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The role of cultural flagships in the perception and experience of urban areas for tourism and culture.

Case study: The Royal Opera House in Covent Garden.

Adrian Francisco Guachalla Gutierrez

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AND EXPERIENCE OF URBAN AREAS FOR TOURISM AND
CULTURE.

CASE STUDY: THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE IN COVENT
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PhD 2011

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Westminster
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore how a cultural flagship influences the cultural tourist's perception and experience of a well established urban area for tourism and culture, taking the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden as a case study. Covent Garden, as an important part of London's tourist portfolio is a case study of interest because of its wide array of land use that makes it a popular area for tourism and cultural consumption, with distinctive architecture, heritage and a wide range of attractions and leisure opportunities. The Royal Opera House, established at the core of the area, stands as a world renowned provider of high culture and has a rich history and heritage of its own, yet it evolved over time parallel to the area, to the extent that Covent Garden's name is often used to refer to either the precinct or the flagship. It was recently subjected to a redevelopment scheme aimed towards providing the building with a fresh architectural front and added facilities. This raises many questions regarding the role that an old cultural flagship made new plays in the well established tourism precinct's sense of place and draw towards the cultural tourist. To address these matters, a social constructivist approach has been adopted, through which the tourist's mechanisms of interpreting their surroundings were explored and the nature of their cultural experiences in Covent Garden understood. 306 semi-structured interviews were conducted throughout six different locations in the area and inside the flagship building aiming to explore the tourist's motivation to visit London and Covent Garden, the nature of their experiences and their perception of both the area and the flagship, and how the latter exerts an influence on their perception and experience of place.

The evidence analysis has revealed that the Royal Opera House does not have a strong influence on the tourist's perception and experience of Covent Garden, which is seen as a place for shopping and relaxation rather than high culture despite the efforts made to provide it with a more attractive architectural front and its policies for social inclusion. However, other visitors perceive it as a pinnacle of high culture depending on their level of appreciation for opera and ballet.

Furthermore, the notion of cultural distance (McKercher, 2002) exerts an influence in these perceptions as the area's visitors tend to relate their surroundings to what they are familiar and unfamiliar with. The visitors' age also plays an important role in their perception and experience of place as the data collected revealed that the older age groups tend to have a more inquisitive attitude in regards to their tourist experiences, which can also be understood as deeper. On the other hand, younger tourists are more likely to focus their visit on leisure and entertainment. Regardless of this, the presence and behaviour of other visitors in the area also prove to exert an impact on the tourist's perception and experience of place. They tend to engage in communal activities such as watching street entertainment and provide each other with behavioural cues that manifest themselves in a slower pace of movement and a relaxed attitude when experiencing the precinct. This is also related to the area's built environment and urban characteristics as the streets are pedestrianised, allowing for visitors to roam and explore their surroundings. However, Covent Garden can be seen as a multifaceted precinct as the area's different locations vary in terms of their size and scale as well as the leisure and cultural opportunities available. The area's Piazza is an open space characterised by the presence of the market, street entertainment and outdoor eating and drinking facilities that grant it with a continental and cosmopolitan ambience. Other locations such as Seven Dials provide the visitors with other types of experiences given the smaller scale of its streets. The Royal Opera House is perceived as a valuable cultural asset for the country and its name is associated with elitism, exclusivity and monumental architecture. However, the building's physical presence in the area does not provide the same visual stimuli that other stand alone flagship developments such as the Sydney Opera House provide for example. Therefore, its importance and role in the tourist's perception and experience of place depends on the individual's awareness of the building and personal interest in its cultural products.

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It is my wish that this work is seen as a reflection of God's love, power, honour and glory.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CG	Covent Garden
DCMS	British Department of Culture, Media and Sport
ROH	Royal Opera House
SOLT	Society of London Theatre
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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Communication is more than just words.
Communication is architecture.
Because of course it is quite obvious
that a house which would be built without that will,
that desire to communicate,
would not look the way your house looks today.

- Tad Danielewski

1. INTRODUCTION

The understanding of the role of tourism and culture in urban precincts is complex since many elements are involved in the process of place making and the debates that they generate. Covent Garden, as an important part of London's tourist portfolio, is a case study of interest because it is a well established tourism precinct with a variety of land uses and a recently redeveloped opera house. Centuries ago, it was London's first planned square. Since then, it has evolved becoming a popular area for tourism and cultural consumption, with distinctive architecture, heritage and a wide range of attractions that act as catalysts for tourism. For these reasons, it is important to explore the tourist's experiential and perceptual processes, and how they assign meanings to the urban settings that they visit considering the diversity of elements that can influence their perception and experience of the area.

The Royal Opera House is firmly established at the core of Covent Garden as a world renowned provider of high culture with a rich history and heritage of its own. Its attachment to an area that celebrates popular culture such as street performance is evident in the fact that Covent Garden's name is often used interchangeably to refer to either the precinct or the flagship. It was subjected to a redevelopment scheme to provide the building with a fresh architectural front and added facilities. This raises many questions regarding the role that an old cultural flagship made new plays in a well established tourism precinct's sense of place and its appeal to the cultural tourist.

Academic research on cultural flagships and their impact on cultural tourism seems to mainly focus on the development or regeneration of urban areas for tourism and novel flagships such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Plaza, 2000a) and the Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam (Mommaas, 2004). This represents an opportunity for this research to contribute with new knowledge concerning the role of a well established cultural flagship in a popular urban area for tourism and culture characterised by a variety of place making elements. This

will also contribute to the understanding of London's status as a world city for tourism. For this purpose, the overall aim of this research is to evaluate the role of the Royal Opera House in the perception and experience of tourism in Covent Garden. To attain this overall aim, the following research questions have been determined:

- What does the term 'Covent Garden' represent for the visitor?
- What motivates tourists to visit Covent Garden?
- How is a visit to Covent Garden experienced by the visitor?
- How is Covent Garden perceived by the visitor?
- How does the Royal Opera House influence the perception and experience of Covent Garden?

1.1. Research area and rationale

This study focuses on a cultural flagship and its influence on an area that is popular because of its cultural offer in terms of performing arts (high and popular) along with the presence of other elements related to leisure and culture. Law (2002:152) states that 'the wider impacts of the arts have become more important in the thinking about policy making, whether this is economic impact (revenue and jobs for example), role in urban regeneration and place marketing (and thereby assisting in the attraction of investment), enhancing lifestyle opportunities for mobile executives, the use of public arts to improve the appearance of the environment or the potential to attract tourists'. In this sense, performing arts can have a positive impact upon a district, a destination and the host community because they act as catalysts for tourism. Tourists may visit the area due to its vibrancy and cultural offer, and engage in other experiences that they may have not sought originally because of their clustered availability. Myerscough (1988) stresses the importance of tourist expenditure in the arts, which is not only directly related to the consumption of the arts product but also the additional expenditure that shopping and related peripheral activities represent. These activities are often catalysed by flagship developments, as indicated by Leslie (2001:224) who proposes that the development of infrastructure for cultural tourism increase levels of employment in the cultural sector, promote conservation and refurbishment

efforts in the built environment, aid in the process of creating an image or brand for a destination and has the potential of improving the quality of life of the local population (as noted by Richards, 2001).

The link between performing arts and tourism is also appraised by Gibson and Connell (2005:265), who indicate that ‘local and national authorities have identified music tourism as a ready means of stimulating income flows and revitalising moribund places (...) countries and regions are marketed –indeed invented- through the lyrics and symbols that music has created’. The authors introduce ‘symbols’ as an issue of consideration to understand the relationship between the arts and tourism. This suggests that infrastructure developed for the arts, such as an opera house, can play an active role in the projection of images that speak of a vibrant cultural sector (Wing Tai Wai, 2004).

Law (2002) identifies three main reasons for the increased use of culture, entertainment, sport and special events in tourist destinations. These are: the perception of such endeavours bringing prestige to a destination, their implications to the local quality of life, and the feasibility of including such activities in the main tourism product of cities. The author (p. 127) also indicates that ‘there has been a movement to make the arts wider and more inclusive by widening access, developing arts centres in communities, broadening the definition of art to include new and more technical arts and also popular culture, embracing the production of the arts as well as their consumption’. This statement highlights a growing trend towards cultural consumption that is materialised by the development of venues that act as cultural suppliers and is applicable to this research as the study focuses on a significant flagship development for the performing arts. However, the fact that the cultural product delivered by the opera house consists mainly of ballet and opera performances add complexity to the study, as these art forms are perceived to be exclusive and elitist (DiMaggio and Useem, 1978). In relation to this, Smith (2007a) states that ‘different models of planning are being developed, such as cultural planning, which takes into consideration people’s lifestyles, cultural associations, and identity so that

projects have resonance with local communities, and discursive planning, which produces a sense of place, place-identity, and common cultural schemes' (as cited in Richards, 2007:107). This suggests that culture and cultural promotion can be closely linked to a precinct's urban identity but its consumption is subject to the tourist's background and personal preferences, indicating the need to conduct research that aims to understand what factors influence this process of cultural consumption.

Covent Garden is an important urban element of London's tourism portfolio as part of the destination's world famous West End, which can be related to Heilbrun and Grey's (2001:358) views on the provision of culture and its impact upon destinations by noting that 'a strong cultural sector does help to create a favourable image of a city'. The authors (p.358) also cite Cwi and Lyall (1977), who highlight that cultural attractions are 'an important indicator of the general level of a community's civility and culture. The presence of these attractions suggests that a community is progressive, resourceful, concerned about itself and energetic'. All these considerations indicate that flagship developments for the arts can have implications for the physical and cultural landscape of a destination, and they also speak of a vibrant cultural sector attracting tourists to the areas where they are established. These views support the relevance of this research as it is important to understand how a cultural flagship projects messages about London's cultural offer, how it influences the perception and experience of its urban environment and how the other elements of the area intervene in these processes.

The economic contribution of London theatre to the country's economy is approximately £2 billion per annum and around 41,000 jobs depend on London's theatre (Society of London Theatre, 2010). SOLT (2010) also reported that some £505 million was generated by theatre ticket sales in London in 2009 (as noted by UK Trade and Investment, 2010), indicating the importance of understanding the attraction of visitors and tourist activities in the urban areas that host this cultural offer. SOLT (2010) also highlights that the West End's contribution to the

national economy is not only related to cultural consumption, but it holds a strong link with other income generated through additional expenditure involved in the performing arts sector. Burns (2009) states that seven out of ten theatregoers make use of eating and drinking facilities and indicates that ‘almost 15,000 restaurant tables would be empty each night without London theatre’. This suggests that in order to understand how a cultural flagship affects the perception and experience of place, these facilities and other experiential opportunities in the area also need to be explored. The fact that 15% of theatregoers pay for hotel accommodation (Burns, 2009 as quoted by SOLT, 2010) confirms the link between performing arts and tourism, further supporting the relevance of this study. Another type of performing arts that is found in the case study area is street busking, which can potentially have an important influence on an area’s sense of place (Arkette, 2004) and on the way tourists behave and experience an urban precinct (Kushner and Brooks, 2000). Therefore, this research will focus on a variety of elements related to the area’s built environment, the significance of the cultural flagship for the area and the destination, the role played by other place making elements in the perception and experience of place, and issues related to the tourist’s personal background that also plays a role in these processes.

1.2. Outline of chapters

This thesis is structured in 11 chapters that establish a theoretical framework (Chapters 2-4), present secondary data related to the case study area and flagship (Chapter 5), propose an appropriate methodological approach and data collection method (Chapter 6), present the findings gathered through primary research (chapter 7) and discuss their relationships and implications (Chapter 8). This will lead to a series of conclusions and recommendations as presented in Chapter 10. A more detailed outline of the content of the chapters is as follows:

- Theoretical framework (Chapters 2, 3 and 4): Definitions of cultural tourism are provided in Chapter 2 along with a review of different typologies and perspectives of understanding the cultural tourist’s experience and perception of place. Chapter 3 focuses on urban areas for tourism and culture by reviewing different models of understanding

tourism precincts by focusing on different aspects that characterise them. Chapter 4 reviews a series of concepts related to flagship developments and their potential impacts on tourism, urban precincts and destinations.

- Case study (Chapter 5): A historical and analytical exploration of Covent Garden as a place for commerce, tourism and culture is provided and the different models of understanding similar areas are applied to the case study followed by a review of the Royal Opera House's significance for the area and recent redevelopment.
- Methodology, method and data collection (Chapter 6): The rationale for applying a social constructivist approach for this study is provided in the first sections of the chapter followed by how this approach is applied through semi-structured interviews as the chosen data collection method. Issues related to interview design and cross cultural qualitative research are also presented followed by an exploration of different data analysis techniques and the approach adopted to undertake this task which also includes use of specialised qualitative data analysis software.
- Evidence analysis and discussion (Chapters 7 and 8): The finding in relation to both the area and the flagship building are presented in chapter 7, which explore the data collected in terms of the interviewees' motivation to visit the area and their perception and experience of both Covent Garden and the opera house. The relationships and implications of these findings are discussed in chapter 7 and applied to the area's visitors, the area and the flagship.
- Conclusions and recommendations (Chapter 9): On the basis of the evidence analysis and their subsequent discussion as indicated above, a series of conclusions are drawn upon in terms of what Covent Garden represents for the visitor and how the area's different place making elements effectively influence their perception and experience of the precinct. A critical reflection of the method applied is provided followed recommendations for further research.

2. CULTURAL TOURISM, CULTURAL TOURISTS AND THE TOURIST'S EXPERIENCE

2.1. Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to establish a theoretical framework related to cultural tourism in an urban context given that this research focuses on the influence of a cultural flagship in the cultural tourist's perception and experience of Covent Garden. For this purpose, different definitions and approaches to cultural tourism will be reviewed along with notions related to the cultural tourist, from motivational, behavioural and psychological perspectives. The experience of urban cultural tourism will also be explored by focusing on cultural distance and depth of experience. This conceptual framework will strengthen the theoretical understanding of the research area in regards to the cultural tourist and how they perceive and experience object and place. The next chapters will review concepts related to urban areas for tourism and cultural flagships, which will further enhance this understanding in order to apply a well informed approach to the research design and data collection methods adopted for this study.

2.2. Cultural tourism

In order to establish an understanding of tourism within a cultural context, it is important to explore different approaches and perspectives by which cultural tourism can be viewed. Richardson and Fluker (2004) identify cultural resources as an important pull factor for a tourism destination playing an influential role in the visitor's perception and experience of place by stating that 'cultural tourism can be viewed essentially as an opportunity for tourists to experience, understand and appreciate the character of a place, its richness and diversity' (p. 76). These considerations imply that cultural tourism is a means of access to a destination's cultural resources that certain types of visitors may seek and consume. Another definition of cultural tourism is provided by Richards (2001:37), who proposes that cultural tourism is 'the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs'. This statement implies that the tourist

has cultural needs to satisfy which can also be understood as push factors motivating the individual to engage in tourist experiences. These considerations can be linked to Maslow's (1964) theory in regards to the hierarchical nature of human needs, described by Beech and Chadwick (2006:103) as 'one of the main content theories of motivation'. They will be discussed more thoroughly while revising concepts referred to the cultural tourist in further sections and are useful to this study as they include the matter of needs and wants, and links them to the cultural tourist's motivation to visit urban precincts. As indicated by the definition above, Richards (2001) places an emphasis on cultural attractions, and notes that these can be 'heritage sites, artistic and cultural manifestations, arts and drama'. This statement points out the wide range of cultural attractions that are featured in the cultural tourism portfolio of a destination; indicating the need to focus on different aspects of this type of tourism considering that, for example, heritage resources for tourism have different characteristics and markets than the performing arts sector. In this sense, focused studies are required on each type of cultural tourism to generate specialised knowledge in the field. However, it is clear that cultural resources have the potential of providing visitors with different types of tourist experiences. This applies to the tourist portfolio of urban areas for tourism and culture, such as Covent Garden, where there are different attractions, some related to culture to different extents, that attract visitors of a wide array of interests and motivations to visit, experiencing and perceiving the precinct in different manners.

These resources leading to cultural experiences can be associated with the notion of cultural productions. MacCannell (1976) refers to cultural productions as both the processes related to the creation of an attraction as well as the final product to be consumed (as cited in Richards, 2001). In this sense, the different cultural attractions that visitors seek in an area like Covent Garden involve a series of actors and processes that ultimately deliver the products that visitors are seeking. On the other hand, the authors also agree that it is important to denote the differences between the wide range of sectors that these productions may be related to. Love (2007:11) refers to Wales' Strategy for Cultural Tourism and

identifies these sectors as 'performing, visual and literary arts, museums, built and social heritage, historic landscapes and gardens, crafts, architecture, design, film, religion, broadcasting, food and sports'. The author emphasises the ample scope of resources for cultural tourism that need to be taken into individual consideration to understand the different types of experiences that they provide to visitors. In relation to cultural productions, Boniface (1995) indicates that the relationship between the different elements involved in cultural tourism consist of the interaction between the 'user' comprising groups of cultural tourists with different needs and motivations, 'the presenter' who the author (p. 28) defines as 'the person or persons immediately involved in making a cultural provision for the visitor'; and the 'item' conceptualised as the attraction itself whether this is tangible or intangible. This framework is useful for this research because it highlights the elements that the study should focus on, which in this case are the area's visitors (users), the cultural flagship (presenter) and culture itself (item).

It is also important to note that these sectors have the potential of interacting and complementing one another in certain areas where cultural attractions and resources are concentrated. Such is the case of Covent Garden and its array of experiential opportunities¹ that are associated with different types of cultural resources such as a rich heritage in terms of its built environment and performing arts of different types. Notwithstanding the need to have a clear focus and development strategies for the cultural resources used by cultural tourism, Love (2007:11) concludes that the inclusion of these resources in a tourism strategy can 'encourage repeat visits to destinations, help destinations develop unique, compelling market positions and present an appealing imagery'. The author implies that cultural tourism can aid the development of a destination's image and suggests that the different sectors of cultural tourism can work as an integral and structural network whilst a visit to one type of cultural attraction can induce visitation to other attractions not necessarily of the same nature as the first. These notions are applicable to Covent Garden as the variety of cultural resources

¹ Throughout the thesis 'experiential opportunities' are understood as the different experiences available in the area which tourists have the option to undertake

attracts visitors that may have experiences that differ from the ones they originally sought because of their concentration within the same tourist precinct.

These considerations identify different types of culture that may be consumed, perceived and experienced within the same tourist area. Hughes (2000) proposes a scheme to distinguish the different forms and manifestations of cultural tourism, indicating that 'universal cultural tourism' refers to the attributes associated with a destination because of its cultural characteristics, such as sense of place or local linguistic accent. Secondly, the author proposes the notion of 'wide cultural tourism' which is likely to be experienced by visitors seeking a general overview of the destination's cultural offer without discriminating specific cultural suppliers. This notion also relates to the multifaceted nature of cultural tourism, which can be linked to the 'cultural needs' mentioned above. Regardless of the type of cultural tourism sought and experienced by the tourist, it is the place's culture that is being assimilated in different forms. Thirdly, Hughes (2000) indicates that 'narrow cultural tourism' starts to envisage discrimination between the cultural resources that tourists seek, such as historic sites, museums, performing arts and others. Finally, the author refers to 'sectorised cultural tourism' as the sum of the specific resources attached to the narrowed sections mentioned above. This perspective is helpful for this study because it addresses the miscellaneous nature of cultural tourism as an activity, noting that cultural resources can be consumed generally or specifically. In other words, tourists in the case study area may visit the precinct seeking the get an overview of its cultural ambience and offer, or they may seek specific cultural experiences.

In order to further understand cultural consumption in the context of cultural tourism, Smith (2007a) evaluates the nature of the experiences that are provided by different cultural resources and the way they are presented to the user. The author identifies traditional and novel forms of cultural consumption as indicated in table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1 –Traditional and novel forms of cultural consumption (Smith, 2007a)

TRADITIONAL	NOVEL
Based on existing culture	Creative
Provides passive experiences to visitors	Experientially active
Educational	Based in more than one location
Location based	Focus on multicultural elements
Focus on indigenous monocultures	Use of intangible resources
Use of tangible resources	Use of technology
	Educational and entertaining

Smith (2003) proposes that traditional cultural tourism can provide distinctive experiences to users whereas experientially active cultural consumption can lead to unique experiences. In this sense, cultural tourism is not only wide-ranging in terms of the form of cultural resources consumed but also in the way by which it is presented to the consumer and the nature of the experience provided by the attractions, whether it be passive or active, tangible or intangible. Furthermore, Smith's (2007a) notion in regards to traditional and emerging forms of cultural tourism has implications with how a visitor experiences culture, suggesting that higher levels of engagement and participation with the 'item' (Boniface, 1995) lead to educational and entertaining experiences. The 'presenters' should address these trends in their cultural delivery policies, from visitor management to the actual process of cultural consumption. These notions are useful and applicable for this study as it focuses on an urban area where different types of cultural experiences are provided to its visitors. However, they also highlight the level of interaction between visitors and a cultural production, which is a complex topic in the case of performing arts, as attending a performance can be understood as a passive experience. In this sense, the views provided on these topics are useful for this research as the study focuses on a provider of performing arts. The next section addresses issues related to cultural tourists in terms of the motivations that lead them to seek these cultural experiences and the processes involved in the experience, perception and interpretation of cultural resources within an urban context.

2.3. The cultural tourist

As indicated above, once a theoretical foundation for the understanding of cultural tourism as a tourist activity has been determined, it is also necessary to review different concepts in regards to the cultural tourist in terms of their motivation to seek culture and the nature of their cultural experiences. However, as Richard's (2007) points out, the target market for many cultural attractions is mainly the local population despite of their role as catalysts for the attraction of tourists. This proposition is of interest to this study because, as evidenced in further chapters, the Opera House in Covent Garden mainly attracts a domestic audience comprised by local residents and domestic visitors. McKercher (2003:30) defines a cultural tourist as 'someone who visits, or intends to visit, a cultural tourism attraction, art gallery, museum or historic site, attend a performance or festival, or participate in a wide range of other activities at any time during their trip, regardless of their main reason for travelling'. This conceptualisation of a cultural tourist is incisive and concrete, and is applicable to this study as the attraction studied is a provider of culture in terms of performing arts and many members of its domestic audience can be understood as cultural tourists because they visit the destination to consume cultural resources.

Cultural tourism, on the other hand, can also be linked to leisure activities given the association between cultural consumption and entertainment proposed by Smith (2007a). This is notable in the case of Covent Garden considering that many cultural resources (performing arts, architectural heritage) are concentrated in the same tourist precinct as leisure activities and infrastructure (cafes, pubs). Parker (1976) analyses the reasons why the leisure industries continue to grow and expand, concluding that the industrial and post industrial societies assign a greater extent of importance to leisure, entertainment and relaxation related activities. Relaxation, therefore, constitutes an important element of the development of precincts for leisure. The author also indicates that these leisure activities, their characteristics and nature hold a close relationship with demographic factors related to the individual such as work, income, family structure, education, religion and life cycle stage. This suggests that a visitor's

interest in certain types of leisure activities, cultural for example, will be related to the individual's background and socio demographic profile. In example, children might have a tendency to be more easily engaged by activities that imply lower levels of intellectual engagement whilst undertaking leisure activities. Likewise, religious beliefs might act as propellers to undertake cultural tourism in the form of pilgrimage. In more recent studies, Richards (2001) also takes demographic factors of the cultural tourists' profiles to undertake research on cultural tourism motivations and type of attractions visited. The author emphasises the relationship between culture, leisure and motivation, and indicates that visits to cultural attractions do not necessarily signify a strong interest in culture. He identifies two major groups: the culturally motivated and the non-culturally motivated cultural tourists. Given these considerations, cultural tourism may serve leisure purposes effectively but not as a catalyst of cultural consumption. Equally, if cultural attractions are visited by individuals not interested in culture, the area or the attraction itself is associated with other elements that succeed in attracting them. They may be amenities, the acquisition of status and prestige for example. These concepts make a useful contribution to this research as it focuses on a popular area for tourism and culture that attracts various types of visitors that differ considerably in terms of their socio demographic profile, motivations to visit and experiences sought. Furthermore, they indicate that a tourist's visit to a cultural attraction does not equal to a strong desire to experience culture in all cases. On the other hand, a vibrant sense of place and the concentration of a variety of tourist experiences within the same precinct, such as Covent Garden, may lure visitors into cultural attractions and that their level of engagement with these experiential opportunities will be influenced by their personal background.

These considerations highlight cultural motivation as a pivotal element in the understanding of why visitors seek cultural experiences. In this respect, Smith (2003) refers to DeBotton's (2002) exploration of the subject, referring to the constant quest for what DeBotton terms novelty and complacency. This view also indicates that the consumption of culture may not be the primary motivation for visiting cultural sites or consuming cultural resources, as it may be the case of

visitors in an area where different experiential opportunities are provided. The author also appraises the distinct characteristics of the cultural tourist, affirming that this group of travellers tends to be more focused on experiencing differentiation, is preoccupied with matters related to authenticity, longs for cultural interaction, tends to have idealised images of the destination and can be highly resistant to simulacra. However, authenticity plays a much stronger role in the cultural experience to those visitors whose main preoccupation and motivation lies within the cultural needs mentioned before and may not be as central for tourists visiting the sites for peripheral reasons. Likewise, Boniface (1995) concludes that what she refers to as 'differentness' plays a fundamental role in the nature of a tourist's experience of culture and place. In the case of Covent Garden, the array of experiential opportunities concentrated in the same urban precinct suggests that the eclectic nature of this offer for tourism may translate into distinctiveness for the area's visitors.

The understanding of how a tourist's motivation interacts with the experience of cultural resources has led existing literature to categorise the cultural tourist. This approach is useful for this research considering the assortment of experiential opportunities available in the area as noted above. In relation to this, Seaton's (2002) typology of tourists emphasises the experiences sought and undertaken. This approach categorises the cultural tourist as follows:

- The dilettante/aesthete, interested in displays such as museums or art galleries
- The antiquarian heritage seeker
- The explorer adventurer, which can be linked to outdoors cultural ventures
- The religious pilgrim and spiritual seeker
- The festival charivariist
- The literateur
- The epicurean interested in food and wine
- The natural and social scientist

This categorisation is based upon the tourist's behavioural pattern and what the author refers to as role playing throughout a visit (as cited by Dann, 2002). It is important to point out that the author identifies roles played by cultural tourists, suggesting that they as tourists may become an active element of the tourist's experience themselves. However, and in spite of the graphic nature of this typology, it can be argued that it does not precisely address the wide range of activities that may be involved in cultural tourism. It can also be argued that some behavioural attributes such as 'adventuresomeness' could be identified in other types of cultural tourists other than the third category. From a more practical perspective, Smith (2003) proposes that cultural tourists can be classified as:

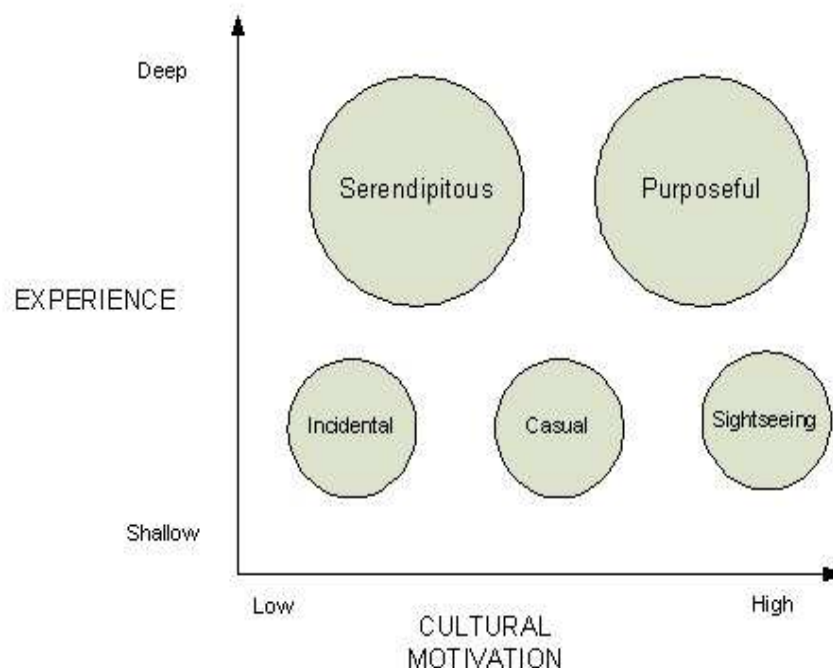
- The heritage tourist
- The arts tourist
- The creative tourist
- The urban cultural tourist
- The rural cultural tourist
- The indigenous cultural tourist
- The popular cultural tourist

This typology provides a clearer approach to types of cultural tourists based on activities undertaken, but it can also be noted that some of the categories are not mutually exclusive, such as the cases of the urban, popular and creative cultural tourists. Additionally, the author does not entirely integrate the matter of motivation for undertaking cultural tourism or behavioural patterns, which as stated above, can be the result of the actual consumption of cultural resources or on the other hand, the attainment of other experiences that may not be related to culture itself. As indicated before, these propositions are helpful for this study given the range of experiential opportunities available in the case study area.

These categorisations highlight the complexity of the cultural tourist's motivation to consume culture. McKercher (2002) approaches the subject from two perspectives. First, the centrality of culture in the decision to visit, considering that undertaking cultural activities may result from different motivations. He

indicates that 'participation alone may not be sufficient to document intent' (p.31). Secondly, there is the matter of depth of experience. Similarly to Hughes (2000), McKercher (2002) proposes that visitors can be 'generalised cultural tourists' when cultural activities are broad and give a general overview of a destination's cultural offer; whilst the 'specialised cultural tourist' has a clear focus on the specific sites or activities that they intend to undertake. These two categories suggest that the depth of the experience can be either meaningful or shallow for the visitor. This perspective differs from Seaton's (2002) and Smith's (2003) stance because it considers depth of experience as an important element of the understating of the cultural tourist. Different levels of depth of experience and purpose of visit result in a categorisation of a set of five different cultural tourists as illustrated by Figure 2.1 below:

Figure 2.1 – Tourist typology according to motivation and depth of experience
(McKercher, 2002)



McKercher (2002) proposes that cultural tourists can be:

- Purposeful cultural tourists, who have a clear focus on cultural endeavours, often on very specific types of cultural tourism, and have deep and meaningful cultural experiences.
- Sightseeing cultural tourists, with high levels of motivation associated with the cultural aspects of the destination, but these are experienced superficially.
- Incidental cultural tourists, with low levels of cultural motivation and if they happen to come across cultural activities, they experience them superficially as well.
- Casual cultural tourists, who may have a limited interest in cultural activities in the destination of choice and have equally limited cultural experiences.
- Serendipitous cultural tourists, with low levels of cultural motivation but end up having meaningful and deep cultural experiences without seeking them originally. He argues that this type of tourist is rare, and if the cultural offer of a destination captivated the attention of non cultural tourists to the extent that they have deep cultural experiences, such destination has a strong cultural sector.

Overall, the main lesson from this model is that 'it is overly simplistic to assume that high motivation automatically equates to a deep experience' (p.33). The model was tested by the author in the case of visitors in Hong Kong, and it was noted by the author that purposeful cultural tourists represent a comparatively smaller group than the other categories. This type of tourists' clear focus on specific cultural endeavours makes them a market of interest and they are 'the greatest consumers of intellectually challenging learning experiences' (p. 37). Even though the latter statement implies what is to be understood as 'depth of experience', a concise definition of the notion is not clearly defined. This approach to the categorisation of the cultural tourist addresses the nature of the tourist's motivation and experience and highlights that participation does not necessarily imply intent in cultural tourism. Nevertheless, it does not differentiate

between the different types of cultural tourism undertaken unlike Smith (2003), suggesting the need for a more wide ranging classification that covers both the supply and the demand of cultural tourism, implying a much more complex network of categories. Furthermore, as insightful as the notion is and helpful in terms of integration of motivation and experience, its applicability to a well established urban precinct for tourism and culture in a world city like Covent Garden in London is yet to be evaluated. As indicated above, the author conducted his research in Hong Kong, which differs considerably in terms of nature of attractions and urban settings from London. However, the notion is useful for this study because Covent Garden has an ample array of experiential opportunities related to culture and leisure that lead to different experiences, and it is beneficial to consider motivation and depth of experience to understand the processes of cultural consumption in the area.

This research focuses on a cultural flagship for the performing arts. Therefore, it is also useful to review categorisations of the cultural tourist in terms of arts consumption. Hughes (2000) focuses on arts related cultural tourists and indicates that they can either be arts-core when the objective of their travels is to undertake cultural tourism in the form of performing arts, or arts-peripheral when these activities complement another primary travel purpose. The author indicates that primary arts-core tourists are understood as visitors whose sole purpose of visit is to undertake cultural tourism; or multi primary and arts-core when performing arts are part of the main objectives of travel. Likewise, the arts-peripheral tourist can be either incidental when undertaking cultural activities is not the objective of the visit to a destination but is still planned; or accidental when it happens spontaneously. Finally, the author (p.59) also considers the nature of the trip, classifying it as either a holiday, which can be arts-core in the cases of those visiting a destination to consume culture but as a part of a holiday, or arts peripheral when culture is part of the holiday acting as a diversion. Non holiday visitors can also be arts-core when they travel solely for culture whilst art-peripheral non holiday travellers can either be on business or visiting friends or relatives. The author provides an insightful approach to the circumstantial factors

affecting the experience of the arts as a form of cultural tourism which is applicable to this study as tourists in Covent Garden may visit the area primarily to attend a performance at the flagship building with other activities undertaken in the area as a result. This notion also relates to McKercher's (2002) ideas on this matter as it considers the centrality of undertaking cultural activities in the tourist's experience of culture. Likewise, it can be applied to Smith's (2003) and Seaton's (2002) typologies as it examines the consumption of the arts as a form of cultural tourism. However, it is not a fully comprehensive model of understanding given that it does not include depth of the experience or motivation to consume cultural resources, whether they may be the arts themselves or the other secondary factors proposed by the author.

All these considerations suggest that a categorisation of the cultural tourist implies not only an understanding of the nature of the attractions but also of the motivations to visit and the circumstances involved in the actual experience. The theories reviewed point out that cultural tourism can be experienced in different ways depending on the activities undertaken (Smith, 2003; Hughes, 2000). However, there is a lack of consensus about participation in cultural activity as indicators of intent considering that the first categorisations reviewed interpret the act of participating in cultural endeavours as a given sign of willingness and full engagement. McKercher (2002) on the other hand examines the nature of the experiences and argues that undertaking them should not be considered as an indicator of a meaningful or purposeful endeavour. Therefore, it is necessary to undertake further research that would take these elements into account leading to a more complex but inclusive classification of cultural tourists. In addition, it is important to understand the mechanisms that intervene in the consumption of the cultural tourism product within the minds of the consumers, the tourists, who have different means of perceiving and experiencing culture.

2.4. The tourist experience

The review of different perspectives and approaches to the cultural tourist leads towards the analysis of the cultural experience within an urban context. As this

research focuses on an urban area for tourism and culture, it can be said that the urban settings and the nature of the offer for tourism in the area have an impact on the visitor's experience of place. The concept of a tourism precinct will be developed in detail in the next chapter whilst analysing different concepts related to urban areas for tourism and culture. However, it is broadly introduced here because the nature of a visitor's experience can be influenced by the settings in which they are undertaken. Hayllar et al. (2008) indicate that rarely is tourism an activity dispersed in and around the urban territory of a destination, but it is often concentrated on specific sites of interest that over time shape the tourist landscape of the destination. The authors (p.8) indicate that 'these points of concentration may include iconic sights, shopping areas, landmark cultural institutions or places of historical significance (...) where a number of attractions of similar or differing types aggregate alongside a range of tourism related services, these areas take on a particular spatial, cultural, social and economic identity'. These elements will ultimately constitute the tourism precinct's place making system, and they will influence the nature of the tourist's experience as discussed below. The authors' proposition is of particular interest to this research because it considers a wide range of elements concentrated within an urban precinct such as Covent Garden, which may shape to different extents the visitor's experience of place.

Hayllar et al. (2008) argue that the experience of an urban tourism precinct is the result of the process of individualizing the urban experience, which the authors associate with Kelly's (1955) 'personal construct theory'. This notion proposes that every experience is preconceived by the individual according to a personalized set of elements that create a sense of expectation within the tourist influencing their experience of place. This suggests that the urban experience, according to the authors, is subject to the idealisation of place after the individual has nurtured images and gathered representations of it. The author also emphasises the socialisation of the urban experience, implying that the presence of other tourists may affect the individual experience, which relates to the notion of co tourism as discussed in further sections. This theoretical framework focuses on preconceptions of place and the presence of others affecting the tourist's

experience of an urban area and is applicable to Covent Garden as this urban precinct is a popular area both in terms of visitor numbers and media exposure that may create images and generate expectations.

Graefke and Vaske (1987) highlight that a tourist experience can be influenced by 'individual, environmental, situational and personality related factors as well as the degree of communication with other people' (as cited in Ryan, 2002a:119). This outline of factors affecting a tourist experience is useful because it encompasses a relatively wide set of elements that may have an impact on the final outcome of a tourist experience. It can be applicable to Covent Garden as the built environment, the presence of other tourists, the circumstances in which they visit the area and the tourist's personal preferences may determine the nature of their experiences. However, it overlooks the depth of human interpretation and perception of outer stimuli that result in such an experience. McKercher (1996:65) indicates that 'whether people feel that they are or are not tourists or have participated in a tourism experience has less to do with the satisfaction of some imposed distance, time, or space criterion and more to do with their own perception of the experiences they have had or of their attitudes to the experiences they perceive others to have had'. The author highlights the importance of inner values and processes that lead to the interpretation of an image and the characterisation of an experience. Richards (1996a) also argues that the meanings assigned to what is perceived will be the key determinant of the nature of a tourist's experience, mentioning Urry's (1990) theory of the tourist's gaze, further explored by MacCannell (1999) below.

MacCannell (1999:23) approaches cultural tourism experiences by indicating that 'the data of cultural experiences are somewhat fictionalized, idealized or exaggerated models of social life that are in the public domain, in film, fiction, political rhetoric, small talk, comic strips, expositions, spectacles, etc.'. The author notes that a determining precedent of the nature of the cultural tourist's experience are the preconceptions and expectations built on the tourist's mind on the basis of the images projected by different sorts of media. The author refers to

these images as 'models'. Subsequently, there is a process of transformation of these models through the process of personal interpretation by the tourist, which the author suggests is the second element of a cultural tourist's experience, the 'influence'. A third element according to MacCannell's (1999) theory is 'the medium', which refers to the component of the structure, linking models and influences in an interactive process. An example of a medium would be a television broadcast or a one to one conversation, presenting the images provided by the models to the subjective interpretation of the tourist, influencing their personal meaning. In this sense, the author emphasises the importance of the processes involved in cultural productions and the interactions amongst the indicated elements which ultimately compound the experience of cultural tourism. They can involve anything from a celebratory parade to music festivals to sport games. All of which are extensions of the local culture perceived by the prospective or actual tourist. MacCannell (1999) refers to these extensions as 'signs' or 'rituals' that represent local cultural values as a whole. However, these are not to be mistaken by the models mentioned above, as the author claims that '(they) are not merely repositories of models for social life, they organise the attitudes we have towards the models and life'. This indicates that a cultural sign or ritual is the mixture between images and behaviour affecting the tourist's perception of a destination and its local community.

These perspectives help to understand the basic elements influencing the cultural tourist's experience of a destination and establish the role of the media and personal interpretation in this process. In addition, MacCannell (1999) refers to 'markers' as information readily available before a person's visit to a place, which can potentially create images and expectations of a specific site. It is important to note that according to this theory, the personal values of the sightseer will determine how the actual site is transformed; therefore the markers are also subject to personal interpretation. Richards (1996a) agrees with these views considering that the intervention of different forms of media form mental constructions influencing the tourist's perception of a destination or of a cultural production or attraction. These considerations are applicable to this research as the

area studied is a popular tourism precinct that is depicted in different forms of media such as film (*My Fair Lady*) or tourist brochures, which lead to the formation of preconceptions about it and mental images that potentially influence the visitors' perception and experience of place. In addition, the rituals indicated by the authors can be identified in different tourist practices in the area, such as watching street performances for example.

MacCannell's (1999) views about the tourist and new leisure classes have been referred to as groundbreaking (Tzanelli, 2004) and are useful to this research as they provide a theoretical framework that identifies the elements that intervene in the construction of a tourist's experience of place. However, it can be argued that these elements are approached from a complex and rather abstract perspective subject to personal interpretation. Ross (1994) on the other hand, provides a simpler and pragmatic approach to the tourist experience from a psychological point of view, which can be linked to that of Grafke and Vaske (1987) considering that it encompasses a series of elements that can have a direct or indirect effect on the experience of place. According to the author, it is important to consider the relationship between work and tourism, suggesting that the 'spillover' effect refers to the identification of either positive or negative aspects of a person's usual working or everyday life in the tourist site. It is suggested that a tourist's experience is influenced by what is perceived as negative or positive aspects of every day life and how they present themselves when undertaking tourist activities.

These considerations are useful for this study as they encompass an individual's personal background in terms of how their past experiences influence their present tourist experience. Ross (1994) also refers to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs (physiological, safety, love, esteem and self actualisation) as an important consideration in order to understand the tourist's inner mind processes that will ultimately determine the nature of their experiences. He also relates the understanding of the tourist's experience to levels of satisfaction in relation to Murray's (1938) classification of needs (conservance, achievement, recognition,

exhibition, dominance, autonomy, contrarianism, aggression, abasement, affiliation, play and cognizance). These views are useful to analyse the tourist's behaviour from a specific stance, as it suggests that they manifest themselves according to the tourist's interest in undertaking certain types of activities. In example, the cultural tourist will be driven by their needs of play and cognizance; while eco tourists or adventure tourists orient their endeavours on the basis of their needs for achievement or affiliation. Hence, the extent to which these needs are fulfilled will be direct determinants of a pleasant or unpleasant tourist experience. These views are also informative for this research as one of the research questions focuses on what motivates tourists to visit Covent Garden, entailing an exploration of what needs are being satisfied.

Asides from motivational considerations, Ross' (1994) psychological approach to tourism also implies the study of personality factors, referring to Plog's (1984) model about personality traits that can have a determining effect on the tourist's experience. These are indicated as venturesomeness, pleasure seeking, impulsivity, self confidence, plainfulness, masculinity, intellectualism and people orientation. As in the case of motivational issues affecting the tourist's experience, these personality considerations will not only determine the choice of destinations and activities to undertake but will also shape the nature of the tourist's experience. The variety of experiential opportunities in Covent Garden suggest that a wide array of visitors with different personality characteristics are attracted to the area, and concepts such as 'venturesomeness', 'plainfulness' and 'pleasure seeking' provide useful guidelines to understand the nature of the experiences they seek and have in the area. Finally, Ross (1994) also indicates that both attitudes and the environment also shape the tourist's experience of place. In regards to the latter, the author indicates that a focus point in terms of the environment of the destination is the image that it projects, making it appealing or deterring for different types of tourism markets. MacCannell's (1999) views about the tourist's experience can be linked with Ross' (1994) stance on the matter, whereas the importance of images attained through different means may actively influence an individual's experience of place. These considerations indicate the

importance of sensorial consumption of place and the influence that images and other means of sensorial stimulus influences a visitor's experience of a tourist precinct.

2.4.1. Sensorial experience of place

Covent Garden is a multifaceted area for tourism and culture that can be perceived from different perspectives. To provide a more inclusive understanding of the processes of perception and interpretation of place, the following sections focus on how images shape the tourist experience along with other sensorial stimulus that also exert an influence. According to Pocock and Hudson (1978:19), 'the image is the sum of direct sensory interaction as interpreted through the observer's value system, and accommodated in the existing memory store where inputs from indirect sources may be of at least equal importance'. This definition of image is useful because it appraises the interaction of images with the visitor's intrinsic means of interpretation which shape their perception of place. The author implies that images are partial, simplified, idiosyncratic and of a dynamic nature as they can evolve over time. Pocock and Hudson (1978) argue that these views on images are particularly applicable to modern cities and urban precincts, considering that they are visual representations of local cultures and values. Another important urban consideration is the activity or use of elements of the urban landscape.

Pocock and Hudson (1978:77) state that 'physical features of the environment achieve significance or image ability through association with a particular activity or function or (...) through the adherence of particular sentiments, memories, attitudes or beliefs'. This assumption is useful to the understanding of the dynamics between urban images and the tourist's perception considering that three elements are involved in the process: the image itself, the use it has and the structure of the individual's inner values and/or feelings. The result of the interaction between such elements will ultimately be the final outcome of the tourist's experience of place. In the case of Covent Garden, for example, a popular image is that of the market which is associated by the area's commercial

ambience, leading to perceptions and preconceptions of place. However, Ley (1981) notes that these are subject to a series of intrinsic and extrinsic factors by indicating that tourism precincts are 'a negotiated reality, a social construction by a purposeful set of actors' (as cited by Ringer, 1998 in Hayllar et al., 2008:190). On the other hand, Pocock and Hudson (1978) stress the importance of sense of place, summarizing it as the element by which an area and its traits can be recalled or remembered easily by past visitors. MacCannell (1999) indicates that a tangible and distinctive sense of place is the result of a strong set of markers as discussed above. In the case study area, the market place, the presence of street entertainers and a distinctive built environment present images that shape the area's place making system by presenting images that influence the visitor's perception of place. It is important to note, however, that these urban characteristics are also subject to the human elements in and around it (other tourists, the local population), therefore the authors indicate that they are not only urban precincts but also cultural landscapes.

Ingold and Kurtilla (2000:90-91) indicate, '(the place) exists through the realisable projects and availabilities, patterns of use and users, all of which are practically negotiated daily (and) this unnoticed framework of practices and concerns is something in which we dwell as habituated body subjects' (as cited by Minca and Oakes, 2006:29). The meaning of place is then referred to as a matter of high complexity that includes people and activities that take place. Covent Garden can be viewed as an immobile image in terms of its built environment, or as a mobile image related to the movement of people and array of activities that take place in the precinct. The immobile perspective can be associated with the authors' views on physical qualities that determine their level of 'imageability' according to how strongly they influence the process of overall image creation in the visitors' perception. Buildings and landmarks mostly account for this process as discussed in further chapters. It is in this sense that flagships developments gain their important role as influences of the image of a city or an urban district as a whole.

These perspectives focus on visual qualities of an area directly affecting the visitor's experience of place. However, Edensor (2006, as cited in Minca and Oakes, 2006) argues that the sensory experience of place goes beyond visual stimulation, indicating that none of the other four human senses should be overlooked whilst analysing the nature of a tourist's experience; as smell, touch, taste and sound can be just as powerful means of shaping a tourist's experience. In relation to this, Arkette (2004:159) proposes that studies focused on perception and experience of place should include 'the corporeal, the sensual and psychological aspects of (a) subjective experience, as well as the broader cultural characteristics of the different communities and subcultures which contribute to the diversity of city spaces'. This suggests that there is a broader sphere of elements that need to be taken into account to determine the tourist's experience beyond an area's visual qualities. The author concludes that sound can be an active and highly important part of place making in the tourist's perception, and that it may play a fundamental role in the urban identity of some districts where street performance takes place for example. This is a clear indicator that sense of place is undoubtedly constituted by a group of elements, out of which architecture is one of them, and sound, amongst others, plays an influential role in the visitor's experience of place.

These assumptions are of special interest in urban areas for tourism and culture where music is an important element of their portfolio of activities, such as Covent Garden and its provision of street entertainment. Cartier (2005:5) agrees and indicates that 'sensory modes beyond the visual may be more elusive, qualities that are aural, haptic, flavourful, olfactory. What stimulates these senses might be fleeting; we might own the visual environment via the gaze, but sounds, tastes, smells have their temporal limits'. This suggests that while visual assets can have a longer term endurance and can be more easily highlighted, other features of the environment are of a more spontaneous nature, and their perception by the tourist is often casual. This once again confirms that the interpretation and experience of place is almost entirely intrinsic but subject to extrinsic place making elements, whilst personality and motivational issues influence the tourist,

the outer circumstances deliver different and temporary elements to certain tourists at certain times. In this sense, besides from the provision of street entertainment providing aural stimulus to visitors in Covent Garden, for research purposes, it will be important to consider how the feel of other visitor's shape their experience of place, and how tastes and smells can also exert an influence.

Perkins and Thorns (2001) highlight that sensorial stimulus may affect the tourists' experience to the extent that their behaviour is modified. This notion can also be linked to MacCannell's (1999) tourist 'rituals', which lead visitors to become performers themselves as they engage in communal activities. By these means, they may become an important element of a precinct's place making system due to their common behaviour. As noted by Cloke and Perkins (1998) in regards to adventure tourism, 'involvement in adventure tourism, whether as active participant or as a member of an eager audience, extends well past watching or gazing. It is much more active than that. In their view, the notion of the tourist performance more adequately captures the experience of adventure tourism because it connotes both a sense of seeing and an association with the active body, heightened sensory experience, risk, vulnerability, passion, pleasure, mastery and/or failure' (as stated in Perkins and Thorns 2001:196). Even though the authors' study focuses on adventure tourism, the statement illustrates that sensorial stimulation leads visitors to engage in certain activities and behave in particular ways that are common in a tourist area, which leads them to become active performers, and indeed, part of the attraction and peculiarity of a tourism precinct. They summarise these notions by indicating that 'whichever combination of activities they choose, and wherever those activities are pursued, each tourist participates in a performance that compromises aspects of Urry's (1990) gaze accompanied by physical, intellectual and cognitive activity and bodily sensation' (Perkins and Thorns 2001:187). Considering that Covent Garden is a popular precinct for tourism with high levels of visitation and the presence of street entertainers that can be linked to the notion of rituals, it is also important to further explore topics related to the tourist's performance in an urban precinct and the idea of co tourism as addressed below.

2.4.2. The tourist's performance

This research focuses on a tourism precinct where different types of performance are concentrated, from popular street entertainment to high culture presented at Covent Garden's Opera House. It should be noted, however, that performance in the area should not be viewed strictly from the performing arts perspective, but from the tourist's contribution to the area's sense of place given their behavioural patterns which can be seen as a performance as well. Pine and Gilmore (1999) make an important contribution to the understanding of a tourist experience in the context of what they refer to as 'the experience economy' considering the importance that the tourist's experience has upon the economic, social and environmental spheres of a tourism destination. In this sense, the authors propose that they are determined, on one hand, by the level of participation, engagement and interaction that the tourist experiences in respect to a tourist activity. These can range from experiences of a passive nature to active participation and involvement. It is interesting to note the link between this view and Smith's (2007a) proposition of the shift from passive to more engaging and interactive forms of cultural tourism. Pine and Gilmore (1999) also indicate that the second dimension to consider the tourist's experience is 'the kind of connection, or environmental relationship that unites customers with the event or performance'. This suggests that visitors 'connect' with an event in different manners which can be associated with their level and nature of their participation in them. For example, the audience of a street entertainer which becomes an important element of the spectacle. In relation to this, the authors indicate that on one end of the spectrum of this element is absorption, to address the mental engagement that visitor's experience whilst on the other end; immersion indicates the level of physical interaction between visitor and attraction resulting in a tourist's experience.

Depending on the levels of participation and nature of engagement, Pine and Gilmore (1999) propose four 'realms' of experiences:

- Entertaining experiences, which are usually of passive participation but high levels of mental absorption, for example, watching a film or attending a performance.
- Educational experiences, implying high levels of intellectual absorption but can provide active experiences to the visitors, as with museums providing 'edu-taining' experiences that engage visitor's actively in the learning process.
- Escapist experiences, which also imply high levels of participation but can be more absorbing in a physical manner rather than intellectual; immersing the visitors in them, as in the experiences provided by casinos or themed parks.
- Aesthetic experiences, involving lower levels of participation but higher levels of physical engagement. As in a tourist's experience of safari rides.

Pine and Gilmore's (1999) approach is helpful because it involves the two spheres by which the outer environment is absorbed by a visitor, both mentally and physically. However, it also combines these elements with the nature of interaction between visitor and object. These notions are applicable to this research as a tourist's engagement with the cultural flagship can be associated to either the building's physical presence in the area or to the institution as a provider of high arts. In the latter case, providing interactive and engaging experiences to the user imposes an issue of consideration for a provider of performing arts due to the passive nature of attending a theatre performance. Regardless of this, it is a communal activity that has also emerged from the literature as an important element to understand a tourist's experience of place. In addition, the author's views highlight the importance of physical immersion in an environment which is a notion that can be applied to the case study as visitors in the area may have their experience of place influenced by the presence of the Opera House without physically penetrating its space. On the other hand, the categorisation of experiences can also be linked to tourist roles assumed by

visitors that lead them to behave in different ways leading them to become performers of the area as discussed below.

Edensor (2001) proposes that the tourist's experience is a performance subject to a tourist space: 'tourist performance is socially and spatially regulated to varying extents (...) the organisation, materiality and aesthetic and sensual qualities of tourist space influence, but do not determine, the kinds of performance that tourists undertake' (p. 63). The author proposes that the tourist's performance provides cues of behaviour to others, and is catalysed by tourist rituals that may be of a serious and formal nature referred to as incorporating rituals, characterised by 'grandiloquent pageantry and solemn, precise movements' (p. 64). On the other hand, Edensor (2001) notes that the rituals may be oriented towards leisure, relaxation and entertainment in what he refers to as pleasurable carnivals that consist of 'more carnivalesque ceremonies' that are 'more convivial, sensual, improvisational and playful'. This notion is useful because it encompasses the importance of tourist behaviour in their experience that is often affected by other tourists as they provide each other with behavioural cues of movement and conduct. In the case of Covent Garden, the leisure orientated sense of place facilitated by street entertainment and a commercial ambience can be linked to the more relaxed ceremonies that may exert an influence on the visitor's behaviour.

Edensor (2001) also takes into account the role of 'sceneography, stage production and design' whilst evaluating the role of town planners that lay out certain areas to provide different sorts of experiences to its visitors. The notion also addresses media exposure and projected images as it conceptualises tourist precincts as mediatised spaces; as well as the important role played by cultural intermediaries that influence the tourists' performance in the precinct. These performances are conceptualised as 'directed' when there is a staged intervention through town planning or the provision of certain attractions or experiential opportunities that influence the visitor's experience of place. For example, designated areas within a precinct where street busking is permitted. On the other hand, the author suggests that the performance may be 'identity oriented' when

the visitor turns to self to determine their behaviour in the area. Finally, the performance may be 'non conformist' when they come as a result of resistance to communal modes of behaviour. Harvey and Lorenzen (2006:16) address this latter group from the post tourist perspective, indicating that '(they) have the cultural capital to realise that tourist activities are staged and yet still reveal in the inauthenticity and kitsch offered by the performances'. The authors refer to Holt's (1998) concepts regarding cultural capital, proposing that people with low levels of cultural capital are more likely to engage in social interactions and that their tourist experience is prone to be influenced by the presence of others. These concepts are useful and informative for this research considering that the array of experiential opportunities in Covent Garden attract visitors with a variety of levels of cultural capital.

2.4.3. Co tourism

The considerations above can be linked to tourist's participation in communal activities and practices that lead them to perform in certain manners. It is also important to consider how the presence of other tourists may affect their experience of place and performance. Harvey and Lorenzen (2006) develop the notion of the co tourist and identify its roots in Urry's (1990) collective gaze, which proposes that the attraction of certain sites and places is associated to the presence of others. As Hogg et al. (2000) note, 'what Urry ignores is the social symbolism of shared consumption and the social interaction that increasingly configures the role of the tourist' (cited in Harvey and Lorenzen, 2006:18). The authors compare the phenomenon of co tourism to any given game where the sole presence of different players is not enough to deliver, but social interactions in the form of performances and practices are necessary. These performances and practices are stimulated by rituals, and have the potential of becoming rituals themselves in a chain of social reactions and interactions that provide other visitors with cues and behavioural parameters without impairing their ability to gain cultural capital. As indicated by the authors (p.20), 'tourist spaces are being developed where the co presence of other tourists is necessary to fulfil the role of the tourist. In these spaces, other tourists, co tourists, either provide cultural

scripts or simply participate in the interactional milieu that facilitate the role'. It is important to note, however, that the collective presence of tourists in urban precincts may lead to congestion that can potentially turn into a detrimental element of the tourist's experience. In relation to this, Lopez-Bonilla and Lopez-Bonilla (2007) refer to Savariades' (2000) notion of social carrying capacity and define it as 'the maximum level of use that can be absorbed by an area without an unacceptable decline in the quality of experience of visitors and without unacceptable adverse impact on the area's society' (p. 118). The author, thus, identifies two layers of understanding of social carrying capacity, the first concerning the tourists and the second related to the local community. Lopez-Bonilla and Lopez-Bonilla (2007) conclude that the optimal levels of social carrying capacity are psychologically established by the visitors themselves. Covent Garden is a popular tourism precinct, and the high levels of visitation may exert an influence on the visitor's perception and experience of place by representing a nuisance or a stimulating trait of the area.

