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**Title: Enjoying Theatre: The Role of Visitors' Response to the Performance**

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## Abstract

In the literature, there is broad agreement on the relevance of visitors' cognitive and emotional reaction to a theatrical performance. However, research on the relative importance of visitors' response for their overall subjective evaluation of a visit to a theatre is rare. Addressing this research gap, the paper investigates the relative impact of visitors' cognitive, emotional, and conative response to the performance for their overall subjective evaluation of a visit to theatre. A study on 2.795 visitors of 44 performances in 12 German speaking theatres reveals visitors' emotional (i.e., involvement and empathy), cognitive (i.e., complexity), and conative (i.e., thought-provoking impulses, stimulation for communication) response to the performance as significant determinants of their overall evaluation of a visit to theatre.

Keywords: cognitive response, conative response, emotional response, subjective evaluation, theatrical experience

Research in reception aesthetics points to the fact that any artistic work needs the recipient in order to be fully accomplished (e.g., Hohendahl, 1977). In case of performing arts such as theatre, the central role of the recipient is most obvious. Hence, academics and practitioners agree in that the visitor is an essential part of every theatre performance (e.g., Bentley, 1966; Eversmann, 2004). More precisely, theatre performances are explicitly presented in order to address the audience (Martin & Sauter, 1995; Sauter, 2000). Accordingly, “recent thinking within the philosophy of art has favored the view that the experience of the arts – and not the artifact itself – is the final criterion for artistic value” (Boorsma & Chiaravalloti, 2010, p. 303). Hence, the visitor’s experience and his or her response to a theatrical performance are of crucial interest for both theorists and practitioners.

In the literature, there is broad agreement on the relevance of visitors’ emotional and cognitive reaction to a theatre play for their evaluation of a performance. While Schoenmakers (1982), Scherer (2004), and Tan (2000) emphasize the impact of visitors’ emotional reaction, Gourd (1977) and Tan (1982) investigate theatre visitors’ cognitive reaction to a theatre play. Still, knowledge about the nature of visitors’ response to a theatrical performance, that is, their active and deliberate processing of the information given by the performance, is limited. Moreover, the theatrical experience as a whole is not confined to visitors’ response (e.g., in terms of their cognitive and emotional reaction) to the play. Rather, other aspects such as visitors’ previous expectations, their general evaluation of a theatre, and their perception of the theatre’s servicescape may be relevant as well. However, insights in the relative impact of visitors’ response to a play on their overall evaluation of the theatrical experience are still lacking.

To provide such insights, an integrative framework is needed, including all aspects that visitors take into account when evaluating a theatre visit. Based on this framework, visitors' response to a performance could be tested empirically as one determinant of visitors' evaluation of a theatre visit, compared to all other aspects that visitors take into account when evaluating a theatre visit. However, despite intense research in both reception research and theatre marketing, integrative empirical approaches are still lacking. In *reception research*, existing integrative models on visitors' response to a theatrical performance are mostly too complex to be tested empirically (e.g., Schoenmakers, 1982; Tan, 1982). When it comes to empirical studies in reception research, some authors investigated the relative impact of visitors' response to a theatrical performance on their overall evaluation of a theatrical event (e.g., Boerner, Jobst, & Wiemann, 2010; Cronkhite, Mishler, & Kirk, 1971; Eversmann, 2004; Tan & Schoenmakers, 1984). However, these studies mainly rely on one single performance and/or investigate expert respondents (instead of ordinary theatregoers) and can hardly be generalized.

In the *theatre marketing* literature, integrative approaches have been developed to investigate visitors' satisfaction with a theatrical event. However, although visitors' emotional and cognitive reaction to a performance is assumed to be an important determinant of their satisfaction (e.g., Gountas & Gountas, 2007), it has been included only in some of the existing frameworks (e.g., Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2010). Moreover, in most of the studies, efforts are largely restricted to investigate visitors' evaluation of the so-called 'servicescape' (i.e., catering, parking lots, public transportation), while neglecting the so-called 'core quality', i.e., the performance itself (e.g., Bauer, Herrmann, & Huber, 1997; Swanson & Davis, 2006). To date, only one study has included aspects of the performance when investigating the role of visitors' cognitive and emotional reaction to a performance on their

overall satisfaction with a theatrical event (Boerner, Moser, & Jobst, 2011). However, since this study is based on only one production, its results cannot be generalized.

Against this background, the paper aims at answering the following research question: *To what extent does the visitor's response to a performance contribute to his or her overall evaluation of a visit to theatre?*

Building on the results of a qualitative study (Jobst & Boerner, 2012), we first develop an instrument for measuring the whole set of determinants of visitors' subjective evaluation of a visit to a theatre. We then investigate the relative impact of visitors' cognitive, emotional, and conative response on their overall evaluation of a visit to theatre by studying a sample of 2.795 visitors of 44 performances in 12 German speaking theatres.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. In the first section, we provide a literature review and develop our research question. Next, a model of the determinants of visitors' subjective evaluation of a visit to theatre is presented, resulting from a qualitative study with theatregoers. In the third section, we describe design and results of an empirical study in 12 German speaking theatres. In the discussion section, answers to our research question are provided and limitations of our study are discussed.

## **Literature Review and Research Question**

In *reception research*, several efforts have been made to develop integrative models of visitors' response to a theatrical performance. Tan (1982) suggests a theory of drama in order

to describe what is going on in the minds of spectators during a theatrical performance. From Kintsch and Van Dijk (1978) he borrows the idea that the reception process as a whole is guided by a “schema”, reflecting global reception strategies of the spectator. Tan (1982) distinguishes three sub-processes of the reception process, i.e., interpretation, evaluation, and emotion, which occur simultaneously and are related to each other in a complex way. Interpretation “is the process in which ‘meaning’ is attached to incoming information from the performance” (1982, p. 161 f.). With regard to evaluation, Tan (1982, p. 165) states that “not very much is known of the factors determining evaluation”. According to the author, two factors may seem relevant, i.e., performance characteristics such as thematic aspects and spectator characteristics such as sex, age, and education. According to Tan (1982, p. 167), central to his conception of emotion is the notion of “interruption”, i.e., “some discrepancy between cognitive structures or within a cognitive structure”. While dealing with the causes and intensity of emotions in detail, Tan (1982) stays rather vague about which kind of emotions spectators are dealing with.

Schoenmakers (1982) develops a model of theatrical communication by analyzing both the staging and spectators’ reactions. Amongst other elements, the model includes the production, mediation, staging, reception, and processing (1982, p. 115). Although intended to be a “detailed description of the communication process“ (1982, p. 116), the model is rather a general framework “in itself not explaining anything of interest, but providing a foundation for detailed description of the reception process” (Tan, 1982, p. 159).

Understanding theatre as an act of communication between its presentational side and its perceptual side, Martin & Sauter (1995) suggest a model of theatrical communication. According to the authors, theatrical communication is comprised of three levels, i.e., a sensory level, an artistic level, and a fictional level – tightly interwoven and activated parallel

to each other (Martin & Sauter, 1995, p. 78 ff.). However, as said above, none of these complex models has ever been tested empirically.

