museum (for example, in the cases of Kamyantsa and Allsång på Skansen).

Moreover, the empirical analysis identifies two groups of antecedents that promote visitor interactions with cultural heritage during a visit to a special event. The first group relates to the visitor's personal context, including their motivations and genre competence. Overall, this corroborates the findings of Hooper-Greenhill (1994) and Macdonald (2007), who emphasized the significance of the personal context as a visitor's antecedent in decision-making processes pertaining to visitor-museum interactions. In addition, the findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a more nuanced understanding of how frequency of visit and

motivation for participation in the event shape the dynamics of visitors' encounters with the exhibition during the music festival. The second group of external factors is associated with the visiting context and event management. Specifically, the study exposes several significant managerial and communicative obstacles that prevent visitors from interacting with cultural heritage. For instance, a lack of communication about the affordances of visiting exhibitions and the low participation of museum personnel and integration of cultural objects (buildings) prevent first-time visitors from exploring cultural heritage beyond the festival's agenda. In addition, the thematic similarity between the festival's program and the museum's institutional agenda fosters synergy and encourages visitors to engage deeply with the cultural heritage of ethnographic open-air museums. Through communication and information support the thematic divide between festivals as casual leisure and museums as serious leisure can be shortened, resulting in more meaningful visitor encounters with cultural heritage and museum spaces during the festivals.

Lastly, the findings reveal that novelty realm was not ranked high among the participants of the festivals, which complies with the previous findings about festival experiences by Marques et al. (2021) and Alexiou (2020). Furthermore, the analysis highlights the correlation between novelty and frequency of visit (or genre competence). In addition to that, the expression of novelty in terms of meeting new people and making friends during the open-air music festival is explicitly presented in the context of the Lithuanian festival, where genre registers (flow, duration, and social context) set up favorable conditions for establishing new contacts.

The findings from the content analysis into visitors' perceptions of ethnographic open-air museums during the special event visit resonate with the results from the guided school visit. In particular, the outcomes reveal that a genre of museum visit acts as a value-laden construct by instilling a particular cognitive framework and promoting the perception of a museum through the personal benefits of participating in the open-air music festival.

In conclusion, the findings from the special event visit contribute to the extant knowledge about visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions framed by the optics of a genre of museum visit. In particular, the results illustrate how genre imposes communicative and regulative forces on visitor-museum interactions, and consequently imparts a particular structure to the visitor experience. The findings indicate that the physical realm is the most influential aspect of the structural composition of visitor experience. This domain is facilitated by the participants' active physical engagement, such as singing along, dancing, and spending time outdoors

during the event. The affective dimension of experience derives primarily from the social dynamics of visitor interactions with a crowd, and active physical participation co-creates the event. In turn, this produced a strong emotional response and a sense of bonding to a community. The cognitive realm is presented less in the structure of the visitor experience, which can be explained by the personal motivations of visitors and the clear distinction between festival attendance as casual leisure and museum context as a facilitator of serious leisure. The study demonstrates that museum visitors are highly cognitively engaged when interacting with the exhibition and artifacts. These interactions could be externally facilitated by information support and communication that enhance a more seamless thematic integration between the event's scope and content and the institution's context. The occurrence of novelty in the visitor experience structure within the context of a special event correlates with the frequency of visits and existing genre competence. In particular, it is more prevalent among first-time visitors, consistent with previous research.

To conclude, the empirical analysis reveals a particularly strong footprint of personal context (specifically, visitors motivations, frequency of visit, and perceptions) on visitor-museum interactions and facilitated experiences from open-air music festivals in the context of ethnographic open-air museums. This could be explained due to the high level of visitor agency and flexibility of genre configurations as regulative forces in special event visits.