Finally, it is important to refer to the profile of the visitor and impact that this has on their experiences beyond the intrinsic psychological and behavioural characteristics developed above. Edensor (2001:60) approaches the individual's socio demographic variables that may exert an impact on their experience of place and concludes that 'culturally coded patterns of tourist behaviour partly emerge out of dispositions that evolve around class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality for instance'. There is also a consistent tendency in existing literature to make a radical distinction between the host community and the area's visitors in order to understand the patterns of behaviour of both treated individually. However, Maitland (2009:31) suggests that in world cities such as London or New York, the boundaries between visitors and host communities are blurred, as the presence of domestic visitors, temporary migrants such as students, the local population and international tourists using the city simultaneously blur the distinction between visitors and host community, identifying these city users as a 'cosmopolitan consuming class' which comprise residents, workers and visitors alike (...) and who 'want to consume amenity and culture, and enjoy familiar landscapes of

consumptions'. The contemplations lead to the conclusion that the host community should not be dismissed as a receptive market for cultural experiences provided by the cultural tourism industry, and that whilst the nature of their experiences may be subject to different elements, tourists and locals absorb the same elements in the world city, where attractions are often not developed for tourism in the first place. As noted before, London is a world city and Covent Garden, located in its central area, attracts a variety of visitors of different interests and socio demographic profiles that result in a cosmopolitan ambience. This also points out the importance of evaluating how a tourist's personal background in terms of origin affects their perception and experience of place. In this sense, the next section addresses issues related to cultural distance and its influence on the nature of the tourist's experience.

2.4.4. Cultural distance and depth of experience

McKercher (2002) argues that cultural distance has a considerable influence on the appeal of cultural activities to international tourists. McKercher (2002:36) refers to McIntosh and Goeldner (1990) to conceptualise the notion of cultural distance, indicating that 'visitors from more culturally distant regions tend to seek deeper experiences, whereas those cultural tourists from culturally proximate regions seek a more entertainment orientated experience'. This concept applied to urban tourism would suggest that international tourists from distant countries would seek to have deeper cultural experiences, and that the domestic visitor would not assign as much importance to it.

Depth of experience is central to this notion. Nevertheless, it should be noted that there is a lack of consensus regarding what depth of experience consists of and what factors intervene in the process of having a deep or shallow experience. McKercher and Chow So-Ming (2001) use a series of indicators based on tourist activity to measure their depth of experience of place. These are: to mostly sightsee and/or photography or seeing interesting and unusual sites, to learn a little about the local culture and heritage, to learn a lot about the local culture and heritage, or to develop a deep understanding of the local culture and heritage.

These indicators directly relate a tourist's depth of experience with the choice of activities undertaken during a visit and to a learning process that comes as a result. However, it should be noted that the first indicator assumes that the individual seeks to experience a foreign culture in unfamiliar settings. Conversely, the authors also cite Jackson (2000) who suggests that 'truly culturally distant destinations are too strange and too threatening, with the prospect of visiting too intimidating to be enjoyable, unless a sufficiently large environmental bubble can be created to shield the visitor from that strangeness' (p. 25). In this sense, 'strangeness' may attract or deter tourists from visiting a site or a precinct. Larsen (2007) states that although central to tourism studies, the nature and essence of tourism experience is a field that remains under researched. The quest for a clear approach to this topic points towards McCannell's (1999) views, which evaluate the tourist's level of understanding of what is perceived and the impact of this understanding on the nature of the experience. The author (p.68) affirms that 'the tourist's inability to understand what he sees is the product of the structural arrangement that sets him into a touristic relationship with a social object'.

This assumption closely links to the matter of cultural distance addressed by McKercher (2002), which indicates that tourists visiting a destination from more culturally far regions will tend to seek deeper cultural endeavours in the search of novel and authentic experiences. However, this position seems to somewhat contradict that of McCannell's (1999), who affirms that a culturally different background may impair the tourist from understanding the cultural productions presented before them. It should also be noted that McKercher (2002) indicates that 'different people have different abilities to engage cultural and heritage attractions based on an array of factors, which include their level of education, awareness of the site prior to the visit, preconceptions of the site, interest in it, meaning to them, time availability, the presence or absence of competing activities that vie for their time and a host of other factors'. All these other factors are likely to be influenced by the individual's personal background. In this sense, if this foreign background may impair their ability to understand the visited site's cultural features yet the greater the cultural difference the deeper cultural

experiences may be, it could be inferred that the tourist embraces and enjoys the challenge of not fully understanding the visited culture.

Goeldner and Ritchie (2003:365) conceptualise the notion of cultural distance as 'the extent to which the culture of the area from which the tourist originates differs from the culture of the host region (...) the greater the cultural distance, the greater will be the resistance (...) however, the relationship might be the opposite (..) the higher the cultural distance between particular origin and destination areas, the more an allocentric person may wish to travel to that destination, to experience this extreme difference'. This conceptualisation again presents a conundrum in the understanding of the international tourist's experience of cultural tourism in a given precinct. In one hand, they may be intrigued by and attracted to what is unknown to their cultural background; whilst it is also possible that this might be a factor to deter them from experiencing an unfamiliar culture. Goeldner and Ritchie (2003) associate this uncertainty to Plog's classification of tourists in allocentric when they are on the adventurous and exploratory side of tourism, and psychocentric when they remain within the packaged holiday in the confinements of Judd and Fainstein's (1999) tourist bubble. The authors' (2003) also identify other factors that may deter tourists from visiting destinations and experiencing their cultures. These include economic distance referred to financial constraints resulting from taking the trip, cost and quality of services in the destination, and seasonality.

Supporting the notion that cultural distance is a factor that prevent tourists from undertaking culturally meaningful experiences is the work of Williams and Zelinsky (1970), who indicate that 'although geographical distance is a commonsensical influencing factor to tourism flows, some proximate nations display weak touristic interaction (and) are also affected by the cultural and social differences among nations' (as indicated by Bowden 2003:259). The authors highlight the different elements involved in the notion of cultural distance, identifying them as cultural differences that influence the tourist's levels of interaction and engagement with place. Bowden (2003) appraises the country of

origin of tourists in China in regards to the geographical areas that they tend to visit and proposes that there is a pattern suggesting that cultural distance may not only affect the nature of the cultural experience but it will also affect the districts/regions of the country visited by international tourist. The author (p. 276) indicates that 'inter-regional tourists have more similar destination preferences than intra-regional tourists do'. This suggests that because of the nature of the cultural experience is apparently less meaningful from more culturally proximate visitors, should they decide to visit the country they shall seek alternative forms of culture rather than the one found in mainstream tourist districts. Similarly, Ryan (2002b:952) undertakes studies to evaluate tourist flows within the Maori culture in New Zealand, and states that 'the lack of spatial distance between Maori and tourists means that European New Zealanders are not drawn to Maori culture as an attraction in the manner that those from Europe and North America are'. This entails once again that the greater the cultural distance is, the more likely is that the cultural experience will be meaningful, or if anything, appealing to the visitor. Ryan (2002b) attributes this to what he refers to as the 'exoticization' of a culture when this culture is unknown to the visitor, stimulating curiosity and intrigue.

On the other hand, McKercher (2002:31) cites Timothy's (1998) work, who indicates that 'people will have different experiences based on their differing levels of connectivity to a site'. This statement implies that despite great cultural differences resulting from great cultural distances between the tourists and the visited site or destination, there are other factors that intervene in the depth of their experiences. Larsen (2007:7) approaches this issue from a psychological point of view and states that 'experiences are influenced by expectancies and events and they remain or are constructed in the individual's memory, forming the basis for new preferences and expectancies'. This work suggests that expectations and past experiences have a direct influence on the tourist's ability to engage in cultural activities resulting in either shallow or deep experiences. These views will be of particular interest when evaluating a repeat visitor's perception and experience of the case study is given their past exposure to it.

The discussion of the nature and factors affecting the experience of cultural tourism is addressed by Timothy and Boyd (2003), who refer to it as the key outcome of tourism. The authors focus on heritage tourism to present their thesis and indicate that 'the heritage tourism experience is influenced and shaped by a mix of elements: supply and demand, the nature of the heritage landscape that has been conserved and protected, the impact heritage creates and leaves within destination regions, how heritage attractions and resources are managed, how it is interpreted and presented, as well as the role politics plays in forming the heritage experience' (p.7). This conceptualisation is useful because it provides a spectrum of elements that affect the tourist's experience, in this case, of heritage sites.

However, it is also important to note that Timothy and Boyd (2003) make a clear distinction between the heritage that is perceived and the heritage that is valued by the tourist. In this sense, the heritage assets of a tourism precinct might be strongly perceived by its visitors or not noticed by them at all. On the other hand, the importance assigned to such assets will vary according to the tourist's inner mechanisms of interpretation. This suggests that it is a misconception to believe that a historical precinct with a long standing tradition as a place for culture is going to directly influence the experience of all its visitors. As for the nature of the significance of the heritage, the authors state that it can be economic, social, political or scientific. They indicate (p. 13) that social heritage refers to 'the personal and collective identity that people and society have with their heritage (...) (which) can also help determine a sense of place, creating situations where people can use heritage to gain attachment to an area'. This suggests that a culturally proximate set of visitors may manifest higher levels of connectivity with a site because of a sense of belonging and positive identification with urban settings that are rich in terms of heritage. However, this is also subject to the individual's inner mechanisms of perception and interpretation leading to Timothy's (1997) notion of 'personal heritage'. Timothy and Boyd (2003) associate the concept of personal heritage to past experiences as fundamental factors that determine a visitor's current and future interest in visiting heritage sites, driven by what they refer to as nostalgia. However, the authors also note that

this is a neglected area of study, which strengthens the need to undertake the present research in order to understand how an urban precinct is transformed into personal heritage by the visitor, which implies the exploration of the factors that have lead to such constructions. In the case of Covent Garden, the concept of personal heritage may be related to a visitor's past exposure to either the area or the Opera House, exposure in terms of media or past experiences that shape their current experience of place.

Returning to the debate regarding depth of experience, Timothy and Boyd (2003:249) also link this issue to the matter of authenticity, referring to Herbert's (1995) question on the matter: 'if visitors seek an experience from their visit which is meaningful to them, should we be concerned whether that experience draws upon fact or reality, or whether or not the two can be distinguished?'. For this reason, a methodological stance that fully integrates the personal nature of the interpretation of the heritage of an urban precinct is paramount to effective experiential tourism studies. These issues are discussed in Chapter 6 whilst exploring the philosophical stance that this research adopts. Timothy and Boyd (2003) refer to the work of McIntosh and Prentice (1999), who indicate that the tourist's ability to create their own authentic experiences can be of three different kinds. The first, reinforced assimilation, when a contrast between the past and the present plays a determining factor in the construction of the experience. Secondly, cognitive perception which entails the gathering and absorption of new knowledge of the site visited. And third, retroactive association, which is a concept closely related to nostalgia as addressed above. All these considerations indicate that the personal construction of authenticity as well as the factors that lead to it needs to be explored in order to fully understand the visitor's experience of a tourism precinct and the meaningfulness of the outcome. All these notions are useful to the understanding of how a diversity of visitors of different socio cultural backgrounds perceive and experience urban precincts. As noted before, Covent Garden is a popular area for tourism located in central London, which is a world city for tourism and culture. This suggests that international visitors from all over the world visit the area driven by different motivations that can be linked to their

socio demographic profile. It is expected that this research will make a positive contribution to understand how cultural distance effectively influences a tourist's experience of culture and urban tourism by taking into consideration all the views and approaches presented above.

2.5. Conclusions

The review of theoretical concepts related to cultural tourism, the cultural tourist and experience of culture in tourism precincts has set a foundation for this research in terms of tourists visiting urban areas for tourism and culture. It has been established that cultural tourism encompasses a wide range of categories of tourism that often complement each other, particularly in the case of urban areas where cultural resources are clustered. There are different types of experiential opportunities in Covent Garden, some related to culture, from its heritage perspective to the provision of high and popular forms of art. This indicates that the area's visitors are exposed to a variety of cultural resources that they will seek depending on their motivation to visit. The motivational theories reviewed point out that the cultural tourist can have focused interests in terms of what type of culture they seek to experience, and that other experiences may come as a result. However, it was also established that experiencing culture is not an indicator of intent, as visitors may have cultural experiences that they were not originally seeking. As indicated before, this is particularly the case of visitors in an area where cultural resources are concentrated, such as Covent Garden, providing the visitor with opportunities to consume culture regardless of their original purpose of visit. In terms of experience, there is a lack of consensus of what a 'deep' or 'shallow' cultural experience entails.

On the other hand, the literature review suggests that the level of engagement and participation will have an influence on a tourist's experience of object and place. It was also established that previous exposure to an area in terms of images and other media exerts an influence on such experiences. Sensorial experience of place, thus, acquires importance in the understanding of the topic area since images, sounds and other sensorial stimulus play roles in the shaping of the

tourist's experience. Sensorial stimuli, that can often be generated by tourists themselves (in their pace of walk for example) provides behavioural cues for an area's visitors, who engage in tourist rituals that take place in the precinct and become performers themselves. The communal nature of these activities also suggests that the presence of other tourists affect a visitor's perception and experience of place. These perceptions and experiences have also been linked to the tourists' background in terms of their socio demographic profile as age, occupation, education and other indicators exert an influence on their tourist activity. The notion of cultural distance places an emphasis on the tourists' origin and proposes that visitors from culturally distant places may seek deeper cultural experiences whereas tourists from proximate regions will focus their trips on leisure and entertainment. This research will make a contribution to the understanding of these topics as the case study area is used by international tourists, domestic visitors and the local population. London's rich cultural resources attract a very diverse flow of tourists with different motivations to visit and from culturally different parts of the world. The next chapter will address the different perspectives by which the areas for tourism that they visit can be evaluated.

3. URBAN AREAS FOR TOURISM AND CULTURE

3.1. Introduction

This chapter establishes a conceptual framework related to urban areas for tourism and culture. Many areas in world cities are successful in attracting visitors because of different elements that influence their perception and experience of place to different extents. These elements may be related to cultural consumption, relaxation, leisure and entertainment. But they may also relate to distinctive physical characteristics that give them a unique sense of place. Whilst this mix of different elements can make of an area a popular precinct for tourism with high levels of visitation, it also makes them complex to understand. In this sense, existing literature and current research tend to focus on specific elements of this mix in order to understand how they influence the visitor's perception and experience of the precinct. However, to model the complex network of elements holistically is a more challenging task. Different thematic approaches to urban areas for tourism and culture are presented in this chapter by reviewing a series of perspectives that focus on different aspects of urban areas for tourism. These approaches have been organised according to the focus on the built environment (physical perspective), the clientele the areas serve, the businesses and sectors that operate in these areas and the output they present to clusters of tourism activity. These theoretical concepts will be applied to the case of Covent Garden in Chapter 5.

3.2. Urban precincts for tourism

Before presenting a focused thematic analysis on urban areas for tourism and culture, it is important to establish a general conceptual understanding of these areas and their role in tourism. Judd (1999:35-36) proposes that a tourist bubble can be conceptualised as a mix that 'combines financial, administrative and professional services –increasingly clustered into a downtown office complex – and a more or less well defined space composed of facilities and amenities devoted to leisure activities and the tourist trade'. Similarly, Maitland (2007)

identifies flagship museums, galleries, aquaria, Imax cinemas or casinos, shopping and leisure facilities along with internationally renowned bars and restaurants as clustered economic units that characterise this type of urban precincts for tourism. This suggests that different elements are drawn upon by city planners in order to make an urban area suitable, hospitable and attractive for visitors. But it is because of this wide range of elements that the process of creating these urban tourist spaces becomes highly complex and varies from one case to another. As a result, it is clear that different models of understanding of these urban areas can be identified, and in further sections their characteristics will be reviewed to explore how urban areas for tourism and culture vary from one another according to the focus their planners adopted.

Hayllar and Griffin (2005:1) indicate that a tourism precinct can be conceptualised as ‘a distinctive geographic area within a larger urban area, characterised by a concentration of tourist-related land uses, activities and visitation, with fairly definable boundaries’. Similarly, Pearce (1998:50) highlights the importance of clustering in tourism areas by indicating that ‘tourism development depends upon concentration rather than on dispersal, functional combination rather than segregation, and multifunctional environments rather than monofunctional ones’. This suggests that the use of land for tourism development purposes will define the characteristics of the area. For example, an area where there is a clustered performing arts sector can be directly associated with the creation of an image of the place as a precinct for culture, such as in the case of Covent Garden that represents an important part of London’s ‘Theatreland’. The authors also indicate that in order to comprehensively understand the tourism dynamics of such precincts, a thematic analysis needs to be performed in regards to three topics: the atmosphere, the physical presence and the history. These layers of study suggest that there are varied perspectives by which tourism precincts can be explored, confirming the need of focused research upon selected case studies. This notion is useful but its primary weakness is that it is too broad and does not introduce the specific elements that determine the characteristics of a tourism precinct. In further sections, different approaches to the use of land for tourism and culture

will be addressed in order to gather an overview of different perspectives by which a tourism precinct can be analysed and understood. These approaches to land use are related to a variety of place making elements such as the built environment and its use for cultural, commercial or entertainment purposes, attracting a variety of tourist markets.

The latter considerations can be associated to existing literature on tourism spaces and urban design theory related to place making elements. In this sense, Franck and Stevens (2007:2) assert that “in urban public spaces around the world people pursue a very rich variety of activities”. The authors refer to these types of areas as “loose spaces” because of the range of activities that take place within them, providing their visitors with a sense of freedom to explore their experiential opportunities. They also highlight that these activities often have little or no connection with the primary purpose for which the area was planned. Therefore, the commercial and cultural sectors endow these areas with a sense of ‘looseness’ as their visitors have the option to explore it and have a variety of experiences concentrated in the same space. The authors also highlight the importance of visitors themselves and their behaviour as important place making elements within tourism precincts and their input on these spaces’ sense of place: “just as people may break free of intended uses and established meanings, they may also break free of restricted forms of comportment and movement” (p.14). Therefore, the variety of land uses attract a diverse set of visitors that become themselves important place making elements. On the other hand, the authors indicate that “looseness depends in part on the overall structure of the urban environment” (p. 6), suggesting that the physical attributes of an urban precinct also plays an important role in its place making system.

Another author that proposes a similar approach to understanding the construction and production of space is Lefebvre (1991), who highlights the relationship between an area’s built environment (referred to by him as ‘spatial architectonics’) and the tangible input made by people as place making elements providing these urban spaces with an important social dimension that holds a

direct relationship with the variety of land uses that develop different markets for tourism attracting diverse sets of visitors within the same precinct. All these considerations are useful for this research because they highlight the importance of different elements that interact with each other leading to distinctive urban precincts, suggesting that these different layers should be explored. Therefore, different models of understanding of urban areas for tourism and culture will be reviewed in forthcoming sections, which focus on their physical attributes, the clientele they serve and the businesses that operate within them.

3.3. The physical perspective

As indicated before, an area can be explored by focusing on different aspects of its place making system. The first one to be analysed by this conceptual framework is the physical attributes that can potentially grant an area with a distinctive sense of place and that stimulate its visitors' senses visually. As indicated by Zufkin (1995) 'culture and the built heritage are more and more the business of cities – the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique competitive edge' (as cited by Gospodini 2004:22). The notion of urban villages is of interest to this study because it focuses on urban precincts that serve a variety of purposes within well delimited geographical areas that tend to be pedestrianised, like Covent Garden. This area can be understood as a 'historical urban core representing long living survivals from the past' (Gospodini, 2001:928) and as such, presents peculiar urban features that to an extent, respond to the notion of an urban village.

Aldous (1992:27) refers to a Structured Planned Urban Development (SPUD) or urban village as 'urban areas in which a mixture of uses and a human-scale architecture full of incident and variety produce places that people instinctively warm to and enjoy using'. The author also indicates that urban villages are the result of conservation and restoration initiatives aimed towards heritage and historic building, referred to as 'visual and psychological assets', combined with new development projects that suggest an inclination to urban regeneration. In regards to the built environment's preservation and conservation, Gospodini (2002a:25) states that 'conservation of traditional buildings and urban cores – and

even neo vernacular design schemes in some cases – is able of creating distinctive place identity by appealing to the city’s history and heritage – built heritage, cultural heritage – and generating strong environmental images to both visitors and residents’. The author highlights the potential impact that a preserved built environment can have upon a precinct’s distinctive sense of place and equally remarks that they benefit a tourist market as well as a domestic sector, particularly in the value granted to well established tourism precincts that ‘in the course of history, have become rich in meaning and can be interpreted again and again in different contexts’ (Viddler, 2978 as cited by Gospodini, 2001:929). The latter statement is also of interest because it indicates that the area’s different attributes can be interpreted from different perspectives and contexts.

Aldous (1992) also suggests that just as important as the buildings in the urban village are the spaces between them, highlighting streets, squares, lanes, pedestrian highways, green spaces, pavement and street furniture as important elements of the precinct’s place making system. Pedestrianisation also plays an important role in urban villages according to the author, who relates the experience of a visit to the area with the capability of visitors to explore the space freely. This notion imposes a series of challenges for town planners who also need to assure fast and effective public transport to these areas whilst ‘catering for the car without encouraging its use’ (p.30). The mixture of uses given to buildings and commercial spaces constitute distinctive characteristics of an urban village according to this model. By these means, different market sectors are attracted to an area resulting in a diverse ambience and cosmopolitan atmosphere. In relation to geographical space, the author assumes that in order to preserve the welcoming and distinctive atmosphere of an urban village, it should not cover more than 100 acres (or 40 hectares), citing the cases of Soho and Covent Garden in London to illustrate how well limited and not too broad areas preserve their sense of place and ambience. However, the author also indicates that they need to be small enough to provide welcoming and friendly settings where stakeholders can have direct social interactions, but large enough to house and sustain a wide range of

activities with the infrastructure, facilities and services that they require. Aldous (1992) proposes that an authentic urban village should not be entirely commercial but it also needs to house a residing local community, raising further challenges to town planners to observe the interests of not only visitors but also a host population. In this sense, the author introduces the matter of tenure of land and suggests that it should not be owned in majority by government or by the private sector, but ideally, a balance between both should be attained.

It is also important to note that this author appraises the difference between the well established urban village developed over time and new initiatives that tend to learn lessons from past successful experiences, such as cultural clusters to be addressed in further sections. Nevertheless, there is a gap in academic studies between new developments and the well established urban village that developed as such organically over an extended period of time, such as Covent Garden as reviewed in chapter 5. As the author indicates, 'new urban villages must not be expected to replicate the results achieved over long periods but the incremental and often accidental development of existing urban neighbourhoods. The urban villages of the future will each have their own special character, reflecting the time and circumstances in which they have evolved.' (Osbourne, 1992 as cited in Aldous, 1992:13).

Lemos (1998) states that globalisation, far from bringing cities together, strengthens the difference between its urban villages and other areas. The author (p. 7) points out that 'globalisation is giving us global cities but it is not giving rise to global government or global living (...) making people act local but think global'. Despite the wide ranging contrast in the urban landscape that the globalised city presents, which can also be linked to centres of gentrification as addressed below, Lemos (1998) suggests that perhaps one of the most beneficial results of the development of urban villages is the promotion of local pride amongst the host community. The approach of urban villages applied to tourism

precincts is beneficial because it provides relevant and valid guidelines to analyse the nature of spaces for tourism in terms of use of land and physical characteristics. Furthermore, it considers tangible and intangible elements of a precinct's place making system. However, it does not comprehensively address the activities that make of a tourist precinct a popular area for tourism or the activities that take place within. Hence, the next perspective by which an urban area for tourism and culture can be approached will be presented by focusing on the clientele they serve in terms of tourism development.

3.4. The clientele perspective

Before addressing the development of urban areas in terms of tourism, it is important to highlight the issue of gentrification whilst assessing a thriving tourism precinct considering that gentrification can be a natural result of such process. It is defined by Smith and LeFaivre (1984) as 'the rehabilitation of working-class inner-city neighbourhoods for upper-middle class consumption' (Palen and London, 1984:43). This phenomenon also holds a link with the creation of 'tourist bubbles' because it implies the development of areas that do not always reflect the actual living and working circumstances in the destination. It is also associated with rising prices and economy inflation as well as indicated by Hoffman et al. (2003:249) who state that 'tourism benefits local land markets, elevating property values by increasing demand for centrally located sites, and by creating positive externalities for spaces adjacent to tourist sites (...) however, it can have negative distributional consequences'. In this sense, and asides from other negative impacts of the development of urban tourism, the local population can be adversely affected.

Smith (1996) refers to the issue of gentrification and highlights both the positive sides of it as well as the negative effects. In first hand, the three R's of gentrification are proposed as 'revitalisation, recycling and renaissance' which benefit derelict areas where a so called invasion of tourists and/or middle and upper classes bring with them economic trade that result in regeneration.

However, this inner form of colonisation may upset the host population that resists such changes and constitute what the author refers to as ‘the revanchist city’. Smith (1996) also debates the role of the arts in centres of gentrification, indicating that often artists bring exposure to certain areas and regeneration comes as a result, accompanied by gentrification that eventually excludes them from their own performing space. This notion indicates that gentrification over time benefits and damages different stakeholders in a determined area. According to the Real Estate of New York (1985), the concept of gentrification applies positively or negatively to different sectors by stating that ‘to one person, it means improved housing. To another, it means unaffordable housing. It means safer streets and new retail businesses to some. To others, it means the homogenisation of a formerly diverse neighbourhood’ (as cited in Smith, 1996:31).

In relation to this, Gospodini (2002a:24) cites Gillis (1994) who points out that ‘national identity involves a widely shared memory of common past for people who have never seen or talked to one another in the flesh. The sense of belonging to the same nationality depends as much on forgetting as on remembering – the past being reconstructed as a trajectory of national present in order to guarantee a common future’. These considerations are of interest because it can be said that the built environment of an urban precinct is reminiscent of the past in terms of local living. The gentrifying process of rehabilitating and reconstructing may put this identity at stake by modifying or removing altogether important signifiers of place and history. On the other hand, gentrification affects different segments of the host population according to their demographic indicators such as income, level of education and certainly, proximity to the area in question.

As a consequence of the development of tourism in urban areas, it has been noted that a differentiation between spaces for tourism and spaces for the local community is on the rise. As stated before, destinations are increasingly met with the need to make cities hospitable, safe and entertaining to attract visitors with the accompanying revenue that this implies. However, the development of designated

tourist areas has lead academics to identify what is referred to as a tourist bubble, contextualized from Judd and Fainstein's (1999:36) perspective as 'virtual tourist reservations' given that the entertainment centres, services and facilities available throughout these areas target a tourist market and do not reflect the poverty, crime levels and other negative aspects of the quality of life in other areas of the destination. This aims towards the development of tourist areas where expenditure can be induced in a safe and dynamic environment. Judd (1979) stresses the issue of conglomeration from a tourism perspective and concludes that 'agglomeration economies apply to tourist districts not principally because concentration lowers costs or increases the efficiency of business transactions, but because a full panopoly of services and businesses is necessary to make the space maximally attractive to consumers of the tourist space' (as cited by Pearce, 1998:50). Therefore, clustering plays an important role in the development of tourist bubbles.

Judd and Fainstein (1999) also highlight the most notable elements of a tourist bubble, which in the case of high profile cities in the United States of America, include convention centres, professional sports franchises, festival malls and gambling facilities among other large scale developments that require high investment to build and maintain. The authors indicate that the positive economic impacts of the development of tourist bubbles are most likely to present themselves in the middle or long terms given the high costs that they imply, creating controversy among the host population because public funds are assigned to these developments. Likewise Norris (2003), states that 'if we build it, they will come' in reference to the provision of infrastructure for tourism, taking the case of the city of Baltimore and the attraction of visitors to its tourist bubble. This destination had a clear focus on tourism when it redeveloped its inner harbour and clustered it with several tourist attractions including a sports stadium and a large scale aquarium amongst others. The main benefits for the destination are identified as the physical regeneration, the attraction of tourists and their spending and the creation of job opportunities and tax revenues. However, and despite these

positive impacts, the author notes criticism raised by the lack of equally distributed benefits for other parts of the city (as stated in Judd and Fainstein, 2003). These negative effects of tourism amongst urban spaces are also related to the issue of gentrification as noted above. However, the concept of a tourist bubble is useful in terms of pragmatic research considering that it raises awareness that the tourist's reality is not necessarily that of the every day life of the destination. On the other hand however, it does not comprehensively address the types of business that comprise the tourist portfolio within these areas. For this reason, the third perspective by which urban areas for tourism will be analysed addresses these businesses in terms of the provision of entertainment and culture.

3.5. The business perspective - entertainment

Rubin et al. (1994) indicate that 'retailing and urban redevelopment are now driven by entertainment. Entertainment attracts people to an area and creates pedestrian activity, repeat visits, (strengthens) the perception of economic vitality (...) and are also credited with revitalizing many nearly abandoned downtowns. Many other cities are now attempting to replicate this success by developing downtown entertainment districts consisting of movie theatres, nightclubs, bars, restaurants, and retail shopping.' (as cited by Berkley and Thayer, 2000). In this sense, it can be noted that the provision of culture for the development of cultural tourism proves to be a viable and effective means for urban regeneration and commercial trade. However, these authors' focus on amenities and attractions that tend to go 'hand to hand' with a place for culture, where visitors not only want to experience the local culture or consume the arts, but also seek experiences related to leisure and entertainment. On the other hand, Berkley and Thayer (2000) note that the development of an entertainment district implies a series of challenges. Namely, issues related to safety and security, transients and panhandlers that constitute a non desired segment of the visitors that these districts attract, noise pollution that disturb the local and working population in the area, traffic congestion, public urination, the need for parking spaces, pedestrian crowding and the need for visitor information centres. These problems can be tackled with by

visitor management strategies (See Roberts et al., 2006, 2005). However, they represent an ongoing and evolving challenge that require constant monitoring intended to ‘assuring public safety, setting a tone, maintaining high visibility to create a perception of safety, crowd and traffic control, (...) and pedestrian flow’ (Berkley and Thayer, 200:480).

The approach of the entertainment district is useful because of its pragmatic perspective upon the tourism precinct and focus on leisure and entertainment. Nonetheless, it lacks an in depth scrutiny of the dynamics of the tourist’s behaviour or motivations to visit. Furthermore, it is important to note that the present study focuses on the provision of culture within an urban precinct for tourism, therefore it is of key importance to explore the role of culture as a business in a tourism context as addressed below.

3.6. The business perspective – culture

Montgomery (1995:136) highlights that there are many cultural resources that can be included in an area’s mix of attractions and features that would ultimately attract a wide variety of visitors with different cultural interests. As noted by the author (p136) ‘culture is seen as a lifestyle indulgence for urban elites, as if high art, opera and ballet were the only (or even the dominant) forms – what about popular music, film, video games, dancing, night clubs, etc?’. The author also suggests that the cultural elements of an urban precinct also have an impact on the area’s visitors’ behaviour and experience of place as ‘(they encompass) the way people eat, talk, think, meet others, engage in transactions, spend their free time, during the day and at night’. These considerations suggest that the use of culture as a catalyst for the development of urban areas for tourism can be seen as activities that take place, but it also comprises behavioural aspects concerned with the area’s visitors. The author notes that cultural consumption can stimulate economic activity that tends to vary throughout different times of day in the cultural precinct; it grants it with a vibrant and animated sense of place and can be

influenced by distinctive urban characteristics. All these considerations lead to the notion of a cultural quarter as addressed below.

Roodhouse (2006:22) conceptualises a cultural quarter as ‘a geographical area of a large town or city which acts as a focus for cultural and artistic activities through the presence of a group of buildings devoted to housing a range of such activities, and purpose designed or adapted spaces to create a sense of identity, providing an environment to facilitate and encourage the provision of cultural and artistic services and activities’. In this sense, clustering, architecture and infrastructure are key elements of a cultural quarter. The author introduces the term ‘cultural iconographic regeneration’ to address the importance of the establishment of these cultural districts in a broader urban regeneration strategy. Despite these considerations, Mommaas (2004:530) questions the development of cultural clusters merely for the promotion of art by reflecting on different cultural quarters in the Netherlands and concludes that ‘most of the projects analysed are not the result of a clear choice between alternative developmental models, based on specific cultural objectives and a related evaluation of local and historical circumstances. Instead, most of them are the result of a rather eclectic coming together of locally specific opportunities, in combination with a rather generalised notion of the possible role of the arts and culture in the post-industrial city’. This suggests that it is important to clarify that cultural quarters can play an important role in the promotion of culture but they also serve a wide range of purposes that are in many cases the primary motivation for their development, such as a strong commercial sector for example.

The concept of cultural quarters and tourism clusters can also be associated with what economists refer to as ‘economies of agglomeration’ as noted before. This implies ‘savings in unit cost that accrue to certain kinds of firms when a large enough number of them locate in the same city. The savings usually occur because the firms are able to share a common pool of highly specialised inputs,

the very existence of which depends on there being a concentration of local buyers' (Heilbrun and Grey, 2001:338). Therefore, it can be said that the clustered nature of economic units within a cultural quarter stimulates economic trade and a synergic relationship between these units. Gordon and Goodall (2000:296) support this view and indicate that the causes for the creation of tourism clusters are 'the comparative advantage arising from inherited local and accessible resources, scale economies in the provision and use of key items of infrastructure, notably transport links or terminals, but also major attractions; and economies of scale and scope in the operation of tourist services' (as cited in Shaw and Williams 2004:189). Roodhouse (2006) also proposes a set of performance indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the establishment of a cultural quarter, stating that it is defined by its ability to address needs on the local, regional and national perspectives; creating, supplying and developing the activity of choice; stressing the conservation and development of the built environment; and a constant quest for the identification of the local population with the meaning and purpose of the district. Risk factors in this matter include the decrease of public investment in certain districts to develop a cultural quarter, rise on long term conservation costs and complexity in the task of providing services such as transport that if altered, may not meet effectively the needs of other parts of the destination. Therefore, a well established cultural quarter will consider issues related to the built environment, the activities that take place within and the stakeholders that are either affected by or affect the area and the activities that take place in it..

Roodhouse (2006) also suggests a mix for the creation of a thriving cultural quarter, indicating that it should be characterized by its activity, built form and meaning. In these regards, Montgomery (2003) points out that other features not directly related to the cultural activity featured in the cultural quarter can be critical success factors, such as a dynamic night time economy and a lively commercial sector, citing London's Soho to illustrate this notion. On the other hand, the author proposes a set of general principles for this matter, which include the task of place making, the use of space, urban layout and visitor management.

Montgomery (2003) makes reference to a range of examples of cultural quarter to illustrate different issues surrounding the concept, such as the United Kingdom's Sheffield cultural quarter which stresses the role of industry in culture and the Wolverhampton cultural quarter focusing on the role of crafts. In a broader sphere, Roodhouse (2006) cites the cases of Vienna's museum cluster and Belfast's Opera compound as examples of the application of cultural quarters as a regeneration strategy that can increase the number of visitors and help create an image for a destination as a place for cultural consumption. Evans (2003) also agrees that the cultural sector of a tourism cluster can help re define the concept and perception of the visitor experience leading to the phenomenon known as re branding, which also relates to the concept of culture-led urban regeneration as stated by McCarthy (2006).

This research focuses on a cultural flagship and its influence on the perception and experience of an area that can be understood as a cultural quarter. Therefore, it is important to consider the role that a flagship development can have upon an urban area. In this sense, the notion of a cultural cluster is also relevant to this study as it highlights the presence of large scale cultural attractions in urban areas for culture. Mommaas (2004) makes an evaluation of the creation and development of urban spaces for tourism and proposes the cultural cluster model based on selected Dutch case studies. The author focuses on the museum quarter in Rotterdam, the multi functional theatre complex built in an industrial facility named the Westergasfabriek located in Amsterdam, Tilburg's musical facilities known as the Veemarktkwartier and the museum and theatre quarter in Utrecht. It is important to note that these clusters are relatively new developments in contrast to other historic precincts that have developed cultural clusters over centuries. Nevertheless, Mommaas (2004) makes a useful analysis related to culture-led urban development. In the first instance, the author notes that the use of land aimed towards the promotion of art with all the benefits that such endeavours imply are identifiable in all cases, 'linking cultural activities and amenities to economic, spatial and social policy goals' (p. 514). The author also identifies a

series of patterns in the relationship between different economic and cultural units. He introduces the concept of vertical and horizontal integration and indicates that horizontally, the gap between the range of activities and their level of interaction amongst them need to be clearly distinguished. In other words, 'although most projects contain elements of leisure and consumption (shopping, entertainment, retail, bars and restaurants), the projects differ both in terms of the share of these elements in the programme and in terms of the level of intra cluster collaboration between these leisure elements and the cultural core' (p. 514). Another important consideration to evaluate the nature of a cultural cluster is the vertical dynamics of the activities taking place in such urban spaces. Mommaas (2004) indicates that a cluster can be monofunctional should a narrow assortment of cultural attractions and activities take place, or multifunctional with a higher level of diversity between them.

Finally, Mommaas (2004) also focuses on the development of the cluster as an important element of its understanding. In general terms, the author indicates that a quest for strengthening the identity, establishing a cultural attraction's power and positioning an area firmly in the tourism market set the grounds for a thriving and sustainable cultural cluster. However, it is important to note once again that this assumption is not entirely suitable for cultural clusters that were developed in the tourist historic city over centuries, and not as a result of town planning or cultural promotion. The same consideration applies to Mommaas' (2004) proposition about cultural clusters resulting from an entrepreneurial trend that focuses on culture and arts. This can be understandable and expected from a case study such as the Veemarktkwartier or any of the recent efforts to develop cultural clusters, but not so in the tourist historic precinct where early policies did not consider entrepreneurship or tourism.

3.7. The output perspective – creativity

It is clear that the use of cultural resources can succeed in granting an area with a distinctive sense of place that attracts a variety of visitors resulting in a popular tourism precinct. It is important to note, however, that the presence of cultural entities may have a deeper impact on the area beyond its status as a tourism hub. When culture is associated and embedded into an area's every day life, fabric and produce, it becomes a milieu for creativity where culture is not only seen as a resource but as a tradition. Landry (2000) remarks the importance of the role of creativity in the tourism city of the 21st century; and likewise, Mommaas (2004) stresses the importance of the promotion of creativity and innovation to support a cultural cluster. Another interesting observation of the author is the trend towards using obsolete infrastructure located in neglected areas as focus points to develop cultural flagships. Such is the case of the Westergasfabriek, an industrial facility for processing natural gas that was transformed into a cultural centre that aided in the development of a cultural cluster attracting a variety of visitors and with a strong commercial sector. The stimulation of cultural diversity and democracy is addressed as a key ingredient for the success of a cultural cluster because of the globalised nature of the phenomenon of tourism in the recent decades. In further sections, Landry's (2000) notion about the creative city and the translation of a cultural cluster into a creative milieu are addressed. The reason why an alternative approach to cultural tourism precincts has been deemed necessary is because, as useful as the cultural clusters theory is, it does not actively include the role of people and institutions that carry through the cultural endeavours that attract tourists.

Under the premise that cultural activity is the result of enterprises by individuals often sponsored by organisations driven by the urge of artistic expression or profitability by means of culture, Landry (2000) approaches the cultural cluster perspective from the core of culture itself, which is creativity. The author highlights the importance of persons involved in the process of their development, not only in terms of funding but in the provision of art in its many expressions and

forms. A creative milieu is defined by the author (2000:133) as ‘a place, either a cluster of buildings, a part of a city, a city as a whole or a region; that contains the necessary preconditions in terms of hard and soft infrastructure to generate a flow of ideas and inventions’. This proposition is useful to understand spaces for cultural tourism considering that the basis of the successful attraction of visitors can be related to an environment that facilitates and promotes the production of culture. It is also interesting to note that the author refers to two different types of infrastructure to create this environment, hard infrastructure constituted by the buildings and facilities required to the production of arts, whereas soft infrastructure refers to the social interactions, human networks and intellectual intercourse required for the production of culture. Landry (2000) indicates that a creative milieu can be formed and sustained if the infrastructural, cultural, intellectual and organisational resources are managed effectively in a collaborating network that should respond to the principle of synergy, where the sum of all the elements’ efforts combined can achieve greater things than the sum of their individual efforts. In the words of the author: ‘creativity and innovation need to be seen as a holistic, integrated process covering every aspect of urban life from the economic, political, cultural, environmental and social-multiple innovativeness’. The author identifies the characteristics of the creative milieu and concludes that knowledge, skills and communication between individuals and organisations are their key success factors. This notion confirms the importance of this research, as it focuses on a high profile provider of culture that is based at the core of a vibrant area for tourism.

3.8. Summary of models of understanding of urban areas for tourism

All the models developed above contribute in different ways to the understanding of the social and spatial aspects of urban areas for tourism and culture. It is important however, to indicate that every city and indeed every urban precinct is an individual mechanism with different characteristics, very much like human beings. Therefore, it is reasonable to affirm that the characteristics of the area studied are the ones that will suggest the relevance of the model, and not the other

way around. In order to understand the characteristics of an area, it is necessary to evaluate it as an individual with intricate and distinctive characteristics. The result of this analysis will suggest which model suits better to the area. However, it is also important to reiterate that to a certain extent, all theories contribute positively to the understanding of urban development, its relationship with tourism and the role that culture plays in it. For this reason, the following table summarises these different approaches. By providing a synthesized illustration of these models, it is hoped that a more logical background can be proposed in order to apply these concepts to the case study area. The table is composed of the authors that have made the most significant contribution to the theories or those who have been considered in this research, a brief conceptualisation of the theories followed by illustrative examples and their focus. On the basis of this, the strengths and weaknesses of each theory are addressed.

Table 3.2– Summary of models of understanding of urban areas for tourism

	Contributing author(s)	Concept	Examples	Focus	Strengths	Weaknesses
Tourism Bubble	Judd and Fainstein (1999)	‘Virtual tourist reservations’	Inner Harbour, Baltimore	Tourists, urban development	Helps identify areas specifically planned for tourism	Does not provide enough focus on types of tourism demand served for
Gentrification Centre	Smith (1996)	‘Revitalisation, recycling, renaissance’	Mayfair, London	Economics, Host community	Provides an understanding of the effects of investment in focalised urban areas	Does not contemplate issues related to tourism supply and demand
Entertainment District	Berkley and Thayer (2000)	‘Economic vitality through the development of leisure industries’	Broadway, New York	Economics, social dynamics, regulations	The focus on leisure and entertainment can be directly linked to tourism	Lacks insights of sociological and behavioural considerations
Urban Village	Aldous (1992)	‘Mixture of uses and features lead to a distinctive and attractive urban setting’	Soho, London	Social, architectural, urban planning	It approaches a mixture of issues related to both the tourism and local segments	Lack of in depth analyses regarding the tourism mix and structure of industries involved
Cultural Cluster	Mommaas (2004)	‘Urban areas developed partly on the basis of flagships providing for the cultural sector’	Culture Park Westergasfabriek, Amsterdam	Cultural, agglomeration economy, flagship developments	It stresses the importance of flagship developments	Limited to contemporary case studies in the Netherlands

	Contributing author(s)	Concept	Examples	Focus	Strengths	Weaknesses
Cultural Quarter	Roodhouse (2006)	‘Urban areas as centres for culture on the basis of a group of developments for this purpose; providing identity and ambience’	Museum Quarter, Vienna	Cultural, flagship developments	Cultural activities considered parallel to flagship developments. Clear definition of public/private intervention	Lack of specialised focus on tourism and, tourist’s motivation and behaviour
Creative Milieu	Landry (2000)	‘A compound of persons and institutions fostering cultural development in urban areas’	Düsseldorf, Germany	Creativity, people and institutions, social dynamics	Stress on the importance of the dynamics between persons and organisations in the creative process	Does not consider interlinks between cultural and other forms of tourism

Another lesson learned from the review of these theories of urban areas for tourism is the need to conduct research on specific case studies to explore their individual nature. It is also important to note that several of the case studies that have given way to these theories are the results of contemporary efforts to develop urban areas for tourism and culture (Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam for example). This raises the issue of how the theories can be applied to case studies from the culturally rich world city, with urban areas established over the course of centuries and under researched as such. In this sense, and once again, considering that some of these theories are the result of studies undertaken in modern or contemporary urban settings, it can be suggested that a specialised focus on a certain area that does not respond entirely to the notions of existing theories can potentially give way to new theories for their understanding.

3.9. Conclusions

The different models of understanding of urban areas for tourism and culture are eclectic in nature and focus. However, a common characteristic that can be applied to all of them is the extent to which tourism has affected their urban development. Whether they are seen as tourist bubbles or cultural quarters, it is clear that these areas may have been purposely developed for tourism and cultural promotion purposes, or they may have evolved organically as such over extended periods of time. Covent Garden, as addressed in chapter 5, has a rich history as a place for commerce and cultural activity that led to its current status as a popular precinct for tourism and culture. Furthermore, its built environment and scale constitute distinct characteristics that strengthen its sense of place and draw for tourism. Cultural activity is intense in the area in terms of the provision of high and popular forms of art along with the presence of cultural attractions such as St Paul's Church and the Transport Museum. However, the leisure and commercial sectors are firmly positioned in the area as well considering the variety of shops throughout its different locations as well as eating and drinking facilities. It has been subjected to development efforts to different extents (the Opera House's re development for example) which have also led to gentrification and increased

property value. On the other hand, there are certain buildings surrounding the area's central Piazza that can be seen as flagship developments, such as the Royal Opera House and Covent Garden Market. All these considerations indicate that all the models reviewed in this chapter can be applied to different extents to the case study area. From a physical point of view, Covent Garden's built environment fits into the urban village perspective because of its scale and mixed use of land. However, it was not developed as such. The area's cultural sector also point out that it can be understood as a cultural quarter or creative milieu. Likewise, its provision of experiences related to leisure and consumption suggest that it can also be seen as an entertainment district or tourist bubble. And finally, the presence of a large scale flagship development suggests that it can be seen as a cultural cluster. These models of understanding of urban areas will be revisited and further applied to Covent Garden in chapter 5. However, considering that the overall aim of this study is to explore how the Royal Opera House as a cultural flagship effectively influences the area's visitors' perception and experience of place, it is important to establish a theoretical understanding of flagship developments and their relationship to urban areas, destinations and users. Therefore, the following chapter will explore the topic of cultural flagships.

4. CULTURAL FLAGSHIPS

4.1. Introduction

Once a theoretical understanding of the cultural tourist and urban areas for tourism and culture has been established, it is important to explore concepts related to flagship developments as this research focuses on the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, which can be understood as a cultural supplier as well as an architectural feature of the area. In this sense, Crosby (1970) indicates that a city's image is constituted mainly by architectural assets in the form of buildings, landmarks and monuments; which interact with the visitor's perception to generate a depiction of the destination. Flagship developments have been identified as important elements of a destination's landscape that play signifying roles in the projection of a city's image. As indicated by Wing Tai Wai (2004:245), 'as cities strive for globality, flagship developments play indispensable roles by signalling messages of economic development and cultural vibrancy'. Roberts and Greed (2001) indicate that social and cultural values are often associated and granted to buildings that can often acquire iconic status. In this sense, the association of architecture as an extension of culture plays a vital role in the understanding of what a cultural flagship embodies, both for the tourist, the local community and the destination itself. In relation to this, DeBotton (2006) states that buildings 'speak' and that they have a 'virtue to them' by communicating messages without words but merely by means of visual signs. Girst (1995:1) agrees and points out that 'buildings speak to us. They tell us about the economic and social structures of the times in which they were built. They speak of pride of ownership, of municipal or state power, and of commercial success-all through the subtle use of architectural form and decoration'. It is also important to note, however, that cultural flagships as expressions of urban development and culture provision are subjected to different mechanisms of interpretation, suggesting that buildings may speak, but their input can also be determined by social meaning.

Given these considerations, the objective of this chapter is to explore the concept of cultural flagships by evaluating the notion from a physical perspective and from their social and cultural perspectives. For this purpose, different concepts associated with flagship developments as commercial and cultural providers will be explored followed by a review of different approaches applied to the concept of flagships as icons and monuments. Subsequently, museums and venues for the performing arts will be evaluated as cultural flagships which will provide an understanding of the different benefits that they may bring to urban precincts as architectural attractions and providers of culture. The final sections of this chapter will address issues related to arts consumption and audience development for flagships for the performing arts.

4.2. Flagship developments

According to Bianchini et al. (1990), a flagship development can be understood as a ‘significant, high profile development that plays an influential and catalytic role in urban regeneration, which can be justified if it attracts other investment’ (as cited in Smyth, 1994:4). As noted previously, flagships developments have the potential of encouraging urban progress related to the attraction of different elements around it, such as a thriving commercial sector or cultural vibrancy. This notion is applicable to urban precincts such as Covent Garden where different sectors such as commerce and different forms of cultural activity are concentrated around the flagship building this study focuses on. Bianchini et al. (1990) note that a flagship development is often funded by government entities or it can be financially autonomous regardless of its role as catalyst of urban renewal benefitting areas from a physical perspective or a cultural context leading to investment and consumption. It can also be a focus point for further investment projects and can become a strategic tool for the marketing of a destination. As indicated by the authors, ‘the development of a flagship as an entity in itself is important, yet it is the wider promotional value that makes the flagship distinctive’ (Bianchini et al., 1990:28). In this sense, it is clear that flagship developments have the potential of projecting images that can ultimately be associated with the destination as a whole. These images however, can have

different focuses depending on the functional aspects and the purpose that the flagship development serves. On one hand, commercial flagship developments are appraised by Wing Tai Wai (2004), who focuses on the case of Shanghai's Xintiandi to illustrate the efficient planning and management of flagship efforts that benefit a destination's image as a place for commercial consumption. It should be noted however, that Wing Tai Wai (2004) focuses on a development oriented towards the provision of eating and drinking, leisure and entertainment facilities. Therefore, a distinction should be made between these types of developments and those that focus on the provision of culture such as Opera Houses and museums as discussed in further sections.

A commercial flagship, such as Kuala Lumpur's The Mall can potentially act as a landmark building and signifier of the city's commercial dynamism and grandiose approach to shopping centres. This development is addressed by Sardar (2000) as an important element of the destination's portfolio for tourism; however, it is also argued that this commercial function and status as a contemporary development lacks sufficient heritage and history to be considered as a cultural asset. On the other hand, there are cultural landmarks that have been granted the status of flagships because of their historic and cultural value, their status as providers of culture and their positive influence on the development of urban areas for tourism and culture. Crowley (2003) cites the case of the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw, which was heavily affected by bombings during the Second World War to illustrate this. The remains of the building were subjected to a series of reconstruction efforts that lead to its full restoration and improvement leading to its current status as a cultural flagship due to its visual characteristics and cultural value. This suggests that buildings with rich heritage can be subjected to redevelopment programmes to improve their accessibility to visitors and enable them to act as cultural suppliers. The Royal Opera House is a similar case study as discussed in the next chapter. Given these considerations, the forthcoming chapter will focus on cultural flagships and different approaches by which they can be understood, such as iconic buildings and monuments.

4.3. Cultural flagships

In relation to a flagship development's significance for an urban area, Montgomery (2003) notes that often the urban identity of precincts for tourism and culture can be strongly influenced by the presence of a cultural flagship, adding competitiveness to a destination in a tourism context and enriching its cultural sector. In the case of London for example, a world famous Opera House may project messages of the destination's cultural vibrancy and resources. Similarly, Smith (2003:159) appraises the close link held between the conception of cultural flagships and their active role in the development of urban areas for tourism by citing Knox (1993:10) who indicates that 'spectacular local projects such as downtown malls, festival market places, new stadia, theme parks and conference centres are seen as having the greatest capacity to enhance property values and generate retail turnover and generate employment'.

These notions suggest that as much as commercial flagship developments can stimulate the economic sector of an area or a destination, the cultural credentials of a tourism precinct can be enhanced by the presence of a flagship development that acts as a supplier of culture. Smith (2003:159) also evaluates the relationship between cultural flagships and the areas where they are situated by indicating that 'it is important in any cultural regeneration project that cultural developments are integrated into mixed-used (land) rather than constructing isolated arts centres or cultural landmarks which fail to generate further economic and social benefits for the local communities'. The author proposes that cultural flagships and the areas where they are located can foster a mutually beneficial relationship through the attraction of a wide array of visitors seeking different experiences concentrated within them. These considerations are useful for this study as Covent Garden can be perceived and experienced as a place for culture, but its cultural sector has attracted further investment that resulted in a vibrant commercial ambience for example. The Royal Opera House as a cultural flagship and its role as a catalyst for this phenomenon will be further explored in the next chapter and through the analysis of primary data in the findings and discussion chapters.

It is also important to evaluate the cultural significance granted to a flagship development to the extent that it acquires the cultural flagship status. Smyth (1994) proposes that a flagship development can acquire cultural significance when it is closely linked to a local culture and/or cultural activities. The author also suggests that because of their role as suppliers of local cultures, they have the potential of engendering pride amongst the local community. However, the context of the conception (original purpose) and development process of these landmarks will ultimately determine the cultural value assigned to them. This value can be associated with a large scale approach to its architectural features and to its role as a supplier of culture. In relation to this, Grodach (2008b:496) comments that ‘in addition to the physical and economic development implications of this clustering dynamic, cultural flagships may serve as a support centre for local artists and arts organisations by providing a space to meet and exchange ideas, creating opportunities for career growth (...) and partnering with non-profit community and commercial arts organisations’. These concepts can be related to the notion of a creative milieu in regards to areas where creative individuals and organisations partner and network for the development of a precinct with a strong focus on culture and creativity (Landry, 2000). This is notable in the case of Covent Garden given the area’s rich supply of different types of performing arts, from high arts at the Opera House to popular street entertainment in the Piazza as explored in the next chapter. Therefore, a flagship development’s status as a cultural flagship can be associated with its visual value in terms of its architecture, its role as a supplier of culture and the impact that it has on its urban environment. However, as noted above, these functions can be assigned to them primarily when a flagship is conceived as a provider of culture, or they can acquire these functions through time and as a result of cultural promotion (such as in the case of converted industrial facilities as venues for the performing arts in cultural clusters as discussed in the previous chapter).

4.4. Cultural flagships as monuments

The high profile and large scale attributes associated with flagship developments indicate their association with monumental architecture, suggesting that cultural

flagships can be understood as monuments considering their contribution to an urban landscape. However, it is important to note that monumentality is not only associated with physical attributes that make of flagships typical sights of a destination. Canniffe (2006:130) proposes that cultural flagships can be approached from the monumental perspective, defining a monument as ‘buildings and objects which attract communal activities’. This indicates that monuments are expressions of local culture that may exert an important influence on an area’s cultural identity. Furthermore, the notion relates them with the practice of communal activities that can be related to the tourist’s performance and rituals as discussed by Perkins and Thorns (2001) and Edensor (2001). DeBotton (2002), however, argues that these facts do not necessarily guarantee a genuine interest from the visitor in monuments as flagships. The visitor’s motivational background will determine the degree by which a visitor’s experience is affected by an architectural artefact. Furthermore, DeBotton (2006:20) states that ‘reverence for beautiful buildings does not seem to be a high ambition on which to pin our hopes for happiness’, arguing that the tourist’s experience and the role of a cultural flagship or monument is the result of the interaction between the intricate inner processes of the viewer’s mind, the physical attributes of the architecture which is perceived and the cultural value assigned to it.

On the other hand, Canniffe (2006:134) cites Serts (1943) whilst addressing the multifaceted nature of flagships as monuments, indicating that ‘the people want the buildings that represent their social community life to give more than functional fulfilment. They want their aspiration for monumentality, joy, pride, and excitement to be satisfied’. In this sense, the value assigned to flagship developments as monuments is perhaps stronger to the local culture than as means for attracting tourists. These considerations regarding flagships as monuments can also be linked to the theoretical background provided in regards to the experience of cultural tourism. It has been determined that cultural experiences are shifting towards participative, active endeavours that would engage the visitor either physically, intellectually, or both. Should a cultural flagship be interpreted as a monument, the act of observing it constitutes a passive experience that does not

respond to Smith's (2007a) novel forms of cultural tourism. This suggests that the monumental perspective applied to cultural flagships is useful to understand the cultural significance of a flagship development, but does not prove to be entirely successful to understand why tourists are drawn to these attractions. However, it can also be argued that the rituals and tourist performances that a monument's visitors' may participate in can potentially constitute active and engaging tourist experiences. Therefore, considering a flagship's visual appeal and cultural attachment to a destination that leads to high levels of visitation by tourists that engage in active communal practices, cultural flagships can also be understood from the iconic perspective as discussed below.

4.5. Cultural flagships as icons

High profile architectural artefacts were not in all cases designed to serve as catalysts for tourism or urban regeneration, but acquired their flagship role because of their cultural value as indicated before. From a visual point of view, Cambie (2009:115) indicates that 'an iconic building is one that shouts about its presence, that transcends its context and makes a commanding statement'. This suggests that both meaning and form are to be taken in consideration when appraising a building's status as an icon. The author (p. 115) also defines iconic buildings as 'sexy snapshots, it destinations, must have holiday visits, pin up posters of modern urban tourism' concluding that their imposing presence in urban destinations lead to a form of tourism conceptualised as 'architourism'. However, the approach does not entirely integrate function, visual traits and cultural meaning. To understand the iconic nature of a building that may acquire a flagship status, Edensor (1998) makes an in depth study focusing on the case of the Taj Mahal in India. Originally built as a posthumous monument in the 17th century, its grandiose architecture successfully attracts tourists, which triggered the need to establish a well defined tourism strategy to sustainably manage the designated tourist space. This structure was granted World Heritage Site status by the UNESCO because of its cultural and physical significance. This indicates that an iconic building's function evolves over time, and that tourism can potentially exert an influence in this process, especially when the building's image is used for

marketing and branding purposes. This example illustrates the contrast between a cultural flagship and a cultural icon, being the latter more applicable to this case because regardless of the measures taken by governments to regulate its visitation and positive input on the economy; it is essentially a manifestation of the local culture. This implies that whilst a cultural flagship may be of a transitory nature because it is often conceived for an impermanent purpose, a cultural icon overlaps and transcends these objectives becoming perennial expressions of culture. Government involvement in the management and use of an architectural structure, then, plays an important role in the building's status as an icon, a cultural flagship, a tool for place promotion and a means for urban regeneration. These concepts are useful for this research because the Opera House in Covent Garden was subjected to a redevelopment programme that entailed heavy governmental intervention that aimed to achieve a series of objectives, being increased notoriety one of them in terms of its physical appearance and functionality.