When it comes to empirical studies, several investigations allow for first insights into the relative impact of visitors' response to the performance on their overall evaluation of a theatrical event. Some of those studies are focussed on opera (Behr, 1983; Boerner & Renz, 2008; Jobst & Boerner, 2011); although parallels in visitors' evaluation of theatre and opera are to be expected, communalities (e.g., the relevance of the servicescape) and differences (e.g., the relevance of visitors' emotional vs. cognitive response) still have to be analyzed systematically. We therefore briefly outline only those studies which are dedicated to theatre. Investigating 71 expert visitors (i.e., students of theatre science and members of the ensemble) of Chekhov's "Uncle Vanya" in the US, Cronkhite, Mishler and Kirk (1971) identify several cognitive (e.g., understanding of plot and character relationships) and emotional aspects (e.g., tension progression) of the performance. In their investigation of 152 student visitors of "Protest" by Václav Havel in the Netherlands, Tan and Schoenmakers (1984) find visitors' interests and their positive emotions vis-à-vis one of the characters as significant determinants of their evaluation of the performance. In their extensive qualitative studies in different countries, the so-called "theatre talks", Sauter (2000) and Sauter, Kalvik, and Isaksson (1986) identify the perceived artistic quality as the main (and nearly only) determinant of visitors' evaluation of a theatrical event. Based on Eversmann's (2004) work, Boerner, Jobst, and Wiemann (2010) analyze the relative impact of four dimensions on spectators' overall judgment of the theatrical event, i.e., the perceptual, cognitive, emotional, and communicative dimension. Investigating 125 visitors of a production in a German community theatre, only the emotional and the cognitive dimension are confirmed as determinants of visitors' overall judgment of a theatrical event. Thereby, the impact of the

emotional dimension ( $\beta = .48$ ) is slightly higher than the impact of the cognitive dimension ( $\beta = .41$ ).

While the above mentioned studies allow for first answers to our research question, they all (with the exception of Sauter, 2000; Sauter et al., 1986) rely on one single performance (or production, respectively) and investigate expert respondents instead of typical respondents; thus, they cannot be generalized. We therefore agree with Eversmann (2004, p. 149) who states:

“Aesthetic philosophy and theatre theory are mainly speculative disciplines which utilize introspection rather than empirical data in order to discuss the aesthetic experiences of spectators. Audience- and reception research on the other hand has tended to be empirical, concentrating either on partial aspects of the aesthetic experience or on the effects of specific performances. However, a systematic exploration of the theatrical total experience itself is lacking – the more so because the tools and measuring techniques tend to be derived from the theory of art rather than from the experiences of the respondents themselves”.

In the *theatre marketing* literature, integrative approaches have been developed to investigate visitors' satisfaction with a theatrical event and/or a theatrical organization (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Garbarino & Johnson, 2001; Johnson & Garbarino, 2001; Johnson, Garbarino, & Sivadas, 2006; Palmer & Koenig-Lewis, 2010; Song & Cheung, 2010a, 2010b; Voss & Cova, 2006). However, although visitors' emotional and cognitive reaction to a performance is assumed to be an important determinant for satisfaction in the theatre context (e.g., Gountas & Gountas, 2007), it has rarely been included in these frameworks. Moreover, most of the studies restrict their efforts on investigating visitors' evaluation of the so-called 'servicescape', i.e., everything beyond the performance itself (Bauer et al., 1997; Haefs & Schmidt, 1999; Swanson & Davis, 2006).



To the best of our knowledge, only two empirical studies so far have included both the core quality and the servicescape, thereby investigating the impact of visitors' cognitive and emotional reaction to a performance on their overall evaluation of a visit to a theatre. While Jobst and Boerner (2011) exclusively focus on opera, Boerner et al. (2011) refer to theatre. The latter study investigates visitors' satisfaction with their subjective experience in theatre. Relying on research in both theatre marketing and theatre studies, the authors suggest a model of visitors' satisfaction in theatre. This model includes nine determinants of visitors' satisfaction with their subjective experience in theatre, namely (1) the topic of the play, (2) stage direction, (3) the ensemble, (4) the principal performer, (5) stage design (i.e., costumes, requisites, and lighting), (6) music, (7) the service quality (i.e., infrastructure and service) provided by the theatre, (8) visitors' emotional response, and (9) visitors' identification with the principal performer. However, in a field study (n = 158) on three performances of 'Twelfth Night or What You Will' (Shakespeare) in a German community theatre, the authors identify only two significant determinants, namely, spectators' perception of stage direction and their emotional response to the performance. Yet, since this study is based on one single production, its results can hardly be generalized.

To sum it up, existing knowledge about the relative impact of visitor's response to a performance on their overall evaluation of a visit to theatre is rare in both reception research and theatre marketing. Researchers agree that visitors' emotional and cognitive reaction are important aspects of both a performance (Cronkhite et al., 1971) and a theatrical event (Eversmann, 2004). Similarly, visitors' emotional and cognitive response have been revealed to determine visitors' evaluation of both a performance (Tan & Schoenmakers, 1984) and a theatrical experience (Boerner et al., 2010) as well as visitors' satisfaction in theatre (Boerner et al., 2011) in single performances. However, the following question still needs to be

answered: *To what extent does the visitor's response to a performance contribute to his or her overall evaluation of a visit to theatre?*

### **Determinants of Visitors' Subjective Evaluation of a Visit to Theatre**

In order to identify the full set of determinants of visitors' subjective evaluation of a visit to theatre, we first carried out a qualitative study (Jobst & Boerner, 2012). By conducting semi-structured, open-ended in-depth interviews with 21 theatregoers, we asked for the factors that determine their subjective evaluation of a visit to theatre. In order to include theatregoers representing a broad set of cases, we chose a typical-case approach to case selection (cp. Gerring, 2006). We conducted a content analysis (e.g., Kvale, 1999; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) of the interview transcripts by using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 8 (cp. Bazeley, 2007; Gibbs, 2002), i.e., a thorough process of reading the interview transcriptions, finding categories, testing, and refining them.

As a result of this study, 30 single determinants of visitors' subjective evaluation of a visit to a theatre could be identified (see Figure 1). For reasons of clarity, we organized them into eight categories, namely, (1) general evaluation of the theatre, (2) visitors' mood and expectations, (3) perceived artistic quality, (4) visitors' cognitive response, (5) visitors' emotional response, (6) visitors' conative response, (7) other visitors' perceived behavior, and (8) servicescape.

# Insert Figure 1 about here #

In the following, we provide a brief description of these determinants. Given the focus of this paper, particular attention will be given to the determinants pertaining to visitors' cognitive, emotional, and conative response to the performance. The description of all determinants is followed by a summary of the results of the qualitative study.

The *general evaluation of the theatre* includes three determinants, namely, the general artistic reputation of a theatre, the season's programming (e.g., a balanced seasonal program), and special events offered in addition to the regular performances (e.g., lectures, panel discussions, or guided tours back stage).

The category of *visitors' mood and expectations* covers three determinants. First, direction of visitors' expectation (i.e., positive vs. negative; cp. Eversmann, 2004; 2 items), second, the level and specificity of visitors' expectation (i.e., high vs. low), and third, visitors' mood before entering the theatre.