The purpose of this section was to define the saliency of visitor experiences across three open-air music festivals in the genre of a special event visit. The data reveal a balanced disposition of four main elements of visitor experiences, including physical engagement, affective engagement, cognitive engagement, and novelty. These findings from the empirical research confirm the hypothesis of the thesis that the genre of museum visit shapes the compositional structure of visitor experience. Moreover, the results demonstrate the importance of personal context as well as museum visiting context (and specifically event' flow and agenda) for shaping visitor-museum interactions during the festival and facilitated experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I presented and discussed conceptualizing the visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions, framed within the genre configurations of a museum visit. The application of a genre lens as a structuring unit provides a useful framework for systematizing visitor-museum interactions in museum practices and developing a more informed understanding of the antecedents of a visitor experience. According to the introduction, this research has identified five primary objectives. One-by-one I outline the topical, conceptual, and disciplinary contributions of the thesis and describe how each of these objectives was attained.

In accordance with broader museological paradigms and recent transformations in society, the first objective was derived from the need for a holistic perspective on a visitor experience from the museological perspective. Utilizing a literature review in museum studies, the overview provides a meta-perspective on visitor-museum relationships and outlines the major approaches to conceptualization of visitor experience in accordance with the tenets of *Traditional Museology*, *New Museology*, and *Sociomuseology*. This elaboration advances the conceptual evolution of the museum visitor experience on a disciplinary level. The data gathered led to the conclusion that a visitor experience is complex, contextual, and multidimensional phenomenon. Moreover, given the recent changes in the museum context associated with democratization processes and the increased complexity of a museum agenda, visitor experience should be approached in a more systematic manner as a nexus of visitor encounters with and within the museum context.

Consequently, the second objective was to develop a framework of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions, conceptualized through the lens of a museum visit genre, that addresses the complexity of visitor-museum encounters and provides a more structured perspective on a visitor's experience. The research was based on Dierking and Falk's (1992) and de Geus et al.'s (2016) conceptualizations of experience. To advance existing conceptualization of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions, the thesis adopted and elaborated on the notion of a genre of museum visit. It was employed as a structuring unit for visitor-museum interactions that encompass similar elements of the form of interaction, level of facilitation, and mediational means, on the one hand, and the social context of interactions and visitor agency, on the other. I propose that this lens expands existing visitor experience theory in three ways: (a) a broader unit of analysis of visitor-museum interactions with shared configurations;

(b) wider levels of investigation than the triad of personal, physical, and social contexts as previously conceptualized by Dierking and Falk; and (c) an expanded theory that embraces visitors and their agency to explain reciprocal interactions within museums. On a conceptual and theoretical level, this approach permits transferring the focus from visitors and museums as distinct instances to experience as a co-created phenomenon between these two instances, framed according to genre conventions. In addition, the investigation contributes to the existing body of knowledge regarding the structure of the visitor experience and its realms (including affective, physical, cognitive, and novelty). It develops an informed perspective on the nature of the revealed components and the significance of personal and institutional contexts as essential antecedents of visitor experience realms. Topical contributions include a better understanding of how museum visitors use genre as a value-laden navigation system to make informed choices about the visit based on their genre competence, including prior knowledge and experiences; as well as motivations, and situational interests. This theoretical bricolage provides new avenues for addressing the widely acknowledged complexity and ambiguity of the visitor experience and incorporating the recent advances in museology. Overall, the model contributes in that it paints a holistic picture of visitor experience by showing more accurate attributes of personal and museum visiting contexts, adopting a systematic lens to complex visitor-museum interactions through the genre of museum visit, and demonstrating explicit experience realms and outcomes. This knowledge is not only of great importance for scholars and future academic work in the area, but also for museum practitioners and cultural managers.

The third objective was to characterize the context of an ethnographic open-air museum as a space for visitor-museum interactions, which served as the empirical setting for the study. In order to achieve this objective, the study incorporated Christidou's (2012) earlier conceptualizations of institutional context to provide a comprehensive overview of the hybrid settings of ethnographic open-air museums. Given a lack of empirical research on visitors and visitor experiences in the context of ethnographic open-air museums, this overview has provided to a greater understanding of the museum context as a milieu for visitor interactions, with its limitations and affordances.