Another example of a cultural flagship that has transcended and transformed itself into a symbol for a destination, a powerful catalyst for tourism and cultural icon is the Eiffel Tower in France. The structure was originally built as an entrance for the World Exposition held in Paris to commemorate the hundred years of the French revolution (Harriss, 1975). It was poorly received by both audiences and builders but in the present day it is the most visited paid attraction in the world (Normand, 2007). This is a graphic illustration of how flagship edifications can generate economic development by means of massive tourism flows. It is also a landmark monument that has constituted the most important element of the marketing of Paris as a tourism destination, as Harriss (1975:223) states, 'it becomes the symbol of Paris, of modernity (...) it is the inevitable sign'. All these considerations suggest that function and visual aspects are involved in the acquisition of an architectural artefact into a flagship and depending on the degree of exposure and attachment to a destination's image, into an icon. In terms of function, museums and venues for the performing arts have drawn attention to existing literature related to cultural flagships as discussed below.

4.6. Museums as cultural flagships

Dexter Lord and Lord (1998:53) address museums as cultural flagships and link them to the tourism industry by stating that ‘museums are a vital part of the world’s largest industry, tourism. As a result they need to be recognised –and to recognise themselves- as significant economic development generators within many communities’. The authors highlight the importance of museums to tourism destinations in terms of economic revenue that the attraction of tourists generates. However, their cultural implications should also be addressed. San Roman (1992) proposes that these cultural institutions are often linked to a destination’s identity in their role as providers of culture (as noted by Boylan, 1992). In this sense, museums can be linked to the notion of cultural flagships because of the positive input they have on destinations along with their architectural importance to the urban landscape and the cultural significance assigned to them. Examples of museums that respond to the notion of cultural flagships include the British Museum in London and the Louvre in France because of their status as world class providers of culture and distinctive architecture that is an important element of their respective area’s urban landscape. Furthermore, they stimulate other activities related to commerce and leisure that result in the attraction of tourists. The Guggenheim museum in Bilbao has also been a flagship development that has been the focus of extensive research on the impact of cultural flagships on the attraction of tourists (Plaza, 2000a) whilst promoting a positive projection of the city as a destination of cultural vibrancy and further urban developments such as increased public transport (Klikzkowski, 2003).

The evaluation of museums as cultural flagships is also useful for this research in terms of clustering, as noted by Van Aalst and Boogarts (2002:196), who propose that ‘cities use museums as tools to redevelop or regenerate city centres, the concentration –or clustering—of museums is considered to be an especially effective way to attract more visitors and tourists to one particular area (...) (this) physical concentration was and is generally tied to the redevelopment of public space and is usually combined with other facilities (...) the intertwining of diverse functions –such as cafes and restaurants, events, museum stores- within a single

space is an explicit goal'. These notions are applicable to this research from the clustering perspective, as the case study area is characterised by the compression of a variety of venues for the performing arts that has promoted the development of other commercial businesses. Another illustration of the role of museum clustering in the development of urban areas for tourism and culture is the Paseo del Prado in Madrid; which has played an important role in the development of cultural tourism in the destination (Parsons, 2003). This urban district houses three of the most important museums in Spain: the Museo del Prado, the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum and the Museo de la Reina Sofia. The concentration of museums in urban precincts like Paseo del Prado in Spain leads these clustered institutions to share services such as public transport and parking space whilst creating a more visible profile for its tourist attractions, which 'provide visitors with an opportunity to engage in multiple activities in a shorter period of time (...) (the multifunctional cluster) has the advantage that a certain area can be used by day as well as by night' (Vaan Aalst and Boogarts, 2002:196). Therefore, such as in the case of Covent Garden, cultural flagships can lead to the clustering of tourist activities within a single precinct that presents visitors with a wider variety of experiences concentrated in the same area.

As noted before, cultural flagships can be conceived as such or they can be granted with that status over time. Hence, it is important to make a distinction between contemporary museums and well established ones. Physick (1982) focuses on the case of the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Kensington to explore the case of well established museums, highlighting the importance of architectural aesthetic to a flagship development which can become as important as the building's content and functionality. The author (1982:12) indicates that 'perhaps the Victoria and Albert Museum is the only museum in the world housed in a building which to a great extent itself was meant to be one of its own museum exhibits'. The case of the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao can also be associated with this notion because of its attractive and innovative design. However, it can be argued that the difference between these case studies is the urban attachment that the Victoria and Albert Museum has developed with South Kensington over time

and as an important element of the area's cultural cluster. The presence of this cluster along with the museum's acquired heritage and cultural value actively contribute to the attraction of tourists in the area, which is aided by the fact that it has been there for an extended period of time. In relation to this, Handler and Gable (1997) indicate that old museums face numerous challenges to keep up to date with changing trends and demands of the industry because of their old infrastructure, but have the advantage of merging into the cultural identity of the area they are attached to, or the destinations themselves, over time. In regards to new flagship developments, Grodach (2008a-b) points out that the opening of the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao has suggested that the contemporary development of large scale cultural facilities are catalysts of urban regeneration and the consequent attraction of tourists. However, the author concludes that an attractive architectural design is beneficial to achieve the indicated benefits, but the 'Bilbao effect' will not automatically happen without careful planning in terms of location, where the dynamics between the museum and other economic units (shops, restaurants) can occur in synergy to achieve the desired urban progress, regeneration and attraction of visitors.

All these considerations indicate that museums as cultural flagships can be well established or contemporary developments, with different cultural values assigned to each case. However, industrial facilities turned into cultural flagships are also of interest to this research as the case study building was subjected to extensive redevelopment work. The Tate Modern in London is appraised by Sabbagh (2000) as playing an important role in the destination's cultural portfolio actively contributing to London's status as a world city of culture. The author highlights how the refurbishment of an industrial site and subsequent transformation into a cultural venue adds on to the cultural offer of the attraction and in this case, to the Southbank's cultural vibrancy. Similarly, Sydney's Powerhouse transformed the infrastructure of an industrial facility and converted into an architectural attraction that houses the Powerhouse museum. Scott (2000:35) indicates that it 'opened to acclaim for its architecture, contemporary exhibition design and innovative use of interactive computer technology. Each year it welcomes up to 600.000 domestic

and international visitors'. Scott's (2000) study reveals that the major challenge to create a positive synergic relationship between a flagship and its wider urban context is projecting an image that is accurate to the reality of the institution's cultural offer, as indicated by Colbert (2003) in regards to the Sydney Opera House as well. It should be noted, however, that museums and theatres face different challenges related to carrying capacity and provide different experiences to their visitors as performing arts are inclined to put the user in a passive role. Thus, the last section of this chapter will explore concepts and issues related to cultural flagships for the performing arts.

4.7. Cultural flagships for the performing arts

'Beginning with the last days of Enlightenment, the power of a nation could almost be measured by the strength of its opera companies (...) the great cities of Europe gave birth to grand Opera Houses which became the envy of the world. Today, opera prepares to enter the third millennium by casting its architecture and repertory in the past but always freshly perfect tense'. (Beauvert, 1996:7)

It is important to note the importance of spaces for performing arts as flagships, and often icons of urban areas for tourism and culture as this research focuses on the case of the Royal Opera House. Mulryne and Shewring (1995) identify three major considerations whilst pondering the presence of the performing arts in urban areas. First, the hard infrastructure, constituted by the physical appearance, geographical location and other physical aspects that may have the potential of exerting an important influence on the area's visitors' perception and experience of place. Second, the attraction of certain type of visitors to the area and the consequent social interactions and dynamics that occur as a result. These interactions are not only amongst users; but also involve the local population, and other visitors in the area. And third, the artistic dimension of an institution for the performing arts related to the quality of its productions. These notions are useful for this research as they point out different elements that should be considered in the study of how a flagship influences the perception and experience of the chosen case study area. According to the authors, the physical presence of the building,

the attraction of visitors in the area and perceptions regarding the cultural product should be addressed for research purposes. Despite the latter consideration regarding quality of performance, it is also important to note Hofseth's (2008:103) considerations regarding flagship developments for the arts, which indicate that 'an analysis of the media coverage suggests that culture can be used as a lever for city development – not necessarily because of the inherent qualities of culture and art as such, but because of the role they can play by being coupled to other elements of urban development'. Therefore, evidence suggests that a flagship's cultural produce can be approached not entirely isolated but relatively independently from the urban benefits that their architectural presence exerts on the urban settings.

One of the most prominent cases of cultural flagships for the performing arts exerting a powerful influence on tourism precincts and indeed on a destination's image is that of the Sydney Opera House, which can also be conceptualised as an icon given the following considerations. According to Thiel-Silin (2005:96) its' development began when 'the government of New South Wales, announced a competition for an Opera House, intended to elevate Sydney's cultural viability and visibility'. In this sense, the benefits of large scale flagship developments for the performing arts are recognised as signifiers of a destination's cultural vibrancy as indicated by Wing Tai Wai (2004). In relation to its physical appearance, its architect, Joern Utzon (1967:3) stated that 'the Sydney Opera House is one of those buildings where the roof is of major importance. It is a house which is completely exposed. The Sydney Opera House is a house which one will see from above, will sail around (...) because it sits on a point sticking out into a harbour, a very beautiful harbour'. This emphasis on contemporary grandiose architecture resulted in the inclusion of the Opera House as an important element of the imagery projecting the city as a world class destination for art and culture. This suggests that not only use of space or cultural meaning grant a building the status of cultural flagship, but certainly its visual appeal and the attraction of other businesses and visitors in its surrounding areas. On the other hand, it is also interesting to note how the architect placed an emphasis on its high profile and

free standing location. Clustering has been identified as a potentially positive attribute to flagship developments in the cases of the museum districts in Madrid and London's South Kensington (Van Aalst and Boogarts, 2002; Physick, 1982). However, it also appears that a development's urban detachment can play a central role in its acquisition of flagship status because of the higher notoriety that a free standing location provides to the building.

As indicated above, this flagship building is often granted with iconic status. As stated by (Colbert, 2003:69), 'a genuine Australian icon, the Sydney Opera House building serves as a symbol of the city and the country, much like the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Tower Bridge in London, the Coliseum in Rome and the Empire State Building in New York City (and it) plays a key role in the highly developed cultural life of the city'. The author approaches the Opera House in terms of its visual input on the destination's tourist landscape and as a provider of culture enhancing the city's cultural offer. It is also interesting to note that the author reports that 95% of patrons indicate that not only the artistic content of a performance has made the experience of visiting the Opera House memorable and enjoyable, but also the simple fact of being inside the building. This indicates that tourists may visit cultural flagships not only because of their content (performing arts) but to experience visiting a building that is known worldwide. Furthermore, it can be argued that the grandiosity and fame of the building may divert the visitor's focus, from culture to the building itself. In this sense, tourists not seeking to experience culture but visiting the Opera House because of its architecture impose a challenge to the delivery of its cultural produce. In this sense, Colbert (2003:69) also addresses the relationship of the Sydney Opera House and the development of tourism in Sydney by noting that its Chief Executive, Michael Lynch 'has set himself to ensure that tourists seek out the Opera House for its shows as well as for its architecture'. This indicates the needs for audience development and educational campaigns to actively engage potential audiences and nurture a culture of appreciation for the work of the flagship institutions besides from its world famous external appearance. It is also interesting to note that the Sydney Opera House is a versatile venue catering for different

demands and purposes via different performing arts spaces (a concert hall, the opera theatre, the drama theatre, a studio and a playhouse) (Beauvert, 1996). Visitors can also take part in guided tours that are tailored according to their special interests in order to serve effectively a wide range of audiences which indicates that the institution has a focus on introducing audiences to its work. In relation to the tourist precinct in which the Opera House is located, the surrounding pier has an appropriate range of ancillary services and other attractions that stimulate tourist activity in the area. These economic units include restaurants, shops and boutiques. In addition, its proximity to the boarding area for river cruise boats and other tourist experiential opportunities such as the Sydney Aquarium facilitate a synergic relationship between the Opera House and other catalysts for tourism development.

In terms of image and the institution's operations, Colbert (2003:75) highlights that 'consumers, both current and potential, form an idea or a mental image of an organisation. Even for people that have never set foot in Australia, the name Sydney Opera House conjures an image'. This suggests that a major lyric theatre, particularly in the case where it's housed by such a distinctive architecture as this case study, bring about mental images to audiences. The author also recommends that in order for these images to have a positive and long lasting effect that will turn potential audiences into actual theatre goers, the organisation should concentrate on two areas. First, promote itself appropriately ensuring that these potential audiences are constantly aware of its cultural offer. And second, monitor the accuracy of the images projected with the actual products and/or services delivered. On the other hand, the author (p. 75) summarizes the strength of the Sydney Opera House in 'the striking architecture that has made the structure a symbol of Australia and the excellence of its resident companies'. He also notes that loyalty is an important result of the institution's focus on culture, indicating that patrons are not only local residents but as a result of the efforts to position itself internationally, tourists are drawn to it not only for its cultural offer but also as any other 'must see' attraction which leads them to experience culture. The cultural delivery is certainly aided by 'the unique architecture of the building that

plays a key role in promoting Australia itself and attracts a great deal of attention from tourists' which fosters local and national pride (Colbert, 2003:75).

Although many lessons can be learned from the case of the Sydney Opera House, it should be noted that this is also a contemporary development. There is limited academic research on the well established Opera House, highlighting the importance of conducting this study. However, La Scala theatre in Milan is also a well established Opera House that has been subject to some academic discussion. Foot (2001) uses the case of La Scala to illustrate how a cultural flagship for the performing arts can reflect a society's or a destination's economic or cultural position by indicating that it 'symbolized the reconstruction of the city, and the return of democracy with the return to Italy of Toscanini (...) the new image of the city was reflected in the kitsch and design of the opening night opera-goers' (p. 14). Another European example of a well established cultural flagship for performing arts is the Palais Garnier in Paris evaluated by Crosby (1970). This grand Opera House was subjected to a conservation programme aimed towards the urban revitalisation of France after the Second World War, along with other monuments such as the Louvre, Notre Dame and the Madeleine. The author identifies these measures as a consequence of the development of the cultural quarter known as Les Marais. This example can also be linked to the modern case of Bilbao in Spain, which as indicated by Klickzkowski (2003), oriented efforts to either develop or improve a series of cultural flagships in order to establish its position as a world destination for culture. The case of Bilbao's Guggenheim success as a cultural flagship acting as a catalyst for urban regeneration has also been identified by Hofseth (2008) in the development of Oslo's new Opera House, suggesting similar patterns between museum and theatre flagship landmarks.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the cultural experiences provided by museums and theatres are of a different nature. On one hand, museums have the opportunity of providing active experiences to its users allowing them to move freely within its premises, whilst attending a performance is a passive experience. It can be argued that cultural flagships for the performing arts can tackle this

experiential disadvantage by strategic use of space in terms of the inclusion of added facilities and services to the building as in the case of the Sydney Opera House presented above. Grodach (2008a) approaches venues for the performing arts from its wider urban benefits perspective and takes the case of New York's Carnegie Hall, which 'functions as a catalytic project by generating a significant amount of night-time activity, acts as an anchor of secondary activity, in this case, many smaller performing arts studios, restaurants and residential buildings that attract musicians and artists, even despite its physical handicap of being situated at the end of long block' (Jacobs, 1961 as cited by Grodach, 2008a:197). The latter considerations confirm that flagship developments for the performing arts lead to urban growth. Furthermore, the authors note the nature of the businesses the flagship attracts, which can be linked to Landry's (2000) notion of the creative milieu where organisations and individuals gather in areas where culture is produced, contributing to its ambience and contributing to a sense of creative space. Aside from the attraction of peripheral cultural units, Grodach (2008a:197) emphasises the consequent cluster and relationship between the flagship and other economic units by stating that 'cultural facilities are designed within close proximity and maintain direct linkages to commercial establishments, are located near public transit and parking facilities, and pay attention to pedestrian traffic and crowd flow'. This physical proximity to other attractions, services and amenities can be identified in the case study area as addressed in the following chapter.

4.7.1. Arts consumption in cultural flagships for the performing arts

Cultural flagships for performing arts can help shape the social, cultural and visual landscapes of a destination as outlined in this chapter. However, it is very important to also consider issues related to arts consumption given that regardless of an Opera House's positive inputs to these destinations, they are also subject to debate and discussion because their cultural produce (high arts) is consumed by a select group of people. DiMaggio and Usseem (1978) make some very useful contributions to the understanding of an individual's interest and consumption of high arts and propose that arts appreciation is trained and contextual, that it enhances class cohesion and is a form of cultural capital.

The authors (p.142) indicate that “adult political attitudes are shaped by the family during childhood and adolescence. This intergenerational reproduction of cultural interests is likely to extend to aesthetic tastes as well”. DiMaggio and Ussem (1978) argue that an individual’s personal background that roots down to their childhood will underpin their personal preferences in their adult life. However, appreciation for certain forms of art can also be acquired if the individual is exposed and educated on the matter to the extent where they develop keenness and interest in participating in cultural endeavours. In this sense, the authors highlight the importance of education as a socio demographic indicator of interest to understand a person’s interest in the arts. But DiMaggio and Ussem (1978) not only refer to education as the individual’s highest educational degree attained and refute the notion that a person “lacking either appropriate family background or educational experiences remains deprived of the means for appropriating the high arts throughout their lives” (p.149). This suggests that exposure to certain art forms can be understood as education as well, but the authors also argue that this exposure is also associated with income levels as these arts forms (particularly opera and ballet) tend to be expensive and exclusive to those who can afford them. On the other hand, Belfiore (2002) argues that these forms of high arts are subject to high standards of quality of productions, and consequently, access to them is restricted to the upper classes that can pay the high price of admission, which itself relates to the high cost of staging these productions.

In relation to this, it is important to consider that Opera Houses and other major providers of culture tend to be subsidised by public funds in most cases (Belfiore, 2002), raising debates concerning their restricted access to those who can pay the price of admission. The author (p. 92) highlights that “within the British arts sector, the actual exclusion of large sections of the population (mainly belonging to the working class) from publicly funded arts activities has been a source of concern”. She also refers to the Arts Council’s Royal Charter (1967), which emphasises the Council’s obligation to make these arts activities more accessible across social classes in the country. Therefore, the issue of audience development acquires two dimensions of importance. The first related to the urge to develop

new audiences to ensure the future production and consumption of the arts by succeeding generations. And the second related to equal distribution of cultural wealth. Kawashima (2006) proposes four types of audience development as follows:

1. Extended marketing: These initiatives target potential and lapsed (not frequent) attendees and do not alter the cultural product, but use it to tailor marketing strategies to draw attention to it and raise attendance by occasional or potential attendees. The purpose is financial and artistic (when for example, a new opera is sought to be promoted and attended by a variety of people).
2. Taste cultivation: these initiatives target existing audiences and do not alter the cultural product but include a variety of them. For example, when there is demand for a particular ballet production but cultural institutions aim to raise attendance to similar productions. The purpose is artistic, financial and educational.
3. Audience education: similar to taste cultivation initiatives, these target existing audiences as well but aim to provide attendees with a deeper insight of the cultural product. For example, when an opera is preceded by a discussion of its background and content to enhance the audience's understanding of it for educational, and to an extent, financial purposes.
4. Outreach: These initiatives target people who are unlikely to attend cultural events (from deprived communities for example). They take the form of arts projects which tend to be participatory in line with Smith's (2007a) notion of novel forms of cultural tourism providing active experiences to its users. The purpose is social and relates to equal distribution of cultural wealth as indicated above.

DiMaggio and Useem (1978) also propose that arts appreciation is contextual when analysing the circumstances associated with arts consumption. The authors argue that these processes are not only related to the content of the cultural product (the opera or ballet themselves for example), but acquire a more complex dimension given that the context in which cultural resources are consumed also

play a significant role in their appreciation. In this sense, the authors evaluate the infrastructure for the provision of arts, theatres themselves for example, and how they influence the experience of arts consumption. They propose that for example, open air performances may be more appealing for the working class as they are less restrictive in terms of behavioural codes than 'rigid' spaces for performing arts like opera houses where there is a fixed auditorium plan and audiences are expected not to talk or interact with each other during the performance. Activities and interactions taking place before and after the performances also play a significant role in their enjoyment according to this notion, suggesting that arts appreciation is not only related to the characteristics of the cultural products themselves but to the circumstances associated with their consumption. It is also interesting that the authors refer to Bernstein's (1975) proposition in regards to consumption of the arts, highlighting that the attendees' behaviour can be understood as rituals as they behave and interact in similar ways. This can be directly related to Edensor's (2001) notion of the tourist's performance as indicated in Chapter 2.

Another useful contribution made by DiMaggio and Useem (1978) to the understanding of arts appreciation is the social dimension that arts consumption acquires, as the authors propose that arts consumption enhances class cohesion. As expressed by the authors (p. 151) "Participation in high arts activities builds social solidarity among those who participate. Since, according to previous propositions, high arts are primarily the preserve of the upper and upper-middle classes, differential class exposure rates to the high arts have the effect of reinforcing class cohesion". In relation to this, the authors refer to as 'class solidarity' when a sense of social understanding and belonging is generated to arts consumption considering that attendees tend to belong to similar socio demographic segments, suggesting that they share similar economic, social and political values and perspectives. This sense of belongingness is also associated by the authors to the attainment of cultural capital, who state that "fractions of the upper and upper-middle class that lack economic capital will accumulate cultural

capital as an alternative strategy for maintaining and advancing their position in the class structure” (p.151).

4.8. Conclusions

The literature reviewed indicates that there are different perspectives by which a flagship development can be understood. A distinction has been made between commercial and cultural flagships depending on their function, focus and nature of produce. The attraction of investment leading to urban regeneration and developing commercial sectors in the areas where they are situated are common characteristics of commercial and cultural flagships. They can both be used to signal messages of successful economies or strong cultural sectors that can be associated with their wider urban environment or the destination as a whole. However, the cultural value assigned to these developments varies considering that their functional aspects are associated with the provision and celebration of local cultures to different extents. Cultural flagships can be understood as monuments because of their potential power to attract visitors that engage in communal activities related to sightseeing due to the high profile nature of the development, attractive imagery and cultural significance. Nevertheless, the monumental perspective to understand cultural flagships is limited because it frames the tourist’s experience from a gazing point of view, whereas it has been determined that the visitor’s involvement with object, place and others are important issues of consideration for the understanding of how a flagship development can potentially influence their perception and experience of an urban precinct. The image’s endurance and degree of attachment to an area or a destination will determine the extent to which a building or structure can be understood as an icon. The icons’ functionality, however, will not be a pivotal factor in the acquisition of iconic status as illustrated by the case of the Eiffel tower, which can be directly associated by Paris’ status as a place for tourism but its functionality holds little association with the provision of culture.

The understanding of museums as cultural flagships pointed out that they enrich a destination’s cultural offer whilst making a contribution to its urban landscape.

They can be either well established or new developments that are often functional parts of urban clusters that attract visitors who benefit from the close proximity between attractions and the concentration of tourists services and facilities. However, it can be argued that the notoriety of many cultural flagships, and in some cases their acquired iconic status, can be directly associated with their free standing location and urban detachment. On the other hand, it is also important to consider that the concept of flagship entails further urban development and the attraction of other businesses.

The well established cultural flagship has the advantage of being situated within an urban environment for a long period of time which aids its attachment to an area. Whereas contemporary developments face the challenge of positioning themselves in urban settings, but they also are more likely to respond effectively to new trends in cultural consumption, from attractive architectural designs to providing engaging and interactive experiences to their users. In relation to this, attending a performing arts event can be viewed as a passive experience, and flagship developments can respond to this by carefully planned and strategic use of space to provide visitors with added services and facilities that would encourage higher levels of participation and involvement. In any case, cultural flagships can be viewed from their physical perspective, in terms of the range of visitors they attract and the nature of their cultural produce. On the other hand, it is evident that arts consumption is a complex issue because high arts, namely opera and ballet, are perceived to be exclusive to the upper-classes and elitist in their accessibility. But it is also clear that an individual's interest in these art forms is directly associated with their personal background as their appreciation is trained and their enjoyment is not only related to the cultural product but to the context in which it is consumed. However, audience development strategies can be implemented to create awareness and generate demand for these cultural products within sectors that would not otherwise attend, and this comes as a result of a concern related to equal distribution of cultural resources.

5. COVENT GARDEN AND THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE: HISTORY, FACES, CHALLENGES AND PHASES

5.1. Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to provide an overview of the area of Covent Garden and the case study cultural flagship, the Royal Opera House. Covent Garden's historical evolution will be reviewed highlighting factors that influenced its development as an urban precinct for culture. There will be an emphasis on the emergence of the theatre industry because of its direct relationship with the area's current status as a place for performing arts. Subsequently, the diverse nature of experiential opportunities for tourism will be analysed by exploring other elements that attract visitors to the area, such as shopping or eating and drinking. The numerous challenges accompanying the development of the area as a place for tourism will also be addressed followed by an overview of the different perspectives by which the area can be understood. A review of the Royal Opera House's history and redevelopment will conclude the chapter, informing this research in relation to the case study area and the flagship in terms of their past and evolution.

5.2. The birth and evolution of the urban precinct

The history of Covent Garden can be archeologically traced back to as far as the first century with evidence of the presence of both Romans and Saxons around this area of London, then known as Londinium (Richardson, 1995). However, its modern history and development only began with the establishment of St. Paul's Church in the county of Middlesex, nowadays serving as the east boundary of the Covent Garden Piazza, then known as Convent Garden given the agricultural activities carried out by monks. Until that point, the land was owned to the Abbey of St. Peter, which designated the space for ecclesiastical settlements. It was then handed to the 1st Earl of Bedford, John Russell (1486-1555) because of the close collaborative relationship held with the Tudors and from this point in the mid 16th century, and under the supervision of the prominent Renaissance British architect

Inigo Jones (1573-1652; the church, the Piazza and housing facilities were developed (Rasmussen, 1991).

These efforts, referred to as ‘London’s first experiment of town planning’ (Westminster City Council, 2010) are an early example of urban regeneration, as the religious landmark and attractive design of the Piazza promoted commercial trade and attracted investment supported by the Russell family, which developed grandiose housing blocks and mansions in the new fashionable area of London. This also led to early environmental issues and debates because of the disappearance of fruit trees and plantations, to give way to urban development (Cathcart Borer, 1967). The disagreements led to the rehabilitation of the space for agricultural trade as another early example of stakeholders and pressure groups influencing the use of land. This influence has strongly manifested itself in the area in the 20th century as discussed in further sections. Cathcart Borer (1967) also notes that the presence of middle and upper classes settled in the area attracted poets and artists seeking to gain notoriety amongst the powerful and influential, leading to an early acquisition of Covent Garden’s character as a place of culture.

5.3. A place for theatres, performance and an Opera House

Author John Gay (1685-1732) was very successful with his ‘Beggar’s Opera’ set in the nearby Lincoln Inn’s theatre. The leading role of this musical work was performed by John Rich (1692-1762), known as ‘the father of pantomime’, who also acted as it’s producer. Such was the financial revenue generated by the successful production that it earned its producer and leading man enough profits to fund a theatre of his own, making ‘Rich gay and Gay rich’. The chosen site was the west border of the Covent Garden Piazza where the first theatre at the Royal Opera House’s site was founded. It was a short walk away from the already established Theatre Royal Drury Lane under the management of David Garrick (1717-1779), who was himself the star and producer of the performances in the latter site. Both theatres were founded on the grounds of the letters patent granted by Charles II in times when only two official theatre companies in the area where

recognised by the corresponding authorities (Hume, 2008). Other phenomena actively influencing the dynamics between stakeholders back then that still stand in the present day are the strong competition in a clustered space, given the close proximity of both theatres exercising a duopoly in the provision of performing arts in Covent Garden. This provision has expanded with the annulment of the letter patent recognising only two official theatre companies, but the clustering of theatres in the area remained, increasing the challenges of the supplier to remain competitive in the market. It should be noted, however, that in the present day these venues offer an eclectic variety of productions serving different types of markets.

The establishment of these venues and the blossoming economy resulting from the success of the market and the ambitious housing developments only strengthened the area's cultural identity, attracting historic cultural figures such as George Frederic Handel (1685-1759). The baroque composer premiered high profile musical works on this site and his long term association with Theatre Royal Covent Garden suggested that the promotion of culture started acquiring more importance in the governmental support towards the arts and the development of the area as a cultural district (Burrows, 2008). Miles and Paddinson (2005:833) indicate that 'the idea that culture can be employed as a driver for urban economic growth has become part of the new orthodoxy by which cities seek to enhance their competitive position'. However, the review of the historic evolution of the cultural sector leading to Covent Garden's current status as a place for culture indicates that this phenomenon is not new to the case study area. Factually, it is a good example to illustrate how culture can lead to urban regeneration even before the concept was known by town planners. In latter times, specifically in the post Second World War era, Lebrecht (2000) points out that the notable British economist Keynes, as a member of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, continuously supported and encouraged assigning funds for the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. The author links this situation with the economist's keen interest in the opera and ballet productions performed at Covent Garden's theatre. Subsequently he acted as first

chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain and ‘at a time when bread was being rationed and London was a bombsite, money was found to create an opera and a ballet company’ (Lebrecht, 2000:1). These historical events suggest that the Opera House in Covent Garden has been viewed as a cultural asset for the nation and a flagship institution for the production of high arts, which was reflected in the continuous monetary support towards its operations at times of economic crisis. On the other hand, they also suggest that the institution received this support from wealthy and politically influential sources.

‘Theatre has always been an important part of the life of Covent Garden, and one which during the eighteenth century generated a great deal of the public life of the area. It is one of the major institutions that, although much transformed, still stands today’ (Richardson, 1979 as stated in Stiff, 1979:np). The author implies that the presence of theatres resulted in higher levels of activity and social interactions in the area, and suggests that different sectors of the population mingled because of a vibrant performing arts scene. In relation to this, Cathcart Borer (1967:51) also notes that performing arts ‘is today more firmly established than it ever was; a vigorous, thriving national institution, with permanent national opera and ballet companies, and audiences who attend, not to be seen themselves, in order to establish themselves socially, but because of their deep-felt love of the music and the dance’. Despite the influence that the high arts have upon the social and cultural dynamics in Covent Garden, popular arts in their many forms and manifestations should not be disregarded as influential elements in the area. It should also be noted, on the other hand, that motivational theories reviewed in previous chapters suggest that arts related tourists are not exclusively motivated by their interest in the arts, but their theatre trips may involve other activities particularly in the case of a theatre located in an area with a wide array of experiential opportunities. Therefore, it is important to apply a holistic perspective to the different elements that comprise an area’s place making system to understand how they complement each other and affect the visitor’s perception and experience of place.

As indicated above, there has been an important theatre at the Royal Opera House's site since 1732. The popularity of the first theatre led to substantial redevelopment schemes in 1782 and 1792 to increase its seating capacity, indicating a positive response and rising demand for performing arts in the area. This theatre burned down in 1808 and a new one built in neo classical style reopened in 1809. To cover the costs, its management raised ticket prices which led to riots and social disturbance given the reluctance of existing users to pay more for attending a performance. In 1837, Queen Victoria granted her Royal patronage which led to a fashionable perception of the area (Dorling Kindersley, 1999), implying that the Royal attendance and status of the institution attracted flows of visitors to Covent Garden. This theatre was also subjected to redevelopment in 1846 and reopened as the Royal Italian Opera and biggest Opera House in the world at that time. In 1856, it also burned to ashes, but given the Royal support to cover the costs of rebuilding it, it reopened in 1858 in a classical Italian style with Corinthian columns at its front, becoming 'a focal point of fashionable London' (Dorling Kindersley, 1999).

Even though the theatre has always been located next to Covent Garden Market, it is at this stage that its association with commerce and leisure was confirmed by the construction of the adjacent Floral Hall, a space to serve as a flower market and dance hall. Described by the authors above as (1999:19) as 'a monument to the Victorian's love of glass and iron', it burned down in 1956 and the space was used as repository until the House's redevelopment in 1999. In 1892, the theatre became the Royal Opera House reflecting the demand for repertoire besides from Italian opera. The building's use was affected by the First and Second World Wars, as it became a warehouse during the second decade of the century and a dance hall for troops during the fourth. In 1946 it reopened as the permanent home of the resident opera company and Sadler's Wells Ballet, which chartered its Royal status in 1956 (BBC, 1999). The Opera House was subjected to a large scale redevelopment programme that led to two years of closure between 1997 and 1999, which will be discussed in further sections.

5.4. A place of many faces

Stiff (1979) indicates that the presence of coffee shops and other forms of commerce have become essential elements of the identity of Covent Garden as a cultural district, attracting intellectuals and artists from its very beginnings in the 17th Century, not only for the social dynamics that thrive in the area but also for the lively atmosphere that peripheral services and activities brought to their visitors. Richardson (1995) notes that the presence of coffee houses, taverns, hotels and bath houses in Covent Garden made the district ‘a pleasurable place’ for both locals and visitors. But they also set the grounds for crime and prostitution as noted by Denlinger (2002) who highlights a concentration of ‘bawdy houses, especially around Drury Lane, St. James’s, and Covent Garden’, being the prostitutes working there listed in what was then called Harris’ List of Covent Garden Ladies. Likewise, Cathcart Borer (1967) highlights the presence of taverns, coffee houses and clubs to illustrate the area’s vibrant night time economy as a result of its leisure orientated ambience. As noted by Roberts (2003), entertainment districts with thriving night time economies face a series of challenges that are today identifiable in the case study area. In relation to this, academic research suggests that anti social behaviour, consumption of drugs and other illegal activities are potential threats to both visitors and the local community in an entertainment district (Roberts et al., 2005).

There is a bilateral, beneficial and synergic association between commerce and performing arts in the area. In addition, the tales of the rich history and heritage of Covent Garden as a place for culture are told by its architecture, but its current character is determined by the wide range of uses of land and land users that contribute to an effective mix of a tourism cluster (as indicated by the Greater London Council, 1970a). Examples of these uses and users include the coffee shops mentioned above, restaurants, fashion galleries, accommodation services and other cultural attractions such as the London Transport Museum, the now relocated Theatre Museum and the Garrick Club Collections. The diverse structure of attractions in the area confirms the need to adopt a wide ranging approach to understand how these elements effectively influence the visitors’

perception and experience of place considering that they interact and complement each other attracting a variety of visitors. Regardless of the lively and cosmopolitan atmosphere that these economic activities add to the ambience of the area, the Covent Garden Area Trust (1997) indicates that the presence of outdoors eating and drinking facilities may have a negative effect on the image projected by Covent Garden in what the authors refer to as ‘undesirable clutter’. The provision of the services mentioned above may not contribute positively to the aesthetics of the area when umbrellas, uncovered tables, unmatching chairs, unpleasant food smells, unauthorized vendors and littering may exasperate the culture led and arts-core tourist (Hughes, 2000). It is important to note, however, that whilst some of the area’s users may find these features displeasing, they attract a different type of visitors that enjoy using the area because of them. In other words, the multifaceted nature of the area’s features attracts a wide array of visitors that should be considered for this research as the area can be experienced and perceived from many different perspectives and by a wide ranging variety of users.

The Theatre Censorship Act, first established in 1737 indicated that all street performers acting without a license from the Lord Chamberlain should be deemed ‘rogues and vagabonds’. However, this legislation was revoked in the 1960s as a response to the tangible contribution that street performers can provide to an urban precinct’s sense of place, such as Covent Garden, where the mixture of the fine arts and popular entertainment constitute a vital element of its image as a place of mixed cultures. Hughes (2000:80) agrees, stating that ‘on-street entertainers do not always have a tourist-attracting purpose but contribute to the animation of an area (...) perhaps the most well-known in the UK are the entertainers at London’s Covent Garden. This old market area in the centre of London, adjoining the Royal Opera House, has been transformed into a tourist zone of specialist shops and market stalls, cafes and restaurants and is regularly animated by fire-eaters, jugglers, living statues and the like.’ Street busking is also discussed by Kushner and Brooks (2000:69), who indicate that ‘downtown retail marketplaces and pedestrian walkways are often the location for artists working in

a variety of performance modes such as music, drama, comedy, puppetry, juggling, or mime’.

Almost all major cities have locations known to residents, business visitors, and tourists as places for street performance. In the case of London, Covent Garden is an excellent illustration of this, where all the types of street performance mentioned by the authors can be found in the designated areas surrounding the market at different times of day and providing different types of performance that also vary greatly in terms of quality. However, quality standards are determined by the visitor, and the wide ranging nature of street entertainment in Covent Garden adds many layers of complexity to the question of how desirable it is for its development as a precinct for tourism and culture. In addition, street busking leads to the ‘free rider’ effect and pedestrian congestion (Kushner and Brooks, 2000), identified by the Councils of Westminster and Camden as a critical issue affecting the quality of the visitor’s experience in Covent Garden (see City of Westminster, 2007).

Despite the potential problems that street performance may impose on urban precincts, Veijola and Jokinen (1994) note that this sensorial stimulation may exert a powerful influence on a visitor’s behaviour and experience of place. They state that ‘we do gaze at street performances at home don’t we? But instead, hardly ever engage ourselves in singing and dancing together; very rarely at home do we share the feeling of being together in this big, incomprehensible world, full of strangers whose words and gestures don’t say anything. Here, we know it in our conscious bodies that are temporarily united in an utterly physical ritual’ (as stated in Perkins and Thorns 2001:191). The authors suggest that street performances engage audiences in a communal ritual and have an impact not only on the precinct’s sense of place from an aural perspective, but they encourage gatherings of people that lead to social interactions. Even though they may represent a nuisance affecting some visitors’ experience of place negatively, it is clear that these gatherings bring visitors together in Covent Garden. This also relates to the notion of co tourism (Harvey and Lorenzen, 2006), which suggests

that a visitor's experience of place can be influenced by others tourists'' behaviour. This behaviour may itself be influenced by the presence of street entertainers attracting audiences that sing along to their performances, applaud them and gather communally, providing cues of behaviour to visitors in the area.

5.5. Proposed redevelopment of the area

Throughout its history, the rising numbers of visitors in Covent Garden and the fast pace by which merchants have been drawn to it has lead to a series of measures aimed to effectively cope with visitors whilst safe guarding local interests. However, these efforts may have had a questionable effect upon the authenticity of what is known today as Covent Garden. In the melancholic words of Thorne (1980:7): 'never again will the Royal Opera House audience emerging into the night breathe those pungent and evocative market smells (...) nor will they have to push their way past lorries and stacks of crates'. The statement suggests that the experience of theatre at the opera in Covent Garden is subject to the area's periodically changes according to how the area evolves as an urban precinct for commerce and culture.

Indeed, the urban development of Covent Garden has not come without its casualties, not only represented by neighbouring areas that are neglected and over shadowed by the booming economy of a historic urban quarter, but also by the local residents who are affected by urban development initiatives to cope with growing numbers of visitors and economic units. This is not a new occurrence; the Duke of Bedford (1844) noted that 'I cannot conceive what becomes of all these poor people who are compelled to leave their homes and lodgings for the improvement of Covent Garden' (as cited by Anson, 1981). From a more recent perspective, Kerr (2003:19) noted that there was a less shimmering side to the West End district than its high profile avenues and streets, where there was a 'dark and wholly lifeless netherworld of abandoned warehouses and derelict market halls shuttered away behind temporary hoardings'. The late 1960s and the early 1970s saw the proposed implementation of a large scale urban redevelopment scheme that intended to replace the historic assets of the area, deemed as obsolete

and out of fashion, and give way to a modern compound of housing facilities, open spaces and recreation centres, offices, a shopping mall, public houses, new roads, hotels and an international conference centre (Greater London Council, 1970a). These redevelopment projects were driven by the decision to move out the fruit and vegetable market to Nine Elms because of the increasing difficulty of coping with the traffic it generated in central London. These initial proposals, in the spirit of the times, were for comprehensive redevelopment but were vigorously opposed and the historic fabric of the area was largely maintained. This resulted in conservation and refurbishments efforts as opposed to complete redevelopment of the market. This ensured a mixed used area that conserved the architectural features that grant it with its ambience as a historic precinct that can be sustainably used by the local community and tourists alike. The pressure exerted by the local community that demanded the abandonment of the redevelopment project lead to an extensive environmental study of the area, which concluded that 'the Greater London Council's Covent Garden Committee recognized and respected the area's unique character and potential contribution to the life of central London'. (Greater London Council, 1978 as cited by Tiesdel et al. 1996). Richardson (1995) also highlights that the area may be a thriving and vibrant precinct for tourism, culture and leisure nowadays; but that the proposed redevelopment scheme propelled community groups to oppose to urban renewal plans that would out the area's built heritage at stake.

The rejection of the area's proposed redevelopment emphasise its historical value, which is evident by further projects that are aimed towards the restoration and conservation of the built environment rather than in new development efforts, such as the Royal Opera House as addressed in further sections. Nevertheless, the emphasis on preservation implies other challenges to the planning of the area in terms of land use and urban revitalisation considering that historic value and urban renewal are required to reconcile in the area, giving way to conflict. Hareven and Lagenbach (1981) refer to the restoration processes around the Covent Garden Market several years after the large scale commercial redevelopment programme was rejected. The authors indicate that 'the extent and

quality of restoration (...) removed the visible effects of its use as a market. This wear and patina is what one associates with a historical market and it can be disorientating to find it so entirely removed when the market is turned into an uncharacteristically elegant shopping centre' (as cited in Tiesdel et al., 1996:175). In this sense, it is important to note that the intangible identity of a historic urban quarter is directly linked to its physical features and that regardless of how important the concept of preservation is to town developers, the ambience of the place changes with efforts to preserve or revitalize them.

5.6. Perspectives on Covent Garden

Glasson et al. (1995:37) indicate that 'a key element in attracting and sustaining visitors, as well as validating the residential decision of those who call it home, is the identity, or image of a city'. The authors highlight that the image or identity of place are not single layered issues, as not only can the many urban units of a destination differentiate themselves from one another, but each and every one of them can be viewed from different scopes. This premise is applicable to the case of Covent Garden as indicated in the discussion below, which analyses the area according to the different models of understanding of urban areas for tourism and culture reviewed in the previous chapter:

5.6.1. Covent Garden as an urban village

Chapter 3 determined that a tourist precinct can be scrutinised from a range of perspectives. One of these perspectives places an emphasis on physical attributes and the precinct's built environment. In this sense, Covent Garden can be conceptualised as an urban village. Aldous (1992) indicates that the concept of an urban village is the result of the constant quest to develop mixed-use urban areas whilst effectively addressing the matter of sustainability. The author (p.27) notes that 'an increasing number of more enlightened developers have sought to create urban areas in which a mixture of uses and a human scale architecture full of incident and variety produces places that people instinctively enjoy using'. Covent Garden as an urban village is not the direct product of planned urban development, but it is perhaps one of the world's most well-known examples of

how the need to make effective and wide ranging use of land whilst housing residents and welcoming visitors has shaped its character. The challenges accompanied by the development of an urban village can be linked to Covent Garden, as vehicular and pedestrian congestion, criminality and potential conflict between the local community and the visitors are issues of consideration in the area. Despite these challenges, Covent Garden can be viewed as an urban village considering that the area is small enough to provide a familiar and warm atmosphere but large enough to hold the variety of services, venues and facilities that act as pull factors for the visitor. On the other hand, and as established before, there is a variety of such services serving different markets without neglecting the needs of the temporary or permanent residents. It also provides means of transport for the pedestrian, the cyclist, the car driver and the tube user. Another characteristic is that there is a contrasting mixture between large buildings and developments of a lesser scale that also provide a range of architectural styles contributing to the speckled urban landscape that provides the area with its visual identity. The area's narrow streets indeed 'cater for the car without encouraging its use', allowing visitors to freely explore its urban settings by making use of its mostly pedestrian streets. All of these urban characteristics can be related to the rejection of the area's redevelopment as discussed in the previous section, indicating that the preservation of these architectural features and layout resulted in a distinctive sense of place within a historic urban precinct.

5.6.2. Covent Garden as a cultural quarter/cluster/creative milieu

From a consumption perspective, Covent Garden could also be understood as a cultural quarter. According to Bell and Jayne (2004), these areas can either be the result of history's course or of planned development efforts to make effective use of land whilst promoting a range of a clustered range of activities, many of which are of a cultural nature. As noted before, Covent Garden evolved over time as a precinct for tourism and culture but was subjected to some development efforts to make its use more sustainable for visitors seeking culture and commerce and for the local community, indicating that the area can be viewed as a cultural quarter. Evans (2003) on the other hand, proposes that the underlying principles for the

development of cultural clusters, or quarters, can be categorised in three layers. The first being the economic, by promoting industry in the area, assigning workspace in an organized manner, fostering the creation of supply chains in their productions as well as providing means of networking for their business stakeholders. As mentioned before, the economic units and active industries in Covent Garden inter relate and dynamise each other, as commerce benefits from the attraction of tourists because of the presence of street entertainers for example, responding to Evan's (2003) premises regarding a cultural quarter. Secondly, the author indicates that the social rationale for them are constituted by the phenomenon of urban renewal, the creation of an identity for the area and by promoting inclusion in the relationship between audiences and the arts; as in the case of Covent Garden, that provides an accessible space for different users with different interests (Bell and Jayne, 2004). In this sense, the area can also be understood as a creative milieu because different networking units work in partnership towards the promotion and enhancement of creative industries, particularly those related to both high and popular forms of performing arts.

Roodhouse (2006) indicates that a cultural quarter can be classified according to different perspectives, such as the level of importance of the creative industries or the iconographic nature of their identity should a landmark or flagship be present, as in the case of Covent Garden and the Royal Opera House. Nevertheless, the author indicates that the success of any cultural quarter is defined by the economic, social and cultural activities that thrive in the area; the dynamics between the built environment and the use of space; and the contribution that it provides to the broader identity of the destination because of its historic value or distinctive ambience. The summary of Covent Garden's past suggests that the area also responds to the concept of a cultural quarter according to this author's standards. Whilst evaluating the feasibility of referring to Covent Garden as a cultural quarter, Law (2002) indicates that it aims to 'root tourism and leisure more firmly in the existing fabric and culture of the city. Cultural quarters like Dublin's Temple Bar in Ireland, or Hindley Street in Adelaide, Australia are planned developments, but the intention is to build on existing cultural activities,

emphasising the precinct's history and developing its built environment to create a new tourism cluster (as cited by Maitland, 2007) (see also McCarthy, 1998; Montgomery, 1995; Rains, 1999). This statement is also applicable to Covent Garden because it recognises that novel efforts to create a cultural quarter have better chances of thriving if existing cultural resources are expanded and developed. The case of Covent Garden, as mentioned before, is a good example of a cultural quarter that developed organically over time, and has been fostered by planning since its redevelopment was abandoned in the 1970s. This is reflected in the Opera House's redevelopment scheme, the recent opening of the largest Apple store in the world housed in the historic building surrounding the Piazza and the closure of its tube station in 2007 to improve its capacity, amongst other examples.

On the other hand, it is important to note that the notion of a cultural quarter (Montgomery, 2003; Roodhouse, 2006) focuses on small enterprises and do not emphasise the role of flagship developments enough. Thus, whilst most elements of the cultural quarter model can be identified in this case study, the notion of a cultural cluster (Mommaas, 2004) seems to be more useful to appraise the presence of a flagship development in an urban precinct and the visitor's perception and experience of place. However, Mommaas' (2004) views are based upon new cultural flagships, in the case of the Westergasfabriek, an adapted former industrial site. This makes the applicability of the theory to this area questionable considering that its main flagship building, the Opera House, has over two centuries of history and therefore has more cultural significance due to its heritage

5.6.3. Covent Garden as an entertainment district

Considering the leisure orientated ambience of the area, another perspective by which Covent Garden can be analysed from is that of the entertainment district. Berkley and Thayer (2000:466) propose that 'frequently, entertainment districts are not planned, they just evolve over time'. Their legacy is manifested by other destinations making significant if not large scale developments in an attempt to

emulate their success and attain the desired culture-led urban regeneration. Examples of this can be identified in Sheffield, Birmingham and Manchester in the United Kingdom. The authors also indicate that with their success, the challenges of making entertainment districts safe and sustainable arise for the local authorities, as has been the case throughout the history of Covent Garden. Berkley and Thayer (2000), however, suggest that some of the features that make of an area an entertainment district consist of leisure activities often associated with the night time economy in the case of pubs and clubs, or with other activities related to consumption and shopping. Covent Garden can be seen as a place for high culture given the presence of the country's leading Opera House at its core, attracting visitors interested in high arts.

On the other hand, the wide assortment of leisure experiences available in the area such as street entertainers and eating and drinking facilities attract visitors seeking popular culture, leisure, relaxation and entertainment as opposed to high arts and elitist experiences. Nichols Clark (2004) notes the importance of amenities in the entertainment district; whether they are natural, constructed or social; concluding that the importance of these characteristics of the entertainment district is strictly subject to the visitor. Such is the case of Covent Garden, receiving visitors that have little or no interest in the high arts but are drawn to it because of its nightlife for example. The potential benefits of amenities improving the experience of the precinct as an entertainment district vary according to the tourists' use, which can also be related to their motivation to visit the area along with their perception and experience of it. These amenities, to name a few, include its eating and drinking premises that facilitate an ambience of leisure, relaxation and socialisation (social), its resting facilities and street furniture (constructed) and its central and easily accessible location (natural).

5.7. Redevelopment of the Royal Opera House

‘The reconstruction (of the Opera House) has produced, moreover, not so much a building as a lively new urban quarter where there was formerly dereliction’ (Powell, 1999 as cited by BBC, 1999:64).

Mosse (1995) indicates that the Royal Opera House as an institution is directly linked with British tradition integrating heritage, identity and pride to the performing arts scene in Britain. However, as the 20th century progressed, the need for a major redevelopment scheme was imminent considering that some facilities and backstage technology dated back to the previous century. This redevelopment programme was divided in two phases, the first consisting of an extension of the building in Floral Street in 1982 benefiting the house with a range of improved facilities and extensions. The second phase proved to be the most challenging and controversial. Mosse (1995:11) points out that ‘phase II of the redevelopment would make the difference and transform the Victorian building into a modern theatre to rival the Metropolitan Opera House in New York or the Bastille in Paris’. This emphasises that the task of transforming the Covent Garden Theatre into a landmark building and a cultural flagship in its own right was to be of high complexity, not only because of the existing facilities which represented both assets in terms of the qualities listed above but also limitations because of their obsolescence or unsuitability for a modern theatre. It is also important to consider that the redevelopment scheme would not happen without opposition of influential stakeholders, such as the Arts Council from a financial point of view, the Westminster City Council from an urban point of view and the Covent Garden Community Association from the resident population perspective.

As indicated in previous sections, the aforementioned Association can fiercely oppose to any redevelopment agenda intended for the area because of the fear of comprising the heritage value and cultural authenticity of the precinct. Mosse (1995) exemplifies the Association’s disapproval of the implementation of Phase II of the redevelopment by referring to a large scale mural placed in the corner of Russell Street and the Piazza, which read ‘Please help us stop the Royal Opera

House demolishing these Georgian buildings and replacing them with an office block' (p. 180). The then Chief Executive of the House, Jeremy Isaacs also recalls the striking amount of opposition faced by the programme as well as a number of stakeholders imposing conditions before granting approval for its implementation. These included, six ministers of the arts that speculated about the cost of the project, three different chairmen of the Arts Council, English Heritage, the Royal Fine Arts Commission, the London Committee and other entities such as advocates for the disabled that did not stop questioning the redevelopment of the house until it's reopening in 1999 (as indicated in Latham and Swenarton, 2002).

Isaacs (2002) synthesises the requirements that were to be met by the second phase of the Houses' redevelopment, which comprised preserving the auditorium, improving sightlines and air conditioning, upgrading the technical settings, upgrading front of house areas, accommodating the ballet company, housing as many of the theatre's functional units on the same site and 'to enhance the cityscape while creating property value realisable on site to help pay for the whole' (as cited in Latham and Swenarton, 2002:122). This overview of the project indicates that a heterogenic approach needed to be applied in the task of converting this theatre into a world class Opera House, which can lead to landmark cultural flagship status. Not only because of the wide range of requirements that had to be observed, but also because of the need to apply state of the art techniques in an area cherished for its historic background. The authors (2002:101) also indicate that 'the significance of the project can be described first in terms of urban design and second in terms of theatre modernisation'. In this sense, the redevelopment of the Opera House prioritised wider urban benefits over the enhancement of the theatre's facilities, suggesting that its primary objective was to exert a positive influence on the urban precinct. Powell (1999) highlights that upon completion of the redevelopment project; the designated architect Jeremy Dixon also celebrated the 16th anniversary of winning an international open competition for the bid in 1983, confirming the long and arduous process that characterised the project throughout its implementation. (BBC, 1999). Factually, talks of the redevelopment began 30 years before its conclusion amidst

controversy and much debate (BBC, 1999). Dixon (1999) indicates that complementing political and economic problems that always accompanied the project, the property crash of the early 1990s affected the implementation of the redevelopment scheme, which was only able to be put through a subsidy of £78.5 million by National Lottery funds along with private sources of financial support that raised the fund to £213 million (as stated by Binney, 1999 in BBC, 1999).

The Department of Media, Culture and Sports (DCMS) expressed concerns about this subsidy, because it was not only the greatest single amount ever to be awarded to a single organisation for a single purpose but it was also concerned that the institution would experience financial deficits of £1.5 million per year during the two years closure time (between 1997 and 1999) whilst the building was developed (Towse, 2001). In addition, DCMS noted that 10% of the funds granted by the Treasury were assigned towards the development of the Royal Opera House for over 10 years whilst the Chairman at the time claimed that no other European country assigned such little funding to a major Opera House; and that the revenue from ticket sales was far more important than the public funds received. These allegations led to the dismissal of the Chairman and the in depth evaluation of the entity's financial and operational situation to assess the viability of the project. This resulted in the Eyre Report, which was paramount in the establishment of a series of performance indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of public subsidy for the arts, not only at the Royal Opera House but to other cultural entities funded by the Arts Council. These are: to encourage excellence at every level, to encourage innovation at every level, to promote a thriving arts sector and support the creative economy, to facilitate more consumption and participation in the arts by more people, to encourage more relevant training in the arts sector, to encourage better use of the arts in education, to combat social exclusion and promote regeneration, and to improve public perception of the arts and to promote British culture overseas (Towse, 2001). It is interesting to note that most of these performance indicators focus on social inclusion and increasing levels of participation by delivering cultural products to an extended audience whilst promoting urban renewal and energizing economies based on cultural resources.

Powell (1999) discusses the intangible aspects that make the Covent Garden site both an asset and a problem for the building's redevelopment. The author reflects on alternative proposals made in the 1980s regarding an entirely new building to be constructed by the Southbank's waterfront in an attempt to mimic the Sydney Opera House for example. Besides from the potential benefits that it would have brought, the author concludes that there is a strong emotional link between the Londoner, the arts and Covent Garden, which propelled and strengthened the decision to redevelop an Opera House that was seen at the time as the most inadequate of the high profile Opera Houses in the world. However, the author claims that 'by remaining on its historic site (it) has enriched Covent Garden and reinforced its status as part of London's cultural heartland' (BBC, 1999:64). Dixon (1999) also agrees that 'London's Opera House belongs in Covent Garden (but it) can never have the grand symmetrical layout of other Opera Houses' (as stated by Binney, 1999 in BBC, 1999:76). The authors explain that the original auditorium which was preserved by the redevelopment programme was originally built at the blocks' corner, leaving all possibilities of expansion to the other end.

Despite the problems that accompany the redevelopment of an old Opera House on site, Binney (1999) affirms that an important contribution of the redeveloped Opera House is that it innovates and contributes to urban pedestrianisation in the area by connecting the Piazza with Bow street in a link open to all pedestrians, which passes by the House's shop and box office. In regards to the outside appearance of the House, Dixon (1999) indicates that an innovative approach needed to be used combining both old and new assets, not only to match the task of modernising an old Opera House but also to accomplish a contrast with the distinctive characters of the wider urban landscape. The L-shaped Covent Garden Opera House is surrounded by the Piazza, from where the building is seen with a traditional stone façade that contrasts with the Piazza's historical Italian design and where a grandiose front would not have been possible. On the other side, along Bow Street, the old façade lies next to the restored iron and glass made Hamlyn (formerly Floral) Hall which serves as the theatre's largest social area and eating and drinking facility as a result of the redevelopment (Binney, 1999 in

BBC, 1999). However, it is important to consider that Bow Street is comparatively narrower than the Piazza, which affects the area's visitors' perception of the building's attractive front.

An important highlight of the design of the new Royal Opera House is the conjoined use of modern and innovative architecture along with conservationist and revivalist schemes that focus on modernisation as well as preservation of built heritage value of the site. In this sense, Maxwell (2002) highlights the partial reconstruction of Inigo Jones' vaulted Piazza, indicating that '(it) contributes towards the re-invention of an important city space, lending itself to field as to figure' (as cited in Latham and Swenarton, 2002:97). The author also notes the presence of shops and other forms of commerce housed alongside this renovated urban asset, suggesting that the synergic work between an Opera House and other catalysts for commercial trade is put to practice in the Covent Garden Piazza.