The *perceived artistic quality of the performance* is the most complex category, covering five determinants, namely, the play, the play's topicality, stage direction (including the sub-dimensions of perceived quality of staging, fit within different aspects of the production, and "werktreue"– i.e., fidelity to the original (Balme, 2008b; Schläder, 2001), quality of the acting, and stage setting (i.e., stage design, the costumes, and the props; Boerner et al., 2011).

According to the literature (Balme, 2008a; Kim & Rubin, 1997), we understand *visitors' cognitive response* to a theatrical performance as the active and deliberate processing of the information given by the performance. Our study reveals three different determinants

pertaining to the cognitive response, namely, novelty (cp. Kindermann, 1971; Schaefer, 1978), complexity (cp. Eversmann, 2004; Lazarowicz, 1997), and visitors' associations from the performance to their own lives (cp. Eversmann, 2004; Kindermann, 1971; Konijn, 1999; Schaefer, 1978; Schoenmakers, 1988).

Confirming the results of the extant theoretical literature (Frijda, 1986; Goffman, 1980; Tan, 1995, 1996), visitors' *emotional response* falls into emotions activated by the fiction (i.e., involvement, empathy, and identification) and emotions activated by the artifact (i.e., breaching of norms and values) – hence resulting in four determinants. While there is no agreement in the literature whether empathy and identification can be understood as separate constructs (e.g., Schoenmakers, 2010) or not (e.g., Konijn, 1999) or whether identification exists in the theatre context at all (e.g., Zillmann, 1995), the results of our interview study suggest the existence of two clearly distinguishable constructs.

In addition to the extant literature, our interview study reveals a third category of visitors' response, namely, their *conative response* to a theatre performance. In contrast to visitors' emotional and cognitive response, this response is related to behavioral intentions stimulated by the performance. According to the literature on the reception of media (e.g., Vorderer & Schramm, 2002) and the psychology of motivation (e.g., Bagozzi, 1992), we choose the label 'conative response'. This category includes three determinants. First, the interviewees appreciate theatrical performances that make them think and that set something in them in motion, i.e., thought-provoking impulses. According to Eversmann (2004), most of the analytical processing of the information provided by the performance is delayed till after the performance since in the theatre setting only then it is complete. Second, the majority of the interviewed theatregoers wants to be stimulated by a performance and likes to talk to others

about a seen performance afterwards, i.e., stimulation for communication. Third, the interviewed theatregoers see it as a good sign if a performance animates them to search for additional information (e.g., with regard to the author, the play, or the topic), i.e., need for further information. Many visitors appreciate to attend post-performance lectures and to talk to participants such as the director.

*Other visitors' perceived behavior* is composed of two determinants, namely, other visitors' behavior during the performance (enriching vs. disturbing; cp. Gutjahr, 2008; Kindermann, 1971) and other visitor's behavior before and after the performance and during the intermission (cp. Eversmann, 2004).

Lastly, *servicescape* covers two determinants. First, the auditorium (e.g., the seat, view of the stage, acoustics) is mentioned as an important aspect. Second, several of the interviewed theatregoers emphasize the importance of friendly and well informed employees such as cloakroom attendants and ushers – hence, the theatre's service (Kunz & Hogreve, 2011).

To sum it up, the model depicted in Figure 1 presents the results of our qualitative study and serves as the point of departure for our subsequent quantitative analysis. More precisely, it provides a summary of all determinants of visitors' evaluation of a theatre visit as identified by our interviewees, including an aggregation of these determinants into abstract categories. With regard to previous research in both theatre studies and theatre marketing, the contribution of our model can be specified as follows.

First, to date, only three studies have been conducted to identify the determinants of visitors' evaluation of a theatre visit (Boerner et al., 2010; Martin & Sauter, 1995; Sauter,

2000). Our model includes the influence factors that have been identified in these studies (cognitive, emotional, and communicative aspects; Boerner et al., 2010; e.g., artistic quality; Martin & Sauter, 1995; Sauter, 2000); in addition, our model adds a range of determinants not considered so far (e.g., visitor's mood and expectations, other visitors' behavior, servicescape).

Second, our model covers determinants that have been used for describing the reception process (i.e., staging and spectators' reactions; Schoenmakers, 1982), for describing theatrical communication (i.e., sensory level, artistic level, fictional level; Martin & Sauter, 1995), and for describing the performance (i.e., cognitive and emotional aspects; Cronkhite et al., 1971). Furthermore, our model includes influence factors that have been suggested as determinants of visitors' evaluation of a theatrical performance (i.e., visitors' interest and positive emotions; Tan & Schoenmakers, 1984) and visitors' satisfaction in theatre (e.g., the play, stage direction; Boerner et al., 2011).

Third, our model reveals the importance of visitors' response to the performance as a determinant of their evaluation of a theatre visit, with nearly half of the identified determinants pertaining to visitors' response. Moreover, our study demonstrates the complexity of visitors' response to the performance: the cognitive, emotional, and conative response each cover different dimensions, which our interviewees identified as separate determinants of their overall evaluation of a theatrical event. As lined out above, these determinants provide a summary of aspects of visitors' response that have been discussed in different streams of literature so far.

## **Methods**

### *Measures*

Given the scarcity of empirical research on the topic, almost all measures had to be developed for the purpose of our quantitative study. Thereby, we related to both the existing literature (as indicated below) and the results of our preceding qualitative study (e.g., by using terms from the interviews). All variables were measured by multi-item scales. While the majority of the scales was constructed as reflective scales<sup>i</sup> (cp. Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001; Homburg & Klarmann, 2006; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Jarvis, 2005), three scales were constructed as formative scales (i.e., general evaluation of the theatre, visitors' expectation and mood, servicescape). The responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

### *Dependent variable*

Visitors' subjective overall evaluation of a visit to theatre was measured by eight indicators. Following suggestions of research in service marketing (e.g., Bruhn & Murmann, 1998), three indicators were related to the overall satisfaction with the visit (cp. Boerner et al., 2010) and two indicators captured the confirmation of visitors' expectations (cp. Jobst, 2007; Olsen, 2002). In addition, one indicator included a comparison to visitors' ideal of a visit to theatre (cp. Bruhn & Murmann, 1998). Finally, one indicator asked for visitors' intention to recommend the production (cp. Swanson & Davis, 2006) and one asked for the intention to revisit the theatre (i.e., the intention of repurchase; cp. Swanson & Davis, 2006).

### *Independent variables*

(1) Visitors' general evaluation of the theatre. As a result of the qualitative study and previous findings in the literature (Swanson & Davis, 2006), three components were used to build this formative scale, i.e., visitors' evaluation of the theatre's artistic quality (3 items), of its repertoire (1 item), and of the theatre's offers beyond the theatrical performance (1 item).

(2) Visitors' mood and expectations. Three components were identified to build the formative construct of visitors' expectation, namely, the level of their expectation (i.e., high vs. low; 1 item), its direction (i.e., positive vs. negative; cp. Eversmann, 2004; 2 items), and its specificity (i.e., open vs. determined; cp. Bennett, 2005; 2 items). To measure visitors' mood before entering the theatre, the dimensions of the "Leipziger Stimmungsbogen" (Hinz, Hessel, & Brähler, 2002) were measured with one item each.