In these lines, the fourth objective was to identify the genres of museum visits that constitute the visiting genre repertoire and their peculiarities in the context of ethnographic open-air museums. The criteria for defining genres were developed based on the nature of visitor-museum interactions and the

characteristics of a genre of museum visit, synthesizing similar structural elements of form, level of facilitation, and mediational means, as well as a shared nature of social context and visitor agency in these interactions. Along these lines, the thesis differentiated between non-guided, guided, and special event visits. The proposed taxonomy provided the basis for empirical investigation of visitor experiences as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions framed in different genres of visitor-museum interactions. As a result, this elaboration was critical to bridge the gap between the existing theory of visitor experience and the emerging conceptualization of visitor experience through the lens of the genre of museum visit. On a disciplinary level, the developed taxonomy describes the mechanism for systematizing museum practices and may provide researchers and museum practitioners with an instrument for examining visitor-museum interactions and facilitated outcomes in various museological contexts.

Lastly, the fifth goal of the thesis was decided by putting the suggested visitor experience model to the test and looking at the structure of the visitor experience (in the emotional, cognitive, physical, and novelty realms) and its antecedents in guided and special event genres of museum visits. The findings appeared in conformity with the previous research on the composition of visitor experience and its core realms. Specifically, the two empirical studies revealed a structural similarity in the disposition of experience realms in two genres across three museums. In addition, the results contributed to existing knowledge by developing a more empirically-informed view of the nature of affective, cognitive, physical, and novelty realms of a visitor experience and its antecedents, simultaneously co-produced by personal and museum visiting contexts and genre configurations. Stemming from the generic resemblance and similarity in outcomes of visitor-museum interactions, the empirical findings comply with the hypothesis that a genre of museum visit enhances the structure of the visitor experience and shapes the way visitors encounter and perceive museum spaces.

In addition, the findings confirmed the main statements for defense. In line with the first statement, the results suggested that genre configurations instilled communicative and regulative forces that frame visitor interactions and produce forms of action mutually co-created by the personal context and museum visiting settings. From a visitor perspective, a genre of museum visit shapes beliefs, actions, and social context for interaction, both enabling and constraining how visitors engage with cultural heritage, museum spaces, and peers during the visit. Therefore, genre competence (prior knowledge, experiences, and frequency of visit) acts as a strong facilitator of

visitor-museum interactions. In museums as highly ordered institutions, a genre of visit imposes certain norms or rules of visitor behavior that determine the character of interactions, perceptions of a museum, and overall visitor experience. This concerns the way in which visitors are empowered to engage in the activities during the visit.

As for the second statement, the results affirmed the structural similarity of visitor experiences across three museums and two genres. In turn, this enabled me to conclude that the conceptualization of visitor experience through a genre lens provides a means to address the complexity of visitor experience and promote a more systematic and holistic understanding of interactions and outcomes.

In relation to the third statement, the content analysis provided a nuanced understanding of the visitor experience and the higher-order antecedents derived from the personal and museum visiting contexts. The encounters visitors have with exhibits at museums are crucial to the cognitive aspect of the visitor experience. The findings indicate that visitors create knowledge about a phenomenon when it resonates with their existing cognitive schema and facilitates personal value beyond the museum visit. To expand the cognitive realm of experience, museums should provide contextual information consisting of anchor points connecting displayed ethnographic and architectural collections with contemporary discourse and the accumulation of personal value. The institutional context of ethnographic open-air museums triggers the physical realm of visitor experience. Similarly, to enhance the impact of physical engagement, museum programs should entail hands-on interactions that stimulate multisensorial involvement and foster meaning on a personal level. In this case, the hybrid institutional context of ethnographic open-air museums has good potential for museum production that entails a high level of physical involvement. In relation to the affective realm of experience, the findings revealed two groups of antecedents. The first one is associated with the social dynamics of the visit, which could foster interpersonal interaction, facilitate a sense of bonding and teamwork, and lead to a sense of belonging to a community. At the same time, the findings from the guided visit showcased the opposite: when the level of facilitation during the excursion was low, visitors constructed affective engagement through personal interactions and situational interest. Lastly, the realm of novelty is associated with the personal context, specifically previous experience and knowledge, as well as the genre competence of the visitors.