The Opera House's redevelopment was not only in terms of infrastructure, but it also propelled a shift in the institution's values in terms of target markets and intended audiences. As expressed by Dixon and Jones (2002:112), the new layout integrates patrons from the stalls with amphitheatre ticket holders, 'the aim is to encourage the audience to move up as well as down (...) reversing the sense of social hierarchy that existed within the old house'. The authors refer to the fact that amphitheatre patrons could only access their lower cost seats through an isolated entrance located in Floral Street, nurturing a culture of social dividedness and exclusion. In the present day, no patrons are subject to any access restrictions throughout the redeveloped building with the exception of the seat they occupy. This situation leads to contemplate the way in which the house's 'excellence, access and artistic development' creed is put to practice, indicating that indeed, access initiatives are implemented in the House's operations. Another author that confirms this assumption is Mosse (1995), who recalls a famous performance by a world renowned singer which was attended by masses longing 'to see –rather than to listen to- the megastar'. (p.146). This indicates that a consequence of social inclusion policies is a shift in the way culture is perceived and consumed by

audiences who grant the experience of attending a performance new meanings and interpretations. The House's focus on indiscriminate access for all audiences can be notable in their student stand-by scheme that releases tickets at considerably low prizes for students. And ultimately, in the fact that the House can be visited by anyone, free of charge, during designated times where visitors are welcome to the front of house foyers and have access to the restaurants, bars, terrace and exhibition spaces. Latham and Swenarton (2002) also identify implicit socio political features in the design of the redeveloped Royal Opera House. In the words of Tooley (1999:47) 'the reopening is an opportunity to throw open the doors and invite inside all comers, leading the unsure gently to opera and ballet, the *raison d'être* of this magnificent building' (as stated by the BBC, 1999). According to Powell (1999), an estimated 25000 visitors were expected to experience backstage tours yearly at the time of the house's reopening, suggesting that in the eleven years that have elapsed since, visitor numbers are likely to have grown. (BBC, 1999). In terms of audience development and engagement, the Opera House's education department 'aims to inspire and empower people to learn and develop creative skills through engagement with its work and art forms' (ROH, 2010). The initiatives implemented to accomplish these purposes include special performances for schools, insight evenings providing audiences with a comprehensive overview of certain productions and the live projection of opera and ballet in big screens in public areas across the country. In 2009, over 87000 people were engaged by these initiatives (ROH, 2010). Even though not all members of these audiences visited the area as a result of this (live relay of performances in other parts of the country for example), these audience development activities highlighted the work of the Opera House to a wider audience and in many cases, attracted visitors to the area.

Michael Kaiser (1999), who at the time acted as Chief Executive of the House, reflected on the large scale investment that was required to reconceive the theatre and suggested at the time that it would act as an attraction for tourism in the area: 'eventually, the Royal Opera House will repay the investment in its reconstruction many times over through tourists and the money that tourism brings into the

country'. In this sense, it is suggested that tourists will visit Covent Garden to see the redeveloped Opera House, but that process will also lead them to engage in other experiences in the area. Another interesting remark made by the then Chief Executive is that ticket prices had been significantly reduced for the reopening, which can be linked to the social inclusion orientation developed in sections above. In relation to this, it was suggested that the House would no longer be deemed as a kind of 'glorified private club', but an institution where 'the various groups who will use the building will enjoy of a mutually beneficial coexistence amongst each other' (as stated by the BBC, 1999:62). Finally, the current Chief Executive remarks that regardless of the English nation's interest in the Opera House's cultural produce, its redevelopment and consequent contribution to Covent Garden's and London's cultural landscape, it is a valued cultural asset and that 'even if they don't come, they feel proud of the building' (Hall, 2008 as cited by BBC, 1999)

5.8. Conclusions

The review of the evolution of Covent Garden indicates that its firm position as a vital element of London's tourism portfolio has been a historical process that unfolded over an extended period of time. This process has often consisted of controversial chapters in the area's evolution as a place for entertainment, tourism and culture affecting the local population as the area evolved. However, its popularity as a tourism precinct also plays a key role in the perception of London as a destination of culture, with a diverse performing arts sector in a historically rich urban setting. In addition, the presence of the market place, pubs, cafes of different scale and street buskers attract a variety of visitors seeking different experiences and perceiving the area in different ways. In this sense, the area can be viewed from different perspectives by focusing on its physical attributes, the clientele it serves and the activities that take place throughout its locations. In any case, it is clear that the area is a multifaceted precinct that concentrates a range of attractions that both tourists and the local population enjoy using.

In regards to the flagship building, it has been determined that the Opera House's redevelopment was complex from the social, economic and physical points of view. The social and economic dimensions can be associated with the Royal attachment of the institution that implies elitism and exclusivity whilst receiving considerable amounts of public financial support to fund its redevelopment and operations. On the other hand, and from a physical perspective, even though the Opera House has been envisaged as a flagship building, it faces a series of challenges related to its visual perception and geographical location in Bow Street. However, its historical value, attachment to the area and quality of performances suggests that its flagship status can be associated with its presence as a provider of culture rather than an architectural artefact. An appropriate methodological approach should be applied in order to enquire about these topics comprehensively and efficiently. Therefore, the next chapter will focus on the methodological perspective adopted to conduct this research, the method to be applied and how the data gathered to answer the research questions will be analysed.

6. METHODOLOGY, METHOD AND DATA ANALYSIS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological framework that underpins the method chosen to collect primary data to inform this research and how this data has been analysed. It is structured in four sections. The first is concerned with the philosophical stance adopted for the study and includes an exploration of the social constructivist paradigm from its ontological and epistemological perspectives. The second section addresses semi-structured interviews as the method chosen to collect the data, followed by a detailed account of the interview and fieldwork design. The last section establishes the approach adopted to analyse the data and the different stages that this process entailed. The concluding section summarises this methodological framework and introduces the next chapter, which presents the data and the findings that stemmed from it.

6.2. Methodological approach

Once the theoretical framework for this research was established through the review of existing literature related to cultural tourism and tourists, urban areas for tourism and culture and cultural flagships; the next stage of this study involved the adoption of a methodological perspective that served as a guideline in the exploratory efforts to give answers to the research questions and overall aim. The adoption of a paradigm is the first step leading to this methodological framework. Willis (2007:8) refers to Chalmers (1982) to define the notion of a paradigm as ‘made up of the general assumptions and laws, and techniques for their application that the members of a particular scientific community adopt’. This suggests that a paradigm represents an approach that ultimately give the researcher a perspective on the way the research topic is explored as well as a series of methodological parameters. As indicated by Willis (2007:8), ‘a paradigm is thus, a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field’. In this sense, and before contemplating practical means of gathering data, it is important to establish the fundamental stance that

the study will adopt in regards to both reality as it is formed, constructed and interpreted; and the individuals that provide this data.

6.2.1. The social constructivist paradigm

Lengkeek (2001:178), referring to the work of Kant, states that ‘we no longer regard reality as the direct reflection of the things around us. Individuals experience reality only through the filter of their ability to know and judge’. The author sets out three elements in the process. First, the sensorial sphere by which the individual perceives their environment (applied to the experience of cultural tourism by Pocock and Hudson, 2978; Minca and Oakes, 2006). Second, the interaction between these outer stimuli and inner values and concepts within the individual. And third, the process by which such interaction leads to interpretation. It is because the range of values that interact with the outer environment vary greatly between individuals from a variety of backgrounds that a positivist approach leading to generalisations is not adopted for this study. It should be noted that all the research questions established for this research aim to explore how a variety of Covent Garden’s visitors from many different backgrounds interpret, assign meanings, perceive and experience this urban area for tourism and culture. According to Lengkeek’s (2001) proposition regarding the construction on reality, a focus on the individual is necessary in order to explore these topics comprehensively and taking into account the visitors’ individuality and diversity in terms of their backgrounds.

Quinn Patton (2002:132) proposes the following set of questions to determine the most suitable approach for qualitative research:

- How have the people in this setting constructed reality?
- What are their reported perceptions, ‘truths’, explanations, beliefs, and worldview?

The author associates these questions with the constructivist perspective, and provides a set of criteria for adopting this approach. This parameters indicate that the subjective nature of the research is acknowledged, that the data obtained will

be trustworthy and authentic, that triangulation of results will be feasible and appropriate, that praxis and reflexivity provide a frame to ‘understand how one’s own experiences and background affect what one understands and how one acts in the world’ (p.546), it contemplates the singularity of each individual and it provides improved and elaborate knowledge on the research topic. These considerations suggest that the framework provided by the constructivist approach is suitable to undertake this research given its subjective nature focused on how the individual constructs their own reality and the variety of tourists from many different backgrounds that visit Covent Garden.

6.2.2. Social constructivism from the ontological and epistemological perspectives

Willis (2007) considers that ontology and epistemology are components of metaphysical studies and defines the former as the way the researcher deems reality to be constructed, and the latter as the approach that the researcher adopts to enquire about it. It is to be noted that social constructivism as a paradigm has both ontological and epistemological implications as it provides a series of directives in regards to both realms of social research. Hollinshead (2004:76) develops a detailed insight into the nature of the constructivist paradigm from its different perspectives. Firstly, he considers it as an ontological stance that intends to give an explanation to what reality is and to the nature of the individual’s existence, and indicates that constructivism is a relativist ontology as ‘realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions (...) dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them’. This suggests that the ontological perspective of social constructivism provides a consistent framework to the research topic and highlights its suitability for this study given its subjective nature. Secondly, the author explores the epistemological dimension, that intends to establish how the researcher approaches the individual providing the data, and concludes that constructivism is an interactive and subjective epistemology because ‘inquirer and inquired are fused into a singular entity (and) findings are the creation of a process of interaction between the two’ (Guba, 1990:27). In this sense, and considering that the ontological dimension of constructivism indicates

that reality is for the individual to construct; epistemologically, the researcher acts as a facilitator for the individual to develop their interpretations from a subjective point of view. Finally, Hollinshead (2004:76) appraises the approach as a methodology and indicates that constructivism is a hermeneutic and dialectic methodological position because ‘individual constructions are elicited and refined hermeneutically and are compared and contrasted dialectically with the aim of generating one or a few constructions on which there is general consensus’ (as cited by Phillimore and Goodson, 2004). This research is entirely qualitative in nature as data will be obtained through dialectic means of enquiry (semi-structured interviews) as indicated in further sections of this chapter; and is hermeneutic given that it explores the processes of interpretation of place. These considerations also point out the suitability of a social constructivist approach as a research paradigm for this work.

6.2.3. The facets and dilemmas of social constructivism

A lack of consensus in academic literature regarding the use of the terms constructionism and constructivism has been identified. Whilst authors like Jennings (2001) and Bryman (2004) use them indistinctively as synonyms, Quinn Patton (2002) refers to Crotty (1998:58) who makes a distinction. According to the latter author, ‘constructivism points out the unique experience of each of us. It suggests that each one’s way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other, thereby tending to scotch any hint of a critical spirit. Constructionism emphasises the hold our culture has on us, it shapes the way in which we see things and gives us quite a definite view of the world’ (as cited by Quinn Patton 2002: 97). In this sense, constructivism is a more subjective concept and that constructionism is more oriented towards the social and cultural. Nevertheless, the author himself points out the validity of the distinction and the widespread acceptance of it in academia. These notions have implications for the method chosen to collect the data as a subjective approach needs to be adopted given the subjective nature of interpretation of place and the variety of backgrounds of the area’s visitors as indicated above.

Another contribution on this subject is made by Delanty (2005) who ponders the approach's applicability in social science. The author indicates that constructivism has three different layers of understanding, constructionism being the first and the weakest position of the three, suggesting that 'social science is principally concerned with interpreting the process by which social reality is constructed by social actors' (p.140). Delanty (2005) describes the term as weaker in contrast to the other two types of constructivism. On one hand, social constructivism, also referred to as scientific constructivism, is defined as 'the stronger thesis which advances the controversial claim that science is constructed by social actors'. These social actors can be linked to Boniface's (1995) elements interacting in the consumption of cultural resources (user, presenter and item). Thus, the inclusion of the concept of social actors in the theoretical framework of this research confirms the suitability of adopting the social constructivist approach given that the study focuses on users (tourists), presenters (the flagship as a provider of culture) and items (culture itself). Delanty (2005) also makes a differentiation between this and radical constructivism concerned with the notion of reality that 'can be viewed as a system which is structured as an information-processing entity (and is) essentially, an endless process of constructing information in order for a system to distinguish itself from the environment'. The practical applicability of the latter concept is questionable for this research considering that this study focuses on interpretation, perception and experience of place but does not aim to radically differentiate these constructions from the urban environment it focuses on. This suggests that a social constructivist position will effectively address the individual's constructions of reality taking into consideration the social actors that intervene in the process.

6.2.4. Constructivism and social actors

Guba and Lincoln (1990) highlight that constructivism 'begins with the premise that the human world is different from the natural, physical world; and therefore must be studied differently' (as cited by Quinn Patton, 2002:96). This statement suggests that reality is not only constructed by what is perceived through the individual's senses via the 'real' world's stimuli, but it is the result of the

interaction between these sensorial experiences with the person's inner mechanisms of interpretation. These notions are useful for this research as the individuals providing the data will assign different meanings to what they perceive considering their subjectivity underpinned by their personal backgrounds. Furthermore, this paradigm has a clear focus on the different social actors that constantly influence the phenomenon of perception and interpretation as noted above. Bryman (2004:17) supports this notion by stating that social constructivism 'asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors (and that) they are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision'. These considerations also suggest the suitability of adopting this approach for this study considering that the perception and experience of an urban precinct like Covent Garden are not merely the result of social interactions (word of mouth information, friendliness and physical appearance of individuals in the area, etc), but there is a more complex network of elements and relationships to be explored. Such elements, understood as actors, include the area's built heritage, its sense of place, the presence of an Opera House next to a market, the attraction of a variety of visitors of different socio demographic characteristics and motivations to visit, its commercial and cultural sectors, etc.

This epistemological approach also relates to Boniface's (1995) basic assumptions regarding the cultural tourist's experience and the mix of elements that intervene in this process, as can be seen in the theoretical framework presented Chapter 2. As indicated above, there are users, presenters and items that interact with one another and with the individual's inner processes of interpretation that lead to perception and interpretation. Three such elements can be seen as the social actors indicated by the social constructivist approach. This is also supported by the notion that these actors are subject to a constant process of evolution and change that can be related to the constant state of revision indicated by the definition above and the area's evolution as a place for commerce and culture. In relation to this, Jussim (1991) proposes another system that illustrates the basic assumption of the construction of reality by the individual according to the constructivist

approach. The author (p. 57) indicates that background information and social beliefs in the form of expectations and assumptions interact with the targets' behaviour or attributes, which leads to the perceiver's judgements. This can be linked to background information on Covent Garden such as media exposure in film or marketing material for example, which can exert an influence on the individual's perception of place.

Greene (2003) evaluates the relationship between the social world and the physical environment, indicating that the first 'does not exist independently 'out there', waiting to be discovered by smart and technically expert social inquirers. Rather, the emotional, linguistic, symbolic, interactive, political dimensions of the social world, and their meaningfulness, or lack thereof; are all constructed by agentic human actors. These constructions are influenced by specific historical, geopolitical and cultural practices and discourses (...) so these constructions are multiple, contingent and contextual' (as indicated by Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:597). This statement suggests that the elements to be taken into consideration to explore the nature of a visitor's interpretation of an urban area for tourism and culture will not be few; but many factors influencing this interpretation take part in the process. This background confirms that conducting a study of this scope is challenging as many elements that ultimately determine the individual's construction of reality have to be taken into consideration.

6.2.5. The anti foundational position of social constructivism

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005:185) a constructivist research approach implies the 'production of reconstructed understandings of the social world (...) (and that) constructivists value traditional knowledge (and) connect action to praxis and build on anti foundational arguments while encouraging experimental and multi voiced text'. Because no general assumptions can be made about the nature of the experience and perception of Covent Garden in the view of its visitors' individual mechanisms of thought, it is important to adopt this non foundational approach that provides the flexible framework required to enquire individually and understand subjective realities. As noted before, these studies

need to be both experiential and pragmatic. Thus, a constructivist approach is appropriate for this study. In relation to this, Gill (2000) indicates that this perspective implies ‘a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge and scepticism towards the view that our observations of the world unproblematically yield its true nature to us’ (as cited by Bauer and Gaskell, 2000:173).

Jennings (2001) reviews the benefits of adopting the social constructivist approach because of its focus on the individual, indicating the need to recognise the subjective nature of an individual’s experiences and that ‘there are multiple explanations or realities to explain a phenomenon rather than one casual relationship or one theory’ (p. 38). Many preconceptions could be deemed as true in the case of Covent Garden. For example, that a famous Opera House has an undisputable influence on the area’s sense of place, that tourists visit the area for cultural motivations oriented to the performing arts, that visitors of the upper classes seek high culture whilst low income tourists shift towards the popular arts, and others. Nevertheless, and as noted before, these preconceptions are unhelpful to the production of new knowledge in the field of tourism. This is because they do not consider the intrinsic nature of a tourist’s construction of Covent Garden, as it is not good research practice to assume that an element of it will mean the same to all of its visitors, which relates to the notion of social construction of place. In addition, these foundational assumptions overlook the complex interactions between the different social actors that influence these processes of interpretation. Therefore, the adoption of this non foundational approach leads to findings that focus on the individual and have practical implications on the basis of the lessons learned.

Regarding the experiential nature of the social constructivist perspective, Flick (2006:79) proposes that ‘knowledge organises experiences, which first permit cognition of the world beyond the experiencing subject or organisms (and these) experiences are constructed and understood through the concepts and contexts, which are constructed by this subject (and) whether the picture that is formed in this way is true or correct cannot be determined’. This proposition points out that

adopting social constructivism as the epistemology to undertake this research provides enough flexibility to allow the visitors interviewed to develop their personal views on their perceptions and interpretations of Covent Garden as they see it, without assuming that one perception is right or wrong. The result will be the production of new knowledge that reflects reality as interpreted by the individual rather than by the preconceptions and assumptions which lead to generalisations that may prevent tourism research from novel findings.

6.2.6. Social constructivism in tourism research

Social constructivism in tourism research is addressed by Phillimore and Goodson (2004), who indicate that the future of social enquiry in this field should shift towards the personal socio cultural constructions of reality rather than the tangible and physical attributes of destinations. The authors (p. 39) affirm that ‘tourism spaces are not physically but socially constructed, it is important to consider how the meanings relating to those spaces are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed over time. Tourism is a complex phenomenon based on inter-relations and interactions, but the tendency in tourism research has been to focus on the tangible, and arguably the objective’. Adopting this approach constitutes a challenge for this study because it is indeed, intended to understand the impact of a cultural flagship upon the visitors’ perception of an area, suggesting that a focus on the tangible and physical would be recommended. However, according to the literature reviewed in this chapter, it is clear that relevant knowledge will not only be the result of understanding the building’s architecture, redevelopment programme or nature of the area’s offer for tourism. It will comprise a more complex network of elements that will focus on the perceiver rather than on what is perceived.

All these considerations suggest that a flexible data collection method is required to enable the individual to develop their views free of assumptions or preconceptions which would be imposed by the administration of questionnaires for example. Restricting the range of answers they can provide throughout the

data collection stage would limit the potential of this study to generate novel findings, which does not harmonise effectively with the subjective social constructivist approach adopted. Similarly, structured interviews would only allow them to answer questions based on assumptions suggested by the literature review, which would also impose a restriction on the potential of identifying emerging patterns of thought that were not suggested by the theoretical framework established. On the other hand and as indicated above, a dialectic and hermeneutic approach has been identified as suitable for this research because it would allow the individual to widely develop their views through the use of language. In this sense, alternative qualitative data collection methods such as photo elicitation would also entail restrictions to the generation of comprehensive data. These considerations suggest that semi-structured interviews are a suitable data collection method as discussed in the next sections of this chapter.

6.3. Method: Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews as a data collection method consists of verbal (dialectic) enquiry about a set of topics regarding the themes that the researcher wishes to explore (Veal, 2006). Unlike closed questionnaires, the topics to enquire about throughout the interview are concepts and ideas that the researcher translates into questions according to the particular circumstances under which the research process is carried through and the individual that is interviewed. In further sections, the proposed topic guide that translates the concepts reviewed in the theoretical framework into issues to explore in the interview will be presented. Veal (2006) also states that it is an appropriate method when the answers obtained from the interviewees are likely to vary significantly from one to another. This framework facilitates the customisation of the structure of the interview to gather rich and comprehensive data from each individual, which would result in an abundant input of information to interpret and structure the overall findings. According to Finn et al. (2000), this method would fall in the category of semi-structured interviews, where a range of topics are to be addressed, but enough flexibility is provided to allow the interviewee to further expand and develop their statements and points of view. The authors indicate that a disadvantage of the

method is that comparability of answers amongst respondents is more complex because the data obtained is heterogenic. Nevertheless, and considering the constructivist epistemology, the need of a strong focus on the individual taking fully in consideration their subjectivity confirms that semi-structured interviews are a suitable method to conduct this research. It is also important to note that Veal (2006:205) addresses qualitative research in tourism from an ethnographic point of view and indicates that ethnography 'seeks to see the world through the eyes of those being researched, allowing them to speak for themselves'. This indicates that this study has an ethnographic quality about because of the social constructivist approach adopted.

Marshall and Rossman (2006:101) quote Kahn and Cannell (1957) to conceptualise interviews as 'a conversation with a purpose'. The authors note that the flexible and informal nature of interviews facilitate thorough enquiry. As will be addressed further on and considering that the respondents will be tourists in the area, the informal and flexible nature of interviews will lead the researcher to capture wide ranging data. As indicated by Flick (2002), it is good research practice to undertake this type of research with a friendly and relaxed attitude. Marshall and Rossman (2006) also stress the emic perspective of interviews that allows the interviewee to develop their views according to their own interpretation of the topic, which is precisely the approach that these types of studies should adopt considering their constructivist nature. On the other hand, the authors also indicate that it is the researcher's challenge to keep the interviewing process casual, formal and comfortable but within a theoretical framework and conceptual grounds.

Robson (2002:271) also addresses the instances where semi-structured interviews are a suitable method for qualitative research and indicates that it is appropriate 'where a study focuses on the meaning of particular phenomena of the participants, where individual perceptions of processes within a social unit are to be studied prospectively, where individual historical accounts are required of how a particular phenomenon developed and where exploratory work is required

before a quantitative study can be carried out'. These four instances can be directly related to the overall aim and research questions of this research because the phenomenon of cultural tourism in Covent Garden intends to be explored from its experiential and perceptual perspectives, being the cultural tourists themselves the sources of information.

Connell and Lowe (1997:168) state that semi-structured interviews provide a flexible framework in which 'analytical interpretations and discoveries shape ongoing data collection'. As will be addressed further on, the data collection stage of this study requires such parallel process of gathering data and continuous and gradual construction of knowledge. This again holds a link with ethnographic research, as indicated by Finn et al. (2000:67) who note that 'an ethnographer is less likely to be narrow and restrictive in his/her approach to research (...) (he/she) will use a more flexible approach to the research process and focus on emergent themes or even alter the course of the research during the research process. For the ethnographer, the perspectives and interpretations of those being researched become the key to understanding human behaviour'. The authors highlight that ethnographic research implies the researcher submerging him or herself into the culture that is studied in order to understand the behaviour and perceptual processes of the individuals belonging to this culture. The researcher should pay high attention to detail and subtle signs of cultural meanings, and no pre conceptions influence the judgement of the individuals studied. A holistic approach is recommendable for ethnographic research as several layers of culture need to be cross analysed to understand it as a whole.

Atkinson and Hammersley (1998) evaluate this type of methodological approach and identify a series of features that characterise it (as cited by Flick 2002:147). The first feature is 'a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of a particular social phenomenon, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them'. This antagonistic position to positivism effectively harmonises with the constructivist epistemology determined as suitable for this study. The second feature is 'a tendency to work primarily with unstructured data, that is, data that have not been

coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytic categories'. As mentioned above, it is the researcher's task to weave together the key themes identified in the bulk of the data collected in order to construct the reality as it is perceived by the interviewee, which is a principle that links ethnography with the theoretical perspective and the epistemology adopted. Another feature of ethnography according to the authors is the 'analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations, with quantification and statistical analysis playing a subordinate role at most'. To understand the nature of the experience and perception of a cultural precinct, it has been determined that a qualitative approach that addresses the respondents as individuals is required. This approach recognises intrinsic values that lead them to the consumption and interpretation patterns that can be obtained through verbal discourse, confirming again that the interviews to be conducted hold a link with ethnographic research.

6.3.1. The challenges of semi-structured interviews

Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005:71) review the benefits of conducting semi-structured interviews in social research and indicate that they are 'an excellent way of discovering the subjective meanings and interpretations that people give to their experiences (...) (they) allow aspects of social life, such as social processes and negotiated interactions, to be studied that could not be studied in any other way (...) (they) allow new understandings and theories to be developed during the research process (and) work well with an inductive theoretical approach (and) are less influenced by the direct presence of their peers'. It is of particular interest to note that according to the authors, this method is compatible with the inductive and subjective approach that the social constructivist perspective suggests for this research. Despite these benefits, Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) also identify a series of limitations of the method, primarily concerned with the costs of the research process. The authors note that conducting interviews can be a costly method in terms of time and money. These concerns can be directly related to this study, which approached tourists and consumed their time in circumstances when

they intended to invest such time in leisure and relaxation. For this purpose, different forms of incentives needed to be provided, which is another cost identified by Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005), who state that financial costs can rise due to this matter. When the practicalities of the method are presented in forthcoming sections, incentives to cooperate with the interview in the form of gifts are evident as financial costs, along with the equipment used to record the interviews and the licensed required to use the qualitative data analysis software.

Finn et al. (2000) also discuss the advantages and disadvantages of conducting semi-structured interviews and indicate that a strength of the method is the flexible framework that at the same time can also be subject to comparability within answers and respondents. However, the authors note that the probing questions that are asked in order for the individual to further develop their ideas may introduce bias in their response and impair comparability of answers. It is very important to note that the lack of comparability between interviews has proved to be a limitation of this study as acknowledged in the conclusions and recommendations chapter. The interviews conducted differed considerably from one another depending on the interviewees' answers to the questions, which were further probed in different ways leading to a wide ranging set of interviews of heterogenic nature that limited the ability of comparing them. In further sections, the topic guide for this research will be presented, with the main questions and topics that were addressed, but probing questions were also asked in order for the interviewees to further develop their views which were adapted and tailored individually resulting in data that was not comparable amongst respondents. The authors make a further analysis of the introduction of bias throughout the interviewing process and indicate that this could be the result of the researcher's personal opinion, the misrepresentation of the interviewee's point of view during the data analysis process, the cultural background of either the interviewee or the interviewer and the induction of answers on behalf of the interviewer.

Finn at al. (2000) state that these potential disadvantages can affect the findings of the study, but can be addressed with appropriate training in interviewing

techniques to develop the researcher's enquiring skills. These skills were gathered theoretically throughout a series of seminars and training sessions that the researcher attended and put to practice throughout the pilot study stage as indicated in further sections. It is also important to make a distinction between bias and focus from the part of the researcher. Bryman (2004) highlights that semi-structured interviews are appropriate when the researcher has a clear focus on the research topic, overall aim and research questions of the study. This suggests that a clear theoretical framework will accomplish the opposite of introducing bias to the interview, but it will keep it focused and oriented towards the aim of research. This conceptual framework was established by the extensive literature review presented in previous chapters, which determined the theoretical approach that underpinned the research design. In relation to this, Kvale (1996) proposes that a researcher will face the interviewing process effectively when he is knowledgeable about the subject, structured in the way he conducts the interview, clear on his questions, gentle in his manner of approaching respondents, sensitive to what the interviewee states, open and flexible in regards to the questions to be asked, steering in his way of keeping the conversation focused, critical in order to discriminate what is important from what is not by remembering to avoid overstatements, and interpretive in the process of aiding the interviewee to clarify their views (as noted by Bryman, 2004).

In regards to ethnographic interviewing, Finn et al. (2000:75) affirm that 'to undertake a successful ethnographic interview, the researcher must establish a feeling of trust and rapport with the interviewee'. Creating this rapport may as well represent another challenge during the research process because given the wide ranging variety of visitors in the area; this is a cross cultural qualitative study that will include international tourists from heterogenic cultural backgrounds. Therefore, creating rapport may be a difficult task due to cultural issues. In response to this, it should be noted that the researcher has strengthened his skills in communicating with individuals of a large variety of cultural backgrounds through voluntary work as Resident Assistant at International Students House for

three consecutive academic years, providing student services to residents from all over the world.

On the other hand, Schostak (2006) also makes an account of the overall ethical implications of conducting semi-structured interviews and refers to as ethical protocols to the matters of anonymisation of the respondents, the confidential nature of the data obtained, negotiation of access to both the people and the places involved in the research process, the right to say no granted to the interviewees, the independence to report the data that is considered suitable from the researcher's point of view and finally, representation of a wide ranging set of individuals without favouring or leaning towards any particular groups of persons or opinions. In this sense, the interviewees were asked to read a consent form (included in Appendix A) that informed them of the study's overall aim, that they were free to refuse to answer any question at any time, that they were not obliged in any way to continue with the interview, that they could stop the interview at any time and the tape recordings would be erased in their presence, that recordings and transcripts would be anonymised and securely stored, and that nothing they say would be published in a form that makes it personally identifiable. The interviewees were asked to sign this form and fill some socio demographic information about themselves, such as country where they live, gender, occupation and age group, which generated useful statistical data in regards to the sample's socio demographic profile.

6.4. Interview design

Bryman (2004) notes that an advantage of conducting semi-structured interviews is the flexibility that it provides to the researcher in order to enquire about certain topics depending on the specific interviewees' case. However, it is also important to follow a general structure so that interviews are conducted in a way that collects data in a systematic manner. The author indicates that an effectively designed interview needs to structure the topics logically and within the frame of the research questions, and must use language that is comprehensible for the interviewee: This latter point is particularly important in this research that

recruited international tourists whose first language may not be English. Bryman (2004) proposes a categorisation of questions that has been used to design the interview and was taken into consideration when tailoring probes to allow interviewees to further develop their views. This framework includes the following types of questions:

- Introducing questions, when a topic is broadly introduced to the interview.
- Follow up questions and probing questions, which aim to encourage the interviewee to further develop a statement.
- Specifying questions, which will further develop details of a particular statement.
- Direct questions, which are the most likely to get either an affirmative or a negative answer when addressing a very specific topic.
- Indirect questions, which according to the author will get the interviewees' own point of view regarding direct questions.
- Structuring questions, which will allow the interview's topics to be connected and associated with each other appropriately.
- Interpreting questions, which will allow for clarification of statements.
- And finally, silence, which will suggest to the interviewee that the interviewer expects them to further elaborate a statement.

The topic guide was designed to explore the research questions and overall aim of this study concerning the tourist's motivation to visit the area, their experience and perception of the area, and the influence that the Royal Opera House has on these processes; informed by findings from the literature review. The interview was structured in three sections. The first enquired about their visit to London in order to determine what their overall purpose for visiting the city was and whether it was a first or repeat visit along with the types of activities they sought and the areas and attractions they visited. The second section enquired about Covent Garden. Similarly, it enquired whether it was a first time or repeat visit which led to useful data about perceptions of change in the area through the years. It also

enquired about potential preconceptions or expectations about it as suggested by the literature review and their motivation to visit it as indicated by the first research question. Their perception of place was assessed through enquiring about what they liked or disliked the most, how they would describe Covent Garden to someone who had never been there and whether it reminded them of any other areas they had visited, and if so, why. Their experience of place was explored by asking them what they had been doing in the area, which was often but not always linked to their primary motivation to visit. The third section of the interview enquired about the influence of the flagship on their perception and experience of place. The flexible nature of semi-structured interviews proved to be especially useful in this final section because some interviewees had heard about the building whereas others had not, so probe questions had to be tailored accordingly. Furthermore, over a third of the interviews were conducted inside the building which entailed awareness of its presence in the area. Its influence on their perception and experience of place was explored through questions related to how important they considered it to be and in what sense.

The topic guide and interview protocol are presented in Table 6.1 in the next page.

Table 6.3– Topic guide

1. Approach visitor and provide information about the researcher and aim of the research		
2. Explain matters related to recording device, use of data and privacy		
3. Attain consent		
4. Get signature on informed consent form		
5. Proceed with interview as follows:		
1. LONDON	2. COVENT GARDEN	3. ROYAL OPERA HOUSE
<p>Is this your first time in London?</p> <p>If no, do you think it has changed since you first came?</p> <p>For how long have you been here?</p> <p>What brings you to London?</p> <p>What kind of things have you been doing/sites have you been visiting?</p> <p>What have you enjoyed the most?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>What is your favourite area or attraction in London?</p> <p>What do you like about it?</p>	<p>Is this your first time in the area?</p> <p>For how long have you been here?</p> <p>What kind of things have you been doing or want to do in this area?</p> <p>Have you heard of it before?</p> <p>Is it how you were expecting it to be?</p> <p>Why did you have these expectations?</p> <p>What do you like the most about it?</p> <p>What do you dislike about it?</p> <p>Would you change anything about it?</p> <p>Did you find anything that surprised you or you were not expecting to find?</p> <p>Do you think this area is different from other areas in London?</p> <p>What makes it different?</p> <p>What caught your attention the most?</p> <p>How would you describe it to a friend who has never been here?</p> <p>Do you think it has a character of its own?</p> <p>What do you attribute this character to?</p> <p>Does this area remind you of any other areas you have seen in London or abroad?</p>	<p>Have you heard of the ROH before?</p> <p>Where did you hear from it?</p> <p>Was it a reason why you wanted to come to this area?</p> <p>Do you know where it's located?</p> <p>Have you seen it?</p> <p>What would you imagine a building called the ROH would look like?</p> <p>What do you like the most about it? (if known)</p> <p>What do you dislike about it?</p> <p>Would you change anything about it?</p> <p>Do you think it's an important element of this area?</p> <p>Why would you say this?</p> <p>Does it remind you of any other buildings you have seen in London or abroad?</p> <p>Do you think the area would be the same without it?</p> <p>If the ROH wasn't there, what do you think you would find on that site?</p> <p>Have you been inside the building?</p> <p>What would you expect to find inside?</p> <p>Would you say the place is famous?</p> <p>Why do you think it's famous?</p>
6. Thank the interviewee for their cooperation, end the interviewing process and provide them with incentives (Royal Opera House pencils, season programmes and In and Around Covent Garden magazine).		

6.5. Fieldwork design

In the following sections, the selection of interviewees, interviewing times and locations and other practicalities involved in the data collection stage are discussed followed by a review of the pilot test which ultimately underpinned the final fieldwork design.

6.5.1. Selection of interviewees

First time and repeat international and domestic tourists.

Rationale: The variety of backgrounds of cultural tourists in London suggests that both international and domestic tourists visiting the area of Covent Garden should be included in the study. The area attracts a variety of visitors that range from tourists responding to the UNWTO's (1995)² definition of such, to domestic visitors, Londoners that work in the area or visit it for shopping or other leisure activities and temporary migrants such as students that may not be classified as tourists but behave in touristic ways. This research has collected data from all these groups of visitors with the exception of individuals living within the Greater London area in order to keep the data within a tourism context. In relation to this, the inclusion of temporary migrants such as students is debatable considering that they may behave in touristic ways as noted above but they may also be studying in the country for a period of over 6 months, which should exclude them from participating in the study because under these circumstances they no longer belong to the tourists category by definition. They were included in the study regardless of this because it was considered that they could make useful contributions to the research considering their variety of backgrounds and willingness to participate as noted during the pilot test stage (addressed in further sections). However, the length of their stay in the country was not assessed in order to evaluate the suitability of recruiting them as interviewees, which constitutes a limitation of the study as acknowledged in the conclusions and recommendations chapter of this thesis.

² 'People who travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four (24) hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited'

The importance of cultural distance in experiencing the area (McKercher, 2002, see Chapter 2) indicates that both culturally proximate and distant individuals should be interviewed to evaluate how this distance affects their perception and experience of place. London is characterised by a high proportion of repeat international visitors, whose perceptions and experience may differ from first time visitors (see for example Maitland (2008), so both groups were also recruited as interviewees. In relation to this, however, that qualitative studies are subject to language considerations that restrict those who can participate as providers of data. In this case, only tourists with a suitable level of spoken English can be included. However, since the researcher is bilingual, Spanish speaking tourists were also recruited. In further sections, an analytical discussion will be presented in order to provide a clear focus and systematic approach to the difficulties of cross cultural qualitative research and how the researcher approached these challenges.

A total of 306 visitors were recruited to participate in the interview throughout different locations of the area as specified in further sections to ensure that wide ranging data from a representative group of tourists in the area was captured. This approach can be linked to the concept of convenience sampling because the recruitment of these interviewees depended on how suitable the interviewing locations were and their willingness to participate in the study. Covent Garden is a popular area that is visited by a large number of tourists every day, which allowed the researcher to conduct a large number of interviews throughout the spring and summer months of 2009, until it was clear that no new data was emerging from the interviews and that the schedule determined for the research suggested that it was time to draw the data collection stage to an end and begin the transcription process, which was lengthy given the high number of interviews. It is also important to note that depending on the interviewees' fluency in the English language and the depth of the data they provided, the interviews varied in length considerably as well. As noted in previous sections, a limitation of conducting semi-structured interviews is that comparability between data is not always feasible. This was heavily noted throughout the data collection stage of this study

considering that some interviewees were willing to converse at length, leading to substantial information in interviews that lasted up to 10 to 15 minutes. Other interviewees were less willing to develop their views and perceptions of the area and the flagship, which is also reflected in the short length of the interview and in the fact that only a limited number of interviews were quotable in the next chapter. The probing questions that were asked differed considerably, therefore, lack of comparability between interviews emerged as an issue of consideration as indicated in the critical appraisal of the method in the conclusions and recommendations chapter.

6.5.2. Time of interview

Throughout the day, all days of the week.

Rationale: Through direct observation, it was noted that visitor numbers tend to increase from the morning, through the afternoon and into the evening. Covent Garden has a vibrant night time economy and performances in theatres surrounding the area mostly start between 7 and 8pm. This suggested that recruitment of potential respondents would be higher in the afternoon and evening hours. Visitation is also higher during weekends, potentially increasing recruitment rates. However, tourists visiting the area in the morning and during weekdays were also interviewed to gather a wide ranging set of views throughout different days of the day and the week.

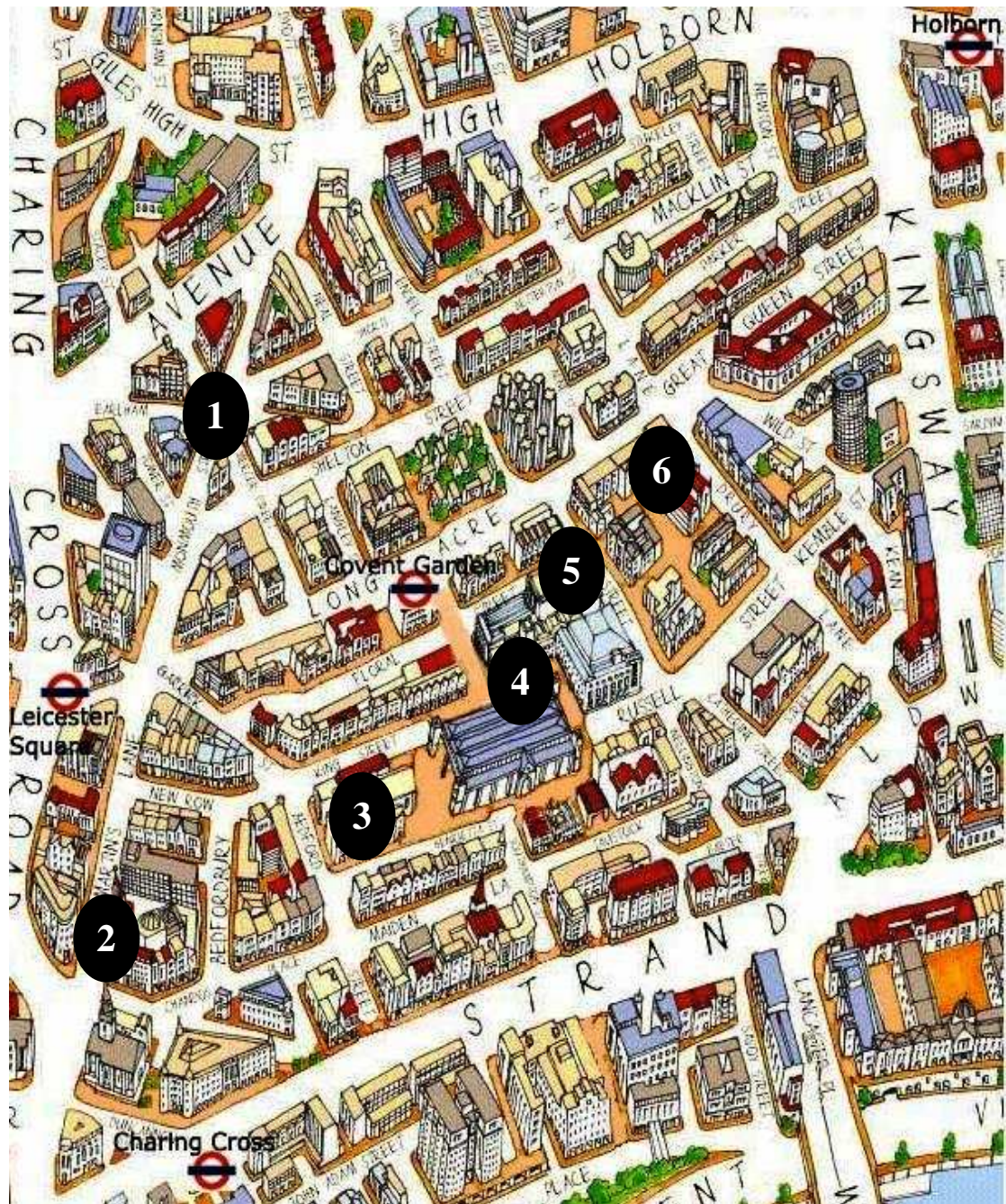
6.5.3. Interviewing locations

Throughout a variety of locations in Covent Garden.

Rationale: A variety of interviewing locations were selected in order to gather an appropriate range of views provided by a suitable range of visitors. Recruitment was higher in the mainstream Piazza surrounding the market because of its variety of leisure opportunities and concentration of attractions. However, Covent Garden's peripheral locations are also visited by tourists that informed this research with contrasting views of the area as a whole and of these tangential locations. The interviewing locations were also determined by the facilities available to collect the data in a way that was comfortable and suitable for both

researcher and interviewees, places where tourists could sit down and talk at length, without interruption. The chosen interviewing locations are shown in Figure 6.1 below with a brief rationale for their choice which was also a result of the pilot test as indicated in further sections.

Figure 6.1 – Map of the area and interviewing locations



© In and Around Covent Garden

1. Seven Dials Road Junction: This is the convergent point of seven streets in the North West area of Covent Garden and its central monument is a popular resting area for tourists where recruitment proved to be successful due to the relaxed and social nature of the site.
2. St Martin's Lane: This peripheral site is of interest because it is likely to be frequented by tourists entering or leaving Covent Garden to other nearby areas and attractions such as Trafalgar Square or the National Gallery. Their reasons for entering the area or leaving it for other places offered insights regarding their tourist experience in London and perception of Covent Garden.
3. St Paul's Church: Located on the West side of Covent Garden's Piazza, it is a popular sightseeing spot for tourists, not only because of the tranquillity of its back garden but for its resting facilities (toilets and bench seats) which allowed for successful recruitment.
4. Throughout the Piazza: as indicated in previous chapters, the Opera House has a subtle physical presence when viewed from the Piazza, which is a high profile location due to its closeness to the tube station which makes it an entry point to the area and the concentration of leisure opportunities such as street entertainment, shopping, eating, drinking and relaxing around the market place. Recruitment was also successful.
5. Inside the Royal Opera House: since the aim of this study is to explore the flagship's influence on the area's visitors' perception and experience of place, it was vital to interview the Opera House's visitors, which was most effectively done within the building. Written consent to conduct these interviews was obtained from the House Manager (see Appendix B), who provided the researcher with an interviewing desk where tourists visiting the building for its eating and drinking facilities, exhibition, box office and shop were recruited.
6. Broad Court: Located directly opposite the Royal Opera House's front façade, tourists use this location to rest around its famous ballerina statue where recruitment was successful.

6.5.4. Pilot test

In order to evaluate the feasibility of conducting the study as tentatively determined by the initial research design, a pilot test was conducted throughout the first two weeks of February in 2009. It was overwhelmingly affected by unfavourable weather conditions. The very few tourists that were spotted wandering in the area complained about the weather and in a case interrupted the interview because of being cold and the recording was inaudible because of the wind. In subsequent days, the weather improved but the amounts of ice on the floor not only made street interviewing uncomfortable but also dangerous. It was expected that as the weather improved in the spring and summer months, recruitment would be more successful, which was the case.

The pilot test revealed that younger visitors were more likely to participate in the interview as older tourists seemed to be less willing to be interviewed, perhaps because the researcher wore a University ID card and a clipboard with the informed consent forms, coming across as a charity worker. Cultural distance also emerged as an issue of consideration as only one Asian visitor agreed to be interviewed. On the other hand, it was also noted that tourists approached in the Spanish language seemed to be more interested in participating. These issues were taken in consideration in subsequent stages of data collection as the researcher endeavoured to recruit a balanced mix of interviewees.

Another consideration resulting from the pilot test regarding cultural distance was that the researcher needed to evaluate carefully the tourist's proficiency in the English language, as some interviews lacked substance due to insufficient language skills by the interviewee. This was a difficult task because in some cases tourists were approached and agreed to take part in the research but it wasn't until the interview started that their low level of English language skills was evident. Therefore, a casual chat to evaluate the potential interviewees' proficiency in the language was included as part of the research protocol. Nevertheless, and as acknowledged in the limitation of the study section of the conclusions and recommendations chapter, a large proportion of interviews did not yield rich data

because of the interviewees' inability or unwillingness to develop their views in length.

According to the University of Westminster's Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Investigations, Demonstrations, Research and Experiments (2010); attaining written informed consent from the participants may not be necessary in certain Class 1 types of work (p.6). Throughout the first two interviewing sessions, the researcher obtained the participant's written consent by getting them to sign the form; but observed that some were intimidated by this as they did not want give any personal details like their last names, cities where they live or signatures. Considering this, it was determined that by participating in the interview, the interviewee automatically granted the researcher their consent to do so, and the consent form was filled for socio demographic monitoring purposes only.

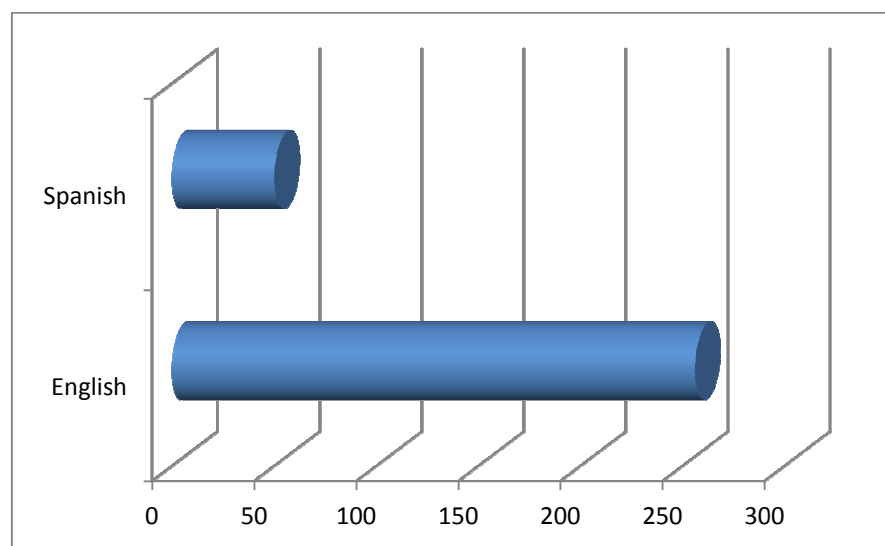
The low quality of some of the interviews conducted in the pilot test stage could be attributed to unfavourable climate conditions, but also to the experimental nature of the pilot testing stage. As the data collection stage progressed the researcher's interviewing skills and confidence improved along with the weather and it was recommended that the volume of interviews was considerably increased by two or three times per day rather than the 17 that were attained for the pilot study, leading to a total of 306 interviewees in total exclusive of the pilot test. The offer of gifts as incentives to take part in the research proved to be an effective strategy to engage older interviewees also resulted from the pilot test stage along with the inclusion of memos documenting the most relevant parts of the interview as specified in the data analysis section below. Finally, the interviews conducted during the pilot test stage suggested a series of probing questions that were later applied in the data collection stage of this research.

6.6. Language considerations: Cross cultural qualitative research

As mentioned above, both English and Spanish speaking tourists were recruited to take part in this study considering that the researcher is fluent in both languages.

Nevertheless, it was noted that interviews conducted in a different language are subject to translation and interpretation issues that should be carefully assessed in order to preserve the legitimacy of the data obtained. It is indeed an interesting observation that very scarce literature exists on this subject applied to tourism research, which is perhaps one of the fields that requires a very strong conceptual framework on this matter the most. For this study, 50 Spanish speaking tourists were recruited to participate in the interview, representing 16% of the sample; whereas a much higher 84% of the sample (256 interviewees) were interviewed in English as graphically represented in Figure 6.2 below:

Figure 6.2 - Distribution of interviews conducted in English and in Spanish



There is a significant difference between the numbers of interviews conducted in English and in Spanish, with the former being much higher than the latter. However, it has been determined that considering issues in cross cultural qualitative studies would strengthen the discussion of the methodological approach adopted for this study. As noted throughout the pilot test stage of the study, Spanish speaking tourists seemed to be more willing to be interviewed and cooperative throughout this process, which urged the researcher to capture data that was representative of the visitors in the area resulting in him avoiding interviews conducted in Spanish at certain times. This can be related to the fact

that Spain and South America only constitute two of the other continents to be considered to attain a representative sample, being the rest of the interviews conducted with tourists from other parts of the world in the English language.

As indicated above, language considerations have been under researched in tourism studies, and although the number of interviews conducted in Spanish only amount to 16% of the sample, it is important to determine a suitable and informed approach to interviews conducted in a different language than the one the research is being written in. Therefore, the following sections present a detailed account of issues and concerns that arise as a product of conducting cross cultural qualitative enquiry in order to ensure the validity of the data obtained throughout this research's fieldwork considering the multicultural background of the interviewees. In brief, these issues are mostly related to:

- Translation problems (Edwards, 2008 in Squires, 2008): when the intervention of translators affect the trustworthiness of the data.
- Contextualisation (Squires, 2008; Lopez et al., 2008): when the interviewee fails to understand the context of the concepts that are being covered by the researcher.
- Alteration of meaning (Lopez et al., 2008): when the translation process disregards specific meanings of terms that may vary greatly from one culture to another regardless of them being used in conversations held in the same language.
- Regional variations in use of language (Lopez et al., 2008): when the researcher fails to identify the implications of the data obtained because of either the differences mentioned in the former point or because of heavy accents that may confuse the researcher.
- Creating rapport between the researcher and the interviewees. Due to cultural differences, the manner in which the researcher approaches and addresses the interviewee could possibly result in intimidation for the latter.

It is interesting to note that contextualisation, alteration of meaning, regional variation in use of language and creating rapport between the researcher and the interviewees are all issues that might also be present when conducting interviews in English when this is not the interviewee's native language (native German or French speakers for example). This suggests that it is not good research practice to assume that interviews conducted in English are not subject to cross cultural considerations and that the only division that can be made between the nature of the data collected in terms of language refers to differences between English and Spanish alone, given the multicultural background of the sample. Therefore, the material presented in forthcoming sections is also useful for the study in terms of how to collect and handle data that is subject to cross cultural considerations.

The challenge of what has been referred to as cross cultural studies in academic literature relates to the conversion of meanings from one language to another. Lopez et al. (2008:1729) define these studies as an 'attempt to understand how individuals from various cultures or backgrounds perceive their situations and act in their own worlds within their own cultural context'. This definition confirms the need to include these cross cultural considerations in tourism research as it is concerned with the understanding of people's behaviour, perceptions and experiences outside their normal place of residence under the influence of their own cultural background. Supporting this concern is that researchers often fail to recognise this issue as an important limitation of their studies (Lopez et al., 2008).

In relation to this, Squires (2008:2) indicates that 'language barriers between interviewers and participants present significant methodological challenges for researchers undertaking cross language qualitative studies'. On the basis of this statement, the author makes an overview of language considerations in qualitative research aiming to make relevant methodological recommendations in order to reduce data distortion to a minimum in the translation process. The author indicates that the ongoing forces of globalisation strengthen the need to include these issues in social research. Although his study is undertaken within a health and nursing context, his findings are transferable to tourism research because as

the author highlights, the level of data distortion mentioned above can be measured according to a set of ‘trustworthiness’ standards. As indicated by Edwards (2008), ‘inconsistent or inappropriate use of translators or interpreters can threaten the trustworthiness of cross language qualitative research and subsequently, the applicability of the translated findings on participant populations’ (cited by Squires, 2008:2). This statement implies that the intervention of third parties to mediate between the researcher and the interviewee constitute a critical element to focus in order to minimise data distortion, or trustworthiness as mentioned by the latter author. In this sense, the present study did not make use of any mediators between the interviewees and the interviewer to either translate or interpret the data obtained, as the researcher is fluent in both languages considered as valid to conduct the interviews.

In order to systematically tackle with the methodological challenges that cross-language qualitative studies represent, Squires (2008) proposes that there are four key strategies to be observed should the quality and richness of the data processed in a foreign language is to be preserved throughout the translation process. The first of these key points is conceptual equivalence, which according to Jandt (2003) means that ‘a translator provides a technically and conceptually accurate translated communication of a concept spoken by the study’s participant (...) when a poor translation occurs, the researcher may lose the conceptual equivalence of or find the meanings of the participants’ words altered because of how the translator performed the translation’ (as cited by Squires, 2008:2). Conceptual equivalence was not a problem faced by this study as the researcher was able to understand the interviewees’ statements in both Spanish and English regardless of heavy accents that made the transcription process arduous but not compromising the integrity of the data obtained. On the other hand, the author observes that often the best possible wording or phrasing of thoughts and impressions of the interviewees cannot be fully translated without altering their meaning because there are no equivalent words or phrases in the target language to entirely express the original concept. In these situations, the author (p. 3) affirms that ‘providing a conceptually accurate translation involves translating the

concept conveyed in the sentence, the incorporation of subject matter knowledge, and the integration of their local context knowledge into the translation process'. This statement suggests that whilst literal translation of words or phrases may not be possible, accurate contextualisation is a valid means to overcome this difficulty. And that this contextualisation can be attained by an ample understanding of the research area, which has been attained for this study by an extensive literature review of a variety of topics related to this research area and case study (Chapters 2 to 5).

The second key element in these series of standards for accurate cross language qualitative research is the observation of the translator and interpreter's credentials. According to Squires (1998), both credentials and experience of the mediators between the researcher and the interviewee can have an influence that will manifest itself heavily throughout the coding phase of the research and the recognition of emerging themes, threatening the reliability of the study. Squires (2008:3) suggests that a reliable translator can be identified when they 'demonstrate the ability to communicate between languages using complex sentence structures, a high level of vocabulary and the ability to describe concepts or words when they do not know the actual word or phrase'. Considering that the researcher has completed primary, secondary and higher education degrees in Spanish followed by postgraduate studies in English; it can be implied that he responds to this profile, resulting in accurate translations of the data obtained.

The third element to consider is the role of the translator or interpreter during the research process. The author indicates that it is of paramount importance that the mediator between researcher and subject of research understands and agrees with the theoretical and methodological approach adopted. Should this not be the case, the nature of the data obtained will be negatively influenced, as this mediator not only acts as a connecting point between researcher and interviewee but in some way, they also act as a producer of data. In relation to this, the researcher himself will undertake this role, safeguarding the adoption of one single methodological and conceptual research approach.

The final elements on this set of considerations in cross language research are issues related to qualitative approaches. Squires (2008) suggests that data obtained in different languages should be handled with particular care as minor details, namely subtle remarks or regional slang may convey the concepts that the researcher needs to identify but can be easily lost in the translation process. As with the other key elements reviewed above, the researcher's expertise in the Spanish tongue suggests that the data obtained will be translated meticulously and constantly observing the preservation and unveiling of hidden meanings; which again constitutes a strength of this study. Squires (2008:9) concludes that 'researchers can improve the trustworthiness of their study by paying close attention to how they describe the identity and role of translators and researchers in the study'. Therefore, because the same person will be undertaking this role, it is assumed that the translation process from Spanish to English will not distort the data obtained but will benefit the study as the cultural background of the sample will be broadened by including Spanish speaking tourists.