(3) Perceived artistic quality. The five determinants of this category were measured according to our qualitative study and to existing approaches in the literature (Boerner et al., 2011; Eversmann, 2004; Jobst, 2007): the play (cp. Boerner et al., 2011; 7 items), the play's topicality (cp. Boerner et al., 2011; 5 items), quality of acting (5 items), stage setting (5 items), and stage direction. Stage direction was divided into three sub-determinants, namely, perceived quality of staging (cp. Boerner et al., 2011; 6 items), fit within different aspects of the production (cp. Butzer-Strothmann, Günter, & Degen, 2001; Moser, 2005; 4 items), and "werktreue" (cp. Boerner, 2002; 3 items) – that is, the faithfulness of a production to the original text (Balme, 2008b).

(4) Visitors' cognitive response. The cognitive response to the performance included the determinants of novelty (cp. Benzecry, 2009; 4 items), complexity (cp. Eversmann, 2004;



Martin & Sauter, 1995; 6 items), and visitors' associations from the performance to their own lives (cp. Andringa, 2004; Eversmann, 2004; Garbarino & Johnson, 2001; 5 items).

(5) Visitors' emotional response. The emotional response to the performance covered four determinants, namely, emotional involvement (cp. Boerner et al., 2011; Eversmann, 2004; Jobst, 2007; 6 items), empathy (cp. Jobst, 2007; 4 items), identification (cp. Boerner et al., 2011; Eversmann, 2004; Schoenmakers, 2010; 4 items), and breaching of norms and values (cp. Olsen, 2002; 5 items).

(6) Visitors' conative response to the performance. This category included three determinants, namely, thought-provoking impulses (cp. Eversmann, 2004; 4 items), stimulation to communicate (cp. Eversmann, 2004; 4 items), and need for further information (cp. Olsen, 2002; 4 items).

(7) Other visitors' perceived behavior. This category was composed of other visitors' response to the performance (enriching vs. disturbing; cp. Gutjahr, 2008; Kindermann, 1971; 3 items each) and other visitors' behavior before and after the performance and during the intermission (cp. Eversmann, 2004; 6 items).

(8) Servicescape. The auditorium (cp. Butzer-Strothmann et al., 2001; Haefs & Schmidt, 1999; 7 items) and the theatre's service (cp. Butzer-Strothmann et al., 2001; Haefs & Schmidt, 1999; 15 items) were used to measure this category .

### *Controls*

Since visitors' age, gender, and level of education have proved to influence their overall evaluation of a visit to theatre (e.g., Eversmann, 2004), these variables were included as controls.

#### *Pretest, pilot study, and validation study*

After a pretest conducted with interviewees recruited for the qualitative study and participants of a seminar on cultural management, some of the items had to be reworded. Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted during a performance of Molière's "Malade imaginaire" (n = 56) and a performance of Schmidt's "Die 7 Todsünden" (n = 78) in a German communal theatre. One result of this pilot study was that response rates could be increased by giving visitors the chance to answer after returning home; hence, a question indicating the point in time when the questionnaire was filled in was added to the instrument (i.e., immediately after the performance; the day of the visit to theatre; one to three days after the visit; four to seven days after the visit; later<sup>ii</sup>).

In addition, a validation study was conducted among 270 visitors of four performances of "Janis Joplin – Ein Stück Rock'n'Roll" (by Thomas Guglielmetti) at another German community theatre. In the first step, missing values were imputed using the expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm and the software NORM 2.03 (Schafer, 1999). This multiple imputation procedure has been recommended in the literature as superior to case-wise deletion and other forms of imputation (Acock, 2005; Little & Rubin, 2002; Schnell, Hill, & Esser, 2011). Second, by conducting confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs), the construct validity of the reflective scales (i.e., artistic quality, visitors' cognitive, emotional, and conative response, other visitors' behavior, and the dependent variable) was tested. Since our sample is too small to test all reflective scales in one comprehensive model (cp. Backhaus,

Erichson, Plinke, & Weiber, 2006; Kline, 2005), we followed recommendations in the literature (e.g., Eisenbeiß, 2008) and divided the model into three blocks according to theoretical reasoning.

The first block includes all scales pertaining to the artistic quality (i.e., the play, the play's topicality, staging, fit, "werktreue", quality of acting, stage setting), the second block contains all scales representing visitors' response to the performance (i.e., novelty, complexity, and associations to own life for the cognitive response; emotional involvement, empathy, identification, and breaching of norms and values for the emotional response; thought-provoking impulses, stimulation to communicate, and need for further information for the conative response), and the third block encompasses other visitors' reaction to the performance (i.e., other visitors' behavior before and after the performance, other visitors' behavior during the performance), and the dependent variable (i.e., visitors' overall evaluation of the theatre visit). For each block, separate CFAs were conducted. Results of these CFAs showed good validity for the newly developed scales (see Table 1).

#insert Table 1 around here#

For artistic quality, the 5-factor model reached a clearly better fit than the 1-factor model. For visitors' response to the performance, the 10-factor model was clearly superior to both a 3-factor model and a 1-factor model. Lastly, considering other visitors' behavior and the dependent variable, the 3-factor model demonstrated a better fit than both the 2-factor and the 1-factor model. In addition, Cronbach's alpha was well above .70 for nearly all scales,

indicating sufficient to good reliability (e.g., Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) – only very few scales had to be revised, thereby only marginally.

### *Sample*

In the first step, all public theatres in Germany, the German-speaking parts of Switzerland, and Austria with an auditorium of 300 seats or more were asked for participation in the study. Out of 111 theatres, 12 were willing to participate – representing a quota of more than 10% which is acceptable for a so-called ‘cold calling’ (e.g., Schön, 2010). In the second step, the selection of productions and performances to be investigated was discussed with representatives of the participating theatres. The criterion for the final selection of events in which our questionnaire was distributed was to assure a broad range of the pieces’ epoch (i.e., before 1800; 1800 to 1939; after 1939), and genre (i.e., comedy; tragedy; tragic-comedy, else), the popularity of the play (i.e., high; low; moderate), the style of staging (i.e., classical vs. modern; in between), and the popularity of the ensemble (i.e., high; low; moderate). These criteria were chosen in order to include a broad selection of theatrical events, to be able to generalize the results of our study. After the performance, visitors were individually asked for their participation and subsequently handed the questionnaire. They were asked to complete the questionnaire as soon as possible, i.e., immediately after the performance or after returning home.

In total, 2.897 visitors of 44 performances of 18 productions participated in the study. Respondents are predominantly female (63%), almost 54 years on average ( $SD = 17$ ), and highly educated (57% of the participants holding a university diploma). Most of the participants are frequent theatregoers (with 31 years on average of going to theatre,  $SD = 17$ ,

and with 11 theatre visits per year on average,  $SD = 14$ ). Hence, the participants of our study are representative of theatregoers in the German speaking countries (cp. Rössel, Hackenbroch, & Göllnitz, 2002). The response rate for the 44 events ranges from 25% to 55%. Presumably, this large range is due to the diverging survey conditions for the different events, such as different incentives offered for participants, different ways of contacting visitors, and different numbers of researchers available to contact the audience. Compared to similar studies and considering the considerable length of our questionnaire, the return rate is relatively high (e.g., Behr, 1983; Reuband, 2005). After eliminating participants with more than 30% of missing data (cp. Roth, 1994), the sample was reduced to 2.795 respondents. Similar to the validation study (see above), the remaining missing values were imputed using the expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm and the software NORM 2.03 (Schafer, 1999).