The purpose of the thesis was to conceptualize visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum interactions, framed in various genres of museum

visit; and to investigate it empirically in the context of ethnographic open-air museums. In museum studies, the visitor experience is considered a crucial means by which institutions establish long-term relationships with multiple audiences, operationalize their agendas, and gain valuable insights for operational and strategic planning of museum programs and services. Consequently, the focus of the thesis was on developing a more nuanced understanding of the experience and its dimensions in a more structured and qualitative manner through the lens of visitor-museum interactions, as systematized via genres.

The conclusions and contributions of the thesis need to be evaluated in light of the limitations and perspectives for further research. Along these lines, the first empirical study is based on a small sample of school visitors. Additional research involving more schoolchildren and other groups of guided museum visitors will strengthen the case for generalizing the results. In addition, the second empirical study was conducted within the specific context of an open-air music festival, and more investigation is required in relation to various types of events with diverse programs, contexts, and content, such as cultural festivals and thematic celebrations. Lastly, the study of visitor-museum interactions in a non-guided visit would provide further theoretical advancement of the developed conceptual framework of visitor experience as a nexus of visitor-museum encounters. Collecting more data through longitudinal research would strengthen the conclusions about the structure and nature of the visitor experience, with the possibility of extending it to other museums for further comparison. Moreover, amplifying the quantitative approach with qualitative methods would enrich and provide a deeper understanding of the data and correlation between the realms of visitor experience and revealed antecedents (for instance, when it comes to the possibly delicate relationship between personal context and museum visiting context and their implications for the nature of visitor experience).

This thesis contributes to the conceptualization of the visitor experience as a dialogical and contextual phenomenon in the context of museology. By inviting a genre perspective with its communicative and regulative tenets, it addressed the limitation in relation to the variations in visitor experience caused by other contextual factors, such as form, level of interaction, and personal, physical, and social contexts. In addition, the revealed patterns and strategies in meaning-making processes provided higher-order antecedents of visitor personal choices and allowed for the illustration of personal identity work in experience-making. Moreover, by addressing a rarely-studied domain of ethnographic open-air museum, and by documenting visitor-museum encounters in diverse contextual and structural settings, this

thesis is also useful for museum practitioners and event managers seeking to enhance meaningful encounters of various groups of visitors. The thesis is also valuable to the larger cultural heritage community that is interested in visitor studies, as it demonstrates how contemporary visitors engage, construct experiences, and assign meaning to genres of visitor-museum interactions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Example of Questionnaire from open-air music festival
(translated into English from Lithuanian, Swedish, Russian, and Belarusian
languages)

Date:

Time:

Venue:

Dear Participant,

You are kindly invited to take part in the survey, aiming at analyzing visitor experiences from open-air music festival (NAME) in the ethnographic open-air museum (NAME). I would appreciate it if you could spare 5 minutes to respond to my questions. The data will only be accessed by the researcher (Nadzeya Charapan) and will be used for doctoral thesis at Faculty of Communication (Vilnius University, Lithuania). You will remain completely anonymous.

1. Have you been to the museum before?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify when last time you visited museum

2. Have you attended the festival before?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify when you attended the festival

3. Please indicate the main three reasons for visiting the museum today.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Festival as event | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Lineup/singer | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Singing /dancing | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Museum and its atmosphere | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Learning | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Spending time with friends and/or relatives | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Tribute to tradition (of visiting festival) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Professional reasons | |

4. Have you managed to visit museum exposition during the festival visit?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify the sections or artifacts that you visited.

5. Continue the phrase: *The ethnographic open-air museum [NAME] is the best place for...*

6. Please rate the following statements from (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree.

1. I actively participated (singing and/or dancing)	1	2	3	4	5
2. I spent time in the open air	1	2	3	4	5
3. I was emotionally recharged	1	2	3	4	5
4. I felt a sense of belonging to a community or nation	1	2	3	4	5
5. I met and made acquaintances with new people	1	2	3	4	5
6. I found out more or learned something new about the museum	1	2	3	4	5
7. I gained a better understanding of the past through music	1	2	3	4	5
8. I learned something new about history and culture	1	2	3	4	5

7. Please, indicate your country of origin.

8. Please, indicate your age.

18-25

26-35

36-45

46-55

56-65

>66

9. Please, indicate your gender.

Male

Female

Other

Thank you for your participation!