All these considerations link to the investigation undertaken by Lopez et al. (2008:1729), who state that 'cross cultural qualitative studies conducted in languages other than the investigator's primary language are rare and especially challenging because of the belief that meaning – which is the heart of qualitative analysis- cannot be sufficiently ascribed by an investigator whose primary language differs from the study's participants'. This suggests that because the researcher's primary language is Spanish, including Spanish speaking tourists in this research will not only result in broader cultural representation of respondents but also guarantees high fidelity in data interpretation. And more interestingly, the data collection stage has generated a series of valuable findings related to cultural distance, which were consistently gathered through interviews conducted in Spanish and translated without losing their meaning. Furthermore, this conceptual framework in terms of cross cultural studies have also provided the researcher with an awareness that interviews conducted in English are also subject to language considerations when this is not the interviewee's native language.

6.7. Data analysis

Denscombe (2007:247), referring to qualitative data, proposes that ‘the process of analysis involves the search for things that lie behind the surface content of the data –core elements that explain what the thing is and how it works. The researcher’s task is to probe the data in a way that helps to identify the crucial components that can be used to explain the nature of the thing being studied, with the aim of arriving at some general principles that can be applied elsewhere to other situations’. The author argues that the task of collecting the data, as demanding and time consuming as it may be, is actually the process of informing the research with enough material that has the potential of giving an answer to the research questions and overall aim of the study. However, once this is accomplished, the researcher’s challenge consists of interpreting such information in a comprehensive, exploratory and thoroughly inquisitive manner; so that no potential finding is overlooked. In relation to analysing and interpreting data in qualitative studies, the author (2007) indicates that qualitative research tends to focus on words and/or visual images as the subjects of evaluation and has suitable applicability to small scale studies implying involvement on behalf of the researcher who responds to a research design and adopts a holistic perspective.

Out of all these notions, the latter two are of particular interest. The concept of holism suggests that a body of knowledge is better explored and understood when all of its constituting elements are taken into account as a whole rather than focusing on just one or the sum of its individual elements. In this sense, a particular phenomenon can be studied more thoroughly when the interaction and relationship between its elements is taken into account. On the other hand, Denscombe (2007) also indicates that interpreting data in qualitative studies tends to engage the researcher more personally, to whom he refers as the ‘crucial measurement device’, indicating that ‘the researcher’s self (their social background, values, identity and belief) will have a significant bearing on the nature of the data collected and the interpretations of the data’ (p.250). This imposes a challenge for the researcher, consisting of maintaining a balance

between the indicated personal background and the framework, theoretical and methodological, adopted for the study.

The author (2007) also suggests that four basic principles should be taken into consideration when analysing qualitative data. These are:

- That the findings drawn leading to any conclusions or recommendations of the research should always be evidence based, and directly linked to the data collected to support their validity. All findings presented in the next chapter stemmed from the interviews themselves and are supported by excerpts from the interviews to validate them.
- That an exhaustive and thorough reading should be given to the data before it is explained, to ensure a correct understanding of the nature of such information. This principle can be related to the transcribing process of the interviews, which provided the researcher with an initial overview of the nature of the data obtained before the analysis was made.
- That the researcher should at all times refrain from allowing preconceptions, presumptions or any other extraneous interpretive elements into the process of analysing the data to ensure that the findings are not biased. The researcher has endeavoured to avoid any bias throughout the data analysis stage through an exhaustive exploration of the social constructivist approach adopted for the study.
- That an iterative approach should be adopted throughout the course of interpreting the information, where the researcher refers back to the data along the process of formulating theories or concepts. As indicated above, the findings presented in the next chapter are supported by evidence directly extracted from the bulk of the interviews, which illustrates the iterative nature of this process.

Following Denscombe's (2007) approach to the process of analysing qualitative data, this study has followed the steps presented below throughout the data analysis stage:

1. **Data preparation:** Once the data has been collected, it is important to suitably organise it to allow the researcher to access it easily and work with it in a structured manner. Firstly, making backup copies of all gathered materials is important due to irreplaceable nature of this type of information. Secondly, the data should be standardised and gathered in a consistent format. Thirdly, the data preparation stage should allow the researcher to take preliminary notes and comments that might be useful for subsequent analytical stages. And finally, a serial number should be assigned to each unit of information to allow for its organised storage and future access. Under these guidelines, the data preparation stage was conducted for this study as follows: backup copies of the recorded interviews in mp3 format were stored both online and on CD-ROM. The standardisation of the data consisted of the transcription of these audio files resulting from the interviews in one single format; they were also stored electronically and printed in paper. Both electronic and hard copies allowed for the researcher to make notes, highlight paragraphs and produce memos as the analysis process developed as indicated in further sections. Finally, each interview and informed consent form with the interviewee's socio demographic data was assigned a code denoting the day the interview was conducted and the interviewing location; which ensured that any given interview could be identified and located easily from the files database.
2. **Data familiarisation:** This stage consists of the process of reading and re-reading the data collected. Denscombe (2007) recommends a parallel process of cross referencing this data with field notes taken throughout the data collection stage, which is helpful to understand what is being read 'in context' and to relate this information with the researcher's thoughts and ideas as the data collection stage progressed. He also argues that the re-reading process should not be a mechanical task but also a quest for unveiling what is 'between the lines' and uncover hidden meanings or subtle messages that may not be apparent from superficial readings of the text. This research has ensured familiarisation with the data through the

transcription process of all 306 interviews; which was a lengthy and demanding task that helped the researcher to familiarise himself with the nature of the data collected and allowed for a preliminary process of cross analysis with field notes taken throughout the fieldwork phase as indicated in forthcoming sections. However, it should be noted that the interviews were thoroughly reviewed after transcription to allow for an analysis.

3. Data interpretation: This stage will be addressed in the section corresponding to the approach adopted for the analytical stage of the data below.
4. Data verification: Denscombe (2007) emphasises the importance of making the researcher's work 'believable', so it is imperative to seek ways to demonstrate that the findings of the study are valid and accountable. For this purpose, the author proposes four bases of verification:
 - Validity, which refers to the precision and accuracy of the information that is being taken as primary source of data for the research. This can be accomplished by triangulating (referring to other sources of information to corroborate the primary) or by validating the information by referring to the original source. In this research, the findings are supported by extracts stemmed from the original source (the interviews themselves) to validate what is said in the next chapter.
 - Reliability, which evaluates the extent to which the researcher's involvement may have affected the nature of the findings, and whether these findings would have been the same if the study had been conducted by someone else. It is suggested that an audit trail consisting of a detailed account of how the research process was conducted informing the examiner of all decisions made and what led to such research design strengthens the reliability of the study. The present chapter aims to serve as an audit trail for this purpose, as it covers issues related to the methodological approach adopted, the method chosen, the research and fieldwork design and how the data has been analysed.

- Generalisability, which questions the broader applicability of the findings. The author suggests that this issue can be addressed by clearly defining the limitations of the study and evaluating the scope for further research, which are issues addressed in the conclusions and recommendations chapter of this thesis.
 - Objectivity, concerned with the extent to which the researcher's values and beliefs influence the process of interpreting the data. The author recommends that the researcher's personal values and background should either be put aside in the data analysis process, or they should be acknowledged as playing a role in this stage. This work adopts the former approach as the researcher adheres to the conceptual framework established by the literature review to prevent his beliefs and values from affecting the analysis of the qualitative data that has been gathered to answer the research questions.
5. Data representation: As discussed above, the use of interview extracts is the way in which qualitative data of this nature is effectively represented as they constitute the evidence base of the findings made. This is the approach adopted in the following chapter that presents the evidence analysis supported by direct quotations from the interviewees either in the chapter itself or included as appendices. The way in which the data has been analysed leading to these findings is discussed below.

6.7.1. Approach to data analysis

Hall and Hall (2004:150) point out that 'qualitative research is about understanding the world of the subjects, listening to their voices, and allowing those voices to be heard in the analysis and the report. This means that the researcher will want to analyse the information in terms of the ideas, concepts and words used by their subjects, rather than, or as well as, those the researcher thinks are important'. In this sense, it is important to note that although the research design has been underpinned by the issues highlighted by the literature review as topics of interest for the research area, the main focus should be on what the

interviewees have said and the potential of identifying emerging patterns of thought. The authors also indicate that in order to ensure valid representation of the data, it is necessary to use direct quotations from the interviewees to illustrate the concepts that are being developed as a result of the data collection. This is the approach taken to present the findings in the next chapter.

Hall and Hall (2004) also agree with Denscombe (2006) in that the researcher's tasks after collecting the data are to organise it in a manner that is suitable for analysis via transcription of the interviews ensuring that these are accurate and consistent. They must then code this information and categorise the codes, which entails identifying patterns of social thought and categorising those themes that are recurring in the body of information being analysed. This process, referred to by Babbie (2004) as 'content analysis' is conceptualised as 'the process of transforming raw data into a standardised form. In content analysis, communications – oral, written or other - are coded or classified according to some conceptual framework' (p. 318). Babbie (2004) also makes a distinction between coding of manifest content, where word counting and the surface aspects of the data collected are being analysed; or latent content, which involves a deeper analysis where hidden and underlying concepts are sought. This study has adopted a latent content approach as it focused and is concerned with a deep understanding of the interviewees' views through the analysis of the interviews' transcriptions.

Phelps et al. (2007) argue that the approach given to qualitative data analysis will derive from the epistemological and methodological positions adopted. In this case, the social constructivist approach suggests a strong focus on the individual, and indicates that whilst content analysis may provide useful guidelines to analyse the data, a theory-building approach is also helpful for this purpose. This approach 'allows the researcher to seek connections within the data and aim to arrive at theories to explain the connections (...) analysis will involve determining whether the data possess discernable structures or whether links exist between/among categories, with the purpose of making propositional statements or assertions regarding the underlying principles' (p.209). The theoretical framework of this research focuses on three fundamental elements, which are the tourist, the area,

and the flagship. In this sense, it is important to provide an understanding of how these three elements relate to one another and to identify the links between them to understand how the flagship building affects the perception and experience of place in Covent Garden in the tourist's view. Therefore, the exploration of these links can benefit from the adoption of certain elements of the theory-building approach as suggested by Phelps et al. (2007). The authors postulate four basic steps to adopt this approach which were applied throughout the data analysis stage of this study:

1. Identifying themes, patterns and/or 'hidden' meanings in the transcripts (latent content). This was done through an exhaustive reading of the interviews that led the researcher to identify these patterns in terms of what affects the perception and experience of the area as presented in the next chapter.
2. Annotating thoughts about the meaning of what was said. Although extensive field notes were taken throughout the data collection stage, these were also generated as the process indicated above developed.
3. Extracting relevant pieces of text that represent what is being postulated (meaningful units). These pieces are the ones used to illustrate the findings.
4. Adding the extract to wider categories using the coding and categorising scheme, as noted by Denscombe's (2006) in relation to content analysis. The themes identified were assigned to wider categories related to the interviewees' motivation to visit the area, their perception and experience of place, and how the flagship influences this processes; which is evident in the structure followed in the evidence analysis chapter.

The last step of this scheme suggests that there is a resemblance between both content analysis and the theory-building approach. Therefore, they both make a useful contribution to this study by providing guidelines related to the analysis of extensive qualitative data.

Finally, and considering the wide range of approaches than can be adopted in the task of analysing qualitative data, Bryman (2007) proposes the notion of narrative analysis, which according to the author (p.412) ‘is a term that covers quite a wide variety of approaches that are concerned with the search for and analysis of the stories that people employ to understand their lives and the world around them and (...) people’s sense of their place within events and state of affairs, the stories they generate about them and the significance of context for the unfolding of events and people’s sense of their role within them’. This approach is compatible with the epistemological stance of social constructivism as it gives a clear emphasis on the individual and their account of how reality is constructed by them. Similarly, Bryman (2007) refers to Riessman (2004), who identifies thematic analysis as one of the models entailed by narrative analysis. This model focuses on ‘what is said rather than how it is said’ and the identification of emerging themes throughout the data, which is the approach this investigation adopted as suggested by most of the positions reviewed above. The identification of emerging themes and coding is a key aspect of qualitative data analysis as agreed by all these approaches, and because these codes provide the themes that will be the subject of analysis in the findings chapter of this research, it is also appropriate to include thematic analysis as a position considered in the process of analysing the interviews.

6.7.2. Coding as an essential task

An interesting observation of these instances is the importance assigned to the task of coding the data, referred to by Bryman (2004:408) as ‘the starting point for most forms of qualitative data analysis’, ‘the key process in the analysis of qualitative social research’ (Babbie, 2004:376) and as ‘an integral part of the analysis, involving sifting through the data, making sense of it and categorising it in various ways’ (Darlington and Scott, 2002:145). The latter two authors highlight that coding essentially consists of finding patterns of social thought amongst a body of qualitative data. Likewise, Miles and Huberman (1994:56) define codes as ‘tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to

chunks of varying sizes –words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting. They can take the form of a straightforward category label or a more complex one’. (as cited by Jennings, 2001:198). Arksey and Knight (1999) argue that the process of meaning assignment to qualitative data is the result of the combination of the frameworks provided by the researcher’s own self, the research design, the conceptual grounds established by the literature review and the data obtained itself. The authors also stress the strong presence of coding in the approach known as grounded theory, and agree that it consists of identifying similar ways of thinking made evident by the data collected, and grouping such patterns in similar categories supported by quotations in form of extracts taken from the interviews themselves. This approach was applied throughout the coding stage of the data collected, but unlike the guidelines provided by grounded theory, an extensive literature review was conducted before the data collection stage.

Bryman (2004) formulates a series of directives that were adopted in the task of coding the interviews. These are:

- Doing it as soon as the data collection process concluded and complementing it with fieldwork observations and annotations,
- Doing it reiteratively and allowing the researcher to go back to texts already coded in search of new themes, introducing more theoretical content in the conceptual framework as the coding process may reveal new topics of consideration, and
- Separating the tasks of coding and analysing as the former should be done first.

In a more broad sense, Robson (2002:457) refers to Tesch (1990) and argues that ‘qualitative researchers are concerned with the characteristics of language, the discovery of regularities, and the comprehension of the meaning of text or action and reflection’. That has been the approach adopted to analyse the data collected. The authors also highlight Miles and Huberman’s (1994) notions about coding and suggest a set of common features of qualitative data analysis, proposing a list

of actions entailed in the analysis of qualitative data, or what they describe as ‘analytic moves’. These have been applied to analyse the data collected as follows:

- Assign codes to the information.
- Produce what other authors refer to as ‘memos’, which are reflections and observations made by the researcher throughout the fieldwork.
- Review the data, searching for common themes and patterns of thought.
- Elaborate theories and concepts based on the consistencies found throughout the data.
- Link such consistencies with the theoretical framework established before the data collection stage.

The task of coding is widely addressed by existing literature related to grounded theory. Whilst such theory is not regarded as entirely suitable for this investigation given that a review of secondary material preceded the data collection stage, it provided useful guidelines for the task of coding this data. Robson (2002:493) maintains that the aim of grounded theory analysis is ‘to find conceptual categories in the data, to find relationships between these categories, and to conceptualise and account for these relationships through finding core categories’. This suggests that the approach to coding that was applied in the data analysis stage of this study incorporated elements of grounded theory. On the other hand, Hall and Hall (2004) relate the task of coding to other approaches, such as that of thematic and narrative analysis, confirming the suitability of adopting useful elements of different approaches of qualitative data analysis for the optimal interpretation of the data obtained for this study. Because, as the authors (p.155) point out, ‘codes (are) used to identify themes mentioned by the interviewee that seem to the researcher to be interesting, significant and indicative of the meanings of the situation held by the subject’. This suggests that the task of coding provides an appropriate balance between what is said by the interviewee and the researcher’s interpretations, which has been informed by an extensive literature review of the topics explored. The task of coding was done through

computerised qualitative data analysis software (QSR N*Vivo), and a detailed account of how this was done is specified in the corresponding section below.

6.7.3. Field notes as complementary sources of data

As noted before, the data analysis stage has also relied on field notes generated throughout the data collection stage. Jennings (2001:198) indicates that ‘memos serve to assist the researcher throughout the analysis phase. Memos can record an observation, a reflection or a comment to pursue a new direction of question or data collection/analysis. Memos can also record a ‘eureka’ discovery –an unexpected finding or concept arising during field and analytical work’. This indicates that as the data collection stage progressed, it was helpful for the researcher to record thoughts and reflections on what was found. These memos were generated throughout the fieldwork stage. Bryman (2004) recommends generating memos in view of the frailty of human memory which could lead to the dismissal of useful thoughts resulting from the fieldwork as a result of not recording them. The author makes a distinction between mental notes, jotted notes and full field notes, according to how appropriate it is for the researcher to generate them throughout the interview. However, as noted by the author, human memory cannot always be relied on. In this sense, this research has dismissed the first category of memos, and because of the unobtrusive nature of the research, full field notes have been generated freely but once the interviews were conducted and the interviewees were debriefed. Adding further depth to the type of field notes to be taken, Babbie (2004) refers to Strauss and Corbin (1990) and identifies more categories, suggesting that they can be code notes, when the codes are being identified as the data is being collected; theoretical notes when they are observations related to the conceptual framework established before collecting the data; or operational notes, when they observe issues related to the method or the approach adopted. The field notes generated for this study respond to all three categories as they focused on issues related to the theoretical framework, what the interviewees said and the methodological approach. Additionally, Babbie (2004) also proposes that these field notes can also be elemental memos when they inform very broadly of the topic that is being investigated, sorting memos when

they suggest patterns of thought identified and may help in the task of creating categories and associations between codes, or integrating memos which provide a logical association between the latter two. The memos generated also respond to these three categories as they focused on the topic itself and the links between findings.

Appendix C includes two examples of how field notes were generated throughout the data collection stage of this research. As indicated in the limitations of the study section of the conclusions and recommendations chapter of this thesis, a more reflective approach to generating field notes could have been used to help the researcher develop ideas and themes on the field, as the nature of the memos generated is brief. Nevertheless, they helped the researcher highlight important issues from each interview, which was useful throughout the initial coding stage of the data analysis. The first field note included in Appendix C, for example, highlights that the interviewee noted that tourists may play a detrimental part of his experience of Covent Garden, but they are an important element of the area's atmosphere. The field note also highlights that the interviewee made remarks related to the quality of street entertainment, which is discussed in the evidence analysis chapter of this study. On the other hand, the field note also highlights that in the interviewee's opinion, the area 'feels like a destination' rather than a 'passing through' area; and asserts that attending a performance at the Royal Opera House does not only entail watching a show which is highlighted in the memo. The second example of a field note generated throughout the data collection stage highlights that the interviewee does not dislike tourists themselves, but overcrowding that comes as a result of high levels of visitation is not something that he enjoys about the area, which is discussed in the findings chapter. Likewise, the field note reminded the researcher that the interviewee asserted that age influences the way in which Covent Garden is experienced by its visitors and that the area has a strong commercial sector but the Royal Opera House's cultural input to the area is also important in the view of the interviewee. As stated above, highlighting these issues in recorded memos helped the researcher remember important aspects of each interview as they were analysed.

The second field note also exemplifies how the interviewee's opinion in relation to Royalism and glamour associated with the Royal Opera House could be contrasted with another interviewee's opinion related to exclusivity and access to the House. However, these field notes did not influence the main themes, as these derived from the literature review, research questions, the topic guide and emerged from the data itself as indicated in further sections.

Field notes were useful to record initial thoughts and to highlight important issues raised by each interviewee right after the interviews were conducted, which helped the researcher capture and record "fresh" reflections of each interview. However, it is important to note that their nature is brief and their purpose was to summarise rather than to analyse. Therefore, although field notes were used to support the data collection stage and to aid in the evidence analysis, they did not influence the main themes nor did they include an in depth reflection of the points highlighted, which is recognised as a limitation of the study but provides scope for enhancing the use of memos and field notes as data collection tools.

6.7.4. Computer assisted qualitative data analysis

Bryman (2004:417) asserts that 'one of the most significant developments in qualitative research in the last twenty years is the emergence of computer software that can assist in the use of qualitative data analysis'. Silverman (2000) discusses the advantages of using such software and indicates that it can help the researcher in speeding the process of handling large amounts of data and it enhances the rigour in which the information can be analysed. Likewise, Phelps et al. (2007:210) summarise the benefits of using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software by stating that 'it is designed specifically to meet the needs of qualitative researchers (and) essentially supports the coding, categorisation, organisation and retrieval of data, providing enhanced flexibility and helping you to manage notes or memos made during your analysis'. As noted before, field notes taken throughout the data collection stage can be useful for the interpretation process of the data analysis process, and existing software can also integrate such memos within the same analytical platform as the interviews

themselves. The software QSR N*Vivo was identified as a useful tool to support the needs that this study required given the amount of interviews conducted. Therefore, after transcription, all the interviews were uploaded in the program which facilitated the tasks of analysing and coding.

Robson (2002) affirms that other advantages of using this type of software include the provision of an organised single location storage system for all the data collected, providing easier access to the information, facilitate handling of large amounts of information, and help in the task of developing consistent codes. However, the author also points out that there are disadvantages in using software to analyse qualitative data, mostly referred to the need to undertake training to make full use of its capabilities. Dey (1993:55) also highlights the limitations of relying on computers by stating that ‘computers can do many things, but they cannot think (...) that also means the thinking is up to us. A computer can help us to analyse our data, but it cannot analyse our data’ (as quoted by Jennings, 2001:212). In this sense, it is important to establish that the software available has been useful for organising the data and facilitating access to it. Nevertheless, the data analysis stage was underpinned by the theoretical framework established and the researcher’s analytical skills.

6.7.4.1 Praxis

As indicated above, it is recommended that the researcher undertakes thorough training in order to make full use of the variety of tools and functions featured by computerised data analysis software. Whilst this would have been helpful for the researcher to understand the full capabilities of the program, the research schedule was tight considering that four months were invested in collecting the data and that the transcription process was lengthy given the high number of interviews conducted. Therefore, only the most basic functions of QSR N*Vivo were used in the process of analysing and coding the data, which is acknowledged as a limitation of the study in the conclusions and recommendations chapter.

QSR N*Vivo was not the only software used to prepare and analyse the data. Once the data collection stage was drawn to an end, the audio files containing the interviews' recordings were uploaded to Express Scribe in order to facilitate the transcription process. An example of how this was done is included in Appendix D.1. These transcriptions had several typing mistakes and Express Scribe is not a helpful tool to identify and correct them promptly. Therefore, they were exported as MS Word documents where mistakes were spotted and corrected. This stage also helped the researcher to further familiarise himself with the data as indicated before. Once all the interviews were transcribed, they were uploaded to QSR N*Vivo resulting in an accessible database where each interview could be easily located and accessed as illustrated in Appendix D.2.

The task of analysing the data consisted of two stages. In the initial coding stage, Covent Garden (CG) and the Royal Opera House (ROH) were treated as Nodes in N*Vivo, and subfolders were created for these nodes reflecting an initial set of categories as illustrated in Appendices D.3 and D.4. These categories derived from the theoretical framework established by the literature review on the basis of the overall aim and research questions. Hence, the tourist's motivation to visit and perception and experience of place determined these categories a-priori. Likewise, the influence of their nationality and age in these processes also determined these categories as suggested by the literature. These categories were also influenced by the literature reviewed in Chapter 3 in regards to urban areas for tourism and culture and their place making elements ('shopping' and 'busking/performance' for example). On the other hand, as the interviews were coded, emergent categories arose ('weather' and 'time of visit' for instance). Other categories derived from the probing questions asked and presented in Table 6.1 ('Different' and preconceptions about the area for example). Therefore, the initial set of categories derived from the literature review, research questions, the topic guide

and emerged from the data itself. This initial set of categories is presented in Table 6.2 below, which is directly derived from the categories illustrated for both CG and ROH in Appendices D.3 and D.4 respectively:

Table 6.2 – Initial set of categories

COVENT GARDEN	Age	Experience	Preconceptions
	Accidental visitors	Garden	Relaxation
	Areas	Heard of	Shopping
	Busking/Performance	Image	Similar to
	Cobbles	Liked the most	Smallness/Streets
	Crime/Drugs	Motivation	Socialisation
	Different	Nationality	Time of visit
	Dislike	Pedestrianisation	Weather
	Eat/drink	People	
	Evolution	Perception	
ROYAL OPERA HOUSE	Access	Exhibitions	Name
	Age	Fame	Nationality
	Been inside	Heard of	Perception
	CG Without	Hidden	Personal Background
	Change	Image	Quality first
	Contrast with others	Importance	Relationship with CG
	English Asset	Motivation	

The categories established for ROH also derived from the research questions, the literature review, the topic guide and emerged from the data itself. Appendices D.3 and D.4 also illustrate how data could often be coded in more than one category. For example, an interviewee in Appendix D.3 refers to the area's commercial sector and its built environment to illustrate his perception of place, and associates this with his nationality. Therefore, this data was coded in the 'Nationality', 'Perception', 'Shopping' and 'Smallness/Streets' CG categories. Similarly, Appendix D.4 illustrates how an interviewee was asked how she would think the area would be like without the Opera House in it, and her response indicated that although the Royal Opera House's physical appearance is not noticeable by all of the area's visitors, it can be seen as a cultural asset for the country. Therefore, this data was coded in the 'CG without', 'English Asset', 'Hidden' and 'Importance' ROH categories.

The fact that many of these initial categories are inter-related led to a second analytical stage where these relationships were explored. This second analytical stage consisted of re-reading data coded using the initial set of categories to understand how these are linked. This is noted as good analytical practice by many authors (Arksey and Knight, 1999; Bryman, 2004; Dey, 1993; Denscombe, 2007), who note that coding qualitative data is a reiterative process, and that it is not uncommon for an initial coding stage to lead to a second one where the relationships between the categories of an initial set are further explored. This led to a more detailed set of themes that derived from the initial categories and the understanding of how they are inter-related resulting from re-reading the data that was coded initially. Table 6.3 below presents the themes that derived from the initial set of categories:

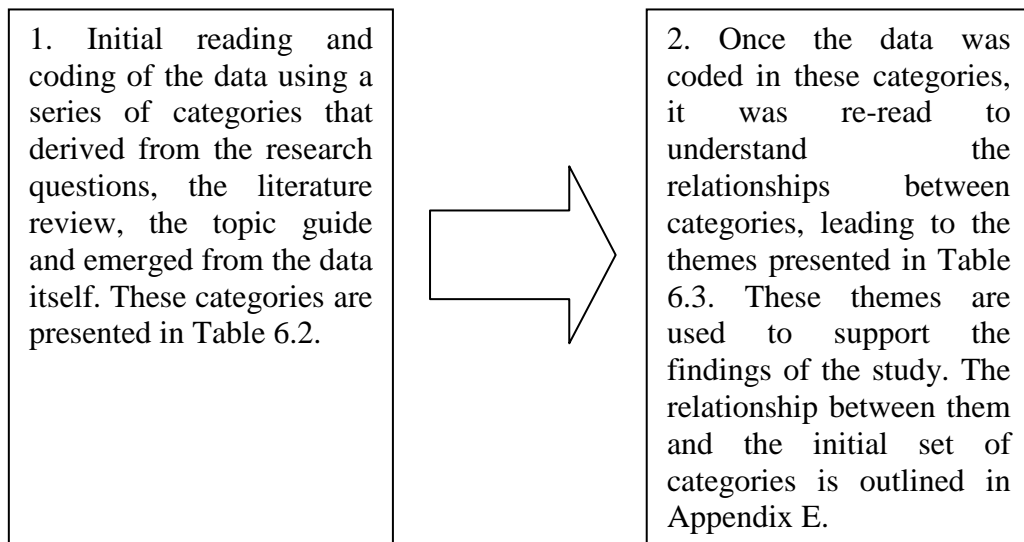
Table 6.3 Themes derived from the initial set of categories

COVENT GARDEN			Visitor characteristics		Area attracts younger visitors		
					Nationality affects perception of area		
			Preconceptions		Expectations of a garden		
					Media exposure		
			Motivation to visit		Deliberate and accidental visitors		
					Centrality and typicality		
					Shopping, eating and drinking		
					Performing arts and vibrancy		
			Experience		Roaming and exploring		
					Commercial experiences		
					Cultural experiences		
					Eating, drinking and social experiences throughout the day		
					Contrast between locations		
			Perception	Urban based elements	Built environment		
					Streets shape and pattern		
					Physical contrast between locations		
					Gentrification		
					Outdoor settings		
				Human based elements	Relaxed ambience		
					Pedestrianisation		
					Co tourism		
					Cosmopolitanism		
				Activity based elements	Commerce and nature of shops		
					Street busking and quality of performance		
ROYAL OPERA HOUSE				Visitor characteristics		Flagship attracts older visitors	
						Nationality affects perception of flagship	
			The building		Physical appearance (hidden)		
					Contrast with other stand alone flagship buildings (stereotypes of opera houses)		
			The institution		Quality of performance over physical appearance		
					Implications of the name (grandiosity), elitism and exclusivity		
					Audience development and access initiatives		
			Relationship with CG		Contrasting points of view		
					Attraction of visitors		
					Cosmopolitanism		
					Importance of opera houses for cultural destinations		

The themes presented above are discussed in the evidence analysis chapter and derive directly from the relationships between the initial set of categories. Appendix E illustrates the relationship between each of these themes and the initial categories. This is also closely linked to the fact that interview material was often coded in more than one category, indicating the importance of understanding these relationships, which ultimately underpinned the material discussed in the next chapter.

The process of analysing the data is summarised in Figure 6.2 below:

Figure 6.3 - Data analysis summary



6.8. Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the methodological approach to the study and detailed the methods that were adopted. A social constructivist approach is a suitable philosophical perspective to undertake this research given its strong focus on the individual's subjective construction of reality. This stance also indicates that semi-structured interviews are appropriate as a data collection method considering their flexibility, which allows for thorough social enquiry. Since this research focuses on perception and experience of urban precincts and consumption of culture, certain conceptual elements of ethnographic interviewing proved useful to

establish a firmer approach to interviewing as a data collection technique. The interview design was underpinned by the literature review and structured the interview in three parts, focusing sequentially on the tourist's perception and experience of London, Covent Garden and the Royal Opera House.

The fieldwork design allowed for wide representation by conducting interviews in a variety of locations during different times and with a wide range of visitors. The pilot test stage provided a series of useful lessons in the approach to collecting the data. They were applied in the main study which resulted in 306 semi-structured interviews. These were analysed using guidelines provided by different approaches to qualitative data analysis such as content analysis, the theory building approach, narrative and thematic analysis as well as grounded theory considering its strong focus on the importance of coding to identify patterns of social thought. The data was complemented by field notes taken throughout the data collection stage and consequent transcription, which allowed the researcher to record reflections related to each interview that further informed the analytical stage of the data. However, the use of field notes was limited as acknowledged in this chapter and the limitations of the study section of the conclusions and recommendations chapter. The analytical stage relied on specialised software that assisted in the tasks of storing, organising and analysing the interviews. This analytical stage consisted of two phases: the first was underpinned by an initial set of categories determined by the literature review, research questions, the topic guide or emerged from the data itself. These categories were inter-related which prompted the researcher to re-read the coded data to understand the relationships between these categories, leading to a series of themes presented and discussed in the next chapter.

7. EVIDENCE ANALYSIS

7.1. Introduction

The overall aim of this research is to explore the influence that a cultural flagship has upon the perception and experience of urban areas for tourism and culture, using the case of the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden as a case study. For this purpose, a wide range of literature was reviewed to establish a theoretical framework that explored the cultural tourists' motivations, experience and perception of place; as well as a variety of perspectives to understand urban precincts for tourism and culture, and the influence that cultural flagships exert upon them. These concepts, along with the adoption of a social constructivist approach underpinned the methodological considerations that ultimately oriented the primary data collection of this study.

As indicated in the previous chapter, the fieldwork was conducted in six different locations throughout the area and inside the flagship building and was drawn to a conclusion in August 2009, resulting in 306 semi-structured interviews that were recorded and subsequently transcribed. This material was uploaded to the specialised qualitative data analysis tool QSR N*Vivo and analysed using the guidelines set out in the Praxis section of the Methodology chapter. This data was analysed in two stages. The first coding stage was made on the basis of an initial set of categories that derived from the research questions, the literature review, the topic guide and others that emerged from the data itself. Once the data was coded initially, the relationships between this initial set of categories was explored, leading to a series of themes discussed in this chapter. A detailed account of the relationships between the initial set of categories and themes is presented in Appendix E. All of the 306 interviews were given equal weight when coding the data. However, some of these interviews did not yield rich data because of language restrictions that prevented the interviewees to develop their views in length. In other cases, the interviewees were unwilling to provide detail in their responses, leading to short interviews that did not yield rich data either. The findings presented in this chapter are illustrated by quotes extracted from a

smaller number of interviews that yielded rich data, conducted with tourists that developed their views in length and provided detail in their response (76 interviews in total). Regardless of this, all the interviews were read and coded where possible since, even though a large proportion of the interviews were short, some of these provided basic data that was coded where possible. In order to further support the evidence analysis, some numbers are provided to reflect the relative weight of certain findings. It is important to note that in some cases, these numbers are higher than 76. This is because, as indicated in the previous chapter, some interviews were coded to more than one category and because all interviews were read, including brief ones that provided some data that was coded where possible. To ensure clarity, the relative weight of findings is indicated in the text by using terms like, for example, ‘some interviewees’, ‘many interviewees’, ‘a large/small proportion of interviewees’, etc.

It is also important that the rationale of the structure of the chapter is made clear. It begins with a discussion of the interviewees’ socio demographic characteristics, and subsequently the discussion is organised around the research questions. This means that the most significant findings are not necessarily presented first, but the evidence analysis follows a structure determined by the research questions. The first research question enquires about what Covent Garden represents for its visitors, and therefore preconceptions about the area are presented first in this section of the chapter although, as it turned out, comparatively few people brought this up. But the order in which findings are presented is not determined by their relative weight but by the research questions. This section is followed by the interviewees’ motivation to visit the area, and their experience and perception of place as outlined above, because these are the second, third and fourth research questions respectively. As the final research question addressed the influence of the flagship upon these processes, the findings regarding the Opera House are presented after. These focus on the visitor’s perception of the flagship as an architectural artefact and as an institution; as well as its relationship with Covent Garden and its influence on the interviewees’ perception and experience of place.

7.2. Visitor characteristics

This study adopts a qualitative methodology that underpinned all considerations regarding data collection and the methods used for that purpose. Nevertheless, the high number of interviews conducted allowed for some statistical information to be generated in relation to the interviewees' demographic profiles. A total of 213 interviews were conducted in various locations throughout the area along with a further 93 inside the flagship building as follows:

Table 7.1– Number of interviews in the area according to location
(Refer to Figure 6.1 in Methodology Chapter for map of the area)

1. Seven Dials	2. St. Martin's Lane	3. S Paul's Church	4. Piazza	5. ROH	6. Broad Court	Total
25	10	86	76	93	26	306

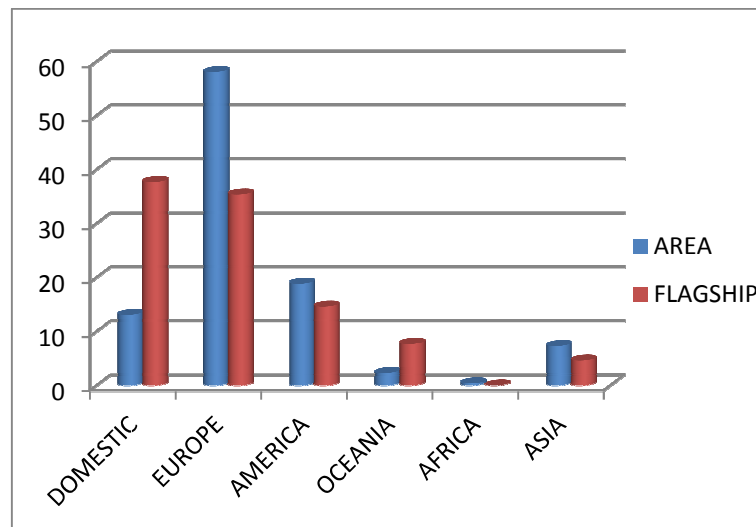
As indicated in the methodology chapter, a variety of interviewing locations were selected in order to capture wide ranging data from a representative and diverse group of visitors in the area. However, not all of them are quoted in this chapter as a large proportion of them yielded limited data, which is to an extent, represented in the numbers provided to support the findings. It was expected that the interviewees' perception and experience of place would be directly influenced by the different locations where they were approached for the interview. This is further explored in forthcoming sections of the findings chapter and the tourists that provided the data are referred to as either CG or ROH interviewees depending on where they were interviewed from this chapter onwards.

According to the London Development Agency (2009), the majority of domestic and international tourists in its London Visitor Survey indicated that they visited or intended to visit the City of Westminster. Additionally, Visit London (2010a) indicates that the British Museum and the National Gallery which are located north and south of Covent Garden respectively are the most visited tourist attractions in London. This indicates that the majority of tourists in London visit areas located in the immediate proximity of or within Covent Garden. For this

reason, the sample used for this research can be compared to existing data on London visitors.

7.2.1. Nationality. Figure 7.1 below illustrates the sample's profile according to the interviewees' nationality:

Figure 7.1 – Interviewees' nationality



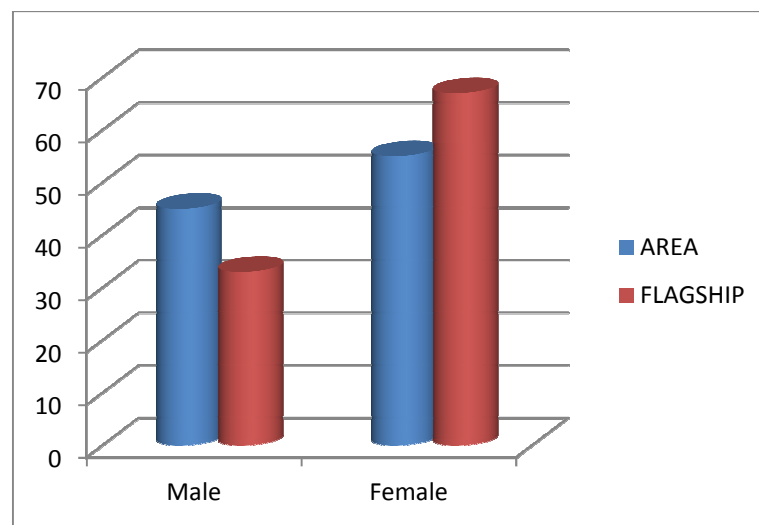
As indicated by the figure, 58% of CG interviewees are of European origin (EU and rest of Europe), followed by 19% of American origin, 13% of the CG sample consisted of domestic visitors and 9% from other parts of the world. On the other hand, 38% of ROH respondents were domestic visitors, 35% of European origin, 15% of American origin and 13% from other parts of the world.

Visit London (2010b) indicates that in 2009, 52% of London visitors were EU nationals with a further 14% arrived from the rest of Europe in the corresponding year, 15% were of North American origin and 19% from the rest of the world. These figures are reflected in the sample used for this research as the majority of interviewees were from European origin in the area and in the flagship, including domestic visitors. However, the flagship has a higher number of domestic visitors than the area in the sample used. This relates to SOLT's (2004) West End Theatre Audience Survey, in which over 73% of the sample belongs to the domestic

sector, with almost 37% of it corresponding to the local London market. On the other hand, the London Visitor Survey conducted by the London Development Agency (2009) confirmed that 20% of overseas visitors have an interest in theatre, music and performing arts; whereas a higher 26% of domestic tourists expressed such interest. This suggests that an appropriate group of respondents have been interviewed for this research as the majority of visitors in the flagship were of domestic origin. Nevertheless, as this research focuses on the tourist's experience and perception of place, potential interviewees living in London were excluded from the study.

7.2.2. Gender. In relation to the interviewees' gender, Figure 7.2 illustrates the percentile distribution of the sample:

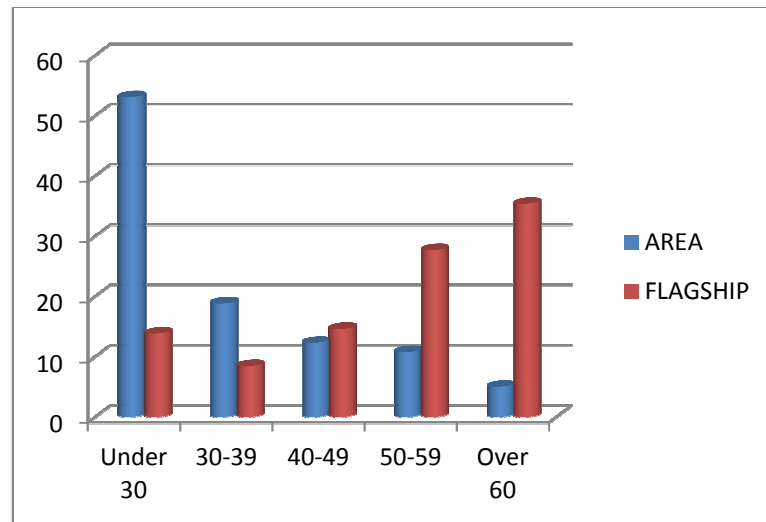
Figure 7.2 – Interviewees' gender



As indicated by the figure above, 55% of CG interviewees were female respondents, with a slightly lower number of male interviewees (45%). The London Development Agency (2009) approached a similar sample in terms of gender with 59% males and 41% females in their London Visitor Survey. ROH interviewees in this research were mostly female (67%) as opposed to a significantly lower 33% of male respondents. However, this does not necessarily reflect audience composition.

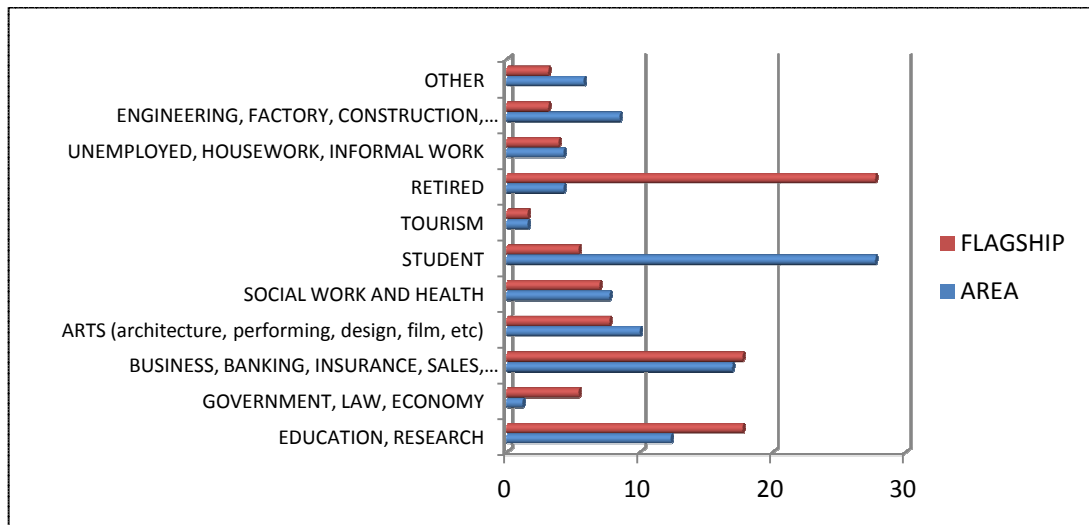
7.2.3. Age. The third socio demographic indicator evaluated is the interviewees' age. Figure 7.3 below illustrates the sample's profile according to their age range:

Figure 7.3 – Interviewees' age



As indicated above, the majority of CG interviewees belong to the younger sector below 30 years of age (53%), followed 19% of respondents between the ages of 30 to 39, 12% between 40 and 49, 11% between 50 and 59, and 5% over the age of 60. On the other hand, ROH respondents belonged to the older age groups as indicated by the figure. The majority of these interviewees were over the age of 60 (35%), 28% were between the ages of 50 to 59, 15% were between 40 to 49 years of age, only 8% were between 30 and 39, and 14% belonged to the younger age groups below 30. Similarly, the London Development Agency (2009) indicates that 'London visitors have a relatively young profile, with more than half of all those interviewed aged under 35 years (57%)', which is consistent with the visitors interviewed for this study. The impact that the high number of younger visitors in the area has upon its sense of place will be discussed in further sections.

7.2.4. Occupation. The final socio demographic indicator taken into consideration for this research was the interviewees' occupation. Figure 7.4 below illustrates this distribution:

Figure 7.4 – Interviewees’ occupation

The majority of CG interviewees were students, whilst they were retired in the case of ROH respondents. This is directly related to the age considerations presented above, as they are mostly over the age of 60 inside the flagship, and 30 or younger throughout the different interviewing locations in the area. Apart from this consideration, all other types of occupation are fairly equally distributed, with education and research (15% combined) and business and finance related jobs (17%) as the most common occupations. These figures confirm that the area attracts a variety of visitors of contrasting socio demographic profiles due to the diversity of experiential opportunities throughout its different locations. Despite strong cultural features, such as performing arts and architecture, only 9% of the sample is employed in creative areas. These topics will be discussed in forthcoming sections related to the interviewees’ perception and experience of the area and the flagship.

7.3. Findings related to the area

This section discusses the interviewees’ motivation to visit, experience and perception of place as determined by the research questions. As a foreword to these sections, however, it is important to discuss how their socio demographic characteristics can have an influence in these processes. In first instance, the interviewees’ country of origin emerged as a socio demographic indicator exerting

an influence on their perception and experience of place as noted by 42 interviewees. As might be expected, many domestic visitors expressed more awareness of the area's heritage and history: *"The Opera House is fine it's a cultural draw, but the area itself is so exciting **What do you think makes it exciting?** The fact that it has been a place where actors and actresses and whores and pimps and people and market folk and Londoners have hung out for centuries. It has always been a pleasure ground. (...)Thousands of actors who have lived in my lifetime have come here for research (...) **How would you describe the feel of the place to a friend who has never been here?** It's exciting, its all the things that London is about. This church is quiet and holy. In the market place its all about market values, it's also always been a place for strolling players, jugglers, clowns, acrobats. It's always been a place where rich and poor mingle. And the whores have always done a roaring trade. There was a book about them in the 17th century. Register. You know how we nowadays have the good pub guide? Well in those days they had the good guide for the ladies of the town (Maria, England)".* The latter interviewee makes historical references that suggest an in depth understanding of the area's past. Such detailed accounts of the area's evolution and heritage were not provided by international respondents, suggesting that domestic visitors are more aware of the area's history.

As indicated in further sections, it was also noted consistently that the shorter history in some interviewees' countries of origin reflected in their less significant architectural heritage makes them notice and appreciate Covent Garden's built environment. Many respondents, particularly of Australian and American origin, stated that they appreciated the area because it is evident that it is 'over 400 years old', whereas their home countries have not existed as such for such an extended period (See Appendix F.2 for further evidence). On the other hand, it was also found that some interviewees were not only attracted to the area because of their unfamiliarity with it, but they also tended to connect and associate it with certain aspects of their home countries. Such was the case of a Spanish tourists who made negative remarks about the way a Covent Garden restaurant cooked a traditional Spanish dish, referring to it as 'horrendous' because it was not served in a

Spanish fashion but it was marketed as such. This indicates that the interviewee's cultural values, in this case cuisine, have an influence on her perception of the area. (See Appendix F.3 for full quote).

Another socio demographic indicator exerting an influence on the interviewees' perception and experience of place is age, as 27 interviewees made remarks about this issue. Some of them noted that the experiential opportunities available in the area have a stronger appeal for a younger market, with some older respondents observing that the vibrancy of Covent Garden, particularly of its central Piazza may be appealing 'to the younger crowd': "*Because of so many people visiting it seems like it's on alert, it's constantly moving, it's not still. That's something that I like, at least at this age I enjoy. Maybe later on I would like something more quiet (Nicosia, 30-39)*". Similarly, other interviewees noted that the presence of large numbers of younger visitors contributes to the area's vibrancy, which is not always regarded as a positive element of their experience as illustrated by additional evidence in Appendix F.1. On the other hand, many interviewees recognised that the array of experiences in the area attracts an 'eclectic mix' of tourists of all ages, which adds to its cosmopolitan ambience: "*I think no matter what age, it's got a lot of appeal. You have got stuff that would be great for young children, you got places to eat, a lot of multicultural here. You got pubs for the older children, so it has a lot to offer (Laura, 40-49)*".

Further probing was applied throughout the interviews to understand how the interviewees' age affects their perception and experience of place, with some of them indicating that as they grow older, they become more perceptive of and receptive to their surrounding: "*As you grow older your expectations of the place change? Yes I think so. You see other things. You see them in another way. You see them more quietly, more at ease. So you see more (...) But in another way, more receptive, receiving, accepting. More than chasing. Said the old man (Marcel, 50-59)*". This is also evident in the fact that older interviewees tended to give a more comprehensive account of their experience of London and Covent Garden, providing more detailed answers about how they perceived and

interpreted the area. For example, a CG interviewee under 30 highlighted that her previous visits were focused on ‘*candy and dolls*’ but as she grew older she is also ‘*checking out the pubs*’. In contrast, another interviewee over the age of 60 provided a very detailed account of his appreciation for the area’s heritage using the case of the now closed National Sporting Club, and his desire to impart that part of history to his grandson. Similarly, an interview conducted with mother and daughter enquired about the first image that they associated with the area. The mother indicated that it was the Opera House’s Corinthian architecture in Bow Street, whereas the daughter mentioned the modern aluminium built ‘bridge of aspiration’ in Floral Street, with both interviewees recognising the bias that their age exerts on their opinions (full quote in Appendix F.1). These contrasts evidence that the perception and interpretation of the area, along with the experiences that its visitors seek, are sometimes subject to their age groups.

7.3.1. Preconceptions

In order to explore what Covent Garden means for its visitors as indicated by the first research question, interviewees were asked if they had any previous expectations or knowledge about Covent Garden. A small proportion of 30 interviewees made remarks in relation to this and two themes developed: expectations of a garden (17 respondents) and media exposure (13 respondents). The rest of the interviewees were either repeat visitors or expressed not to have any preconceptions about the precinct.

7.3.1.1. Covent Garden’s name as a literal implication

“It’s quite unusual because I thought it was a garden but there is no garden. I don’t know, I heard the name but I just had no idea what it was about, it doesn’t sound like a market or a place for art (Maya, Mexico).”

The statement above is a generic example of some views gathered whilst enquiring about the visitor’s expectations of the area, which indeed suggests the presence of a botanical garden. This finding surfaced from the data itself and is an emergent theme because the literal implications of an area’s name were not

suggested by existing literature. It is interesting to note that, the interviewees evaluated the area in terms of its provision of performing arts of different types, its urban shape and scale, its commercial ambience and other aspects related to the visitors it attracts. But 17 interviewees interpret its name literally, as they indicated that they expected green areas to be a focal point in the area's attributes. In relation to this, another interviewee interestingly identified a sense of greenery in the architecture of the area despite the absence of large green spaces: ***"What is the first image that you associate with Covent Garden? The glass rooftop of the market. Does it remind you of any other buildings? No, it reminds me of a green house. Is that a good thing? Yes, I really like vegetation (...) there is still a sense of vegetation, the glass domes kind of reflect of greenhouses so in a way it is kind of like a covered garden (Kim, Canada)".*** In this sense, it is suggested that both the architectural traits of the glass roofs of the market place area and the Opera House's Hamlyn Hall resemble green houses, which may imply that the literal implications of the area's name have been acknowledged in its visual planning, and succeed in providing the area with a sense of flora and foliage in the view of some of its visitors.

7.3.1.2. Media exposure

The play *Pygmalion* and the musical and the film derived from it, *'My Fair Lady'* were the most notable media influence on how the area's visitors perceive it as indicated by 13 interviewees when asked about their preconceptions of the area. The musical film, released in the 1964, features a humble flower seller in Covent Garden during Edwardian times, and her views and aspirations of becoming an aristocrat. This research has revealed that 47 years after the film's release, it still exerts an influence on some of the area's visitors' perception of place. In first instance, some interviewees indicated that their fondness of the film (or play) motivated them to visit the area: *"It's just another one of those sites you know. To be honest every time I come here I come because of the play, My Fair Lady. Because I read it as a kid and I never forget. In America we dream of these places and then you come and you see them and it's kind of great (James, US)".* Further evidence of the connection between the film and the area is included in Appendix

F.4. Some of these interviewees also indicated that the first image that they associate with the area is that of flowers being sold, Eliza Doolittle (the character), Audrey Hepburn (who played her in the film) and other elements which can be directly associated with the film. Nevertheless, it was also noted that these statements were mostly gathered from individuals belonging to the older age groups: *“I’m old enough, I’m an old granny and I remember the days when here it really was the flower market, the flower market that Eliza Doolittle sold her violets (Maria, over 60).”*

On the other hand, other types of media exposure affecting some of the interviewees’ perception of Covent Garden relates to literature, as some respondents connected the area with literature by Oscar Wilde, Jane Austen, and Charles Dickens. It is important to observe that these 19th century British writers often portrayed Victorian architecture in their written work, which can still be found as described by them in their time as noted by some interviewees: *“It’s an old neighbourhood (...) what makes the difference is that it has history, Charles Dickens. I think it’s the history, the novel, it’s a novel-esque neighbourhood (...) it takes you back to novels and their times (Antonio, Spain)”*. In relation to this, it is also important to highlight the level of cultural awareness exerting an influence on remarks of this nature, which also serves to illustrate how the individual’s personal background affects their perception of place. It was found that some respondents appreciated the area’s rich heritage because of what they have read in history texts that make reference of both the area and the flagship building, and the social implications that attending an opera conveyed as noted by the following interviewee: ***“Have you heard of ROH before? Yes I have. Do you know where you hear from it the most? I read quite a lot, a lot of history and it comes up quite often in books about it. For example recently I read a book about the history of Victorian London and it featured quite heavily in there because it focuses on lifestyles of the social classes and that sort of thing. But generally I would say in reading. Why do you read so much? Because I have an inquisitive mind I would say. I don’t know, I find history fascinating. I find the whole Victorian period***

really fascinating and obviously ROH is a major institution in that, in that aristocratic lifestyle in Victorian times I suppose (Mike, England)”.

The latter statement suggests that the individual’s motivation to visit the area, his experience of place and the way that he assimilates and interprets the history and heritage of an urban precinct are affected by his individual background, preferences and level of cultural awareness. These topics are addressed in the remainder of the chapter.

7.3.2. Motivation to visit

In order to answer this study’s second research question, the interviewees were asked why they decided to visit the area. The contrast between the answers gathered from ROH and CG interviewees is an important consideration. In the former case, most respondents indicated that they were in the area primarily to visit the Opera House, with other activities coming as a result. CG interviewees’ motivations to visit were more diverse, suggesting that the eclectic array of experiential opportunities in the area leads them to seek more than one experience. These opportunities include the consumption of high and popular forms of performing arts, shopping, eating, drinking and socialising. They present themselves in different forms throughout different locations and they are experienced by roaming and discovering the area by some interviewees. The area’s central location makes it a convenient place to visit as addressed below.

7.3.2.1 Central location

In order to assess the respondents’ motivation to visit Covent Garden, interviewees were asked about other tourist areas and attractions that they had visited. Their answers confirmed that some tend to visit London’s most prominent attractions for tourism, such as Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, National Gallery, Houses of Parliament, the British Museum and other main stream tourist attractions. This was also the case with popular tourist areas, with Soho, the South Bank, Mayfair and other central areas consistently cited as part of the experience

of the city. Given Covent Garden's physical proximity to many of these areas and attractions, some wander into it knowingly or unknowingly:

- Deliberate sightseeing visitors: many tourists visiting the area seek to experience London's most prominent tourist attractions, seeking high profile areas or attractions and often referring to their tourist guide books to provide an account of the places they had been visiting (See Appendix F.5). A large proportion of 261 respondents belonged to the deliberate visitors' category as they further explained their motivation to visit the area by focusing on cultural, commercial or environmental aspects of it as discussed in further sections.
- Accidental visitors: A lower proportion of 45 interviewees were unaware that they were in Covent Garden, or had wandered into it by accident and unknowingly: "***Why did you decide to visit this area? By accident. I stumbled upon it because I was in Piccadilly Circus and ended up in Covent Garden (Tutu, Russia)***". Other visitors passed through en route to somewhere else: "***I was going to the British Museum and I found this market which is very nice so I stayed. I also like the jugglers. So you didn't mean to come here? Not exactly (Johanes, Germany)***". This suggests that there is a flow of tourists coming from popular tourist sites who make their way into Covent Garden because of their physical proximity to the area (Further evidence of this is included in Appendix F.6).

Whether visiting Covent Garden deliberately or coincidentally, it was consistently noted that many tourists valued the area as a resting spot in London's tourist panorama: "***Why did you decide to bring the kids to Covent Garden? I know that after one hour in National Gallery where we went on the tour they were a bit tired so I wanted to show them something different than Leicester Square for example where we were before. And I wanted to give them the opportunity to relax, to buy some souvenirs here in Jubilee Market Hall and to eat something. Entertainment***

basically (Horacy, Poland)”. In this sense, relaxation has also been identified as a motivation to visit (See Appendix F.7). This will also be explored when evaluating the tourists’ experience of place.

7.3.2.2. Shopping, eating and drinking

Shopping and commercial activities were identified as an important motivation for the area’s visitors. As anticipated from literature reviewed, a large proportion of interviewees mentioned that they visited the area to either look at the shops or purchase goods. The area’s market place was identified as ‘*famous*’ by many interviewees, which strengthened their motivation to visit. The presence of shops of different scale and selling a diversity of products was further identified as an important element of the area. However, very few respondents indicated that shopping was the only reason why they visited the area. The presence of these shops along with restaurants, cafes and pubs also acts as an important motivational factor encouraging tourists to visit as indicated by a total of 192 respondents. This is also related to the social nature of the area and can be associated with the area’s proximity to other main-stream tourist areas.