### *Preliminary Analyses*

The validity of the questionnaire was tested in two steps. First, the construct validity of the determinants of visitors' overall evaluation of a visit to theatre was tested; second, their discriminant validity was investigated.

(1) In order to test the *construct validity*, the eight categories we identified in the qualitative study (i.e., general evaluation of the theatre, visitors' expectation and mood, artistic quality, visitors' cognitive response, visitors' emotional response, visitors' conative response, other visitors' behavior, servicescape) were interpreted as latent second order constructs. Separate factor analyses were calculated within each category, showing sufficient to good results for all scales. In case of formative scales (i.e., general evaluation of the theatre, visitors' expectation and mood, servicescape), only explorative factor analyses were

calculated (cp. Eberl, 2006; Jarvis, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2003). For the general evaluation of the theatre, all items loaded on one single factor. The items pertaining to visitors' expectations and mood loaded on three factors (i.e., visitors' mood; direction of expectation; level and specificity of expectation). Visitors' evaluation of the servicescape splits into seven factors (i.e., foyer, infrastructure, cloak room, catering, view and acoustics, air quality, and seat comfort).

In case of *reflective scales* (i.e., artistic quality; visitors' emotional, cognitive, and conative response; other visitors' behavior), initial explorative factor analyses were followed by subsequent CFAs. For three of these categories (i.e., visitors' cognitive response, visitors' conative response, and visitors' overall evaluation of the visit), the exploratory factor analyses (EFAs) revealed exactly the expected factors; these factors were then confirmed in subsequent CFAs, by comparing the expected model with a 1-factor model. More precisely, for *visitors' cognitive response*, the expected 3-factor model ( $X^2/df = 23.63$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .89; RMSEA = .09; SRMR = .08) reached a better fit than the 1-factor model ( $X^2/df = 103.14$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .49; RMSEA = .19; SRMR = .18). Regarding visitors' *conative response to the performance*, the expected 3-factor model ( $X^2/df = 14.88$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .07; SRMR = .04) was superior to the 1-factor model ( $X^2/df = 121.09$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .70; RMSEA = .21; SRMR = .10). Since the items of *visitors' overall evaluation* of the visit loaded on one factor as expected, no subsequent CFA was conducted.

However, with regard to *artistic quality* and *visitors' emotional response*, the EFAs suggested slightly different factors than were expected theoretically; yet, in both cases, subsequent CFAs demonstrated the superiority of the theoretically expected models: Regarding *artistic quality*, the expected 7-factor model ( $X^2/df = 16.23$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .89;

RMSEA = .07<sup>iii</sup>) showed a better fit than both the 5-factor model suggested by EFA ( $X^2/df = 22.15$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .84; RMSEA = .09) and the 1-factor model ( $X^2/df = 48.94$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .64; RMSEA = .13). Looking at *visitors' emotional response*, the expected 4-factor model ( $X^2/df = 8.34$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .98; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .03) achieved a better fit than both the 3-factor model suggested by EFA ( $X^2/df = 25.05$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .09; SRMR = .06) and the 1-factor model ( $X^2/df = 100.15$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .65; RMSEA = .19; SRMR = .14). Lastly, the explorative factor analysis for *other visitors' behavior* suggested three instead of the two expected factors (i.e., other visitors' behavior before and after the performance; disturbing behavior of other visitors during the performance; enriching behavior of other visitors during the performance). According to subsequent CFAs, this 3-factor model ( $X^2/df = 29.93$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .90; RMSEA = .10; SRMR = .08) is clearly superior to both the expected 2-factor model ( $X^2/df = 89.31$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .66; RMSEA = .18; SRMR = .15) and the 1-factor model ( $X^2/df = 133.75$ ;  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .47; RMSEA = .22; SRMR = .16).

2) The discriminant validity of the scales was tested by using additional CFAs. However, this step is only useful for the reflective measures (cp. Eberl, 2006; Jarvis et al., 2003), namely, for the 20 determinants pertaining to five second order constructs (i.e., artistic quality; visitors' emotional, cognitive, and conative response; other visitors' behavior), plus visitors' overall evaluation as dependent variable. Therefore, we tested a 21-factor model by using CFA (see Table 2). In addition, we were able to show that this 21-factor model has a far better fit than a 6-factor model, including the 6 latent second order constructs (see above). We interpret this result as a legitimation for using the single determinants instead of the latent second order constructs (i.e., the categories) as independent variables in our regression analysis.

#Insert Table 2 about here#

As Table 3 demonstrates, all of the reflective scales proved to reach sufficient *reliability*, with the only exception of other visitors' disturbing behavior (cp. Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

#Insert Table 3 about here#

#### *Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations*

First, descriptive statistics reveal relatively high means for many variables (see Table 4). This result indicates that visitors tend to highly estimate the single determinants of their theatre visit – a trend which is common in research on customer satisfaction (Söderlund, 2002). Second, the majority of the correlations is in the middle range, only in few cases going beyond the critical value for multicollinearity (i.e., .70; Bertsimas & Freund, 2000). Thus, multicollinearity is not a problem in our sample.

#Insert Table 4 about here#



### *Regression Analysis*

In order to answer our research question, regression analyses were conducted. Since spectators of our study are nested in groups (i.e., productions), the evaluation of a theatre visit is a function of influences of both the individual level (i.e., differences between visitors) and the group level (i.e., differences between productions). Instead of using standard regression procedures, we therefore applied multi-level analyses, including both the individual and the group level (cp. Nezlek, Schröder-Abé, & Schütz, 2006). Visitors' overall subjective evaluation of a theatre visit was regressed on the controls (see Model 1, Table 5) and all the independent variables introduced above (see Model 2, Table 5).

#Insert Table 5 about here#

Of the control variables, only gender is significant (see Table 5, Model 2). The negative coefficient ( $b = -.03$ ) indicates that women tend to evaluate a theatre visit more positively than men. This result is consistent with findings in the marketing literature, which usually report higher values for female consumers' satisfaction than for male consumers' satisfaction (z.B. Bryant & Cha, 1996; Mittal & Kamakura, 2001). Contrariwise, neither visitors' age nor their degree of education influences their evaluation of a theatre visit. Given that both age and education may be interpreted as indicators of theatre experience and that experienced visitors may formulate more critical evaluations (cp. Boerner & Renz, 2008), this result appears unexpected at first sight. However, since the participants of our study are relatively old on average (i.e.,  $m = 54$ ) and highly educated (with 57% of the participants holding a university

diploma), the variance in our sample may be too small to discover any effects of age or education on the evaluation of a theatric event.

As our analysis reveals (see Model 2, Table 5), the most relevant determinants for spectators' evaluation of a visit to theatre are those pertaining to the perceived artistic quality of the performance, in particular, the staging ( $b = .35, p \leq .001$ ), the play ( $b = .23; p \leq .001$ ), the actors ( $b = .11; p \leq .001$ ), stage setting ( $b = .047; p \leq .001$ ), and "werktreue" ( $b = .029; p \leq .050$ ).