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Appendix 2. Coding structure and results for visitor experience realms from the guided genre of museum visit across three museums (Nvivo 12)

Item/Sample	Skansen	LOAM	BSMFARL
N Sources	11	23	24
N References			
Affective Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Excitement] I was excited/ it was fun • [Hedonism] I liked it/ I enjoyed • [Dreaming] My dream will come true • [Adventure] It was adventurous • [Recollection of activity/ phenomenon] Used to play/ do/ engage with 	8 4 3 0 0 1	12 3 6 0 0 3	20 10 3 2 3 2
Cognitive Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Cognition/thinking] I was thinking • [Learning/ Knowledge acquisition] I learned something new 	6 0 6	7 1 6	12 3 9
Physical Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Behavior] I was active • [Hands-on participation/bodily engagement] I did something with / played/interacted with an object (for example, climbed, baked) • [Creativity]I created/drew/made souvenirs • [Multisensory (elements)] Description 	4 1 3	7 3 4	15 2 8 0 5

of sense(s) (taste, scent, hearing, smell, and touch)			
Novelty	5	11	11
• [Distinctiveness of engagement] It was my first time I saw, played, encountered	2	8	4
• [Unfamiliarity] I experienced/ engaged with things unknown to me	3	3	7

Appendix 3. List of the keywords, including the value of frequency of appearance and overall share

Code	Kamyanyitsa		Allsång på Skansen		Granatos Live	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Recreation	75	28	9	4	5	3
Festival	26	10	40	17	62	32
Culture	25	9	14	6	8	4
Learning	19	7	7	3	3	2
Belarusian/ Swedish/Lithuanian	19	7	15	7	9	5
Family	17	6	19	8	0	0
Tradition	13	5	15	7	0	0
Past	12	5	7	3	4	2
Identity	8	3	0	0	0	0
History	7	3	12	5	2	1
Celebration	6	2	0	0	0	0
Nature	5	2	4	2	6	3
Excursion	5	2	0	0	0	0
Community	5	2	25	11	7	4
Village	5	2	0	0	0	0
Weekend	5	2	0	0	0	0
Atmosphere	4	2	16	7	22	12
Open-air	4	2	3	1	3	2
Education	4	2	0	0	0	0
Children	0	0	11	5	0	0
Music	0	0	10	4	26	14
Friends	0	0	5	2	4	2

Singing/activity	0	0	5	2	2	1
Entertainment	0	0	6	3	13	7
Animals	0	0	3	1	0	0
Heritage	0	0	3	1	12	6
Food	0	0	0	0	3	2
Total	264	100	229	100	191	100

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2018.05.02. Lecture at the Estonian Open-air Museum: “Comparative Research onto Visitor Perceptions and Behavior in Open-air Museums”; Tallinn, Estonia.

2019.03.08. Lecture at the Latvian Ethnographic Open-Air Museum: “Open-air Museums and Their Visitors in the Era of Experiential Marketing”; Riga, Latvia.

2019.04.25. Research seminar on guiding and cultural heritage communication; Linköping University, Norrköping, Sweden.

2019.09.13. Lecture and workshop for museum professionals at the Estonian Open-air Museum: “Visitor Experience Matters: Implications for Research and Practice in the Museum Sector”; Tallinn, Estonia.

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Nadzeya Charapan holds a Master Degree in History (European Humanities University, Lithuania) and Bachelor Degree in Tourism Management (Belarusian State University, Belarus). She has been an extensive research and teaching experience in the U.S., Sweden, Estonia, Lithuania and Belarus. Her scope of academic interests evolves around the media and communication studies, cultural anthropology, visitor studies, digital humanities, and digital knowledge transfer in the Nordic and Baltic regions. She is currently teaching courses in digital cultural heritage and information management for graduate students at the Department of ALM (Archival Studies, Library and Information Studies and Museums and Cultural Heritage Studies) at Uppsala University (Sweden). Nadzeya is a principal investigator in the DigMus project: DigMus: Empowering Museum Professionals with Digital Skills project (2020-2023, Adult NordPlus). She is an active participant of international collaborative projects (NEP4Dissent: New Exploratory Phase in Research on East European Cultures of Dissent).

NOTES

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