7.3.2.3. Performing arts and vibrancy

Performing arts, both high and popular are another feature of the area motivating tourists to visit (82 interviewees in total). Many CG respondents indicated that they were attending a performance in a theatre (55), and some of them made use of the area’s eating and drinking facilities or window shopped before the performance started. Likewise, many ROH interviewees confirmed that the Opera House was the main purpose of their visit, and that shopping, eating and drinking were secondary activities that were undertaken as a complement to the primary motivation. This indicates that there is a strong relationship between these elements of the area.

The presence of street buskers was also mentioned as a motivation to visit by 27 respondents (20 visited because of ‘the artists’ and 7 because of ‘the buskers’). However, the quality of these performance and the crowds they attract were

subject to criticism by other interviewees. In other cases, the respondents indicated that although street performance was not central to their motivation to visit, they decided to stay in the area because of the vibrant atmosphere street busking generates, confirming the synergic relationship mentioned above. Although street performance results in over crowdedness in the market place area deterring some interviewees, it also contributes to its lively ambience, motivating other respondents to stay.

7.3.3. Experience of place

The third research question focuses on the tourist's experience of the area. For this purpose, the next section of the topic guide enquired about what experiences the interviewees were seeking or sought throughout the area. The consumption of the arts, food and drink, and commercial activities were mentioned as their core experiences of place by the number of visitors indicated in the section above. Nevertheless, some of these respondents also suggested that they had been roaming around it and '*soaking up its atmosphere*' by wandering its streets and gathering a variety of sensorial stimuli. This led some interviewees to indicate that a visit to Covent Garden provided them with a glimpse of London as a whole because of the variety of experiential opportunities in a single precinct: "*It's very dynamic, very lively with a very special atmosphere if someone wants to experience London in a snapshot they would come to Covent Garden I think. Why do you think that is? Because there is so much here, it's very intense; I think Covent Garden is very intense so you can see everything here (...) If you are here just for half a day or a few hours you can probably see it all here. It's probably not so much about the culture and the traditions but more about the shops and the restaurants and the actual architecture is here so it's a very lively place if you want to have a drink or shop around it's a good thing to come here for sure. (Nora, Hungary).*"

7.3.3.1. Roaming, exploring and discovering

Although Covent Garden presents a range of experiences that can provide the visitor with a broader sense of tourism in London, they are mostly based on

shopping and consumption rather than culture (See Appendix F.8. for further evidence of Covent Garden providing visitors with a '*London in a snapshot*' experience as addressed above). In this sense, many interviewees observed that Covent Garden is experienced by roaming, exploring and discovering the area; which have been identified as fundamental activities that enhance the process of sensorial perception and experience of the area. This leads them to listen to street performers and people gathering around them, perceive the architecture and street patterns; smell aromas from the shops or restaurants, eat, drink, and undertake different activities that stimulate their senses (See Appendix F.9). The experience of roaming and exploring the area also lead some tourists to experience unexpected activities and discover attractions which were referred to as '*hidden London*', '*places off the beaten track*' and '*gems that you stumble across accidentally*' as illustrated by the following interviewee: "*We just saw a delightful statue of a ballet dancer on Bow Street, which we didn't notice before. Unless you are doing what we are doing today, which is slowly walking, you miss such a lot (...) We went past it many times and never realised. (Roshean, England)*".

7.3.3.2. Commercial experiences

Commercial experiences such as purchasing products or window shopping are also an important element of the overall experience of the area as noted in the previous section related to the interviewees' motivation to visit. Furthermore, some respondents referred to Covent Garden's commercial aspect as '*quaint*' because of the smaller scale and less generic nature of its retail premises in contrast to other commercial areas in central London. It is also important to note that the individual's personal background, preferences and motivation to visit play a pivotal role in their experience of Covent Garden as a commercial precinct. In this sense, many interviewees consistently indicated that they visited the area because of its cultural offer and its heritage, which leads them to avoid the commercial aspects of the area: "*If you go to other areas like Carnaby Street, it's quaint and all but it's really focused on shopping so it's not far from Oxford Street, it's all about shopping shopping shopping. Which I hate. At least here, you*

get this kind of, spiritual influence from the church, and which I find a lot more powerful, the Opera House (...). So all the ghost of the theatres, the memories of the people that have gone to the theatres, all that energy is here (...) I haven't ever done any actual shopping in these shops you know. I specifically come here to meet people, eat in the church (yard), go to the theatre (Krysia, Australia)".

7.3.3.3. Cultural experiences

The comment above introduces the importance of performing arts in the visitor's experience of Covent Garden. Many interviewees indicated that the supply of high and popular forms of art not only act as a primary motivation to visit but also comprises the main element of their experience of the area. This was particularly true in the case of ROH interviewees, who indicated that they were in the area to visit the flagship building, make use of its eating and drinking facilities, book tickets or watch its exhibition spaces. As indicated in previous sections, many of them also confirmed that even though this is their main activity, window shopping, roaming, exploring and all the other experiences are part of visiting the area. It is also important to note that their preference tended to be towards high forms of art such as opera or ballet, with many of them indicating that they avoided popular forms of art such as street busking or musical theatre. Other cultural attractions of importance in the area that emerged as important to the interviewees' experience of the area are St Paul's Church and to a much lesser extent, the London Transport Museum. It should also be noted that many respondents interviewed inside the church discovered it by roaming through the area, which was not the case of ROH interviewees who visited the flagship on purpose.

7.3.3.4. Eating, drinking and social experiences throughout the day

Eating, drinking and socialising were also identified as important elements of the visitor's experience of the area. These issues are closely related to the visitor's motivation to visit Covent Garden because of its proximity to other areas for

tourism and because it is perceived as a place for relaxation. Many CG interviewees confirmed that they were meeting someone in Covent Garden, or that they enjoyed visiting for social reasons because of the presence of adequate facilities to do so: *“Normally I come for a cup of coffee or to meet someone. I think it’s a meeting point for people, to find friends because it’s well located and it’s easy to reach. (Silvia, Bolivia)”*. *“Generally I meet with friends in some of the popular sites, Covent Garden in this case and after that we move somewhere else to have a beer (...) my friends asked me to meet here by Punch and Judy and ever since it has become my central axis (...) I wanted to meet some friends and generally my reference point is Covent Garden, so I say lets meet here. (Enrique, Colombia)”*. 28 other respondents made remarks about the area’s social nature because of its central location and eating and drinking facilities.

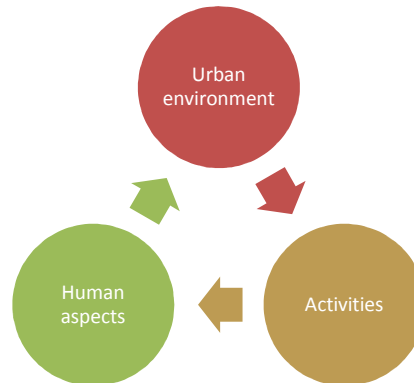
It was noted through personal observation that the nature of the experience of eating and drinking tends to change throughout the day, although a relatively low number of 21 interviewees made comments about their experience of place in relation to their time of visit. In this sense, time of visit is another element to understand the nature of the visitor’s experience of the area: *“There’s lots of movement, human activities. It’s essentially a human scale, human feel, the fact that is open and pretty much around the clock. I wouldn’t like to be here at 2am in the morning but I imagine there are still people on the streets, a different side of life. At any hour of the day there’s always something going on and it’s human activity related (Richard, England)”*. This interviewee belongs to a group of respondents that associated their time of visit with safety concerns. This topic is also addressed in further sections when evaluating the tourist’s perception of the area as a safe precinct because of its high amount of visitors and gatherings of people generated by street buskers. Nevertheless, this study came across a few cases of illegal drinking and consumption and commercialisation of illegal substances (See Appendix F.10 for further details).

7.3.3.5. Different experiences throughout different locations

A final consideration is the contrast between the area's central and peripheral locations, and the different types of activities that tourists undertake in each. The central Covent Garden Piazza is characterized by the presence of street entertainers, the market, the Transport Museum, St Paul's Church and a range of high profile and large scale shops such as HMV (refer to figure 6.1 for map of the area). These amenities, facilities and attractions provide different experiences for the Piazza's visitors depending on their motivation to visit and willingness to explore other experiential opportunities. Non central areas of Covent Garden provide their visitors with a different set of experiences, which led an interviewee to indicate that he thinks of Covent Garden as '*two different areas*', one characterized by '*the tackiest side of tourism*' when referring to the Piazza's commercial nature and the presence of street buskers, and another focused on small scale shopping and cafes. This interviewee referred to Seven Dials to illustrate this case as he noted that because of the lack of an open space free of car traffic, street performance is not possible, and its urban form also prevents the presence of large scale stores. In this sense, the tourist's experience is based on small scale shops such as the ones located in Neal's Yard.

7.3.4. Perception of the area

The fourth research question of this study enquired about how Covent Garden is perceived by its visitors. Once the interview enquired about the interviewees' motivation and experience of place, it subsequently asked them to develop their views of the area, what they enjoyed and disliked about it, how they contrasted it with other areas in London and abroad, what caught their attention the most, how did they perceive it to be distinctive and other probing questions to determine the area's elements that influence their perception of place. Their answers suggested that these perceptions stem from three different dimensions: one related to the area's physical attributes, another related to the activities that take place, and the third associated with human behaviour as indicated in forthcoming sections.

Figure 7.5 – Place making system

Although Figure 7.5 above is proposed by the researcher on the basis of the data collected and analysed to address the overall aim and research questions of this study, it can also be related to existing literature on tourism spaces with high numbers of visitors and a variety of land uses. As noted in Chapter 3 in relation to urban precincts, it is important to consider an area's place making elements and Figure 7.5 can be associated with Franck and Stevens (2007) notion of "loose spaces" where land use (activities), the built environment and visitors themselves conform the areas' place making system. The relationship between the authors' model with the case study can be illustrated by for example, focusing on Covent Garden Market, which was originally developed for commercial purposes that lead to the attraction of street entertainers and the establishment of eating and drinking facilities. As indicated in forthcoming sections and further relating the area's proposed place making system with a sense of 'looseness', roaming and exploring the area constitute an important part of the area's visitors' experience of place, which is reflected in the perceived slower pace of movement of commuters that embrace this freedom by exploring the area's experiential opportunities and environment-based features. On the other hand, Covent Garden's built environment not only provide a platform for a variety of land uses (theatres, shops, restaurants, street entertainment), but also exert an important influence on the way the area is perceived by its visitors from a visual perspective as further developed in the sections below. Therefore, the model presented above relates to existing literature on urban design, but it was proposed by the researcher on the basis of the evidence discussed in this chapter.

7.3.4.1. Urban environment based elements

Covent Garden's physical attributes and built environment are assimilated, perceived and evaluated from different perspectives leading to different ways of interpreting the area. As indicated before, an individual's personal background such as age and origin exerts an influence on their perception and experience of place. In this sense, it was noted that this influence is related to connectivity as many interviewees indicated that they liked its smaller scale and urban clustering and because of the similarities with urban characteristics of their own places of origin. Likewise, when enquiring about their impressions of the Opera House in Covent Garden, some interviewees stated that they wanted to compare it to theatres from their own countries. This was also the case with the market place area and other urban features of the area as many interviewees compared them to similar commercial precincts from their countries of origin. It was also noted that some interviewees were attracted to the area, praised it or criticised it, because of its differences to what they know, with some of them expressing that they enjoyed their visit to Covent Garden because of its architectural features, regarded as expressions of the area's heritage and history, which they lack in their hometowns: *"Why did you like this place so much? I think basically because its remnant of a past. We don't see this kind of history in South Africa. There are no major historical monuments in South Africa. (Robert, South Africa). The history of the buildings, compared to America, everything is always being torn down and rebuilt but here everything is being preserved and it still has that essence and the history behind everything (Norbert, US)".* The data indicates that the area's urban characteristics can often be regarded as signifiers of the area's heritage and history; and that familiarity and unfamiliarity to such features exert an important influence on the interviewees' process of perception and interpretation.

7.3.4.1.1. Physical attributes

74 interviewees observed Covent Garden's smaller scale in comparison to other tourist areas in London. It was noted that Covent Garden is *"kind of like a little village in itself. So it's like a little town within the city (Paul, England)"* in

contrast with other central areas because of its architectural layout (See Appendix F.11. for further evidence of the area's perceived attributes of an urban village). The area's urban shape and scale were also evaluated from a land use point of view, with some interviewees noting the urban clustering of a wide range of attractions within a relatively confined space as indicated by the following statements:

"Its quite pedestrian isn't it? And you've got a lot of places where you have to walk a long way to get to different places whereas here you know its all in quite a small space so you can do a lot of things in one area (Wendy, US)".

"It's a physically smaller area compared to what we are used to but there's so much packed into it so to make sure you take a lot of time to explore (Gerald, US)".

"It feels like a community a little bit. Small geographical area but there is a lot going on. It's quite put together, quite condensed (Mo, Canada)".

"It's nice to be in London but not between hordes and hordes of people and there is such variety, there is variety with the cafes and restaurants and places to visit, I think it's the variety (Hilary, England)".

In relation to the topics raised by the latter statement, the area's diversity was praised by interviewees not only because of the wide range of visitors from many backgrounds that it attracts, but also because of its architectural features which reflect policies aimed at preserving the area's heritage as well as new developments. *'The mix of the old and the new'* emerged from the data as what a number interviewees will remember the most, and was associated with human elements as indicated above due to the range of the age of visitors as well as the presence of modern architecture (such as the Royal Opera House's Hamlyn Hall) attached to preserved Victorian architecture.

7.3.4.1.2. Streets shape and pattern

The nature and scale of Covent Garden's streets also proved to be an element influencing the visitor's perception of the area was mentioned 66 times. Some of these indicated that they enjoyed visiting the area because of its distinctive

narrow, pedestrianised streets. Pedestrianisation was cited by 22 interviewees as an important element of their perception of place, indicating that it plays a considerable role in the visitor's perception of the area which can also be related to their pace of movement and human interactions amongst the area's visitors. This acquires a unique dimension due to the area's narrow streets characterised by distinctive architecture. One of these distinctive characteristics are the cobbles that pave them. They were noted by a lower number of interviewees (11) as expressions of the area's heritage because they '*restore the originality of the place*', which they regard as a positive element affecting their perception of the area. Nevertheless, one interviewee interested in fashion indicated that they represent a nuisance because they are difficult to walk on (refer to Appendix F.12. for details of these contrasting opinions). This confirms that the area is perceived and interpreted from different perspectives according to the individual's personal background, interests and motivation to visit.

7.3.4.1.3. Contrast between locations

The opinions mentioned above were gathered in central and peripheral locations of the area, suggesting that the visitor's overall perception of place is influenced by the attributes that its different areas present to the individual. Whilst not a typical stand point, a small proportion of 8 interviewees noted that they disliked the areas in and around the Piazza because they perceive them as '*tailored for tourists*' due to the presence of street performers, souvenir shops and other amenities whose users are not the local population. But the same interviewee observed that Covent Garden's peripheral areas are of smaller scale but tend to be used by a local working community away from the '*tackiness*' of the market place area (as evidenced by the excerpt included in Appendix F.13). Some respondents interviewed in the Piazza tended to focus their perception of place on street busking, the conglomeration of people and other place making elements typical of the central square. Conversely, interviewees approached in Seven Dials, Broad Court or St Martin's Lane focused more on the area's urban shape and scale.

7.3.4.1.4. Gentrification

Gentrification processes are common in urban precincts for tourism and culture. This was mentioned by some older domestic interviewees who noted local displacement as part of their perception of the area, which can relate to a lack of exposure to the area before the development of tourism. Although some interviewees' praised Covent Garden as *'London in a snap shot'* as noted before, other respondents noted that the area has been modified to suit the demand for tourist attractions and activities, which entails the displacement of the local working community to other areas: *"How often do you come to London? As little as I can. How come? Because it is not the London I knew. What is the London you knew? As a child I came here to the fruit market and it was hustle bustle (...) it was a very very busy working community (...) Everything was working; there was no tourism in Covent Garden. Busy busy, 5 o'clock forget about it, it's just, finished. The pubs were open all night (...); everything was different (Maurice, England)"*. The interviewee refers to the area's gentrification and the *'invasion'* of tourists that has had a defining impact on the area's nature, shifting from a busy local working community to what it is in the present day as a tourism precinct. Similarly, other interviewees often referred to the commercial origins of Covent Garden as a fruit and vegetable market place, concluding that its evolution as a shopping area for tourism has resulted in a loss of heritage as noted in the excerpts included in Appendix F.14.

7.3.4.1.5. Outdoor settings

57 interviewees indicated that they found Covent Garden similar to other historic precincts in the European continent. This hold a link with its perceived *'al fresco'* culture that provides it with a *'continental ambience'* due to the amount of cafes and restaurants providing outdoor seating facilities and the presence of street buskers as suggested by the following interviewee: *"What do you like the most about Covent Garden? I like the street entertainers so that's good, and Covent Garden is just a very nice area to be in a sunny day like this. What makes it nice? It's got a nice atmosphere with all the people in the streets, the entertainers, different things going on, the singers. It just makes a really nice atmosphere on a*

sunny day (...)It's a lot more outside based, whereas in other parts in London like museums you have to go inside whereas here there's a lot more going on in the street and also you get a lot more people taking part in the street entertainment and stuff like that. (Clive, England)".

This statement can also be associated with the perception of the area as a place for relaxation which was made evident throughout the fieldwork stage of this study as it was observed that throughout the day, tourists enjoy sitting on the pavements by the Piazza and watching street entertainment. These activities tend to be affected by adverse weather conditions, which were noted 29 times as a negative element of their experience of the city. However, one of these respondents (of the same name and nationality as the interviewee quoted above) praised Covent Garden because its narrow streets that in a way protects it's Piazza from the wind: *"What do you like the most about Covent Garden? The outdoor life, there are few places in England where you can have a sense of outdoor living, Covent Garden would be one of those few places (...) I think its different, the street theatre makes it different but I think as I already said that the main difference is this sense of being in the outdoors which is very continental but we can't do it in Britain because of the weather. Covent Garden being reasonably enclosed from the wind, it's more possible. (Clive, England)".*

7.3.4.2. Human based elements

This study has also found that the perception of the area is also deeply influenced by a series of elements associated with other tourists, such as their relaxed attitude when experiencing the precinct and their diversity which grant the area with a cosmopolitan ambience as discussed below.

7.3.4.2.1. Visitors and co tourism

The influence of other visitors in the area upon the tourists' perception of place was mentioned 75 times, with many interviewees noting that the number and variety of its visitors is both Covent Garden's charm and curse: it creates a lively atmosphere but also causes pedestrian congestion and overcrowding. It is

important to note, however, that overcrowding occurs mainly in the market place area due to the presence of street entertainers and the market's fully pedestrian periphery (See Appendix F.17. for evidence related to how other visitors affect the tourist's experience and perception of place). To a lesser extent, this is also the case in other locations where controlled vehicular traffic allows visitors to roam through their streets with more freedom.

It was also noted that many interviewees indicated that what they disliked about Covent Garden was the presence of 'too many tourists' decreasing their feeling of having an authentic experience of an area in London. However, some of these interviewees recognized themselves as part of that tourist crowd (refer to Appendix F.18). These respondents expressed that they did not enjoy the presence of other tourists, yet they enjoy its vibrancy and cosmopolitan feel as addressed in further sections. Furthermore, other respondents said that the increasing number of people congregating can impose an inconvenience to pedestrians, but they are part of the area's appeal motivating them to visit along with other aspects of the experiential opportunities available in the area (See Appendix F.19). Besides from providing the area's visitors with a sense of belonging to the crowd and a vibrant atmosphere, the presence of large groups of tourists was also assessed from a positive perspective because of its implications in terms of safety: *"I feel safe here even when there is people drunk or trying to pluck money or whatever, you know that there is a lot of security around here and a lot of different types of people and no one can really cause trouble because there are just too many people around so it has a fairly relaxed nature to it (Matt, England)"*.

7.3.4.2.2. Place for relaxation and pedestrianisation

Relaxation plays an important role on the visitor's experience of Covent Garden, as noted by 32 interviewees. This is also associated with the area's proximity to other main-stream tourist areas because tourists visit it to rest and make use of its resting facilities. The relaxing ambience of the area was often associated with the synergic relationship of different elements that characterise the area and lead to a relaxed ambience: *"Despite being very commercial at the same time it's very*

cheery, it's a chilling area. You can have a relaxed time here. Even when it's crowded with people you still feel a bit comfortable and cosy that's the best thing about Covent Garden, you can sit down. You feel comfortable just to sit and appreciate the area and the sun and hear the music people are playing. And just enjoy yourself without having to do shopping or to consume properly. Just relax. (Favio, Brazil)."

The latter interviewee recognises the area's vibrancy, crowdedness and high levels of activity; yet still perceives it as a suitable area for relaxation. In relation to this, many interviewees noted that the behaviour and pace of movement of Covent Garden's visitors are a reflection and consequence of the perceived relaxed nature of the area compared to other busy areas of London as indicated by the following statements:

"What makes this area different? The people's movement, there is something different in the way people walk, people walk like they are enjoying their time. In other places people walk maybe thinking in their jobs and what to do and more concentrated. Here people are more at ease. (Simone, Brazil)".

"Maybe that people are not in a hurry so much. Like in Piccadilly Circus or Trafalgar square, the proximity of those places makes a huge contrast between this place and those ones. Everything is going around there faster and faster and here people rather are looking for some rest, calming down, slowing down, sitting and just experiencing and thinking and hearing. (Horacy, Poland)"

Further evidence of this finding is included in Appendix F.15. The area provides a more relaxed urban setting which, as indicated previously, is related to the area's proximity to other popular areas for tourism in central London as tourists experience these busy areas and then visit Covent Garden to eat, drink, watch street performances and rest. It should be noted that with the exception of St Paul's Church garden, there are no free seating facilities that tourists can make use of for relaxation purposes. However, the shared and communal nature of relaxation and people '*spilling out onto the streets*' lead to human interactions and

a friendly ambience that is not normally found in other busy areas of central London as explained by some interviewees (further evidence in Appendix F.16).

The area was also often referred to as vibrant because of its large numbers of visitors, street performances in its main stream Piazza and the audiences they attract. Conversely, some interviewees also pointed out that they perceived the area to be quieter, providing them with an appropriate setting to relax. They perceive the area as such because the pace of movement of its visitors appears to be slower as they roam through it, enabling them to explore and assimilate the area's features. Similarly, an interviewee indicated that Covent Garden feels like a destination, as opposed to other areas where he feels he's just passing through them. And yet, many tourists visit the area, knowingly or unconsciously, because of its central location and proximity to other areas for tourism in central London. Although Covent Garden is perceived by some visitors as a '*stop over*' on their way to other areas or attractions, its different elements tend to engage them, having an effect on their pace of movement and activities they undertake. Activities related to relaxation were identified as important elements of the interviewees' experience of the area, and it was also noted by some interviewees that they expect every large city to have central urban precincts that provide relaxing settings to its visitors. However, Covent Garden's vibrancy, its large number of visitors leading to people congestion, particularly in its central areas, and the loud noise emitted by large groups of people and street buskers were also identified as important elements of its place making system, confirming the complexity of this case study.

Tourists roaming through the precinct, soaking up its atmosphere, the presence of street entertainers and the consequent attractions of large groups of audiences can all be directly related to the area's pedestrianised and traffic calmed streets. When asked how the visitors perceived Covent Garden to be different from other popular areas for tourism in London, a recurring answer related pedestrianisation and the range of human related activities that take place due to the lack of vehicular traffic. An interviewee interestingly noted that the area is indeed very

busy and loud, but what made it ‘special’ were the sounds generated by people and performers, and not by vehicular traffic, suggesting that part of the interviewees’ enjoyment of the area is related to its human feel.

7.3.4.2.3. Diversity and cosmopolitanism

Covent Garden seems to be an expression of London’s status as a cosmopolitan destination as noted by 15 respondents. This was supported by some interviewees who highlighted that the clustering of buildings in areas with rich heritage are an important motivational factor and critical element in their enjoyment of the city. On the other hand, the diversity of the visitors that lead to the vibrancy of these areas are an important pull factor attracting visitors from different backgrounds who add themselves to the area’s vibrancy, diversity and cosmopolitan ambience as observed by 31 interviewees. When asked about what they liked the most about the area, what they will remember the most and what is the first image that they associate it with it, some interviewees related their answers to the diverse and multi cultural nature of the range of the area’s visitors as noted by the following statement: “(...) *it is very cosmopolitan, that is what I like the most. Because you find different cultures and can meet people from various countries and you can immerse yourself in those cultures without having to visit them. For example here I can meet people from Europe or South America where I have never been but have kind of known of these places even though I have not been there, the cuisine for example, you can access places to eat in so many different places from all over the world. That’s what I like about it. (Angelica, Mexico)*”.

In relation to this, it was also noted that it is not only the number of people that congregate in Covent Garden that makes them an important place making element, but also the diversity of ages and nationalities that affects the visitors’ perception of place. The variety and numbers of visitors reflect other popular tourism precincts that attract high numbers of tourists such as Mayfair or the South Bank, further enhancing the ‘*London in a snapshot*’ appeal. However, and as noted before, the pace of movement of visitors in the area is slower, allowing

them to calmly perceive its built environment, the activities that take place and the diverse characteristics of their fellow visitors.

7.3.4.3. Activity based elements

Similarly to factors motivating tourists to visit the area and the experiences that they are engaged in, the area's commercial and cultural sectors have a strong influence on their perception of place as noted in the following sections.

7.3.4.3.1. Commerce and nature of shops

Shopping and other commercial activities have already been identified as motivations to visit and important parts of a large proportion of the interviewees' experience of place as noted by 192 respondents. From a perceptual point of view, the scale, nature, and contrast of the shops around Covent Garden, both in central and peripheral areas were identified by some of these interviewees as important elements that not only motivate them to visit the area but also play a considerable role in the area's sense of place. However, the commercial aspect of Covent Garden was questioned by some interviewees, who either recognised the importance of shopping in the area's place making system, but criticised the quality of products being sold, or believe that shopping is in itself a negative element of the area's place making system: *"It is very touristy. Lots of souvenir shops but again I understand people like these sort of things. They don't appeal to me but I understand why people like them (Simon, Australia). Oh it's just a bunch of commercial bull****. I detest the commercial side of it (David, US)"*.

On the other hand, it was also noted that the small scale of the shops constitutes a positive element, which harmonises effectively with the small scale nature of the area's urban features as mentioned in previous sections. *"England has gone in a way that there are all these shopping centres and things which are very uninteresting you can get the same shops anywhere all over the country. Whereas here, it's unique, the little shops. (Kathryn, England)"*. In relation to the small scale of the shopping infrastructure, some interviewees indicated that they dislike the presence of large shops such as HMV or Urban Outfitters, suggesting that the

area's small scale urban features and 'traditional' feel should be conserved by restricting the presence of generic and high profile brands (See Appendix F.20.). Many interviewees indicated that they enjoyed visiting the area because of its cosmopolitan ambience; and the presence of the variety of large and small scale shops adds to that atmosphere. In addition, and as indicated in previous sections, 'the mix of the old and the new' was identified as another positive element of the area's attributes. This indicates that there are contrasting opinions regarding how Covent Garden's commercial nature effectively influences the tourist's perception of the area.

7.3.4.3.2. Street busking and quality of performance

Even though street performance is exclusive to the surroundings of the market place area, it has already been noted that it is an important element of the area's place making system affecting its sense of place and motivating 27 respondents to visit as evidenced by the following interviewee: *"(People) go out of the box, right now you can hear the music for kind of a teenage market and it's just complete mix of people and mix of performing things. Last time I came I stood in the balcony and somebody was singing opera and there's the mimes. It's just the whole mix of... this is lovely, it's alive and open. (Marcia, South Africa)"*.

This was also associated with the variety of visitors that provide the area with a cosmopolitan ambience. It was also suggested that street performance may be of stronger appeal to the younger age groups, which has also been identified as an element of consideration influencing the visitor's perception and experience of the area as some interviewees perceived the market place area as 'young'. Some of these interviewees praised the presence of live street entertainment not only because it adds to the liveliness of the area but also because it makes it safer and helps the area's visitor to relax: *"I think it's always good to have an influx of artists, of people doing things on the streets, singing or presenting some type of art form like the magician or the juggler, especially when there are audiences around them, it makes it more cheerful. That also maintains a level of safety and makes you feel good. That's what generates the sense of being happy. In other*

parts of London everything is about everyday work, whereas here everything relaxes. (Enrique, Colombia)”.

This statement is of particular interest because it relates the presence of street buskers to the relaxed atmosphere of the area affecting its visitors pace of walk and attitude towards each other as noted in previous sections. Despite the positive elements cited by the interviewee in regards to the contribution of street performance to their perception of the area, other respondents were heavily critical. In some cases, they evaluated the nature of entertainment itself: *“The street entertainers are not always very good, they make a lot of noise and the people that watch them must be morons because it’s just rubbish (Keith, England)”*; whilst others reflected on monotony *“I have never really been into a couple of the consistent buskers. Some of them really drive me mad because they play the same s... all the time. Because it’s trashy in comparison to having high art you know? You have this low art and high art (...) I acknowledge that it’s acceptable because in the end, you need a balance of tackiness (...) But ultimately I would prefer (...) more traditional music (Krysia, Australia)”*.

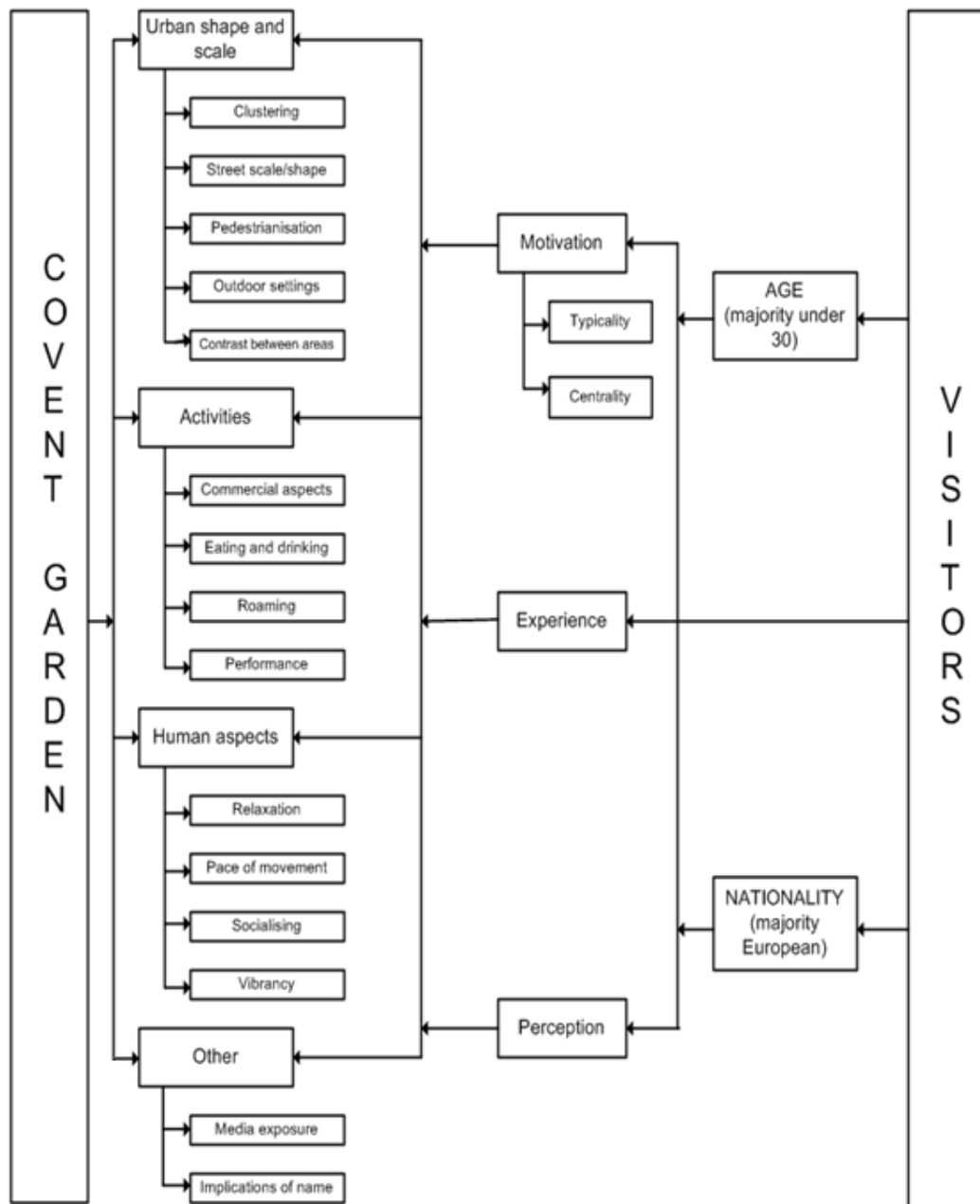
It is important to note, however, that both statements clearly illustrate how the personal background of the interviewees influences their perception of street busking. In the first case, the respondent belonged to an older age group and identified loudness as a negative element of the area; whilst the second interviewee is an entertainer herself and recognises that she has a preference towards high culture over popular forms of performing arts. On the other hand, another interviewee indicated that these buskers make their audiences ‘happy’ and contribute to the area’s relaxed ambience. Thus, and similar to the process of interpretation of the area’s heritage which is influenced by the individual’s background, the presence of street entertainers is interpreted subjectively by each interviewee, who regards them as either positive or negative elements of the place making system.

A final consideration related to activity based elements of the area's place making system is that they strengthen and complement one another, creating synergic relationships that provide the visitors with multifaceted experiences in the area: *"You get the opera singers inside, the street entertainers, you get so many different things going on you can just wonder (...) **What do you think is the most important thing?** I'd say they're all important because they all contribute to the others, lets say tourism contributes to the arts and the commerce contributes to that as well but then the arts contribute to commerce as well (Clive, England)".* In this sense, the network of place making elements and their interactions is evident, and are effectively regarded by the latter statement as a synergic partnership. Further sections addressing issues related to the Opera House's visitors will also present evidence of this synergic relationship as many interviewees indicated that even though they visited the area primarily to visit the Opera House, they also visited the area's shops and experienced street busking and engaged in other activities in the area.

7.3.5. Summary of relationships between place making elements in the area

Figure 7.6 below summarises the findings related to Covent Garden's perception and experience of place along with the interviewees' motivation to visit the area and media exposure that lead to preconceptions.

Figure 7.6 – Summary of relationships between place making elements in the area



The analysis of the interviewees' socio demographic characteristics indicated that the majority belonged to the younger age group below 30 years of age and that the majority of them were visiting from the European continent. As discussed in previous sections, the area's vibrancy and array of experiential opportunities were

identified by many interviewees as having a stronger appeal to a younger market, and the interviewees' nationality also plays a role in their perception and experience of place because they tend to relate the urban settings they visit to what they are familiar and unfamiliar with. In terms of the visitors' motivation to visit, it was interesting to note that 261 respondents were visiting the area willingly either because they perceived it to be a typical area to visit in London, or because of its convenient central location proximate to other tourist areas and attractions such as Trafalgar Square or the British Museum. On the other hand, other features of the area such as the activities that take place within it and human based elements that characterise it motivate them to visit and play an important part in their perception and experience of place along with media exposure (travel guides, film and literature) as well as the perceived presence of green areas because of Covent Garden's name.

In relation to the area's built environment, it is clear that the clustering of buildings, the streets' shape and scale that cater for pedestrian visitors and outdoors eating and drinking facilities also play an important role in the visitor's perception and experience of place. Nevertheless, Covent Garden is not experienced or perceived in the same manner throughout its different locations as some respondent's highlighted the contrast between its areas. In first instance, the market place area is characterised by the Market and the provision of street entertainment, which were referred to by an interviewee as '*tacky*'. On the other hand, peripheral locations such as Seven Dials are structurally different because of the smaller scale of its shops and narrower pattern of its streets, attracting a different set of visitors that in some cases are deterred by the crowds that tend to congregate in the main stream Piazza.

The latter point highlights the importance of variety of land use throughout different locations of the area, which are used and attract a contrasting set of visitors seeking different experiences that are concentrated within the precinct. The area's commercial sector is certainly strong with the presence of a variety of shops and Covent Garden Market at its core. Eating and drinking facilities also

succeed in attracting tourists given the outdoors continental ambience perceived by many interviewees that often experience the area by roaming and exploring it which is a phenomenon that is aided by the area's pedestrian streets. On the other hand, the cultural sector also proves to exert an important influence on the visitors' motivation to visit the area and their perception and experience of place, as many of the interviewees cited attending a performance as a motivation to visit and as street busking provides the area with a soundtrack and attract visitors that gather around them becoming place making elements themselves. Although this activity is exclusive to the surroundings of the piazza, it also highlights the importance of visitors themselves as place making elements which relate to human aspects exerting an important influence on the visitors' perception and experience of place.

Many interviewees cited relaxation as motivation to visit the area given its convenient proximity to other busy and popular areas and attractions for tourism along with the presence of eating and drinking facilities and street buskers that endow the area with a relaxing ambience. All of these elements along with its pedestrianised streets invite visitors to experience it through roaming and exploring it as indicated above, which lead many interviewees to note how *'there is something different about the way in which Covent Garden's visitors move'*. Their slower pace of movement also proved to exert a considerable role in their perception and experience of place, which many of them related to the social nature of the area. Its central location along with an array of eating and drinking facilities makes of the area a convenient place for socialisation attracting a variety of visitors and granting it with a vibrant sense of place. All of these relationships will be discussed in detail in the forthcoming chapter, and the following sections of this chapter will focus on the findings related to the flagship and how it influences the visitors' perception and experience of place as indicated below.

7.4. Findings related to the flagship

The third section of the interview enquired about the interviewees' perception of the flagship building and its relationship with Covent Garden as an area for

tourism and culture. This final section of the chapter presents the findings regarding the interviewees' age and origin influencing their perception of the flagship as an institution and as a building, as well as the dynamics between the flagship and the area in terms of its significance as an architectural artefact and a provider of culture.

Before presenting these findings, it is important to note that several interviewees connected their perception and experience of the flagship building with their socio demographic indicators, such as their age and nationality, suggesting that these findings are a suitable introduction to forthcoming sections. In first instance, it was noted that some ROH interviewees heard of the work of the Opera House and were interested in visiting it because of performers from their countries that worked for the flagship's company (full text in Appendix F.21). In addition, 34 interviewees noted that their countries of origin provide them with examples that make them compare the Opera House in Covent Garden to similar flagships in their own countries: *"I'm coming from a town where there is a brilliant Opera House (...) so I am interested in seeing other Opera Houses to maybe compare (Iona, Germany)"*. Another interviewee commented on national cultural values that are likely to spark an interest in certain art forms and in the buildings that host them: *"La Scala is the cradle of opera, so opera is part of Italian culture; it goes to all levels of society, not only from the top sophisticated educated people but to the lowest level. You see people that do simple jobs that love opera, that know by heart all the words of each opera. So its part of our culture. (Ricardo, Italy)"*. These statements suggest that the interviewees' country of origin influence their interest in certain art forms and make them compare venues for the performing arts with similar buildings in their home towns.

Conversely, the lack of cultural offer in some of the interviewees' countries of origin also constitutes an important consideration in their perception of the flagship, as another set of visitors expressed that their nationality makes them appreciate the Opera House, and London as a cultural destination, because of its rich cultural resources in terms of performing arts: *"I think it's a centre for*

culture and also for us, as tourists. In Thailand we don't have this much exposure. So coming to metropolitan city like this is a good opportunity for us to see and have a chance to listen and experience Opera Houses (Narn, Thailand)". This evidence indicates that the interviewees' country of origin makes them appreciate the Opera House because of its similarities and differences with what they know.

It was also evident that age plays a role in the interviewees' interest in the Royal Opera House, as noted by a small proportion of 11 interviewees. The majority of ROH respondents were over 60 years of age, and some of them recognised that the building may be of more interest to older generations: *"The Royal Opera House is not for pupils the age of my pupils, they are 14 years old so that is really too far off their world. They are too young. (...) they want to buy things, they want to go shopping and go home and say I bought this in London. (Danielle, Belgium)".* Further supporting this finding, another CG interviewee explained that he is open to the idea of experiencing these arts forms in latter stages of his life, but because of his young age he focuses on other art forms: *"It's something that I haven't gotten into yet. I'd like to be very culturally aware but probably as I age a lot older I will probably get into and go there but at the moment I'm into painting and things like that but it's probably something I will look into (Luke, under 30)".* The Opera House's initiatives to engage and deliver its cultural products to younger generations also emerged as an important finding of this study as addressed in further sections. Another interviewee explained how the empty nest stage of her life age improved her financial prospects and allowed for her to experience more expensive art forms, further illustrating the relationship between age and interest in the Opera House: ***"Why do you go to Opera Houses? Because I like opera, I retired in 2004 and I always went to the opera in Berlin but I decided to spread my wings and go to other places. Is this since you were a kid? No, since I retired in 2004, my kids are all grown up so I can spend my money on myself for a change and this is how I am spending my money (Anne, Ireland)".***

The next sections of this chapter will evaluate the visitors' perception of the flagship both as an institution and from its physical perspectives, as well as its importance to the perception and experience of Covent Garden as an area.

7.4.1. Perception

As indicated above, when enquiring about the influence of the flagship has upon visitors' perception and experience of the area, two perspectives emerged: one concerned with the flagship as a building and the other concerned with it as an institution. This suggests that a cultural flagship can be understood both as an architectural artefact and as a provider of culture. The following section focuses on aspects related to the visual appearance of the Opera House in Covent Garden first.

7.4.1.1. Physical appearance

The Royal Opera House's apparent visual concealment was mentioned 179 times, with a large proportion of CG interviewees noting that they could not identify the building despite its central location opposite the market: *"I was hoping to find grand architecture. Just the theatre and nothing else around it (...) I did not know where it was, I could not find the entrance (...) When my friend pointed it out to me I didn't understand because all I could see were shops and shops and shops and galleries and galleries and galleries and then a tiny door with its name on top. One has to read and look to find it (...) I thought I would see a grand theatre like on other parts of the world. You go to Argentina and you see that the Colon is there, you can't miss it, it's inevitable to see it. I looked for the Royal Opera House but I must confess that the first time I came to Covent Garden I did not realise it was here. (Silvia, Bolivia)"*. This statement highlights issues such as the clustering of buildings and commerce in the precinct. In addition, it contrasts the Opera House with other stand alone cultural flagships, which was a recurring issue that emerged from the data (55 interviews). This evidence suggests that London in general is not a monumental or formally planned city. In that sense, the perceived concealment of the Royal Opera House within a cluster of buildings and

use of land makes it more typical of London than a grandiose stand alone location would (See Appendix F.22 for further evidence of this finding).

Despite the apparent visual disadvantage that the geographical location of the building has, it was also found that many interviewees do not perceive a cultural flagship of this nature according to its visual traits but for its role as a supplier of culture. In this sense, even though flagship buildings can have a strong visual influence on the visitor's perception of an area, the case of Covent Garden and the Royal Opera House is different, with its architecture playing a secondary role in the significance of the institution: *"It's not just the building but what it represents, the art itself (...) To me it's more a matter of what it is but the building itself (Gerald, US)"*. These reflections were not only gathered in regards to the Opera House, but in more generic terms, to other flagship buildings, as another interviewee expressed that her favourite tourist attraction in London are the Houses of Parliament, *'not only because it's very impressive, but because it makes (her) think about the people that have worked there, and how hard they must have worked (Angelica, Mexico)'*.

7.4.1.2. Contrast with other stand alone flagship buildings

55 interviewees compared the Opera House to other flagship buildings. These comparative references were often from the interviewees' countries of origin as noted before, but a frequent example used was the Sydney Opera House. This case study is widely discussed in existing literature related to flagship developments, and it also emerged from the data when analysing the contrast of the Covent Garden Opera House with other flagship buildings:

"Obviously it is not quite as flamboyant as the Sydney Opera House (...) but people talk about the Sydney Opera House more because of its architectural features rather than what it actually means as an institution for the art of opera I guess. So I guess in many ways, ROH is probably the opposite case and it's a much more interesting place because of that. It's more about the performances that they give rather than the fact that it's a visual treat. That's not what opera is about; it's about the music and not about the building where it takes place (Mike, England)".

This point of view was also shared by another interviewee of Australian origin, who agreed that the advantage of the Opera House in Covent Garden over Sydney's Opera House is related to its functionality as a venue for performing arts even though its external appearance lacks the grandiosity of the former: *"(ROH) is an Opera House that works. The problem with the Sydney Opera House is that the acoustics is awful so they had to go back and refit it out to put good acoustics in, whereas CG was perfect from day one. There is no need for speakers or microphones because it is acoustically perfect (Erica, Australia)"*. 18 interviewees indicated that they appreciated the Opera House because of the high standard and quality of its productions over its physical appearance, and additional evidence that highlights the importance of quality of performances over the building's physical attributes is included in Appendix F.23.

It was also noted that the comparative references used to contrast the Opera House with other flagship developments were all free standing buildings as evidence by the following interviewee: *"I think when you have an Opera House you like to see a stand-alone building and you have some space around it so you can admire the architecture. Usually that's how they design them. (Nora, Hungary) **Would you change anything about the building?** In a simple way, absolutely like in Vienna the big Opera House, Staatsoper in Dresden is always big style, its single standing separately and here it stands in the middle of the big architecture group so maybe you could miss it if you go through the streets (Iona, Germany)"*. The latter statement once again introduces the notion of urban clustering affecting the visual significance of the case study flagship. Nevertheless, another CG respondent recognised that the clustering of buildings in London does not facilitate the establishment of cultural flagships in busy areas: *"I would give it more space so that people could visualise it and realise it's there (...) everything is a bit saturated. That's what happens in London, it's very populated, very saturated and I feel like one thing is on top of the other and if you removed the Royal Opera House and put it in the middle of a park like Regent's Park I think it would be more notorious. (Silvia, Bolivia)"*.

Similarly, another interviewee cited the case of the Royal Albert Hall and compared it with the Opera House in Covent Garden, concluding that its geographical location and free standing nature allows for the visitor's appreciation of its architecture. However, it is located in a fairly separated area of South Kensington, which was planned as a district for culture ('museum polis') and it was mentioned by other interviewees that the Opera House's central location effectively harmonises with the urban village characteristics of the area, and represents a valuable asset to its eclectic cultural offer: *"I think it's something quite special, the fact that it's sort of an integral part of the whole layout of the buildings. When they built it they could have flattened the whole area to have a free standing building completely distinct from all its neighbours but the fact that its kind of built into the network of streets and the building around the Piazza is something quite good. It's something quite London, working to an existing street layout or the foundations that have existed for hundreds and hundreds of years without sort of the North American principle that is knocking something down and building something new eradicating parts of history. They built it into the environment that it sits now basically (Mike, England)".*

The latter statement raises issues related to a second dimension by which the Royal Opera House is assessed by the interviewees, related to its historic significance for the area and its relationship with London's urban and cultural identity, which are findings addressed below.

7.4.2. The flagship as an institution

All the architectural and visual considerations presented above indicated that the Opera House is not only perceived and interpreted as an architectural artefact, but as a provider of culture attracting contrasting sets of visitors to the area. In this sense, it has been found that the Royal title of the institution has an impact on the visitor's assessment of the flagship, leading to perceptions of exclusivity. The institution's efforts to develop new audiences and to make opera and ballet accessible to the wider public have also emerged as important considerations to

understand its importance for the area and for London's cultural offer as discussed in forthcoming sections.

7.4.2.1. Implications of the name, elitism and exclusivity

Visitors outside the flagship building who indicated that they did not know where the Opera House was located were asked how they imagined a building called the Royal Opera House to be. The Royal status attached to the institution's name proved to exert an influence on the visitor's expectations of the building, with 35 of them using adjectives that illustrate the title's allusion to grandeur such as '*opulent*', '*magnificent*' and '*spectacular*'. This indicates that the flagship's name is interpreted literally, suggesting grandiose architecture to some interviewees. It was also noted, however, that the implications of the Opera House's Royal title were perceived as both positive and negative elements of the flagship as an institution. The positive connotations of the Royal attachment include the perceived association of the institution to the country's monarchic history and cultural agenda: "***Why have you decided to visit the Royal Opera House today? Because I love opera and I love ballet and I love history and I am a little bit of a royalist***" (Dean, England)". On the other hand, other interviewees indicated that the name is a signifier of social divide and exclusivity: "*I would change the name. I would make it the People's Republic Opera House. Why would you say that? I'm not a monarchist* (Pamina, Wales)".

Many interviewees perceived the Opera House's cultural products to be costly and inaccessible to a wider audience. Nevertheless, other respondents acknowledged that the institution's reputation is directly associated with the high quality of its performances, which entails higher costs of production and their subsequent impact on the price of its cultural offer: "*I can recognise why it has to be expensive. Opera is a very expensive art form to mount and to keep standards up with. But for most ordinary people, it's way out of one's pocket to come in regularly. We tend to go to opera in Birmingham and at the Warwick centre they have smaller productions coming around so we go there, but you can't compare it to this really* (Patricia, England)". These perceptions of exclusivity were not only

associated with the high cost of attending a performance at the Opera House, but also to its perceived concealment that lead some interviewees to tag it as an ‘uninviting’ building inaccessible to the average visitor: *“Does it look inviting? I can’t say. I don’t think it does, because there are no big open doors like in other places. Sometimes you walk in front of a shop and the doors are wide open so you know you can come in. I don’t see that here (Myriam, Canada)”*.

In most cases, the perception of the Opera House as a socially exclusive institution was regarded as a negative element of the flagship. However, and as will be addressed further on, this perception does not always carry a negative connotation, because it provides the area with the contrast and the ‘mix’ of elements that were identified in previous sections as motivators attracting visitors to the area: *“We walked around it today and it has been accused of being an elitist organisation for people that can afford it. The Opera House feels quite exclusive and elitist, but the actual area feels quite open and inclusive. And you got the market close to it, so you have quite a contrast in a small area (Anabelle, England)”*.

These considerations suggest that both the flagship’s name and its architectural design led many interviewees to perceive it as a socially exclusive institution. However, the educational initiatives undertaken by the Opera House aimed at developing new audiences and reaching disadvantaged sectors of the population also emerged as issues of consideration and proved to be effective means of improving the level of awareness of both the institution and its cultural products as indicated below.

7.4.2.2. Access initiatives and the importance of experiencing the flagship from the inside

“I’m always hoping that any theatre would reach to a large audience, not exactly to their principal audience which at this time they are cultured people that want to see ballet and opera and theatre of that nature, but sometimes it’s a very

limited crowd. I think once people get into it, they want to see it more (Katrina, US)”.

The previous statement is a suitable introduction to this section as it highlights the importance of audience development and reviews how it can succeed at generating awareness of the cultural offer of an institution and the provision of performing arts. In this sense, and considering the disadvantage that the flagship’s physical location imposes on the visual perception of the building, it was evident that the degree to which the interviewees assign importance to the Opera House is often directly associated with whether they have been inside the building or not: **“Do you think it’s an important element of Covent Garden? Not to me because I have never been there but I’m sure it is (Anna, Austria)”.** 23 interviewees expressed that the flagship is better perceived from the inside given its concealed outer appearance, confirming the importance of introducing the individual to the inside of the building in order to raise awareness of its significance and relationship with the area: **“Do you think it’s a powerful visual element of the area? I think it’s much more powerful on the inside than outside. Outside you don’t spot it immediately like La Scala in Milan for example. But inside it’s a great place (Ricardo, Italy). Inside it’s amazing, when you think of an Opera House you think of a glass dome or the actual theatre, I think it’s a much more internal image I get for when I think of ROH than the outside. So I don’t think it’s visually important to CG because I think it is quite hidden. (David, England)”**

The Opera House’s initiatives to engage a wider audience emerged from the data as some interviewees noted the positive experience provided by their discounted tickets for students, which made the respondent feel ‘special’. Another initiative aimed at social inclusion and increasing cultural awareness is the large scale relay of live performances in high profile public areas throughout the country. As illustrated in the narrative included in Appendix F.24, this scheme proved to be an effective means of engaging audiences that would not otherwise be interested in attending an opera or ballet performance. Nevertheless, the latter activity takes place outside the flagship building and as indicated above, the task of ‘bringing

people inside the building' is vital to increase their level of awareness of its presence in the area considering its perceived concealment amidst the area's urban clustering. In relation to this, the house is open to the general public during designated times when they do not require a ticket to go inside and make use of its facilities, which many ROH interviewees remarked as a good initiative, yet not widely known by the general public: "*I was pleasantly surprised when I found that I didn't need a ticket to come into the Opera House. It's a fantastic piece of architecture and a lovely building (Claude, France)*". "*I think it would be quite good if you had a few signs out. Maybe to draw more people in because I think people feel a bit worried about coming in. (...) (Roseanne, England)*" (further evidence of this is included in Appendix F.24). A total of 32 respondents made reference to the House's access initiatives.

Although the interviewees indicated that the activities that take place on stage is what they regard as the essence of the Opera House, the building's added services and facilities play an important role in the perception and experience of the flagship. ROH interviewees visited the Opera House to shop at its store, to book tickets, to make use of its eating and drinking facilities, to appreciate the view from its terrace and to attend its exhibitions, which confirms that the experience of the building is not only related to the direct appreciation of performing arts, but also to the provision of these services. In this sense, the experience of being inside the building to make use of any of them is likely to encourage attendance to a performance, which harmonises with the flagship's policies of education and audience development: "***Has your perception of the place changed now that you have been inside the building?*** Well now I feel like coming to watch a show because it's so pretty, and the decorations, the photos on the exhibition that we just saw about Robert Helpmann they make you want to come and experience that entire atmosphere live. (Angelica, Mexico)".

Some interviewees recognised that the area's visitors need to be introduced to the work of the Opera House in order for it to exert an influence on their perception and experience of the area. However, this discovery process can also work

conversely, with the flagship's visitors' discovery of the area and its many elements as an unexpected experience: *"I'm sure a lot of people experience Covent Garden because they come to visit the Royal Opera House. It draws people from around the world. As far as I understand it's a pretty well respected institution so I am sure a lot of people come specifically, those people who are really into opera come from all over the world for it and I imagine its reputation spread out further than Covent Garden itself so I imagine that people probably come to visit the Opera House and find Covent Garden a kind of unexpected jewel attached to the side of it (Mike, England)".*

This interviewee raises matters related to the two way relationship between the area and the flagship, as well as issues concerned with the social implications of an Opera House and its value for a cosmopolitan destination for tourism and culture. Given these considerations, the following sections will evaluate the dynamics and complex relationship between the area and the flagship.

7.4.3. Reciprocity between the area and the flagship

Many ROH interviewees referred to the Opera House simply as Covent Garden, as if they were synonyms: *"The words Covent Garden go with the Royal Opera House, everyone says Royal Opera House/Covent Garden. Or they say I'm going to Covent Garden or somebody is playing at Covent Garden but actually what they mean is the Royal Opera House (Dicle, Turkey)".* Appendix F.25 also illustrates the case of a ROH interviewee who refused to develop any views about the area itself, but asserted that the improved views of the stage were a positive result of Covent Garden's evolution (redevelopment). Likewise, other respondents who were interested in opera or ballet (or both) directly associated the area's history as a precinct for culture and the performing arts to the presence of the Opera House; and attempted to explain how the tradition of referring to both the area and the flagship indistinctively by the same name is passed on through generations: *"I suppose because people have enjoyed it so much throughout the years, everybody knows about it and programmes are kept, parents tell their*

children about going and grandparents talk about it and it's just impossible to imagine Covent Garden without the Royal Opera House (Maria, Ireland)".

Nevertheless, it is clear that this occurrence is more common amongst visitors that have an interest in the Opera House's cultural produce and belong to the older age groups as illustrated by an interviewee who associated her fondness and interest in the Opera House to her early exposure to its work (See Appendix F.26). This was explicitly acknowledged by another interviewee who recognised that the extent to which the Opera House exerts an influence on the visitor's perception and experience of place is directly related to their affinity with the arts: *"I don't think that the Royal Opera House makes Covent Garden. It does contribute but I would say it contributes to the people that are interested in arts. Like if you go to an Irish pub here in Covent Garden, I don't think those people care if there is a Royal Opera House or not. But for those people who are interested in the arts, definitely, it's a reason to visit Covent Garden. (Nicosia, Cyprus)".* In total, 130 CG respondents indicated that the area would remain the same without the Opera House at its core as indicated in the next section.

7.4.3.1. Covent Garden without an Opera House

In order to further evaluate the relationship between the Opera House and the area, the interviewees were asked to imagine how Covent Garden would change if the Royal Opera House was located elsewhere. Two very different perspectives were identified regarding this topic. The first one indicating that it would not change because of the many other elements of its place making system that attracts a wide array of visitors regardless of the presence of the Opera House: *"Do you think CG would be the same without ROH there? I probably have to say yes, I think it would probably be largely the same because most of the people that come here come just to experience CG itself. As I say there is obviously a sector of people who would come here for the Opera House but I think most people come here regardless of the Opera House which may or may not be a good thing. But I would probably end up coming here anyways even if the Opera House wasn't there. (Paul, England)".*

The latter statement highlights that personal interest in art is a crucial factor in the way the flagship is perceived by the area's visitors and the importance they assign to it; and it implies that the scope of amenities and attractions throughout the area would still provide different tourist experiences to its visitors even if the Opera House was located elsewhere. This was also noted by many interviewees who spoke of their perceptions and experience of the area and their reasons to visit; yet were unaware of the presence of the flagship building. It was also acknowledged by other interviewees who expressed an affinity for the arts but recognised that without the Opera House, the area would still attract visitors because of its commercial and entertainment related features (refer to Appendix F.27 for further evidence). Nevertheless, some interviewees thought that the provision of other facilities, attractions and amenities for tourism came as a result of the presence of the Opera House before the area developed into a precinct for tourism: *"If this wasn't here then probably the markets wouldn't be next door and it would probably still be a fruit and veg market. But this attracts customers from all over the world and they can come here for the culture and next door for a different level of entertainment (Laurence, England)"*.