Moreover, half of the variables representing visitors' response to a theatrical performance turn out to be significant determinants of their evaluation of a visit to theatre, i.e., emotional involvement ( $b = .18; p \leq .001$ ), complexity ( $b = -.13; p \leq .001$ ), thought-provoking impulses ( $b = .91; p \leq .050$ ), empathy ( $b = -.029; p \leq .050$ ), and stimulation for communication ( $b = .02; p \leq .050$ ).

In addition, visitors' expectations before the theatre visit are confirmed as determinants of their overall evaluation of a theatre visit (i.e., direction,  $b = .04; p \leq .001$ ; level and specificity,  $b = -.03; p \leq .001$ ). Lastly, other visitors' behavior turns out to be a significant determinant, if perceived as enriching instead of disturbing ( $b = .02; p \leq .050$ ).

To test if our results are stable across the different performances included in our sample, moderating effects of the characteristics of the play (i.e., epoch, genre, popularity) and the staging (i.e., style and popularity of the ensemble) were tested in separate regression analyses. However, only the interaction of the play with the popularity of the play turns out to be significant ( $b = -.04, p \leq .001$ ). According to subsequent slope analyses (cp. Aiken &

West, 1991), the relationship between visitors' evaluation of the play and their overall evaluation of the theatre visit is stronger for unpopular plays than for popular ones.

## **Discussion**

While there is broad agreement on the relevance of visitors' cognitive and emotional reaction to a theatrical performance, research on the relative importance of visitors' response for their overall evaluation of a visit to a theatre is rare. Against this background, this paper provides empirical evidence for answering the question, *To what extent does the visitor's response to a performance contribute to his or her overall evaluation of a visit to theatre?* A qualitative study with 21 theatregoers revealed 27 single determinants of visitors' subjective evaluation of a visit to a theatre which could be organized into eight categories (i.e., general evaluation of the theatre, visitors' expectations and mood, perceived artistic quality, visitors' cognitive response, visitors' emotional response, visitors' conative response, other visitors' perceived behavior, and the servicescape). Based on this result, we conducted a quantitative study with 2.795 visitors of 44 performances in 12 German speaking theatres, suggesting the following answers to our research question.

1) First, the most important determinants of spectators' overall evaluation of a theatre visit are those belonging to the perceived artistic quality, in particular, the staging, the play, the actors, the topicality of the play, the stage setting, and "werktreue". The better spectators evaluate each of these determinants, the more they appreciate the theatre visit as a whole. Spectators' response to the performance is less important than their perception of the artistic

quality, but more important than all remaining determinants included in our model – thus representing the second most important category of determinants.

Moreover, visitors' expectations before the theatre visit turned out to be significant. The more positive their expectations were, the more positive visitors' overall evaluation of a theatre visit was ( $b = .04$ ;  $p \leq .001$ , see Table 5). On the one hand, this result may indicate that respondents in our sample, due to their high theatre experience, have realistic expectations before going to theatre; however, on the other hand, this result may also reflect self-fulfilling prophecies of our respondents (Merton, 1948). The higher and the more specific visitors' expectations are, the more negative is their overall evaluation of a theatre visit ( $b = -.03$ ;  $p \leq .001$ , see Table 5). Interpreting this result, one could argue that high levels of aspiration in the form of high and specific expectations result in more critical evaluations (cp. Boerner & Renz, 2008).

Other visitors' behavior turns out to be a significant determinant, if perceived as enriching instead of disturbing. The more other visitors are perceived as enriching during the performance, the more positive is the overall evaluation of a theatre visit ( $b = .02$ ;  $p \leq .050$ ). This determinant result corresponds to the communicative dimension of a theatrical event as identified by Eversmann (2004).

Lastly, variables representing the servicescape (e.g., catering) were not confirmed as determinants of spectators' overall evaluation of a theatre visit. Considering the high relevance the servicescape is given in the marketing literature (e.g., Bitner, 1992; Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011), this result is surprising. However, as stated above, studies in theatre marketing tend to exclude determinants of the so-called core quality (i.e., the performance;

e.g., Bauer et al., 1997; Swanson & Davis, 2006). As our study demonstrates, results may change considerably, if elements of both the core quality and the servicescape are simultaneously included in one comprehensive investigation.

2) Second, the determinants pertaining to visitors' response to the performance differ with respect to their impact on the overall evaluation of a theatre visit. More precisely, determinants representing the emotional response (i.e., involvement,  $b = .18$  and empathy,  $b = -.03$ ) have the highest impact on the evaluation of a visit to theatre, followed by the cognitive (i.e., complexity,  $b = -.13$ ) and the conative response (i.e., thought-provoking impulses,  $b = .09$  and stimulation for communication,  $b = .02$ ). This result is in line with the findings by Boerner et al. (2011) and Boerner et al. (2010), who discovered the emotional dimension of a theatrical event to be slightly more important for visitors' overall evaluation of a theatrical event than the cognitive dimension.

With the exception of identification, all emotions activated by the fiction (i.e., involvement, empathy) could be confirmed as determinants of visitors' overall evaluation of a theatre visit. In contrast, emotions activated by the artifact (i.e., breaching of norms and values) were not confirmed. Interestingly, empathy is (marginally) negatively related to visitors' overall evaluation ( $b = -.029$ ;  $p \leq .050$ ), contrary to the literature (e.g., Jobst & Boerner, 2011). The more empathy spectators feel for the figures in the play, the more negative is their overall evaluation of the theatre visit. However, this effect is very small.

While an inverted U curve between perceived complexity of the performance and visitors' overall evaluation of a theatre event could be expected from the literature (e.g., Schoenmakers, 1982, 2010; Tan, 1982), the visitors in our sample tend to appreciate low

instead of moderate degrees of complexity. While this effect is rather small, it is nevertheless interesting, given that the spectators in our sample are highly educated and have high levels of theatre experience. Contrariwise, neither novelty nor associations to own life could be confirmed as determinants of visitors' overall evaluation of a theatrical event in our study, although considered relevant in both in the literature and in our interview study.

One of the most striking results is the emergence of the *conative response*. While rarely mentioned in the literature and first examined empirically in our qualitative study, determinants pertaining to this category were tested and confirmed for the first time in a quantitative study on visitors' overall evaluation of a visit to theatre. However, determinants related to the conative response seem to be less important for visitors' overall evaluation of a theatrical event than their emotional and cognitive response. Moreover, only "thought-provoking impulses" and "stimulation for communication" turned out to be significant determinants, while "search for additional information" could not be confirmed.

3) Third, we tested the moderating effects of the characteristics of the play (i.e., epoch, genre, popularity) and the characteristics of the staging (i.e., style and popularity of the ensemble) in separate regression analyses. However, only the interaction of the play with the popularity of the play turned out to be significant. According to subsequent slope analyses (cp. Aiken & West, 1991), the impact of the play on visitors' overall evaluation of the theatre visit is stronger for unpopular plays than for popular ones. One possible explanation for this effect maybe that unfamiliar stimuli generally tend to attract more attention than familiar ones. Apart from this interaction effect, we can thus conclude that our results are valid for all performances (i.e., for all characteristics of the play and of the staging) that have been included in our sample.

In addition to answering the above research question, three further contributions of our study to the literature on reception research should be mentioned. To begin with, we are among the first to integrate two different lines of research in reception research in one study (cp. Boerner et al., 2010). While some studies explore the content of the theatrical experience (e.g., topic of the play, ensemble, music, stage design; Konijn, 1991; Perky, 1976; Sauter et al., 1986), others focus on the structure of the theatrical event in the eyes of the spectator (e.g., visitors' emotions, cognitions; Eversmann, 2004; Martin & Sauter, 1995; Sauter, 2000, 2002). According to our qualitative study, aspects of both approaches are perceived to be relevant for visitors' overall evaluation of a theatrical event (e.g., the perceived quality of the performance and visitors' response to the performance). Our quantitative study allows to compare the impact of determinants pertaining to the content (e.g., the play, the play's topicality, staging, fit, "werktrue", quality of acting, stage setting) with those pertaining to the structure (i.e., visitors' emotional, cognitive, and conative reaction to the performance) – revealing that the former are slightly more important than the latter.

Second, our study allows analyzing visitors' response to a theatrical event more detailed than has been done before. In particular, while there is agreement in the literature that both the emotional and the cognitive reaction is relevant for visitors' reception of theatre (e.g., Gourd, 1977; Scherer, 2004; Schoenmakers, 1982; Tan, 1982, 2000), the conative reaction has rarely been mentioned so far. In addition, authors disagree on the different aspects of each reaction (e.g., involvement and/or empathy in case of the emotional reaction; Konijn, 1999; Schoenmakers, 2010; Zillmann, 1995). Our qualitative study revealed three types of visitors' response to be relevant (i.e., the emotional, cognitive, and conative reaction). Moreover, our quantitative analyses demonstrated that each response is composed of different

dimensions (e.g., novelty, complexity, and associations to own life as dimensions of the cognitive response). In addition, these dimensions differ in their relative impact on visitors' overall evaluation of a visit to theatre; for example, within the emotional reaction, involvement is much more important ( $b = .18$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) than empathy ( $b = -.029$ ;  $p \leq .050$ ) and identification (*ns*). In other words, the differentiation within visitors' response to a theatre performance suggested in our study seems to be of both theoretical and practical relevance.

Third, while our study is limited to identifying determinants of visitors' evaluation of a visit to theatre, further research might develop more complex models. In particular, it would be interesting to conceptualize possible relationships between the determinants. For example, does visitors' response to the performance mediate the relationship between their perception of the artistic quality and their overall evaluation of a visit to theatre? While this was not the intention of our paper, we at least were able to provide valid and reliable measures of variables that might be relevant for developing and testing such a model.

Admittedly, our study is not free of limitations. First, our sample may suffer from a self-selection bias. In order to be able to generalize our results, we decided not to rely on student samples or expert samples. Therefore, cooperation of theatres and theatre visitors was needed. While we consider a response rate of 10% of the contacted theatres as acceptable, we can only speculate about the reasons for participation. For instance, given that theatres were allowed to include additional items in the questionnaire, our study was probably used as chance to learn more about the audience. Thereby, it is possible that theatres with either highly satisfied or highly unsatisfied customers were more interested in learning about the theatrical experience than other theatres. Other reasons for participation can be of



organizational nature, such as a new managing team in a theatre or a new marketing department with special ambitions to learn about the audience. Anyway, since the theatres in our sample turned out to be very typical with regard to their size, types, and the size of their communities, we are confident that the selection bias is rather small. The same is true for the individual respondents. Since our questionnaire was considerably long, we assume that participation was biased by aspects such as respondents' special interest in theatre, high levels of loyalty for a particular theatre, or just time available. Nevertheless, we achieved a comparatively high response rate of between 25 and 55 per cent of the visitors.

Second, according to research on multilevel analysis (e.g., Bickel, 2007), a sample should include at least 20 groups with each including 30 individual cases at least. On the individual level, our sample easily meets this requirement; however, on the production level, our sample size ( $n = 18$ ) is slightly smaller. Hence, it cannot be excluded that estimations of variances and standard errors are biased; hence, the influence of characteristics of the play and the staging may be underestimated.

Third, our study has been exclusively conducted in German speaking countries. Since theatre funding and, as a result, structure and organization of theatres in German speaking countries are different from other European countries and the US, the generalization of our results may be limited. Unless comparable studies are conducted in other countries, it thus cannot be excluded that the relative impact of a visitor's response to the performance on his or her overall evaluation of a visit to theatre is specific to the German context.

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Figure 1. Determinants of Visitors' Overall Evaluation of a Visit to Theatre