There is on the other hand, another set of opinions, mostly from ROH interviewees that believe that the area would be missing a key element: *"It would be like someone without a soul I think. **And what would that be like?** Like anything that's soul less, not worth worrying about (Susie, England) I don't want to imagine. I think the Opera House is the heart of Covent Garden. The whole history of the Piazza is tied up and linked with theatres and the Opera House. If you take that away it would still have some interesting characteristics but I'm very biased, I think it's the heart of Covent Garden (Valerie, England) I think it would lose its heart really. **What makes it its heart?** It's the quality of entertainment and the international acclaim it has as an Opera House. And the people that it draws to the area from all over the world. That would change if it wasn't here (Andrew, Scotland)"*.

The latter statement suggests that an important element of the Opera House's relationship with the area is the influx of visitors that it attracts, adding to the cosmopolitan ambience that has been identified as an important place making element as indicated before. The findings related to the social dimension of the Opera House in Covent Garden will be presented in subsequent sections.

7.4.3.2. The flagship and the visitors it attracts

The importance of the Royal Opera House was not only evaluated on the basis of its architecture, but also in terms of the diversity of visitors it attracts: *"its part of the culture, the vibe around here. You know you get the people... there are different crowds I suppose that are made up of different people at different times and there is the Opera House crowd that comes at certain times to see the shows and those kind of people that (...) bring an element to the area which is kind of like the show kind of theatre going people and then there are the other kind of people that are here for the shopping and other kind of people that are here to spend a nice day outside. It all adds together to make it a cool vibrant place to be. (Ola, Poland). It brings a wonderful influx of people to CG. They come early but if they can't eat in the restaurant inside they come to CG and eat here, drink here, whatever or go shopping. I feel that it is like an oasis of creativity being manifested. So for me it's very magical (Krysia, Australia)".* Both interviewees recognised that time of visit is a factor to consider when evaluating the flows of visitors in Covent Garden attending a performance at the Opera House, suggesting that the flagship's social significance is not only related to the type of visitors it attracts but their time of visit. In this sense, the variety of visitors that are attracted to the area because of performing arts was also found to be a positive input of the Opera House upon some visitors' experience of place: *"The thing about Covent Garden is that it has its hours or so. Come in the twilight that's when the opera and theatre take over, and the ballet and things like that. (...) So that's when you have a different kind of person that comes from twilight. Different character of people that's what I like, the sort of changing hours of Covent Garden. (Alice, New Zealand)".*

7.4.3.3. Cosmopolitanism and the importance of an Opera House

As noted in previous sections, 15 interviewees indicated that they enjoyed visiting London and Covent Garden because of the diversity of visitors and cosmopolitan ambience. Opera is not an English art form, but many interviewees mentioned the importance of major flagship buildings devoted to the provision of performing arts for any large city, which adds on to their status as cosmopolitan destinations: *“Most large metropolitan cities have an Opera House of their own and that’s a mimic of London anyways, or Paris, New York (Alice, New Zealand) I think every major city really has an Opera House and because London is such a centre of the arts it needs to have one so in that perspective it’s a key thing to have. (Clive, England)”*.

It was also noted that the importance of an Opera House in cosmopolitan destinations is not only associated with the diversity of visitors that it attracts, but also to the practice of international artistic endeavours regarded as fine arts. A sense of national pride in the institution was identified amongst some domestic tourists, who praised the Opera House for being a leading cultural institution that represents the country globally: *“Do you think the Royal Opera House is an important element of the area? It’s an essential element of the area, of the nation’s life. Why do you think that is? Because I think culture matters and it’s very high in culture. Can’t say I’ve been to the Royal Opera more than once, opera isn’t my thing, but nevertheless you know... it’s as much of English national life as Lords, as Wembley and many other things. And the British Museum where we have been today (Clive, England)”*. *“It’s our heritage, I think it’s extremely important and it’s known world-wide and it attracts people from all over the world (Susie, England)”*.

The latter statements emphasise the relevance of the Opera House in Covent Garden not only for the area but for the country itself, which was also agreed by 36 other respondents who indicated that the Opera house can be seen as an English cultural asset. On the other hand, and confirming the statistical analysis that indicated that most ROH respondents were domestic visitors, an interviewee

observed that the Opera House has a greater appeal for domestic visitors and Londoners, and that commerce and other features of the area attract an international market: *“I don’t think people come to Covent Garden for the Royal Opera; I think they are more interested in the shops and the market. Maybe the Opera House interests more local people **Do you think the Royal Opera House is more for local people then?** Yes you don’t see tourists coming to London for opera. Maybe some sophisticated tourists (Jakob, Austria)”*. This notion was also noted by domestic visitors, who recognized their awareness of the Opera House because of their country of origin: *“**Do you think CG would be the same without ROH?** I think it would be because it’s tucked away in a corner and un less you know about it... most tourists don’t even realise there. I think it’s only because we are British that we know that. So I think you can quite easily miss it if you are an international tourist (Roshean, England)”*.

The local interest in the Opera House was expanded from different perspectives, relating it to the part royalty plays in the country and its role as a nurturer of culture: *“A big part of the English culture and identity has come from the arts and their attraction to the classics and I suppose their attraction to things Royal and things of I suppose what they might consider of noble state and the classics have an association with that and the Opera House represents that certain part of society (Christina, Ireland)”*.

Finally, and from a financial perspective, another domestic tourist mentioned the high cost of the flagship’s redevelopment scheme and his personal thoughts about it before and after personally seeing how these public funds where spent: *“**Is it how you were expecting it to be?** No, this has absolutely thrown me, it’s absolutely wonderful. When I saw how much money was spent here I thought it was wrong but coming in and seeing what they have achieved and perhaps the down side is that the public doesn’t know they can walk in and look. That is definitely a downside because people out there they come to the door, I said to my grandson I don’t think you can come in they will throw you out, it didn’t worry*

me. To be able to come and see this, I think they are doing themselves a big disfavoured by not inviting the public to look at it. (Maurice, England)”.

The statement shows that domestic visitors, regardless of their appreciation of opera or ballet have an awareness of the institution because of the amount of public funds spent on its redevelopment.

7.5. Conclusions

The variety of experiences throughout the area is clearly reflected in the variety of visitors that have been interviewed for this study and the range of views gathered in relation to their perception and experience of place, and how the flagship building influences these processes. The presence of a variety of shops, eating and drinking facilities in the area have been identified as motivational factors attracting visitors and having an impact on their perception of place because of their scale and diversity. Similarly, street performance exerts an influence on their motivation to visit and their experience of place. Furthermore, it encourages the gathering of large groups of audiences which become themselves an important factor affecting the visitors’ experience of the precinct and contribute to its lively and cosmopolitan ambience. The area’s pedestrian streets allow visitors to explore Covent Garden without fear of vehicular traffic which reflects on their slower pace of movement, and ultimately lead them to have a roaming based experience of the area associated with its perception as a resting place in central London. In relation to urban characteristics, the clustering of buildings and smaller scale of streets proved to exert a profound impact on the way visitors experience and perceive the area. However, it also affects their perception of the Opera House which appears to be concealed due to these clustered characteristics. Regardless of this, the Opera House is seen as a catalyst for the attraction of tourists that contrasts with those visitors seeking other experiences in the area. Whilst the Piazza and surrounding areas are popular amongst younger, international visitors; the Opera House is visited by an older and domestic set of visitors, which effectively contribute to the area’s cosmopolitan ambience and diverse sense of place. It is also evident that, the flagship can also be seen as a national asset

considering its reputation as a highly regarded provider of culture. This reputation has little connection to the building's architectural features that lack the monumental characteristics that are stereotypically attached to the concept of an Opera House.

All these considerations suggest that the many elements effectively influencing the visitor's perception and experience of the area interact synergistically with one another, as the experience of visitors seeking high culture is influenced by the presence of shops and street entertainment for example. Adding more complexity to this case study, the individual's personal background such as age and origins play a pivotal role in their processes of perception and interpretation. The data also suggests that older visitors seek deeper cultural experiences as they adopt an inquisitive approach to exploring the precinct whereas younger visitors are focused on experiencing more, but from the surface as developed in the next chapter. In this sense, the next stage of this study consists of relating these findings with the theoretical framework established in the literature review regarding the cultural tourist, the experience of cultural tourism, urban areas for tourism and culture and flagship developments in these areas. This will lead to the identification of gaps in existing knowledge regarding the well established precinct for tourism and the impact that the redevelopment of historical cultural flagships exerts on the area's visitors.

8. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

8.1. Introduction

Given the overall aim of this study that explores the influence of the Royal Opera House as a cultural flagship on the tourist's perception and experience of Covent Garden as a precinct for tourism and culture, the purpose of this chapter is to identify overarching themes and patterns on the basis of the findings presented in the previous chapter, as well as discussing their implications. This discussion will focus on the visitors' socio demographic characteristics and their impact on their motivation to visit, their experience of place, levels of cultural awareness and connectivity with the site. Subsequently, findings related to the area's environment will be discussed, focusing on the contrast between perceptions gathered throughout different locations. Finally, the findings relating to the flagship will be revisited, with a focus on its physical appearance as a building and its significance as an institution for the area and the destination.

8.2. Visitors

8.2.1. Background - Age

A large number of visitors of different socio demographic profiles were interviewed throughout a variety of locations in the area. In relation to these profiles, the interviewees' age is an indicator of consideration given its influence on how tourists perceive and experience the area. As indicated in the findings chapter, the majority of CG interviewees were under 30 years of age, and ROH respondents were mostly over the age of 60, suggesting that the flagship has a stronger appeal to the older generations whereas the array of experiential opportunities found throughout the area tends to attract younger visitors. These opportunities consist mostly of shopping, eating and drinking, socialising and the consumption of popular forms of art such as street busking. Some CG interviewees indicated that they engage in these experiences unexpectedly as they roam throughout the area, highlighting the importance of exploration in their experience of place. This exploratory experience of place is also associated with their age, as many respondents noted that they are more receptive of their

surroundings when they are older, seeking more inquisitive and informative tourist experiences, which can also be understood as deeper as illustrated by the following statement: “*Do you think London has changed since? No, we have changed (...) We are more micro, looking more micro(in) more detail (Rene, 50-59).*”

The older CG and ROH interviewees were more likely to visit specific attractions in the area, whether it was the Opera House, St Paul’s Church or attending a performance elsewhere. Younger CG interviewees were likely to cite more than one motivation. They perceive the area as a whole and not as a cluster of sites of interest, leading to more varied experiences. This data suggests that visits to specific attractions are more likely to be purposeful, as opposed to the experience of Covent Garden’s shops and street performers which result from roaming, exploring and discovering the area. However, and as indicated above, the older age groups are more likely to roam and explore the tourist precinct, soaking in its atmosphere and discovering its opportunities instead of “*running from one place to the other*” and “*ticking boxes*” when they are younger. A possible explanation is that older visitors are more experienced and better travelled, which leads them to have deeper, more informative and inquisitive experiences. In some cases, they have already experienced the most notorious areas and attractions of a destination and its’ precincts. An inexperienced tourist, likely to belong to a younger age group, tends to visit the most notable attractions and areas for tourism as indicated by travel guides and other forms of media. For example, many CG interviewees stated that although they were not drawn to the area for a specific reason, they wanted to visit it because it is the setting of the musical film *My Fair Lady*.

Similarly, the market place area and the street entertainers are also often mentioned in travel guides and other media. These attractions serve as signs and markers, as suggested by MacCannell (1999), and succeed in attracting a set of visitors that are not driven by a strong interest or motivation other than getting to know these high profile sights/sites. The more experienced and older travellers tend to explore lower profile experiential opportunities by roaming around the

area and discovering unexpected features, described as “*gems off the beaten track*”. They seek a deeper understanding of place once they have experienced the typical and main stream aspects of a precinct, leading them to more informative experiences. The more informative nature of the older tourists’ experience of place is illustrated by interviewees in cultural attractions such as the Opera House or St Paul’s Church being more inquisitive about the sites’ heritage and history. Similarly, older interviewees tended to develop more elaborate and explanatory accounts of their perception of place in terms of the area’s history and heritage, indicating the importance of their previous knowledge of place in their present perception and experience. This knowledge is acquired through previous visits, confirming that older visitors are more likely to have gathered these experiences leading them to seek more exploratory, informative and inquisitive experiences of a precinct.

8.2.2. Depth of experience

Multi sensory consumption plays an important role in the visitors’ experience of place, as senses are stimulated by sights, sounds, fragrances and other sources of sensorial stimulation throughout the tourist precinct. However, this study indicates that a deeper tourist experience consists of not only perceiving these stimuli, but proactively reacting to it in an inquisitive manner. This is evidenced by some interviewees who not only perceived the physical presence of St Paul’s Church or the Opera House, but entered their premises and learned about the sites. This suggests that the notion of a ‘deep’ tourist experience can be directly associated with the act of physically penetrating into a space and reacting to the sensorial stimuli by proactively seeking to learn about it. Conversely, other CG visitors were mostly driven by their eagerness to visit the attractions noted in a guide book (sightseeing tourists - McKercher and DuCros, 2002, Browsers – Hayllar et al, 2008). Their lack of knowledge of the city makes them seek typical experiences of it as a destination. Once this need has been fulfilled, they explore other opportunities as they become older and more experienced. The surface approach to visiting an urban precinct evidenced in younger interviewees can be understood

as a ‘shallow’ tourist experience, as it entails low levels of reaction to the precinct’s sensorial stimuli.

It is clear that the eclecticism of the area has an appeal for visitors of a variety of backgrounds and cultural motivations, as expressed by the following interviewee: *“What brings you to Covent Garden today? Because of all the theatres around, the market as well, the little shops and there’s always something to look around like performers and all that it’s just really relaxing (Maya, Mexico)”*. All these experiential opportunities related to leisure are compressed in the area in different forms throughout its different locations. For example, the Opera House and St Paul’s Church are located in the Piazza, attracting tourists that seek cultural experiences. The market place and the areas designated for street entertainment are located in immediate vicinity attracting sightseeing visitors focused on leisure and entertainment. Some CG interviewees indicated that they visited the area unknowingly because of its proximity to other popular areas or attractions. However, this did not mean that they had a shallow experience of place in all cases, as many of them praised the area for its unexpected features and array of experiential opportunities, as expressly suggested by the following statement: *“I was passing through here, I didn’t even realised this was a specific area. I just sort of wandered through and I have seen... very interesting, very different, very unique I have to say I very much like it’ (Michael, US)”*. These visitors can be understood as serendipitous tourists (McKercher and DuCros, 2002).

Conversely, many culturally motivated ROH interviewees expressed reluctance to experience any other features of the area. Hughes (2000) proposes that these arts orientated visitors can be arts core or arts peripheral depending on their likelihood of engaging in other experiences that may result from their visit to a destination or an urban precinct. Although some ROH interviewees praised the area for its eclecticism, older interviewees appeared to be purposeful and arts core given their unwillingness to experience the area as illustrated by the following interviewee: *“I’m sorry; nowadays I simply come here for the opera and then make my way back to my village outside Cambridge. Being retired (...) just going around*

looking at things that you may or may not want to buy is not something that interests me particularly. I think it would probably interest the much younger rather than the retired population (Anna, over 60)”.

This indicates that the area is appraised from many different perspectives that lead each interviewee to have individual perceptions and experiences of the precinct and the flagship. However, the area’s commercialisation and vibrancy deters tourists seeking deep cultural experiences, who limit their visit to a specific attraction which may impose a restriction to the learning process of discovery of place through roaming and exploring it. All these considerations indicate that the variables to consider the tourist’s experience of place are not only their level of motivation or depth of experience, but also their willingness and likelihood of being engaged by unexpected features and experiential opportunities. Although older visitors are more willing to undertake this exploratory consumption of place because of their previous knowledge of the area, it is evident that their age may also diminish their willingness to do so.

8.2.3. Background – Nationality and cultural distance

Many ROH and CG interviewees associated and evaluated different aspects of the area according to the similarities and differences that they hold with their places of origin. Their level of familiarity with certain elements of the area play a pivotal role in their enjoyment of place as they are either attracted or deterred depending on their previous experiences. This was also the case for their views and perceptions of the flagship, as many of them cited venues for the performing arts from their own countries as examples of their expectations of an Opera House. Similarly, they praised it as a building and as an institution because of the lack of cultural resources of this nature in their own countries: *“Its historical significance is the primal thing, especially coming from the US where there isn’t any history. So the cultural significance of the building and what it represents (Doron, US)”*. This indicates that the interviewees’ interpretation of place can be the result of sensory perception that interacts internally with the filter of their own cultural values. This process is directly associated with the individual’s background, as

some are excited about the new and unfamiliar whereas others escape it. Visitors evaluate a tourist precinct according to the values determined by their previous experiences which can be linked to their age, their nationality, their previous travelling experience, their level of education and other socio demographic variables which are pivotal elements that constitute the filters that ultimately determine their appraisals of place and influence their perceptions and experience of it.

McKercher (2002) suggests that visitors from culturally distant regions will seek to have deeper experiences of place because of their desire to gather novel knowledge and experience unfamiliar cultures. Conversely, he proposes that the culturally proximate domestic market for tourism will tend to focus on experiences based on leisure and entertainment as they are already acquainted with the cultural aspects of a precinct and arguably *'take them for granted'*. However, according to these results, the interviewees' cultural values may attract or deter them from certain elements of the area that lead to their processes of perception, experience and enjoyment of place as noted above. But their level of cultural awareness and motivation to visit will also play a fundamental role, which are also underpinned by their personal background through the process of cultural appraisal that determine their preferences. This is evidenced by the Opera House's stronger appeal to domestic visitors, who almost in all cases expressed a keen interest in opera and ballet. Likewise, international ROH interviewees indicated that they visited the flagship because of their enthusiasm for high arts. In both cases, they used their cultural awareness to evaluate the importance of the Opera House for the area, the city and the country. Their personal interest in these forms of arts was to an extent influenced by their origins, but other variables such as previous exposure also intervene in this process *"I was taken to dancing classes by my mum"* (Janet, over 60). This is also notable in that opera and ballet are not English art forms, but the Opera House's interviewees were mostly domestic visitors with a fondness for these art forms. Conversely, many international CG interviewees indicated that they focused their visit on leisure, entertainment and relaxation.

The contrasting appraisal processes that take the individual's cultural values to evaluate what is perceived are more closely related to the tourist's connectivity with a site (Timothy, 1998), indicating that the interviewees' interpretation of the area and the flagship is indeed determined by their cultural values. However, these cultural values are not only related to the interviewees' origin, but to personal preferences determined by past experiences and exposure to culture as illustrated as follows: *"My parents, we went to the Opera House a lot at home, we visited some museums too, planetariums. And nowadays we also take our grandsons (Norma, over 60) I was brought up on a lot of ballet and a lot of opera. I saw a lot of that when I was young" (Dean, England)".*

8.3. Environment

8.3.1. Sub-areas within the precinct

The findings indicate that the area can be viewed from different perspectives as suggested by the literature reviewed in chapter 3. These are related to the contrast between the area's central and peripheral locations, and their corresponding use of land and urban characteristics that attract different types of visitors. As indicated before, the socio demographic profiles of ROH and CG interviewees differed considerably. These differences were not only identified in the types of visitors that agreed to be interviewed, but also in their insights regarding their perceptions and experience of the area. The interviewees approached in the Piazza tended to focus on the provision of street entertainment and commerce. On the other hand, those interviewed in St Paul's Church held the area's heritage as central to their perceptions of place. Those interviewed in peripheral locations such as Seven Dials referred to the small scale of the area's streets and buildings. This indicates that there are different qualities and characteristics present to different extents throughout the area's locations, exerting an influence on the visitors' perception and experience of place to different degrees. These qualities, identified as urban characteristics, human based elements and activities that take place; vary considerably from one interviewing location to the other. For example, the market place is an open area surrounded by large buildings, street entertainers and outdoor eating and drinking facilities. Conversely, Seven Dials, Broad Court and

St Martin's Lane are surrounded by narrow streets where the shops are of smaller scale and a theatre can be found in each location. In this sense, Covent Garden can be understood as a multifaceted precinct characterised by the compression of a range of attractions that act as catalysts for tourism. Given the contrasts between its different locations, it is not feasible to treat it as a single urban unit in central London in terms of perception and experience of place. As an interviewee stated: *"I kind of think about it as two separate areas almost. I think around Seven Dials are people who work and live in London and kind of know what they are doing (...) Its people just stopping and having coffee with their friends whereas when you are going towards the market its just tourists hanging out and its people who have come to their day trip in London almost on holiday, its a bit more tacky"* (David, England). An urban precinct's uniformity often leads similar studies to treat these areas as a whole (Hayllar and Griffin, 2005). However, Covent Garden's different locations are characterised by different features that provide different experiences and stimulate the visitor's senses in different ways. This indicates that if a tourism precinct of this nature is treated as a single urban unit, its understanding is limited and superficial; and that its diversity is part of its appeal.

The area lacks a sense of coherence and uniformity between its locations despite the ring of major roads that clearly limit it. Many of these locations present characteristics that hold a closer resemblance to adjoining areas when contrasted with the Piazza. For example, the peripheral Seven Dials is more similar to the adjoining Soho than the market place area. The lack of coherence between these locations throughout the area is also notable in some interviewees' enjoyment of place. Many CG interviewees indicated that they enjoyed the vibrant ambience of the Piazza whereas others were deterred by it and preferred the less busy and smaller in scale peripheral locations. However, the most prominent attractions attached to the area's name, the market and the Opera House, are located in its Piazza. Many tourists interviewed in peripheral locations were unaware that they were visiting Covent Garden, especially those who found their way from an adjacent area. This evidence suggests that tourists seeking London's most

prominent areas and attractions for tourism tend to limit their visit to the market place area, where the market, the Opera House, the tube station and the Opera House are located. These serve as the most important markers attached to the area which attract sightseeing visitors, but they are limited to the Piazza and its surroundings attracting browsing tourists (Hayllar et al, 2008).

8.3.2. Relaxation and performance

Many casual and serendipitous interviewees indicated that the area's perceived relaxed ambience encouraged them to use it as a resting spot and explore it in some cases. However, it was also praised for its vibrancy aided by the presence of street performers that contribute to crowdedness in its popular market place area. Regardless of this, its visitors 'warm up to it and enjoy visiting because of its human feel' (Aldous, 1992). This perception is not associated with the provision of facilities aimed for the purpose of relaxation such as benches (both of which are only present in St Paul's Church). It is the human aspect and the social interactions that take place which visitors find relaxing. As many CG interviewees noted, the visitor's pace of movement is slower compared to other nearby busy areas such as Mayfair or Westminster, which makes them relax: *"there is something different in the way that people move in Covent Garden (...) (its visitors) are not so much in a rush, but assimilating the area' (Dicle, Turkey)"*

This indicates that the experience of relaxation in Covent Garden does not only entail sitting down or consuming food and drink, but it acquires a more complex perspective. It involves a slower pace of movement facilitated by the area's pedestrian streets that also allowed some interviewees to experience the area by roaming, exploring and discovering it. These exploring tourists are 'looking for the unexpected discovery and the chance of encounter (they are) rather serendipitous, wandering aimlessly but with hope (Hayllar et al., 2008:55). Many tourists interviewed contrasted this pace of movement to other adjoining areas for tourism where it was noted that people's pace of movement was faster, as illustrated by an interviewee: *"When you are in other parts of London, people are always going somewhere, going to do something, always focused. Whereas here*

you feel like people are relaxed and enjoying their walk. (Silvia, Bolivia)". The visitor's slower pace of walk, therefore, can be understood as a 'touristic choreographed movement' (Edensor, 1998:114) which has a profound effect on the area's sense of place and on the way its visitors perceive and experience it. This choreographed movement provides visitors with a range of cues and patterns of behavior that engage them and encourage them to become an active part of a ritual, in what appears to be a process of influence and imitation as tourists follow each others' cues (pace of movement for example). Tourists in the area influence each other's behavior subtly whilst taking part in these unspoken rituals that engage and lure other tourists to participate. This phenomenon is related to how its visitors behave and the impact that this behavior has upon its distinctiveness. When they roam through it, they are not only gazing or exploring (Urry, 2002), but they are effectively performing and becoming a fundamental element of its place making system.

All of the aspects mentioned above are closely related to the area's pedestrian streets, indicating the importance of vehicular traffic engineered in a way that visitors are free to roam through its streets (Aldous, 1992). This is one of the area's most recognised and distinctive urban characteristic which provides a sense of freedom to the visitor, a lack of fear of vehicular traffic leading them to perceive that the streets are theirs. According to these findings, some interviewees embrace this freedom by roaming, exploring and discovering the area, which also proves to enhance the interviewees' experience of place because it strengthens their 'degree of communication with other people', identified by Graefke and Vaske (1987) as a fundamental aspect of a tourist experience (as cited in Ryan 2002a). The notion of co tourism suggests that the individual's experience of place is to a considerable degree affected by other tourists' attitudes and experience of a tourism precinct. This is the case in Covent Garden, as many interviewees attributed its perceived relaxed ambience to the slower pace of movement and relaxed attitude of others. The presence of street entertainers around the market place area actively contributes to its relaxed ambience of leisure as well. These street performances can be linked to the 'rituals' which play

pivotal roles in the tourist's experience of place (MacCannell, 1999). In this case, the notion of ritual acquires two dimensions. The first focuses on the performers who ritually deliver an artistic product repeatedly and within a designated space. Secondly, the tourists who communally gather around them, in some cases pay for their songs and celebrate their performance. This indicates that the ritual of street performance engages its audience and makes them an active part of it. These spectators experience a sense of belonging as they become an active element of a ritual that characterises the area, providing them with a stronger degree of communication with other spectators and the performers themselves: *"Today there was this person who was playing the guitar and just singing and everyone was just standing there watching him. It's different from the usual Londoners that are just rushing around everywhere. People are just spending time enjoying and relaxing"* (Guy, 40-49). This can also be related to Canniffe's (2006) views on monuments around which tourists manifest common behaviour. It is interesting to note that street performance and consumption are concentrated around the market place. In this sense, Covent Garden Market can be viewed as a monument because of the activities that take place around it influencing the tourist's perception and experience of place along with their behaviour as they become active parts of tourist rituals.

8.3.3. People as place making elements

Novel forms of cultural tourism provide active experiences for the user, relying on intangible elements to engage them (Smith, 2007a). In this case, these intangible elements are the sense of belonging and acceptance that this audience experiences when they become part of the shows. They are stimulated by sounds of music and applause, partly generated by themselves, which have an important influence on a precinct's atmosphere and have implications on its perception as a place for leisure and relaxation (Arkette, 2004): *"The people. I love it because people are singing. There's action, it's not boring"* (Carol, Student). Although some interviewees indicated that they disliked the crowds produced by street entertainment, they felt part of them as visitors themselves. In this sense, people play a fundamental role as place making elements of the area. These crowds also

contribute to the area's safety, strengthening its perception as a place for relaxation. Considering the positive and negative implications of crowds, it is evident that the interviewees determine optimal levels of crowdedness (social carrying capacity - See Lopez-Bonilla and Lopez-Bonilla, 2008) which emphasise the advantages (safety in example) and diminish the disadvantages (difficulty to walk): *"Is there anything that you would change about the area? 50% of the tourists. But they are allowed to come as much as we do"* (Erica, Australia). It is important to note, however, that many tourists, particularly those interviewed in cultural attractions such as St Paul's Church and the Opera House, were heavily critical of the nature of street performances and the crowds that they attract. In any case, the presence of street entertainment, whether enjoyed or not, was acknowledged by a significant number of interviewees. This indicates its importance as a place making element of the market place area and it acquires a deeper importance from a social perspective because it acts as a catalyst of social interactions and sensorial stimuli for the area's visitors. However, it is also important to reiterate that the area's different locations are characterised by very different features, and street entertainment is exclusive to the mainstream area surrounding the market.

From a different perspective, the visitor's enjoyment of the area was often associated with its perceived cosmopolitan ambience. Hannerz (1996) conceptualises cosmopolitanism as 'an orientation, a willingness to engage with the other (entailing) an intellectual and aesthetic stance towards divergent cultural experiences (and) a search for contrasts rather than uniformity' (as cited by Binnie et al., 2006:103). In this sense, the many elements of the area that attract a contrasting variety of visitors not only contribute to the area's vibrancy but grant it a cosmopolitan atmosphere. These visitors are not only engaged by this sense of place, but also feel like active parts of it, relating to feelings of belonging indicated before. They become the fundamental elements that make the area distinctive (Edensor, 1998), which results in a stimulating and positive experience of place. In this sense, the notion of co tourism can once again be effectively applied to this case study as many interviewees' perception and experience of

place was directly influenced by other tourists and their diversity. This effect is not only achieved by the mingling of visitors of many nationalities, but also of different age. *'The mix of the old and the new'* was not only frequently regarded as positive characteristic of the built environment, but also in terms of the range of ages of the area's visitors. "A mixture of old and new architecture, a mix of range of people, very cosmopolitan but quite nice old fashioned" (Phil, Wales)". This indicates that a 'cosmopolitan ambience' involves two dimensions. The first concerned with its tangible elements, the al fresco cafes and the distinctive village-like built environment for example. The second dimension relates to intangible elements such a diverse, relaxed and vibrant atmosphere, the sounds emitted by street entertainers, the assortment of visitors and their slower pace of movement that make them interact.

The enjoyment of the area because of the diversity of its visitors increases the opportunity to use and acquire cultural capital from a tourist experience (Harvey and Lorenzen, 2006). In this sense, the tourist's performance has implications for the area's distinctiveness, other tourists' and their own enjoyment of place. This indicates that a tourist precinct is socially constructed rather than being 'out there' (Blunt and Rose, 1994 in Hayllar et al., 2008). It is important to highlight that these precincts tend to be enjoyed by tourists that seek conviviality and value the presence of others as an important element of their collective experience of place (Urry, 2002). Although crowds were acknowledged and recognised by many ROH and CG interviewees as an important element of the area's place making system, this study has also identified 'romantic gazers' who appreciate solitude, privacy and intimacy with what is visited as evidenced by the following statement: "***What have you enjoyed the most about your trip? The city at night and along the river What about it at night? The fact that it's empty, so it's mine essentially*** (Guy, England)". This is also associated with the interviewees' age and past experiences, as the majority of ROH respondents were older. It is evident that youth equates to speed, rushing around and ticking boxes in tourist agendas. As they grow older and gather more tourist experience, they seek quietness and sites

that represent intimacy and substance. Hence, these flagship visitors can be understood as ‘romantic’ gazers.

8.4. Flagship

8.4.1. Stereotypical views of Opera Houses

Many CG and ROH interviewees expressed preconceptions of what an Opera House should look like. As indicated before, many of them used venues for the performing arts from their own countries as examples of these expectations. They pointed out that the notion of an Opera House is associated with grandiose architecture and free standing buildings, as well as their detachment from entertainment districts and popular culture: “*Considering I’m from Italy I just find out that that’s the Royal Opera House and it doesn’t look like an Opera House should look like*’ (Angelo, Italy)”. Monumentality, then, is directly associated with the notion of an Opera House. However, as will be discussed further on, it is important to emphasise that the difference between a monument and a flagship relates to both significance and functionality. In this sense, the Royal Opera House is a peculiar case study. It is perceived as one of the country’s most elitist venues and is widely recognised for the world class quality of its performances. And yet, it is located at the core of an urban precinct characterised by its strong commercial sector, the celebration of popular forms of art and is perceived and experienced as a place for leisure and relaxation. Furthermore, the royal attachment of the institution’s name also made some interviewees expect an opulent, free standing building that would project a majestic image. In this sense, the concept of cultural flagship has visual and literal implications.

Cultural flagships tend to be stereotyped as free standing buildings with opulent architectural features, often located in urban areas that may or may not also serve as tourism precincts (the Royal Albert Hall for example). But the spaces they occupy and the area’s morphology assign the status of flagship to a building. The British Museum is another flagship building of interest in this regard because its surrounding urban environment speaks of rich heritage amidst narrow streets and urban density. A large courtyard paves the way for the museum, drawing attention

to the building by allowing the visual perception of its distinctive and monumental architecture. The urban density of the area prevents the visual perception of the Opera House in Covent Garden despite its extensive redevelopment programme. Its potential influence upon the area's visitors' perception and experience of place is directly affected by the building's subtle physical presence. However, the visitor's cultural motivations play a pivotal role in the process of assigning meaning to this institution and its relevance to the area.

As indicated in chapter 5, the Opera House's re development scheme considered relocating the institution to a different area where a free standing building could have been built for a lesser cost. But this alternative was rejected due to the flagship's historical attachment to the area, which is evident in the fact that many ROH interviewees refer to the Opera House simply as Covent Garden. Regardless of this, the redevelopment scheme acknowledged the importance of monumentality as a trend in flagship developments. It succeeded in providing the building with a distinctive front that responds to the '*mix of the old and the new*' with the restoration of the steel glass made Hamlyn Hall along with the preservation of the Corinthian columns of the original theatre. Regardless of the free standing grandiose stereotype of flagship developments, current trends and practice in the development of these buildings can celebrate their heritage whilst embracing modernity to bring them up to the millennium as illustrated by the following statement: *"I think up until twenty or thirty years ago, if anyone thought about an Opera House, they would think of something Victorian or Edwardian that sort of style. But I think in the last twenty or thirty years there have been a lot of those types of buildings that have been rebuilt, reconditioned or architecturally redesigned. So now I think the scope is completely open for all sorts of different types of architecturally interesting designs for buildings of an entertainment nature whether its culturally high brow or whether it's just a cinema multiplex It has been blown wide open over the last twenty or thirty years and there's a lot of innovative designs in architecture, specially for entertainment (Matt, England)"*.

8.4.2. Significance

As stated above, many ROH interviewees use the term Covent Garden to refer to the area or the flagship indistinctively, indicating that for them, that is what the area consists of. This is also evidenced by many of them visiting the area exclusively for the Opera House and they feel a sense of attachment to it because of their strong interest in opera and ballet. Conversely, other CG interviewees indicated that for them, the area represents commerce, leisure and relaxation. Their dismissal of the flagship's cultural input relates to the Opera House's lack of visual appeal and more importantly, because they are not interested in high forms of art. It was expected that the considerable contrast between the interviewees' appraisals of the importance of the Opera House in their experience of the area would be directly related to their interest in opera and ballet. In one case, the majority of ROH interviewees and some CG respondents regarded it as an essential element of the cultural offer of the area and the city. On the other hand, a considerable majority of CG interviewees highlighted that given the building's subtle physical presence and the wide array of experiential opportunities in the area, the Opera House does not exert an important influence in their perception and experience of place. These contrasting points of view are firmly subject to their interest in the art forms that the Opera House produces and delivers to its receiving audience, as indicated by a respondent: "***Do you think the Royal Opera House is an important element of the area? Maybe for many people but probably not for me, because I'm not so much of an arts person (Colin, under 30)***".

In spite of the Opera House's subtle physical presence, many ROH and CG interviewees indicated that they regarded the Royal Opera House as an important element of the area, not as an architectural artefact but as an institution. They associate this importance to its long standing tradition as a highly regarded provider of culture characterised by excellence in the quality of its productions. In this sense, the concept of cultural flagships and the potential impact that they can have on urban precincts and destinations acquires an intangible dimension directly related to its content and not its form (Ham, 1987; Mulryne and Shewring, 1995).

This intangible perspective can also be associated with the implications of the institution's name, suggesting that its royal status implies high quality. In addition, the importance of the institution was consistently evaluated from its functionality as a venue for the performing arts. As noted by a ROH interviewee, its suitable acoustics, improved seating facilities, backstage technology and the consequent attraction of famous performers put the Covent Garden Opera House ahead of other contemporary developments that tend to be led by design rather than function. For example, the Sydney Opera House, which is considered a triumph of contemporary architecture and succeeds in exerting a visually stimulating physical presence to the area's visitors. But its functionality as a theatre was subject to criticism. This is also the case with the Royal Albert Hall. Regardless of its free standing location and distinctive architecture, it had to be subjected to extensive improvement works to enhance its auditorium's acoustics that were inadequate due to the building's oval design (Royal Albert Hall, 2007). However, it is important to note that these considerations are given a pivotal importance by respondents who were interested in the consumption of the Opera House's productions. Whereas they were assigned little, if any importance at all by CG interviewees who visited the area to shop, eat, drink, socialise or undertake any of the other experiential opportunities available in the area. In this sense, the concept of flagship and the attributes that grant a building or an institution with such status depends on the individual's interests. Opera and ballet enthusiasts tend to approach the concept by examining and assessing the nature of the institution's produce and its quality. Conversely, the potential impact that a flagship may have upon other visitors in the area will directly depend on the building's physical presence. This is notable in statements like the following: *"Unless you're an opera fan you wouldn't seek it out. I don't know, it's in a very prime location but it's almost tucked away it's quite private"* (Deidre, England).

8.4.3. Cultural asset for the country

The institution's status as one of the country's symbols of high culture leads to a sense of national pride amongst some domestic visitors, mostly in those who are interested in these forms of art. Another set of less culturally motivated

interviewees indicated that they visited the Opera House to evaluate how the large amounts of public spending were invested regardless of their interest in opera or ballet. This suggests that regardless of these visitors enthusiasm for opera or ballet, the Opera House is perceived as an asset, or a cost, for the English nation. Likewise, many overseas CG respondents mentioned that they enjoyed visiting London because of its cosmopolitan ambience as indicated before. They expressed that they expected a reputable Opera House or venue for performing arts in any world city, indicating that an Opera House is regarded as a feature that speaks of a destination's rich and high levels of cultural offer. It is important to note that opera and ballet are not English art forms, but over time they have become superior artistic expressions that appear to grant status and prestige to the destinations they are attached to and to the users that appreciate them. In this sense, the Royal Opera House does not only influence some visitor's perception of Covent Garden positively as a precinct for culture, but of London as a cultural destination: *"Do you think ROH is an important element of this area? It's an important element of London I would say. If it's an important element of this area, I wouldn't say so What makes it an important element of London? It's an important cultural highlight (Ulrike, Germany)"*.

For the non opera enthusiast, the Opera House is an attribute that is expected from a world city. However, the urban concealment of the building prevents it from having the Sydney Opera House effect. Arguably, the flagship's historical value and attachment to the area's evolution make up for this disadvantage. But these considerations are again subject to the individual's interest in opera and ballet. In any case, the presence of this cultural flagship can be associated with the concept of option or existence demand, as visitors in the city 'do not at present use and may not have specific plans to use but (...) feel that these things should be maintained so that the option to use them is always there' (Veal, 2006:61). *"It's a cultural landmark in the city, it's really important for a big city like New York, Tokyo, Paris, even in Buenos Aires the Opera House is always an important building in the city" (Brova, France)*.

8.4.4. The flagship's social input to the area

From a social perspective, the Opera House exerts a powerful influence of the precinct's ambience because of the influx of visitors it attracts. In this sense, the relationship between the Opera House with London's status as a World City is not only confined to the provision of high forms of art. But also, to the attraction of visitors interested in these high art forms that mingle and contrast with visitors who are not. The diversity of people visiting the area is a pivotal place making element that benefits greatly from the presence of the Opera House at its core. The market place area and peripheral locations tend to attract younger visitors seeking leisure activities and commercial experiences, as well as a local population focused on entertainment and the night time economy. It is also important to consider that the variety of people visiting the area tangibly contributes to its cosmopolitan ambience, and the Opera House is a catalyst for the attraction of a contrasting set of visitors as illustrated by the following statement: "*What do you think CG would be like without ROH? I think it would be a sad loss for CG, I'm sure it would continue but I think it draws in a different type of person to those who come to CG for the shopping, it brings in an international audience*" (Charles, Wales)". However, many arts core ROH interviewees indicated that they only visited the area for the flagship, and were heavily critical of the area's commercial ambience and street entertainers providing 'low' forms of culture. Nevertheless, these findings indicate a reciprocal positive relationship between the area and the flagship, not only because of the variety of visitors it attracts, but because the area's central location allows for easy access for domestic visitors in the city and the local population. The area's wide ranging provision of shopping, eating and drinking facilities were also regarded by some ROH interviewees as positive elements of the area along with its urban cultural heritage, making of Covent Garden a convenient and distinctive place for the Opera House.

8.4.5. Access and audience development

Regardless of its popular location, the royal attachment of the institution's name leads many interviewees to perceive the flagship as socially exclusive and elitist.

This is further corroborated by the high number of CG interviewees expressing a lack of interest in experiencing high culture. They explained this lack of interest because *'it is not their thing'* and to the perceived high cost that attending a performance at the Opera House may imply. These high costs were recognised by ROH interviewees, who acknowledged that the high quality of the Opera House's productions demands for ticket prices to be expensive. As a consequence, those seeking leisure activities and relaxing experiences lack the sense of belonging and connectivity with the Opera House. This lack of connectivity along with the building's subtle physical presence in the area prevents them from exploring the flagship in spite of its free daytime openings. Attending a performance at the Opera House is a passive experience where the audience does not take an active part as opposed to informally watching a street performer, resulting in some of the area's visitors' disregard of the flagship as an element of their experience of Covent Garden. In relation to this, it is important to mention that cultural attractions of this nature are primarily intended for a domestic audience (Richards, 2007), which largely explains the majority of domestic ROH interviewees who were English, but tourists nonetheless (potential respondents living in London were dismissed from the interview as the study focuses on tourists). Furthermore, the majority of ROH interviewees were over the age of 60, indicating the impending urgency of engaging younger generations necessary to secure the future of the production of opera and ballet.

The Opera House's response to these perceptions of exclusivity through access initiatives and audience engagement schemes emerged from the data as an issue of consideration as many interviewees noted that their perception of the flagship is influenced by them. The most notable of these consist of the live relay of performances in public areas, discounted tickets for students and its daytime access to free exhibitions and a terrace cafe. As the majority of interviewees inside the flagship belong to the older age groups, these initiatives aim to engage and nurture new audiences who may come to appreciate opera and ballet. Furthermore, the Opera House is largely subsidised by public funds, which means the institution has a social responsibility to deliver benefits to other sectors of the

nation aside from its core market. Active experiences for diverse audiences are important for the development of cultural tourism markets (Smith, 2007a) and they can be associated with the initiatives listed above as they not only entail a passive experience of watching a show. They invite the user to play an active role in the discovery of the Opera House, but it is up to the individual to explore these opportunities, which depends directly on their level of cultural motivation and inquisitive approach to a tourist experience of a precinct. The building's subtle physical presence prevents the area's visitors from being aware of these opportunities as noted by many interviewees. In this sense, potential new audiences can be provided with welcoming feelings of belonging that might result in novel markets for the appreciation of opera and ballet. But this task is faced with the challenge of overcoming the building's lack of visual appeal and these potential markets' reluctance to experience these art forms.

An Opera House may exert an influence over a visitor's perception and experience of place when it presents itself in a visually stimulating manner. In addition to this stimulus, added facilities such as shops, cafes and terraces can potentially engage the area's visitors and embed the flagship as part of the overall experience of an urban precinct. These added facilities are available for the wider public's use within the Opera House in Covent Garden. However, the wide assortment of experiential opportunities in an environmentally clustered urban precinct causes it to remain hidden from the area's visitors' reach. In a sense, this is also part of its appeal to domestic and older visitors likely to seek culture, as they regard it as one of those '*hidden gems*' of Covent Garden that in a way, delivers the area back to the nation and provides a space free of tourist activities. On the other hand, audience development initiatives like the student stand by scheme, the availability of day tickets, the house's daytime openings, family and school performances at reduced prices and a creative marketing approach for example play a key role in the engagement of new markets that would further strengthen a reciprocal and synergic relationship between Covent Garden and the Opera House.

8.5. Conclusions

The apparent association between the interviewee's socio demographic variables with their perception and experience of the area acquires a complex, yet more comprehensive dimension when it is understood as a process of cultural appraisal. An individual's personal background along with their previous experiences and preferences leads them to perceive the area and the flagship from different perspectives. Tourists perceive and evaluate areas and buildings differently according to their background, which comprises their education, their age, their class, their previous positive or negative exposure to places, artefacts and arts. They are attracted to the familiar as it provides them with a sense of safety and assurance, and to the unfamiliar as it excites their desire to learn and experience the unknown, if such a longing exists. The tourists themselves are also central to the understanding of the process of perception and experience of place. Not only because of what they make of it, but also because they are an active and functional part of it. They are a fundamental element in the area's place making system as they do not only gaze but perform like the street buskers and the singers at the Opera House when they roam, applaud, eat, drink and interact with one another. They represent simultaneously a nuisance and a source of reassurance, a blight and an attraction. The area's distinctive urban environment and the array of activities that take place throughout its different locations accentuate the impact of these processes, making of Covent Garden a peculiar and complex case study.

Areas for tourism may be formally constructed as grandiose and monumental by presenting rigid structures to its visitors (for example, Trafalgar Square). Covent Garden is characterised by the opposite. Its flexibility and plasticity allows for the visitor to interpret it intrinsically. Its organic development, exacerbated by its popularity and centrality, was not laid out to signify a specific meaning. The Royal Opera House at its core is the ultimate example of how its different elements mean and serve different functions to the diverse assortment of visitors in the area. For some, it is the heart and soul of Covent Garden, the pinnacle of high performing arts of the country and a highly regarded building and institution. Whereas for others, it is a plain and subtle architectural artefact amidst the sights

and sounds of its vibrant Piazza. An Opera House, then, may acquire an iconic status stimulating the visitor's senses regardless of their appreciation for its functionality as a venue for the performing arts in what can be understood as an aural attraction to what is seen when it is meant to be primarily heard. In this case, the Royal Opera House is an atypical icon as it relies on its historic significance above its visual appearance, stimulating the area's visitor's senses in an unconventional way. But the relationship between the area and the flagship is strong because of its positive input into the visitor's perception of London as a destination for culture. However, this, and all processes explored throughout this study are strictly subject to the individual's cultural appraisal of object and place.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research applied a qualitative methodology to understand how the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden influences the area's visitors' perception and experience of place. It resulted in extensive data that has been presented and discussed in previous chapters. The objective of this concluding chapter is to summarise these findings and their relationships and to make a critical reflection on the methodological approach and scope for further research.

The research questions for the study were:

- What does the term 'Covent Garden' represent for the visitor?
- What motivates tourists to visit Covent Garden?
- How is a visit to Covent Garden experienced by the visitor?
- How is Covent Garden perceived by the visitor?
- How does the Royal Opera House influence the perception and experience of Covent Garden?

The organisation and presentation in the evidence analysis chapter reflected this structure. These findings and their subsequent discussion are tied in with each other in this chapter, and applied to the research questions below.

9.1. What does the term 'Covent Garden' represent for the visitor?

The notion of 'Covent Garden' can be seen from different perspectives as the place signifies and is signified by different elements interpreted by different people. It has been identified, however, that the area can signify a concept, a precinct or a flagship.

9.1.1. Covent Garden as a concept

First, it is important to consider the area's 'markers' (MacCannell, 1999) to understand what the area consists of in the view of the visitor. Elements of the area providing strong visual stimuli to its visitors can ultimately represent the area and signify what Covent Garden is. The market discussed below, can be seen as the area's commercial flagship building and deeply influences the visitor's perception of place due to its close association with the area as a whole because of

its name (Covent Garden Market) and its commercial function. Other markers in the area are the Tube station, the Royal Opera House and even the street buskers around the market which present images that are associated and paired up with the area's name. On the other hand, it is also important to note other literal interpretations of this name. Some first time visitors indicated that they expected not just a market, but a garden: a botanical space since the name suggests a green area. This indicates that individuals tend to assign literal meanings to places due to their names, which would be especially applicable to people who have no previous experience or knowledge about the place. In relation to previous exposure, the film *My Fair Lady* emerged in the data collected, indicating that it can also be seen as an area marker, providing visitors and potential visitors with images about the precinct as a place for commerce.

9.1.2. Covent Garden as a precinct

The fact that many visitors interviewed in the area's peripheral locations were unaware that they were in Covent Garden indicates that the precinct consists of a series of sub-areas with different characteristics. Given the considerations in the previous point, it is clear that the sub-area within the precinct that presents the most distinctive characteristics of the area as a whole (such as street busking and shopping) is the market place in the Piazza. Therefore, the understanding of the area can be limited to the perception and experience of this central sub-area in the view of some visitors. As discussed in further sections, the presence of street entertainers that stimulate gatherings leading to social interactions, having an impact on the tourist's behaviour and providing a soundtrack for the area are all pivotal place making elements. The fact that they are exclusive to the market place area relates to the limited understanding of Covent Garden as confined to this location. From a visual point of view, the market's building proved to be a powerful image that captures the attention of visitors who directly associate the concept of the area with this image, and hence, with its function. The area's commercial ambience has been consistently identified as an important place making element affecting the visitors' perception and experience of place. This indicates that the market place is the epitome of this phenomenon due to the

concentration of shops of different scales, which along with the provision of eating and drinking facilities attract a variety of visitors. It should be noted, however, that this in an open space surrounded by large scale buildings. There are on the other hand, other sub-areas within the precinct that are characterised by other urban features related to their smaller ‘village like’ scale. Some visitors associate the notion of Covent Garden with narrow paths, cobbled streets and independently owned shops. According to the visitors’ interpretation, then, ‘Covent Garden’ can signify different precincts.

9.1.3. Covent Garden as a flagship

Whilst the area is directly associated with the image and the function of the market, which can also be seen as a flagship development for the area in terms of its commercial function, some visitors limit the meaning of Covent Garden to the Royal Opera House. These visitors tend to be older, domestic tourists with a keen interest in opera and ballet. In this sense, previous exposure to the Opera House’s work, artistic heritage and historical attachment to the area is pivotal to this understanding of Covent Garden. The fact that the interviewees that hold this view belong to the older age groups is explained by the understanding that this exposure happens over a prolonged period of time and as the individual grows older. This exposure is enhanced by the cultural proximity of domestic tourists and rooted in their personal interest in these art forms. The Royal Opera House was referred to as ‘part of our heritage’ by a domestic interviewee, indicating that it can be seen as a cultural asset that engenders a sense of local pride amongst some culturally proximate visitors. This perception often depends on their interest in the Opera House’s cultural produce. On the other hand, another interviewee referred to it as a ‘key thing to have’ in terms of its role on London’s cultural portfolio, suggesting that regardless of the individual’s interest in opera or ballet, it can still be perceived as a flagship institution symbolizing London’s cultural vibrancy in the high arts arena.

9.2. Motivation to visit, experience and perception of place

The findings presented and discussed the proposed that Covent Garden's place making system can be related to the activities that take place in the area, its urban characteristics and human based elements related to the area's users, their behaviour and interactions. In this sense, all of these elements motivate tourists to visit the area and influence their perception and experience of place to different extents. The close links between motivation to visit, perception and experience of place indicate that these research questions can be addressed in this concluding chapter through the understanding of four key elements. These are performance, consumption in the area, the role played by relaxation and the influence of the built environment. They are discussed below.

9.2.1. Performance

The area's cultural sector in terms of performing arts attracts tourists who may visit it exclusively for this purpose or are engaged by other experiential opportunities whether deliberately or accidentally (Hughes, 2000). This exerts an influence on the way the area is perceived by its visitors from different perspectives. In the first instance, the architecture for performing arts along with billboards throughout the area's different locations visually strengthens its status as an entertainment district. However, the presence of street entertainers around the market place area has proved to exert a more complex influence on the manner in which this precinct is perceived and experienced by the visitors interviewed. As noted in the evidence analysis and further discussed in the previous chapter, these street performers provide the precinct with a soundtrack that can be understood as two aural layers. The first one stems from the entertainment itself; the music that the performers produce influences the visitors' perception of place, suggesting an ambience of entertainment that can result in the attraction of tourists. As this is accomplished, a second aural layer can be related to the sounds made by these audiences, which acquire a fundamental role in the provision of street entertainment. The sounds of cheering and clapping act as signifiers of appreciation for street performance. From a more complex perspective, they also engage visitors in communal rituals that create rapport between them and facilitate

a sense of belonging to these crowds and to the spectacle itself. It is also interesting to note that even though these are communal activities, there is also a lack of rigid behavioural codes which allows these audiences to engage in the rituals freely, and to withdraw from them without fear of social disapproval. This is a fundamental difference between attending a performance in a conventional venue with such guidelines of conduct as opposed to street events (DiMaggio and Usseem, 1978). Therefore, appreciation for the performing arts is not only associated with the quality or nature of the cultural product, but with the circumstances involved in the process of its consumption. This pattern of cultural consumption is interactive and entertaining, and responds to novel forms of cultural tourism that stimulate learning through entertainment and leisure activities that focus on sensorial stimulation and active and inclusive experiences (Smith, 2007a). The educational value of street entertainment, however, can be contested from a performing arts perspective given the casual, light and popular nature of the cultural product. But street performance can also be viewed as an opportunity to experience Covent Garden's cultural offer, which as noted in chapter 5, has been characterized by the presence of popular entertainment throughout history. Street busking, therefore, is as much a part of the area's heritage as the built environment is, not only because of its long standing presence around the market place area but also because of the impact that it has the communal behaviour manifested by the visitors of this central sub-area on the precinct.

The phenomena discussed above constitute relevant findings related to the impact of street entertainment in the visitors' perception and experience of the case study area. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the provision of these popular forms of entertainment are exclusive to the market place's surroundings. This can be linked to the limited perception of Covent Garden constituted by the Piazza, the market place area, the tube station and other signifiers of place concentrated in its central location. In this sense, street entertainers can also be understood as these signifiers of place which provide visitors with considerable sensorial stimuli that has an important influence on their perception of the area and of their

experience of place should they engage in the communal rituals mentioned before. On the other hand, it is also important to note that the appreciation of these popular art forms are determined by the individual's preferences, which are themselves underpinned by the mechanisms of cultural appraisal related to the tourist's background in terms of their nationality, age and previous exposure to these art forms. McKercher's (2002) views in relation to cultural distance plays a fundamental role in this process as tourists are attracted to what they are familiar with as much as they seek unfamiliar experiences. Street entertainment was also consistently associated with pedestrian congestion and overcrowding by many interviewees, which was noted as both a positive or negative attribute of this central area. From a positive perspective, these audiences can be viewed as expressions of the area's vibrancy and cosmopolitan ambience providing cues of behaviour that relate to relaxation and leisure. From a negative stance, they can be seen as a result of the area's popularisation and commercialization representing a nuisance to visitors not interested in partaking in these activities. This can also be associated with the tourist's purpose of visit and likelihood to engage in other activities as noted in the previous chapter.

9.2.2. Consumption

As in the case of performing arts, shopping and consumption of food and drink act as key motivators attracting tourists to Covent Garden, engaging them in commercial experiences and influencing their perception of place. As indicated before, many interviewees relate the concept of Covent Garden to the market place, which as noted above can also be understood as a flagship for the area. The association between the area's name and the market suggests that the area is perceived as a place for commerce. This is also noted by the relationship between the area and the main character (a flower vendor in this market) in the film *My Fair Lady*, which is evident in some interviewees' expectations of similar commercial activity. Therefore, the commercial perspective by which the area can be understood as a commercial precinct is related to the presence of the market that presents the area's visitors with visual stimulation through its distinctive architecture and large scale. However, it should be noted that this commercial

perspective varied depending on the interviewing location, as many tourists interviewed in peripheral locations indicated that they escaped the mainstream Piazza because of the generic nature of its shops labelled in many cases as ‘*touristy*’ and ‘*tacky*’. This further supports the notion that a distinction should be made between Covent Garden as a district and as a precinct in terms of its commercial ambience. Covent Garden as a district is made up of different sub-areas with distinctive commercial characteristics. The market place area can be defined as the mainstream commercial precinct characterized by the presence of the large scale Covent Garden Market. Due to the powerful visual stimuli that this building presents to its visitors along with its heritage and attachment to the area aided by media exposure, this structure could also be understood as a flagship building. However, its flagship status is related to its function as a commercial provider which as noted in the recommendations section of this chapter, provides scope for further research.

On the other hand, the comparatively smaller in scale Neil’s Yard and Seven Dials have also being praised by visitors for the consumption opportunities that they provide. These smaller commercial sub-areas attract a different set of tourists that seek detachment from the mainstream experience of Covent Garden as a place for commerce. They reject the idea of being stereotyped as typical visitors that ‘*tick boxes*’ as noted on a tourist guide and are preoccupied with individuality and originality of the products they purchase.

The considerations above also apply to other economic activity. The presence of shops and a vibrant cultural scene facilitated the attraction and establishment of pubs, cafes and spaces for consumption of food and drink that motivate tourists to visit the area, play pivotal roles in their experience of place and influence their perception of Covent Garden. The area’s central location and the varied supply of these establishments were consistently identified as positive attributes of place that provide its visitors with spaces that not only serve the purpose of relaxation as discussed in the next section, but also act as catalysts for socialisation that contribute to the perceived ‘*friendly*’ nature of the area’s ambience. The night

time economy can result in public disturbance (Roberts, 2005), and this research has shown that the case study area is no exception. However, Covent Garden's cultural vibrancy combined with its dynamic commercial sector makes many of its visitors feel safe and provides suitable shopping and entertainment opportunities that stimulate commercial trade whilst developing a sociable sense of place based on consumption and social interaction. The provision of these services and the presence of this infrastructure play an important role in the acquisition of cultural capital as visitors from all over the world gather, engage in communal rituals and interact to different extents within the same tourist precinct. All this relates to Covent Garden's perceived 'continental' and cosmopolitan sense of place. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that these considerations are also subject to place configuration as Covent Garden's different sub-areas accommodate infrastructure of different scale and carrying capacity. The open surroundings of the market place area allow for users of cafes and pubs to spread into the pedestrian streets which are in some cases taken by chairs and tables that remind some visitors of similar continental precincts. This may be attractive through both familiarity or unfamiliarity, depending on how cultural distance effectively influences the visitors' perception and experience of place. This is not the case in smaller sub-areas such as St Martin's Lane or Broad Court where the streets are narrow and the scale of pubs and restaurants is smaller. In any case, however, these businesses contribute in different ways to the area's role as a place for leisure that links to relaxation as discussed below.

9.2.3. Relaxation

As consistently noted in the evidence analysis and discussed in the previous chapter, Covent Garden is perceived and experienced as a place for relaxation. Its convenient location in central London in the immediate vicinity of other popular areas for tourism along with the presence of infrastructure and services for leisure and consumption lead to visitation both purposefully and serendipitously. The absence of benches and seats throughout the area (with the exception of St Paul's Church) does not prevent visitors relaxing, since relaxing means more than sitting down and resting. Relaxation is more complex because it is not associated with a

physical act but with an attitude and an approach to experiencing a precinct. The area's pedestrian streets prove to play a fundamental role in making the areas seem relaxing, as they deliver the streets for the visitor's free exploration. This exploratory attitude to visiting the area is subject to the individual's background as discussed before considering that younger visitors are more likely to be driven by the pursuit of quantity of experiences whereas older visitors are more concerned with the quality of these experiences. This leads them to calmly assimilate a precinct and explore it by means of roaming through its streets, which has proved to be a vital behavioural consideration in the understanding of the visitor's experience of Covent Garden. It can be argued that this behavioural pattern applies mostly to visitors that have gathered enough tourist experiences to understand the importance of exploring a tourist precinct and discover its hidden traits, qualities, experiential opportunities, character and heritage.

Roaming and exploring imply a slower pace of movement that has been distinguished by interviewees of all ages as a distinctive characteristic of place, indicating the pivotal role that visitors themselves play in the area's place making system. As indicated in the previous chapter, the notion of co-tourism is directly applicable to this research as the interviewees' perception and experience of place was influenced, if not determined by the presence and attitudes of others. This evidence suggests that the concept of the tourist's performance in Covent Garden is not only evident in their engagement in communal activities associated with the appreciation of street entertainment. In addition, it is clear that the 'infectious' exploratory attitude to experiencing the precinct leads to unknowing imitation as visitors who may be young and in a hurry lower their pace of movement as a result of other visitors in the area doing so. Therefore, imitation and social behavioural cues related to relaxation constitute a key element to understand the perception and experience of place.

These phenomena lead to a strengthened cohesion between visitors that as in the case of performing arts, provides them with a sense of belonging that can potentially enhance their tourist experience. On the other hand, it is also important

to note that these considerations are as well subject to the perception and experience of Covent Garden as different sub-areas. The market place area is characterized by spatial configuration that allows for large gatherings of people that experience relaxation either through street performance, the use of cafes and pubs, window shopping or sitting down around the Piazza. This is not the case in other adjacent areas where the streets are narrow and not pedestrian (Seven Dials for example). This suggests that the market place area and its surroundings can be seen as the most adequate settings that facilitate exploration as a way of experiencing the area and to relaxing experiences. This is also suggested by the higher concentration of eating and drinking facilities and spaces completely free of vehicular traffic which many visitors use to sit and socialise as well. In relation to this, the notion of 'freedom' acquires importance to the understanding of the role of relaxation in the tourist's perception and experience of place. Firstly, freedom provided by the area's pedestrian streets that allow visitors to roam, explore and discover the precinct. Secondly, freedom from behavioural codes that can potentially alienate or have a detrimental effect on the experience of visitors seeking relaxation and leisure. Ironically, they embrace this freedom by manifesting similar behavioural patterns which are evident in their communal slower pace of movement and their exploratory means to experiencing the precinct.

9.2.4. Built environment

Covent Garden's attributes in terms of its built environment are as diverse as its mixed land use and the array of tourists that it attracts. This entails that its understanding as a precinct for tourism and culture acquires great complexity considering the different thematic perspectives that can be applied to it as discussed in chapter 3. From a built environment perspective, it is clear that the peculiar urban settings related to the smaller scale of its buildings and cobbled streets that speak of rich heritage can be perceived and interpreted as important place making elements. These traits grant the precinct its status as a historic urban core that presents its visitors with visual stimuli related to its authenticity and meaning, leading to a distinctive sense of place. However, this process is subject

to divergent interpretations according to the mechanisms of cultural appraisal developed above (Gospodini, 2001, 2002a) and subject to cultural distance (McKercher, 2002) as visitors tend to evaluate the built environment according to what they are used to and unfamiliar with. This process can be particularly noted in domestic and culturally proximate visitors that perceive these features as remnants of the past providing them with built heritage narratives that emphasize the cultural value of their visit to Covent Garden (Graham, 2002). On the other hand, many interviewees attributed the area's distinctiveness to 'the mix of the old and the new', not only referred to the variety of the area's users but to the conservation of historic architecture along with new developments. It should be noted, however, that these developments apply an innovative approach to conservation that aims to improve the area's urban landscape by means of modern developments inspired by historic architecture. Such is the case of the Opera House's domed Hamlyn hall resulting from its redevelopment along with the market's similar use of iron and glass structures and the more recent renovation of the Transport Museum. This infrastructure presents strong images to the precinct's users which were interestingly associated with a sense of greenery, reminding an interviewee of a greenhouse leading to the association between the built environment and the area's name. These associations and range of visual stimuli can play pivotal roles in the visitors' interpretation of the area's distinctiveness and sense of place. The built environment provides infrastructure for shops, cafes, restaurants and other facilities that further enhance the attraction of visitors due to its distinctive architecture and variety of uses. This infrastructure is also used for cultural promotion in many cases. This is noted in the use of exhibition spaces in the area now taken over by the world's largest Apple store, its designated spaces for street performance and the clustering of theatres within the area. This strengthens the area's creative ambience that leads to its current status as a perceived place for arts and culture and responds to Landry's (2000) views in relation to the creative milieu. This ambience is associated with an adequate hard infrastructure that accommodates soft infrastructure understood as the processes and interactions involved in the production of culture as theatres and spaces for creative endeavours serve as platforms for such purpose. The clustering of cultural

activity in the area and the built environment's historical value and heritage strengthen its identity and underpins its distinctive sense of place (Newman and Smith, 2000).

9.3. The Royal Opera House's influence on the perception and experience of Covent Garden

The findings related to how the Opera House is perceived by the area's visitors clearly indicate that its physical presence does not exert an important influence on Covent Garden's perceived urban landscape. The redevelopment scheme succeeded in providing it with a fresh façade by conserving its built heritage and complementing it with innovative design that resulted in monumental architecture that is not visible from the Piazza. If this attractive front was visible from the market place, the area's identity and perception as a place for tourism and culture could change dramatically. The facade would be associated and used in media along with the other popular images associated with the area (street entertainers and the market for example). However, the images of the Corinthian columns and the Victorian glass and iron Hamlyn Hall attached to the Opera House are used independently and are detached from other elements associated with the area. These physical considerations along with the perception of elitism and exclusivity suggested by the Opera House's name leads to the conclusion that there is a sense of detachment between the flagship and the area. Covent Garden is perceived and experienced as an open, popular place for leisure, relaxation and entertainment.

On the other hand, the Opera House is experienced by a selected group, does not stimulate the Piazza's visitors' senses and is exclusive to those who know it is there and visit it. This awareness, as established before, is the result of previous exposure to different aspects of the Opera House such as its history, past or present productions and the entertainers that have performed there. Therefore, a visitor's perception and experience of the area are likely to be influenced by the presence of the Opera House provided that the visitor is aware of this presence and assigns value to it. This value may not be necessarily linked to the act of visiting the Opera House or a strong interest in its productions. It can also be

understood as option demand when tourists will not visit it or attend a performance but appreciate the fact that it is there and that they have the option to use it. On the other hand, it is important to consider that appreciation for the arts is trained (DiMaggio and Useem, 1978) and that the Opera House is highly valued by people who do appreciate its work. These people's personal background has underpinned this preference, which could be related to a variety of socio demographic indicators. For example, exposure to high arts and culture from an early age, or attendance to an opera or a ballet performance for financial reasons considering the high cost of doing so leading to an association between this and status and prestige. These considerations indicate that the Royal Opera House does indeed play a flagship role in the performing arts arena as a provider of opera or ballet of the highest quality, but does not act as a flagship for the area because of its lack of visual appeal from the most visited locations, its perception as an exclusive and elitist venue suggested by its royal title and the wide array of other leisure and commercial opportunities available throughout the area.

Cultural flagships have been stereotyped as free standing buildings and are associated with grandiose and monumental architecture. However, in this case, it can be concluded that a monumental design can distract from the core activity of an institution, diluting its role as a flagship supplier of culture. The Royal Opera House's quality of performance and status as one of the world's most famous Opera Houses was never contested by any interviewees who were not only aware of its presence in the area but also had an interest in its work. They indicated that they do not perceive the Opera House as an architectural artefact (Lefebvre, 1991), but it is its role as the country's leading Opera House that underpins its importance. Therefore, this study has concluded that powerful visual images provided by flagship developments may enhance the projection of messages of economic and cultural vibrancy (Wing Tai Wai, 2004), but in the case of Covent Garden, it is the Opera House's heritage and standards of quality in terms of its productions that grants it flagship status. A flagship is, by definition, the leading ship in a fleet of vessels, where the fleet's commander is based and his flag is waved. In this sense, the Royal Opera House is indeed a flagship institution as one

of the country's most important providers of high performing arts. For people who appreciate these art forms, it can even be interpreted as an iconic institution because of its heritage and all the famous performers and performances that it housed over centuries. However, none of these qualities are related to its architecture or physical attributes. Although current research focuses on the visual dimensions of a flagship development, its function and its role should not be neglected. This is noted in the fact that this research has concluded that the Opera House may exert a profound influence on a visitor's perception and experience of place, to the extent where some of them refer to the Opera House as Covent Garden itself depending on their level of appreciation for opera and ballet and their familiarity with the Opera House's work. But this phenomenon does not hold a link with the building's outer appearance, but is directly associated with its history, heritage, productions and performers.

9.4. Critical appraisal of methodology and limitations of the study

The adoption of a social constructivist approach to conduct this research still stands as the most appropriate considering that it focused on how visitors perceive and experience a place, which are individual processes that vary in each case. However, other topics related to tourist activity in the area could have been explored through quantitative data collection methods. For example, statistical information could have been generated in terms of how many people visited the area to attend a performance as opposed to shopping to establish a relation between the different sectors that the area caters for. But exploring these issues were not the overall aim of this study as much as there is potential to conduct quantitative research in the area, which provides scope for further studies as addressed in the next section. On the other hand, because this research explored what Covent Garden represents for its visitors, a better inclusion of the notion of image could have been introduced to the research design. By doing this, a more innovative methodological framework could have been applied, such as photo elicitation to understand how the area's architecture and visual images exert an influence on how its visitors perceive it.

The data analysis stage of this research was undertaken with the assistance of qualitative data analysis software, which was used to organise, structure and interpret the bulk of the interviews and identify themes and codes throughout their content as indicated in Chapter 6. Whilst this harmonised effectively with the approach chosen to analyse the information gathered, many potentially useful functions of the software could have been considered in this stage in order to present the findings in a more creative and exhaustive manner. For example, if the chosen approach would have included counting the frequency of key words, N*Vivo could have counted the most commonly used words in order to, for example, assess which are the most popular images that visitors relate with the area or the attractions that were most often mentioned as part of the interviewees' tourist experience of London. More importantly, cross analyses would have been feasible if the researcher had had a more thorough understanding of the software's variety of functions that allow for cross analysing data which would have made provided more argument in the evidence analysis chapter. For example, it would have been interesting to establish a more comprehensive contrast between the experience of the area between different age groups according to their occupation (for example, by exploring what activities are undertaken by visitors within the 40-49 age bracket in Seven Dials as opposed to the youngest age group in the Piazza; or how a visitor's gender and occupation influence their perception and experience of the precinct). Therefore, a more thorough use of the software could have been applied to analyse the data, considering that a high number of interviews were conducted with a variety of visitors. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that the bulk of this data provides scope for further research, and that the present thesis is subject to a limit in length.

Semi-structured interviews have proved to be an effective means of capturing qualitative data to inform tourism studies of this nature. However, it is clear that the heterogenic nature of the interviews conducted heavily impaired the ability of comparing them. Some interviews were short as the visitors recruited provided very brief answers to the questions and did not respond well to further probing. In these cases, and as noted above, capturing data through questionnaires would have

allowed for generating statistical information to complement data of a qualitative nature. On the other hand, other interviewees were willing to talk at length and responded effectively to probing questions leading to longer interviews that were more substantial in terms of their dialectic content. Although all interviews were given equal weight during the initial coding stage, the longer interviews effectively illustrated the findings in the evidence analysis chapter better. However, the interviewees that did not respond well to the semi-structured interviews had the potential of further informing this research if a quantitative data collection method had been applied

Another limitation of this study, and as mentioned in the Methodology chapter, is that temporary migrants such as students were recruited as interviewees regardless of the length of their stay in the country because of their willingness to participate in the study and the potential contribution that the data provided by them in terms of age and cultural distance would have made. Nevertheless, many of these students do not fall under the tourist category as defined by the UNWTO (see footnote, page 137). Therefore, a student's suitability to participate in a cross cultural study of this nature should be evaluated in terms of how long they have been in the country regardless of the fact that many of them behave in touristic ways.

Finally, and as noted in the methodology chapter as well, it is important to acknowledge that the use of field notes was limited because they were brief in content and had a summarising function for each interview, rather than an analytical one. They could have been used in a more organised manner that could have potentially helped the researcher develop the initial set of categories following a more systematic approach. However, and as reflected in the examples presented in Appendix C, these memos were only used to record initial views and highlight important points from each interview, and their use was limited throughout the coding stage. In this sense, field notes as complementary sources of data could have informed the research better.

9.5. Scope for further research

As indicated above, the area's popularity and high levels of visitation would allow for future quantitative research efforts that could aim to generate statistical data related to tourist activity such as shopping, attendance to theatre, consumption of food and drink and a more detailed analysis of the area's visitors' socio demographic indicators. The findings of this research indicate that appreciation for the performing arts is learned and subject to a series of factors related to the individual's background. This suggests that there is scope for a deeper understanding of how an individual's level of education, occupation, income, nationality and family background effectively influences his or her interest in the arts. This would also allow for further studies focusing on what types of arts are sought by which groups of people and how they affect social construction of place, which would also enhance the understanding of audience development initiatives and how effective they are in attracting new audiences for certain art forms.

This research has also revealed that the area's name lead many individuals to expect a green area in Covent Garden, and that the Opera House's name suggests monumental architecture and elitism due to its Royal status. This indicates that there is scope for exploring the influence that an area's or an institution's name exerts on the tourist's perception of place and object. This can also be related to language considerations as this has been basically, a bilingual study throughout the data collection stage, and the potential influence that the words 'royal' or 'garden' may have had on some interviewees could have been related to their native tongue. In relation to this, the fact that only 16% of the interviews was conducted in Spanish does not affect the bilingual nature of the study, as the majority of tourists that were interviewed in the area were of European origin and therefore, many of them spoke a second language throughout the data collection stage.

It is also recommended that similar studies are conducted to understand the perception and experience of other well established precincts and flagships for

tourism and culture. Existing literature tends to focus on novel developments and areas, but it appears that the long standing precinct and historical cultural attractions are neglected by current research practice. Considering London's strong cultural sector that has a wide array of historical attractions in its tourism portfolio, usually located in urban areas, future studies should aim to understand how these attractions interact and effectively influence the area's perception and experience by tourists. Other flagship developments in London's urban landscape such as the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square invite further research in terms of how the spaces around it are constructed by the individual and the interactions between the built environment and the social dimensions that these spaces acquire because of the tourists that visit it. The National Theatre is also a flagship development of interest because of its waterfront based location in London's Southbank, suggesting that research efforts could be made to assess how visitors use the precinct and contrast the presence of this landmark building with other developments that shape the urban landscape such as the nearby London Eye and Houses of Parliament for example. Another research trend of interest is that of former industrial facilities converted into spaces for culture. This has been the case with London's Tate Modern, suggesting that further studies could focus on this flagship development and how its status as a converted industrial site plays a role in the attraction of visitors.

The case of the Royal Albert Hall was also raised as a case study of interest because despite its free standing location and grandiose architecture, some interviewees have noted that its functionality as a music venue is subject to limitations due to its oval structure that is not ideal in terms of acoustics. In this sense, it is suggested that future research should focus on the visual appeal of flagship developments in contrast with the flagship's function. This can also be related to the fact that many sightseeing tourists experience the Royal Albert Hall from the outside and as an architectural artefact, but its actual function is not part of their experience. Conversely, the Royal Opera House lacks the visual appeal that the Royal Albert Hall has and is not perceived as an attractive visual asset for Covent Garden's built environment, but its cultural productions are highly

regarded by those interested in them. Therefore, a flagship's function should also be considered by further studies to understand how it influences an area's visitors' perception and experience of place. Research on the tourist's experience of flagship developments should focus on the nature of these experiences as this study has focused on a venue for the performing arts, which provides passive experiences to users who pay for them. On the other hand, other cultural flagships such as the British Museum and the Tate Modern are free and allow for more interaction between object, place and user. Therefore, there is scope for further evaluation of the processes involved in arts consumption.

9.6. Encore

The process of establishing a suitable theoretical framework to conduct this research, the adoption of a social constructivist approach to address the overall aim and research questions along with the data collection stage that led to 306 semi-structured interviews which were thoroughly analysed and discussed generated a variety of findings related to how tourists perceive and experience urban precincts for tourism and culture and how a flagship development can exert a role in these processes. The complexity of the case study is related to its rich heritage and status as a world renowned provider of culture and this study has revealed that flagship status can be acquired through monumental architecture. However, it is clear that the understanding of this concept is also related to the institution's name and quality of cultural produce, which are areas that have been under researched and provide scope for further studies as addressed above.

Elements of a destination that act as catalysts for tourism then, whether its an area or an attraction, should be understood not only from their physical or functional characteristics. They are concepts that are complex to understand because they are determined by many aspects about them which are given different interpretations by every individual, which is a process that is in itself determined by the tourist's background. This background is related to their nationality, their age, their exposure to media, their previous experiences, personal preferences and a large number of variables that make them unique tourists and make the task of

understanding their perceptions and experiences so complex. It is evident however, that these processes can be influenced by for example, developing a stand alone cultural flagship with distinctive architecture that shapes a destination's tourist landscape. Or, as evidenced by this study, by implementing social inclusion initiatives that aim to introduce potential new audiences to a cultural institution's work and by these means, drawing attention to it. In this sense, the social dimension of urban spaces acquires great importance because not only are these places perceived and experienced in different ways depending on the individual's background, but these individuals construct these spaces as well, and influence each other's perception and experience of place by providing each other with behavioural codes and granting the area with a distinctive ambience.

The task of understanding the bond between a flagship development and the area where it is set is more complex in urban precincts that developed organically over extended periods of time and that were not planned as such. In this sense, this type of precincts and well established cultural flagships should be explored by taking into consideration the processes that led to their current status as popular areas for tourism and culture. Chapter 5 of this thesis provided an overview of the area's evolution and highlighted the relationship between its commercial and cultural sectors, which strengthened the researcher's understanding of the case study area and flagship along with their relationship. Hence, it is not only the tourist's inner processes of interpretation that should be explored, but a comprehensive evaluation of the area's evolution as a precinct for tourism consistently reinforced the researcher's approach to understanding the connection between Covent Garden and the Royal Opera House.

Although subject to a series of methodological limitations as indicated in previous sections, this study has made a thorough analysis on a complex case study which lead to an understanding of how the Royal Opera House effectively influences the perception and experience of cultural tourism in Covent Garden, which is an area characterised by the provision of popular forms of art, high levels of commercial activity and distinctive architecture, adding on to the challenge of exploring the

relationship between these elements. Considering that the well established urban precinct and long standing cultural flagship tend to be under researched by tourism studies that focus on planned tourist areas and novel flagship developments, this work has addressed a relevant area that plays an important role in London's status as a destination for urban cultural tourism. The findings that stemmed from these efforts are of a complex nature but the researcher's ultimate goal has been achieved, not only as the overall aim and research questions determined for the study have all been addressed, but also because of his personal interest in understanding the significance of the Royal Opera House to London, to others, and to himself.

10. SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX A:
Informed consent from



Nbr.

CONSENT FORM

The role of cultural flagships in the perception and experience of urban areas for tourism and culture: The case of Covent Garden.

This academic research aims to understand how the Covent Garden visitor's experience and perception of the area is influenced by the presence of the Royal Opera House.

Researcher: Adrian Guachalla, Centre for Tourism, University of Westminster.

I agree to take part in the research and understand that:

- I am free to refuse to answer any question at any time.
- I am not obliged in any way to continue with the interview. I can stop the interview at any time, and the tape recordings will be erased in my presence.
- Recordings and transcripts will be anonymised and securely stored.
- Nothing I say will be published in a form that makes it personally identifiable.

Name:

Signature: *(optional)*

Please indicate:

Country where you live		
Town / City where you live		
Gender	Female / Male	
Occupation		
Age Group	Under 30	
	30-39	
	40-49	
	50-59	
	Over 60	

APPENDIX B:

Permission from the Royal Opera House's House Manager to conduct the study

Nicki Spencer
Nicki.Spencer@roh.org.uk

From: **Nicki Spencer** (Nicki.Spencer@roh.org.uk)

Sent: Wed 7/15/09 8:31 AM

To: Security Control Room (Security.ControlRoom@roh.org.uk); Alan Gilbert (Alan.Gilbert@roh.org.uk); Box Office Management (BoxOfficeManagement@roh.org.uk); adrianete@hotmail.com (adrianete@hotmail.com); Adam Holgado (Adam.Holgado@roh.org.uk); Amanda Lane (Amanda.Lane@roh.org.uk); Annina Barandun (Annina.Barandun@roh.org.uk); BarryStewart (Barry.Stewart@roh.org.uk); Rosalind Templeman (Rosalind.Templeman@roh.org.uk); Salvatore Scalzo (Salvatore.Scalzo@roh.org.uk)

Usher, Adrian Guachalla, has been given permission by Nicki Spencer and Caroline Bailey to interview daytime visitors in the Main Entrance Foyer and Link as from Monday 20 July to the end of the season. This is work towards his PhD.

From: adrianete@hotmail.com
To: nicki.spencer@roh.org.uk
Subject: Interviews
Date: Tue, 7 Jul 2009 15:26:14 +0000

Dear Nicki:

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing because as you know, I am halfway through a PhD that is looking at the significance of ROH to Covent Garden's urban identity as a place for tourism and culture. So far I have conducted 230 interviews with visitors in the area in places like the Piazza, Broad court, Seven Dials, etc. It has been really tough but my findings are quite interesting. As I am about to draw the data collection stage to a close, it is time to hear what visitors at the House have to say, which are basically the most important interviews I have to conduct. So I was wondering if it would be possible for me to show up during daytime opening times at the Hamlyn Hall wearing my University ID card and ask people if they would be willing to give me a 3 minute interview. I will make sure I do this as they are leaving the building and I won't hassle them (my interviewing skills have improved massively this year so I know how to do it ethically and hassle free). It would only be for the next two or three weeks during daytime opening and around the box office after 330pm. Please find attached the set of questions I will be asking, an informed consent form that I will be showing the interviewees to guarantee their right to privacy and anonymity and also a document that summarizes my progress so far.

As always, I am deeply grateful for your cooperation and the privilege of being part of our lovely front of house staff, and I am sure that this research will lead to new and interesting knowledge about our much loved ROH. And on a side note, thank you for putting me inside for the RB School summer performance at the Linbury last Friday, I very much enjoyed it.

Kindest regards:

Adrian Guachalla BSc, MATM, PhD (Candidate)
Centre for Tourism Research
UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

APPENDIX C:**Examples of field notes generated throughout the data collection stage**

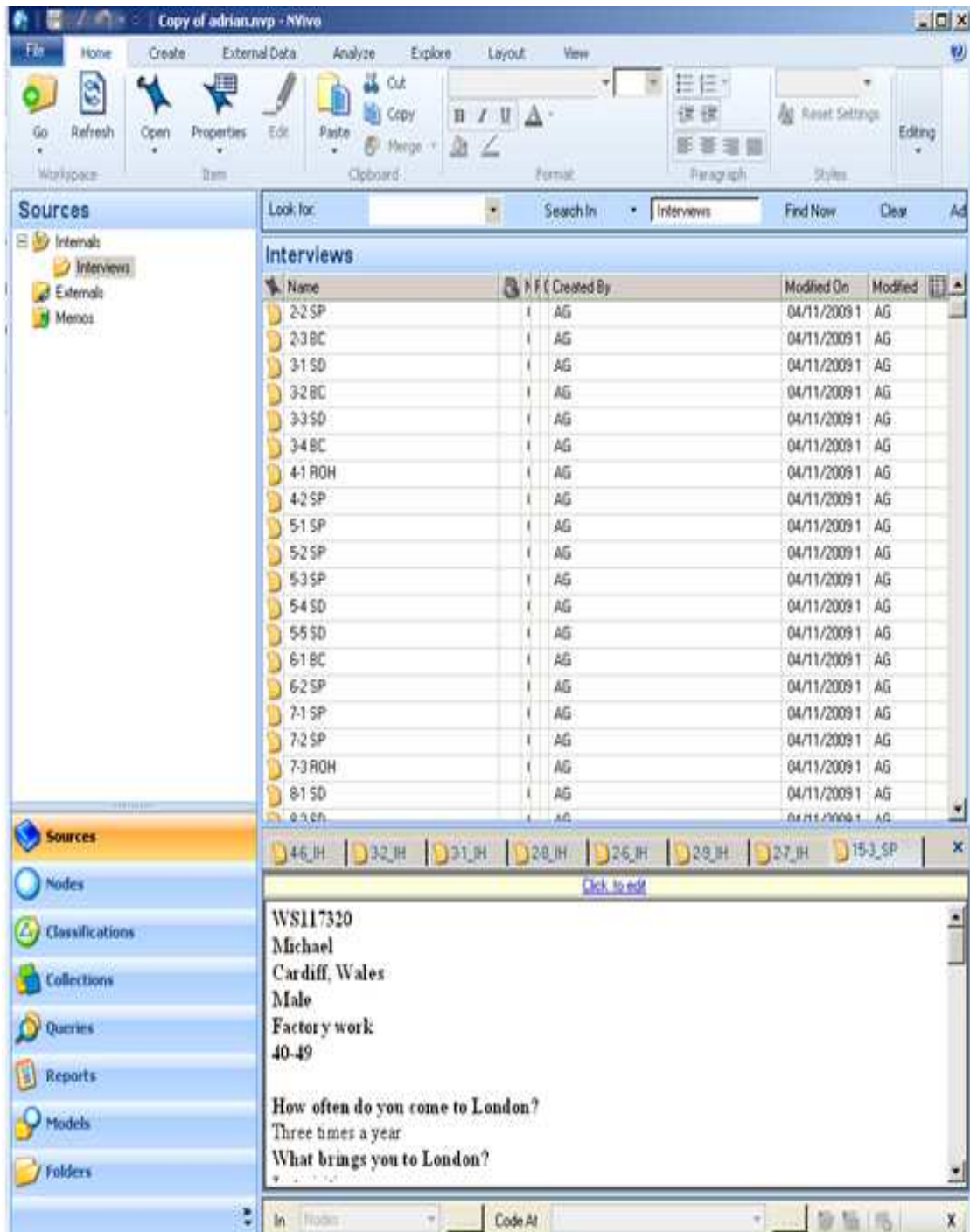
1-10 Tourists are "bad"
but don't tourists make the
atmosphere?
Low quality of Busking
Feels like a destination
rather than passing through.
ICHELLE VIEW.
Roth → experience more than just
a show.

3-6 "ocean of concrete."
dislike: not tourists but crowds.
Experience of place: depends on age
No Roth → restaurants + shops but
there's plenty already. Hence
Roth → cultural input,
royalist + glamour. (compare with
laible peoples opera?)

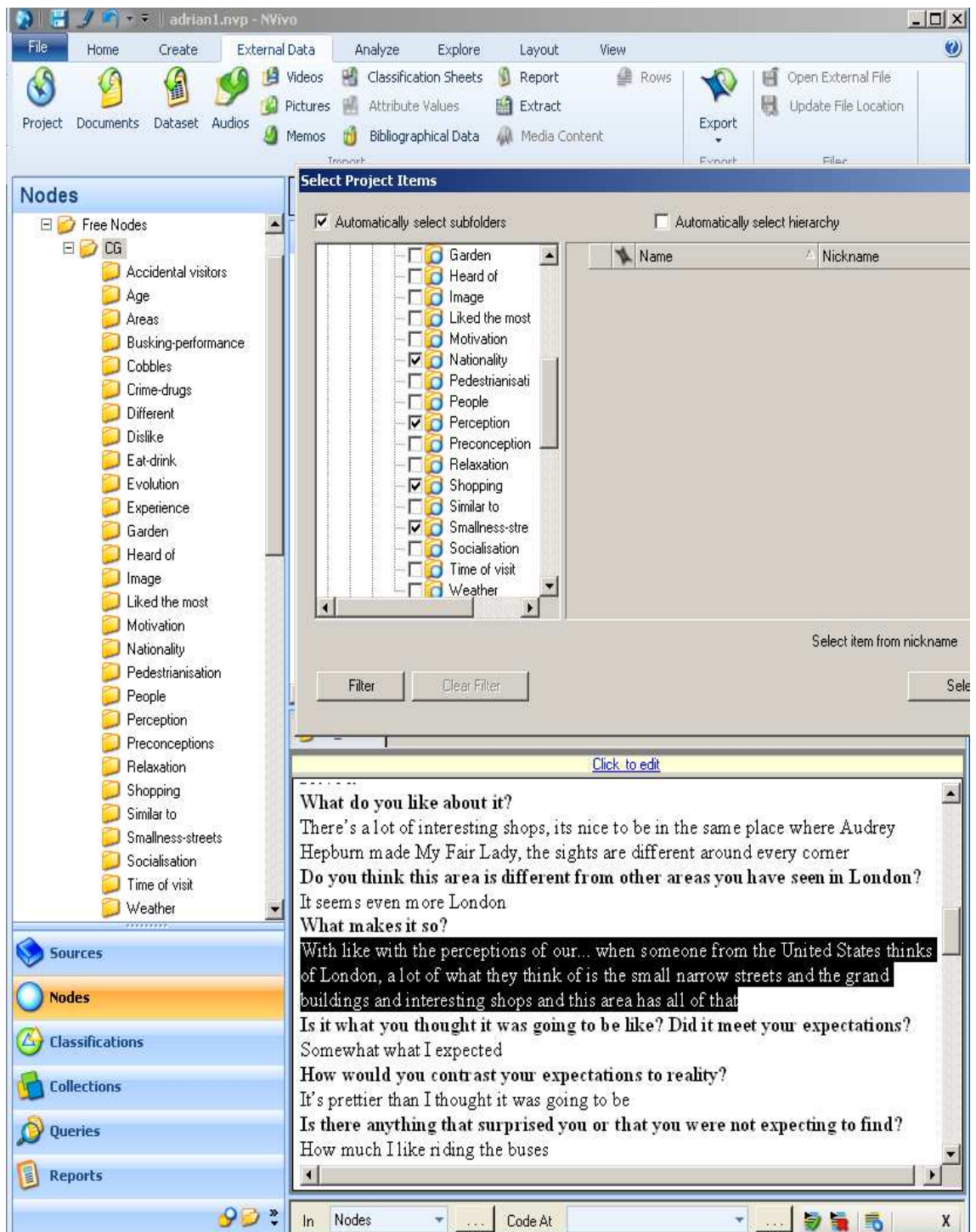
APPENDIX D.1: Transcribing the interviews using Express Scribe software



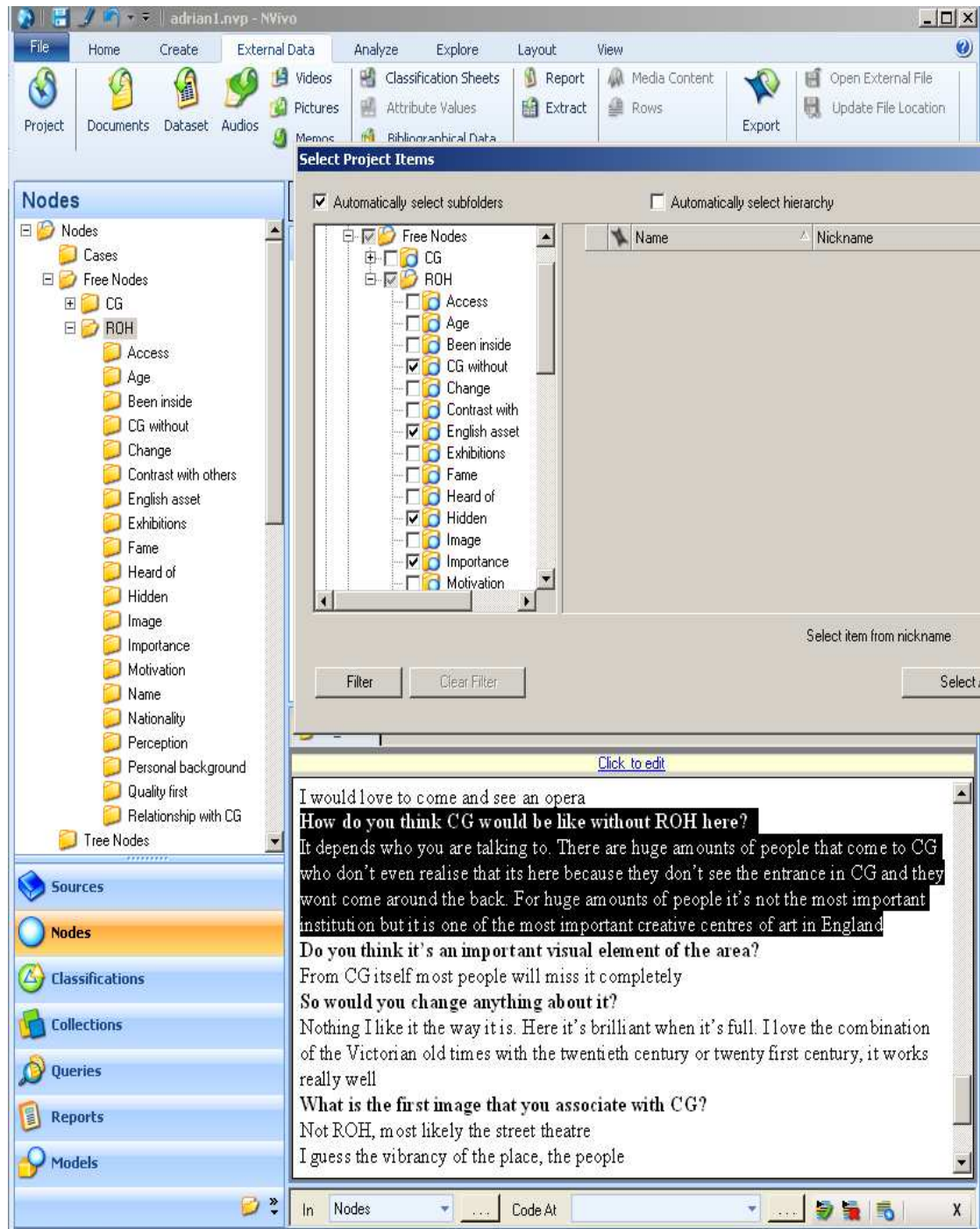
APPENDIX D.2:
Uploaded transcriptions of the interviews to QSR N*Vivo



APPENDIX D.3: Creation of sub-folders for CG categories and initial coding



APPENDIX D.4: Creation of sub-folders for ROH categories and initial coding



APPENDIX E:
Themes derived from the initial set of categories

THEMES			INITIAL CATEGORIES THEMES DERIVED FROM
AREA	Visitor characteristics	Area attracts younger visitors	Age (CG) - Experience – Motivation (CG) – Perception (CG)
		Nationality affects perception of area	Motivation (CG) - Nationality (CG) – Perception (CG)
	Preconceptions	Expectations of a garden	Preconceptions - Garden
		Media exposure	Preconceptions - Heard of (CG)
	Motivation to visit	Deliberate and accidental visitors	Accidental visitors – Motivation (CG)
		Centrality and typicality	Motivation (CG) – Perception (CG)
		Shopping, eating and drinking	Motivation (CG) - Shopping - Eat/Drink - Socialisation
		Performing arts and vibrancy	Motivation (CG) - Busking/Performance - People - Different
	Experience	Roaming and exploring	Experience (CG) - Pedestrianisation - Relaxation
		Commercial experiences	Experience (CG) - Shopping
		Cultural experiences	Experience (CG) - Busking/Performance
		Eating, drinking and social experiences throughout the day	Experience (CG) - Eat/Drink - Time of visit - Crime/Drugs - People - Socialisation
		Contrast between locations	Experience (CG) - Areas
	PERCEPTION	Urban based elements	Different - Image (CG) - Liked the most - Perception (CG) - Similar to – Smallness/Streets
			Cobbles - Different - Image (CG) - Liked the most - Pedestrianisation - Perception (CG) - Similar to – Smallness/Streets
			Areas – Perception (CG)
			Dislike - Evolution – Perception (CG)
			Eat/Drink - Liked the most – Perception (CG) - Weather
		Human based elements	Liked the most - Pedestrianisation - People - Perception (CG) - Relaxation - Socialisation

P E R C E P T I O N		Pedestrianisation	Liked the most - Pedestrianisation - People - Perception - Relaxation - Socialisation
		Co tourism	Dislike - Liked the most - People - Pedestrianisation – Perception (CG)
		Cosmopolitanism	Liked the most - People - Pedestrianisation – Perception (CG)
	Activity based elements	Commerce and nature of shops	Dislike - Liked the most - Perception (CG) - Shopping
		Street busking and quality of performance	Busking/Performance - Dislike - Liked the most – Perception (CG)
F L A G S H I P	Visitor characteristics	Flagship attracts older visitors	Age (ROH) - Motivation (ROH) – Personal Background
		Nationality affects perception of flagship	Contrast with others - Motivation (ROH) - Nationality (ROH) – Image - Personal background
	The building	Physical appearance (hidden)	Contrast with others – Image - Perception (ROH) - Hidden
		Contrast with other stand alone flagship buildings (stereotypes of opera houses)	Contrast with others – Nationality (ROH) - Perception (ROH) - Hidden – Image (ROH)
	The institution	Quality of performance over physical appearance	Contrast with others - Fame - Image (ROH) - Perception (ROH) - Hidden - Quality first
		Implications of the name (grandiosity), elitism and exclusivity	Access - Fame - Image (ROH) - Name - Perception (ROH)
		Audience development and access initiatives	Access - Been inside - Exhibitions
	Relationship with CG	Contrasting points of view	Heard of – Motivation (ROH and CG) - Personal background
		Attraction of visitors	Change - CG without - Importance - Relationship with CG
		Cosmopolitanism	Change - CG without - English asset - Importance - Relationship with CG
		Importance of opera houses for cultural destinations	Change - CG without - English asset - Importance - Relationship with CG

APPENDIX F:

Further evidence of findings

F.1. EVIDENCE OF AGE AFFECTING THE VISITOR'S PERCEPTION AND EXPERIENCE OF THE AREA

“What is your favourite thing about Covent Garden as an area? I’m sorry; nowadays I simply come here for the opera and then make my way back to my village outside Cambridge. Being retired and especially at the moment with the financial crunch, just going around looking at things that you may or may not want to buy is not something that interests me particularly. I think it would probably interest the much younger rather than the retired population (Anna, over 60)”

“Is there anything that you dislike about it? It’s just rather crowded, I’m sure you generation doesn’t mind but mine does (Doris, over 60)”

“Do you remember the first time you came? I was probably 14 or 15 **Do you think it has changed since then?** Probably, but I have changed too **Say more about that** Back then I was trying to buy candies and doll things but now I’m also checking for the pubs (Dicle, under 30)”

“What makes this are different in your view? Well it’s a little more high energy it seems to me than other parts **What do you attribute that energy to?** I think there’s a lot of younger kids (Marion, US)”

“I like the refurb and because I know the history of some of the buildings. I showed to my grandson the building that used to be the National Sporting club at the turn of the century. You look at it now and there’s a restaurant underneath and you would never think that in the 1800s gentlemen used to seat there and watch fester cuffs at least once a month. So it’s nice that I can impart that part of history so that he knows what went on there (Maurice, over 60)”

“What is the first image that you relate with Covent Garden?

1. The opera house
2. The bridge between ballet school because you are walking and look up and see this amazing bridge, I quite like that
1. Well that’s because you’re young, I’m stuck in the past, but for me it’s the Bow street façade (Erica and Jill, Under 30 and Over 60)”

F.2. EVIDENCE OF NATIONALITY AFFECTING THE PERCEPTION OF THE AREA-LACK OF HERITAGE IN THEIR HOME COUNTRIES

“How would you describe this area to a friend who has never been here? Charming, good shopping. It’s a historical market square that has a great deal of diversity in shopping, in people and entertainment (...) **What do you think makes it charming?** Well when you come from California we don’t have housing that is 400 years old (Marion, US)”

“What do you like the most about Covent Garden? I suppose that if you’re an Australian and you come from a country that’s barely over 200 years old, it’s

what you love about London and Dublin. It's the history, the age (...) you realise its 400 years old and my country isn't 400 years old. So it's the history (Gary, Australia)"

F.3. EVIDENCE OF NATIONALITY AFFECTING THE PERCEPTION OF THE AREA – NEGATIVE BECAUSE OF THEIR ORIGIN

"Is there anything that you dislike about the area? The paella we saw being cooked over there it was horrendous **Is this because you are Spanish?** Yes they were adding chorizo and paella should not go with it (Marga, Spain)"

"I am from a market town so I kind of had expectations of finding a market, not the hussle and bussle but I never realised on what scale it would be like. The scale is quite larger (Paul, England)"

"I think it's to go and see some shops that we don't have in our country like see different clothes. All these H and M, designer stores and things that we don't have that come with the big cities (Lina, Sweden)"

"What things are you expecting to do in Covent Garden? (...) Museums (...) National gallery (...) British Museum (...) and musical spectacles that I can't find in Seville. (Julia, Spain)"

F.4. EVIDENCE OF CONNECTION WITH 'MY FAIR LADY'

"Do you think it's an important element of Covent Garden? Yes I'm sure it attracts tourists. My Fair Lady took place at Coven Garden, that's also one thing I wanted to come for, to get the feeling, you still can imagine it smaller and people and the street vendors, so it is where it took place. (Claude, France)"

"What do you like the most about the area? There's a lot of interesting shops, it's nice to be in the same place where Audrey Hepburn made My Fair Lady, the sights are different around every corner. (Gerald, US)"

F.5. EVIDENCE OF TOURISTS VISITING HIGH PROFILE AREAS AND ATTRACTIONS

"What places have you been visiting? Westminster Abbey, Camden town, Westminster, Trafalgar Square, all the tourist centres (Peter, Germany)"

"We visit exhibits, museums; we have done all the main tourist attractions (Andy, Ireland)"

F.6. EVIDENCE OF PROXIMITY TO OTHER AREAS/ATTRACTIONS AS MOTIVATION TO VISIT

"What makes it touristic? (...) it's very central for the tourists to find. You can walk straight up from Trafalgar square and you are there (Dicle, Turkey)"

"To be honest we were just walking by, we are coming from the river and passed by because we are on our way to the British Museum and our hotel is nearby as well (Maria, Spain)"

“It’s very convenient because you can walk to most of the main sites from here so you don’t have to rely on public transportation and actually you don’t need a car. If you want to go further you use the underground but to walk like from here I walk to the river, I go to Piccadilly, Leicester square, Soho, Oxford Street, Hyde Park. (Wiorgos, Cyprus)”

F.7. EVIDENCE OF RELAXATION AS MOTIVATION TO VISIT

“I think the atmosphere is great, its not so, its a little bit more relaxing, not so stressed like, in Oxford street, the atmosphere is really great. The streets with a lot of little small shops and some nice restaurants The same, the place inside is really great, really relaxed, plenty of stuff to see but no one is in a hurry. Seems a lot more relaxed. (Martin and Ania, Germany)”

“Despite being very commercial at the same time it’s very cheery, it’s a chilling area. You can have a relaxed time here. Even when it’s crowded with people you still feel a bit comfortable and cosy that’s the best thing about Covent Garden, you can sit down (Fabio, Brasil)”

F.8. EVIDENCE OF ‘LONDON IN A SNAPSHOT’ EXPERIENCE

“If you want to see London in a short way, have a glance of it you can come to Covent Garden and look at all the places and you will have a sense of some kind of English thing in style (Tutu, Russia)”

“It typifies London **How does it typify London would you say?** Well because the concentration of the streets and all the different nationalities of the visitors, the tourists the people who live here and work here all the time is just... lovely (Marvis, England)”

“With like with the perceptions of our... when someone from the United States thinks of London, a lot of what they think of is the small narrow streets and the grand buildings and interesting shops and this area has all of that (Gerald, US)”

F.9.EVIDENCE OF SENSORIAL CONSUMPTION OF PLACE

“The thing which amazed me here from the first time was the smell. It’s nice and warm, the smell of the soup, the shops. I think that’s it. Different experiences from different senses. Your head is surrounded by different sounds like violin players and some meters further you can hear a singer and so forth. That’s very unusual. In each corner you can have different sensual experiences, voices and smells. That’s it. (Horacy, Poland)”

F.10. EVIDENCE OF ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA

“**What kind of things do you do when you come to Covent Garden?** Drink beer, watch people and smoke a spliff. Do you have one? (...) **What is the first image that you associate with Covent Garden?** A spliff (Diego, Venezuela)”

“**What brings you to Covent Garden today?** We are illegally drinking on the streets **Is that what you usually do in Covent Garden?** Yes because I can’t afford anything else here (Brian, Germany)”

“What brings you to Covent Garden? Business (...) What other things do you do in Covent Garden? Nothing really that I would reveal (Jude, Iraq?)”

F.11. EVIDENCE OF URBAN VILLAGE FEATURES

“Yes, its, I want to say suburban. It’s kind of suburban because it takes you out of the hussle and bussle of the city life. It’s kind of like a little village in itself. So it’s like a little town within the city (Paul, England)”

“You know all the parts is very busy and here it seems like you are in a much smaller town that London really is and other parts of the city is very noisy very busy lots of people rushing (...) it’s like a small town although it’s a very huge town where you don’t expect it. (Doris, Germany)”

“(...) in these little streets you feel like you are not in London because it’s all small. The street and the small squares so you feel like in a small village instead of the big city that London actually is (Silvia, Italy)”

“What makes them unique and different? They are almost encapsuled. If you stand at the terrace of the opera house and you look around, it’s a lot of brick work which makes it unique buildings (...) It has a lot of character, it seems like it has been around for a very long time and its purpose is to look beautiful and to be enriched with culture when you are sitting here taking it all in. (Kim, Canada)”

F.12. EVIDENCE OF COBBLED STREETS AS PLACE MAKING ELEMENTS

“Does this area remind you of any other areas that you have seen in London or abroad? No not really it’s quite different. Yes because the market was there since 1830 so that’s quite different. And if I’m not mistaken the cobbled stones are original Is that important? It is for a landmark Why do you think it’s important? It stores the originality of the place (Oliver, Australia)”

“Do you think Covent Garden is different from other areas? It seems older, the structure of it would remind me of an older time with cobbled streets. (Janet, US)”

“Is there anything that you would change about the area? I hate the floor, you can’t walk. It’s all really old and then yeah it’s definitely not suitable for heels. I would change that. (Maya, Mexico)”

F.13. EVIDENCE OF CONTRAST BETWEEN AREAS FROM A PERCEPTUAL POINT OF VIEW

“Some of the shops are quite good around Floral Street but I quite like moving away from the touristy south side of Covent Garden and going north more towards Seven Dials. (...) I kind of think about it as two separate areas almost. **How would you contrast these areas?** I think around Seven Dials are people who work and live in London and kind of know what they are doing (...) Its

people just stopping and having coffee with their friends whereas when you are going towards the market its just tourism hanging out and its people who have come to their day trip in London almost on holiday, its a bit more tacky (David, England)”

F.14. EVIDENCE OF GENTRIFICATION

“It’s just like your average thrown on the mill sort of giant market place these days with all the little markets in the middle (...) I used to go to a lot of pubs and they used to go on about Covent Garden and how wonderful it was when it was actually a proper market. (Alice, New Zealand)”

F.15. EVIDENCE OF PACE OF MOVEMENT

“**What makes this area different?** The people. I think that the people are here for amusement, they are strolling relaxed on the streets. When you are in other parts of London, people are always going somewhere, going to do something, always focused. Whereas here you feel like people are relaxed and enjoying their walk. (Silvia, Bolivia)”

“I like it because London feels like such a rush, very chaotic and I like it here because you can relax for a while, people don’t seem to be in such a rush like in other areas. For example I’m coming from Canary Wharf and everyone looked like they were running a marathon, I was choking as I walked, here is more of a relaxing zone. (Angelica, Mexico)”

F.16. EVIDENCE OF FRIENDLY AMBIENCE

“**Do you think it’s different from other areas in London?**

Yes, because of the fact that Londoners don’t seem to want to stop and talk much whereas in Covent Garden they all mingle, people stop and chat, they watch the performers, they spill out onto the streets in the pubs and the clubs, the restaurants are out. It’s almost like Paris where they spill out onto the streets. I think that’s quite unique in London (Phil, England)”

F.17. EVIDENCE OF CONGLOMERATION AS A NEGATIVE ELEMENT

“**Is there anything that you dislike about the area?** The tourists. Its not that I dislike them but I just find that they occupy large spaces that you are trying to get through and because they are not from the place they don’t have the awareness of moving on to the side or respecting other large groups of people. Covent Garden seems notorious for several large groups of people sightseeing at the same time. (Dean, England)”

“**Is there anything that you would change about the area?** 50% of the tourists. But they are allowed to come as much as we do. I think she’s right, the area has still retained its charm, and the trouble is when you walk through, an awful lot of tackiness (Erica, Australia)”

F.18. EVIDENCE OF TOURIST’S CARRYING CAPACITY

“**Do you like the area?** Not very much **What do you dislike about it?** Too many tourists, like me (David, Netherlands)”

F.19. EVIDENCE OF LARGE CROWDS AS A RESULT OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

“It can get quite congested of people in certain parts where people tend to gather together in the streets but I suppose that’s part of the appeal as well. (Phil, Wales)”

“Do you think the area has changed since then? It seems a lot busier than it was **Is that a good thing or a bad thing?** Well to us it’s not a good thing but its part of London, that’s why you come to London really; it’s the buzz of the place that is part of being in a big city (Jonathan, England)”

F.20. EVIDENCE OF LARGE SCALE SHOPS AS NEGATIVE ELEMENTS

“They should ban all chain stores from Covent Garden. Its part of its charm that it’s an old market square and there are small stores but also huge chain stores. (Brian, Germany)”

“Is there anything that you dislike about Covent Garden or that you would change? I think that some of the shops are too generic it would be nice to have more boutiquey shops **What do you mean by that?** Sort of individual shops, more privately owned shops. (Claire, England)”

F.21. EVIDENCE OF NATIONALITY EXERTING INFLUENCE ON THE VISITOR’S INTEREST IN THE OPERA HOUSE

“Have you heard of the Royal Opera house before? Yes Where did you hear of it? Because the first ballerina is Spanish **Tamara Rojo?** Yes (Paula, Spain)”

How do you imagine it to be?

“Like the Royal Spanish theatre (Alejandro, Spain)”

“I can’t explain because in my mind house of opera also in Bucharest (Vasilica, Rumania)”

“I would imagine it would be something like the Belfast opera house (Rich, Ireland)”

“I wanted to make out the difference between our opera house and this one (Margarita, Armenia)”

F.22. EVIDENCE OF THE OPERA HOUSE’S URBAN CONCEALMENT

“I don’t think it’s important to the area because I think it’s quite hidden almost. It’s a very small door in the corner of the courtyard by the piazza which you wouldn’t really know unless you knew it was there and I think the other side which is a nice frontage you don’t get the aspect because it’s on a street with a building opposite so you cant stand back. Whereas other landmarks you get views which I don’t think you get with the Royal Opera House (David, England)”

F.23. EVIDENCE OF QUALITY OF PERFORMANCE OVER PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

“I mean the most important thing about the opera house is what it sounds like within. I think the inside is the most important thing than the outside (Doris, Germany)”

“I don’t think that one thinks about it in terms of its architecture. You think in terms of the performances but not the architecture. (Aline, England)”

F.24. EVIDENCE OF AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

“It’s the heart of the culture and the poshness of Covent Garden, what’s sitting outside on a terrace with a glass of wine without the opera? It’s somewhere where people can go and feel like they are part of some rich society. Some people are I’m sure but someone like me it’s like just once in a while that I can do that and it makes me feel very special (Kim, Canada)”

“Do you know where you first heard from it? Probably in one of the things they did in Trafalgar sq where you can see it live **The big summer screens?** Yes the BP thing yes **How did you find out about that?** It was advertised on websites so that’s where I first saw it **Did you enjoy the big summer screen?** Yes **Do you think they should do more stuff like that?** Yes because it gets more people involved and a lot of people go to see it in Trafalgar sq just because you get the people that wander by. **Would you say you are an opera loving person?** Not necessarily, if it hadn’t been free I wouldn’t have gone. I went just because it was free and its something nice to do in the evening but I don’t necessarily love opera **Yet you enjoyed it?** Yes it was good. It’s the atmosphere that was nice. The opera was good but then the atmosphere was nice, it’s a nice summer thing to do **Did you enjoy the opera more than you expected to?** Yes (Clive, England)”

“I thought I would not be able to come in. Maybe it’s necessary to raise awareness of the possibility of going in a bit further so that more people can come in and have a closer look (Silvia, Bolivia)”

“It just seems to be very people friendly and I didn’t expect it to be open like this when I came today. I just came to stare at it from the outside so that was very nice. It’s very nice that you can just walk inside and have a drink, that’s charming (Doris, US)”

“What do you think it’s famous for? Because of its name, what it stand for. It might have sometimes an image of being a little bit exclusive sometimes (...) I would try to get more people who might not necessarily come to see the type of things that sometimes are on, to try and get them to come in just to experience it perhaps (Caroline, England)”

F.25. EVIDENCE OF RECIPROCITY BETWEEN COVENT GARDEN AND THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

“Do you remember the first time you came to Covent Garden? More or less **Do you think it has changed?** Yes, the seating is much better, we used to get masses of places that if you had expensive seats but there was a pillar or something in front of you and you couldn’t see the stage **Let’s talk about the whole area** I don’t really know much about the area, I want to talk about the opera house (Kate, England)”

F.26. EVIDENCE OF EARLY EXPOSURE TO ROYAL OPERA HOUSE AND LINGUISTIC DILEMMA

“How would you imagine Covent Garden would be like without the Royal Opera House? It would be awful to me **How do you imagine it?** It would be dead. People come initially to see the opera house **What does Covent Garden mean to you?** Covent Garden is the Royal Opera House **So the first thing that you associate with Covent Garden is the Royal Opera House?** Yes definitely **You obviously have an interest in opera and ballet am I right?** Yes, but even before they redeveloped, even as a young girl, Covent Garden was the Royal Opera House and of course all of this has evolved since the 1960s (Maria, Ireland)”

F.27. EVIDENCE OF COVENT GARDEN BEING THE SAME WITHOUT THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

“Even for us because we make music but I don’t think people in this area... they only like the shops. If I reach in the guide, it says about the restaurants and the shops, but not the opera. It is mentioned but it’s not central. (Ulrike, Germany)”

“Do you think the Royal Opera House is an important element of Covent Garden? Certainly, I think its absolutely central, take away the opera house and the place would probably become a kind of minor Soho (Anna, Russia)”

“What do you think Covent Garden would be like without the opera house? I dread to think **What do you reckon?** I don’t know, I think the space that it occupies would probably be more restaurants and shops possibly and I don’t necessarily think that would be a good thing. (Dean, England)”

“I sincerely think it would be the same from my point of view because I am coming to watch an opera, it is an important building but if it was located elsewhere in London for me it would be the same. Perhaps people in the neighborhood feel proud its there but for me as a tourist it makes no difference where its located, I am going to watch an opera. (Silvia, Bolivia)”

“In some respects it hasn’t changed but in others it will permanently keep changing because stores and shops and people are always moving and some things close and some others open and when I came to the Royal Opera House it wasn’t how it looked now and it was before the change so you got quite a major change here (Dean, England)”