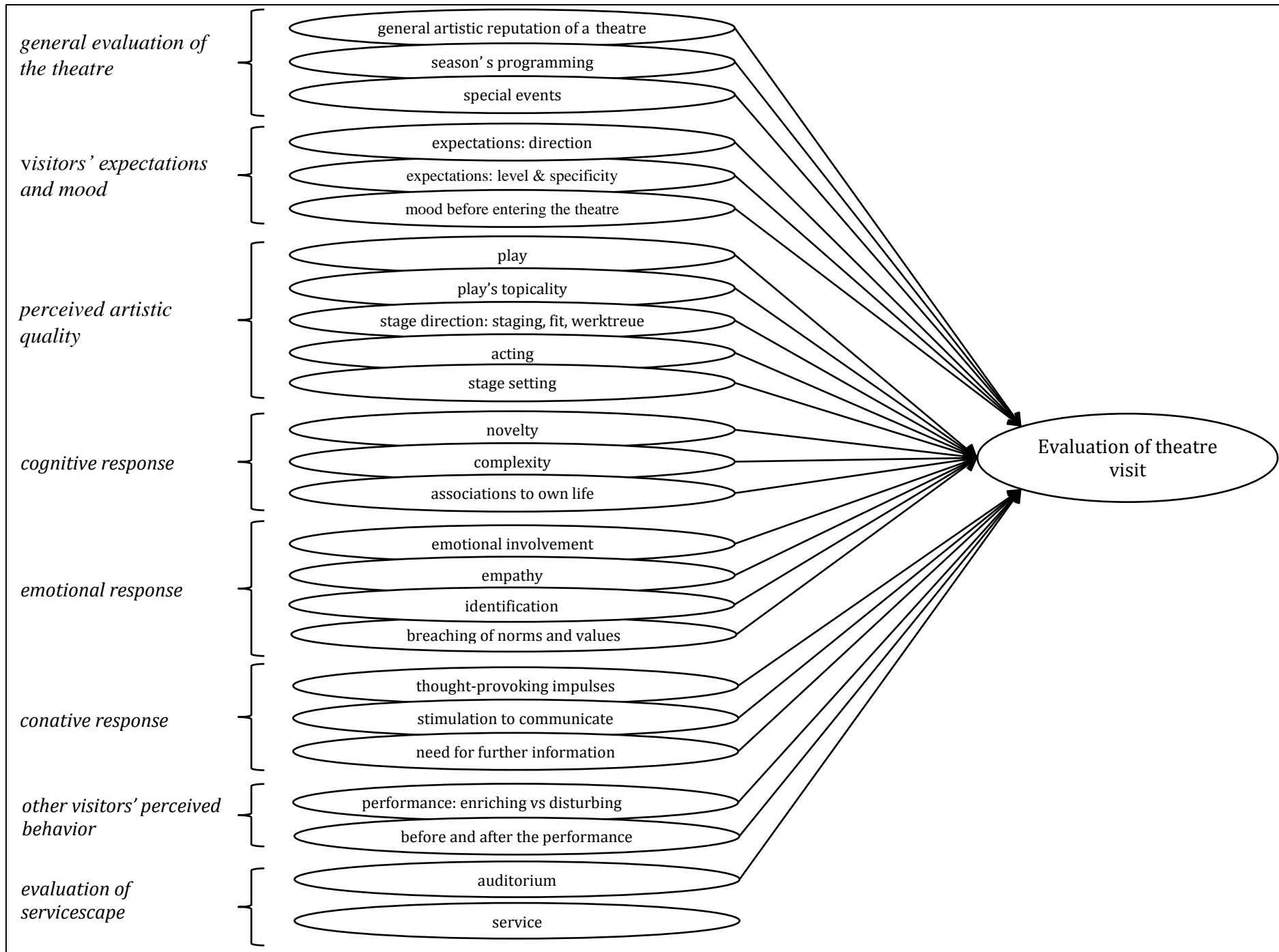


Table 1. Results of validation study

<b>Model</b>	$\chi^2 \div df$	<i>p</i> -value	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
<b>Artistic quality</b>					
5-factor model	3.49	.000	.83	.10	.08
1-factor model	6.70	.000	.59	.15	.12
<b>Visitors' response to the performance</b>					
10-factor model	2.44	.000	.83	.08	.19
3-factor model	4.52	.000	.57	.12	.21
1-factor model	5.12	.000	.49	.13	.11
<b>Other visitors' behavior and overall evaluation</b>					
3-factor model	3.19	.000	.93	.09	.09
2-factor model	3.81	.000	.90	.10	.08
1-factor model	8.35	.000	.74	.10	.08



Table 2. Global model fit

<b>Model</b>	$\chi^2 \div df$	<i>p</i> -value	<b>CFI</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>	<b>SRMR</b>
21-factor model	9.50	.000	.80	.06	---
6-factor model	19.25	.000	.57	.08	---

Note.  $\chi^2 \div df$  = quotient from chi square and degrees of freedom. CFI = Comparative-Fit-Index. RMSEA = Root-Mean-Square-Error-of-Approximation. SRMR = Standardized-Root-Mean-Residual.

Table 3. Constructs, Measures, and Reliability

Construct	Measure (Number of items)	Reliability
<b>Independent Variables</b>		
General evaluation of the theatrical organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>artistic level (3)</li> <li>season's programming (1)</li> <li>additional offerings (1)</li> </ul>	--
Mood, pre-information, & expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mood (5)</li> <li>pre-information, expectations: level, specificity (4)</li> <li>expectations: direction (2)</li> </ul>	--
Perceived artistic quality	play (7)	.84
	play's topicality (3)	.79
	stage direction (5)	.89
	fit (3)	.83
	"werktreue" (3)	.85
	actors (4)	.88
	stage design, costumes, & props (4)	.88
Cognitive response	novelty (3)	.76
	complexity (7)	.79
	associations to own life (4)	.87
Emotional response	involvement (4)	.83
	empathy (3)	.88
	identification (3)	.70
	norms and values (3)	.88
Conative response	thought-provoking impulses (4)	.84
	animation for communication (3)	.87
	animation for information seeking (3)	.75
Other visitors' behavior	before and after the performance (3)	.73
	during the performance: enrichment (3)	.70
	during the performance: disturbance (3)	.63
Servicescape	foyer (4)	--
	infrastructure (5)	
	cloak room, sanitary facilities (4)	
	catering (2)	
	view, acoustics (3)	
	air quality within the auditorium (2)	
	seat comfort (2)	
<b>Dependent Variable</b>		
Visitors' Subjective Evaluation of a Visit to a Theatre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>overall satisfaction with the theatre visit (3)</li> <li>confirmation of expectations (2)</li> <li>comparison with an ideal (1)</li> <li>intention to recommend (1)</li> </ul>	.94

Control Variables		
Age		--
Gender		--
Education		--

Note. For the scales that were constructed as formative scales, no reliability measure was calculated (cp. Jarvis et al., 2003).

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
General evaluation of the theatre	4.02	.64
Mood	3.87	.58
Expectations: direction	4.00	.82
Expectations: level, specificity	2.86	.85
Play	4.10	.69
Play's topicality	3.66	.96
Staging	4.09	.77
Fit	4.21	.79
“Werktreue”	4.09	.80
Acting	4.27	.66
Stage setting	3.85	.94
Novelty	3.35	.98
Complexity	1.90	.66
Associations to own life	2.33	1.04
Emotional involvement	3.30	.91
Empathy	2.75	.98
Identification	2.76	.92
Breaching of norms and values	1.75	.96
Thought-provoking impulses	3.23	.95
Stimulation to communicate	3.66	.97
Need for further information	2.53	1.05
Other visitors' behavior: Before and after the performance	3.45	.76
Other visitors' behavior: enrichment	2.27	.86
Other visitors' behavior: disturbance	1.89	.78
Foyer	4.04	.82
Infrastructure	4.55	.50
Cloak room, sanitary facilities	4.27	.61
Catering	3.95	.84
View, acoustics	4.19	.68
Air quality within the auditorium	3.88	.91
Seat comfort	3.77	1.02

Table 5. Multilevel Analysis of the Determinants of Visitors' Overall Subjective Evaluation of a Theatre Visit

	<b>b</b>	<b>SE b</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>SE b</b>
	Model 1		Model 2	
<b>Controls</b>				
Age	.003**	.001	n.s.	
Gender	.096**	.032	-.032*	.016
Level of education	n.s.		n.s.	
<b>Independent Variables</b>				
General evaluation of the theatre			n.s.	
Mood			n.s.	
Expectations: direction			.036***	.011
Expectations: level, specificity			-.032***	.010
Play			.233***	.018
Play's topicality			-.050***	.011
Staging			.347***	.020
Fit			n.s.	
“Werktreue”			.029*	.014
Acting			.110***	.016
Stage setting			.047***	.012
Novelty			n.s.	
Complexity			-.125***	.019
Associations to own life			n.s.	
Emotional involvement			.179***	.015
Empathy			-.029*	.011
Identification			n.s.	
Breaching of norms and values			n.s.	
Thought-provoking impulses			.091***	.013
Stimulation to communicate			.019*	.009
Need for further information			n.s.	
Other visitors' behavior: Before and after the performance			n.s.	
Other visitors' behavior: enrichment			.019*	.010
Other visitors' behavior: disturbance			n.s.	

Foyer			n.s.	
Infrastructure			n.s.	
Cloak room, sanitary facilities			n.s.	
Catering			n.s.	
View, acoustics			n.s.	
Air quality within the auditorium			n.s.	
Seat comfort			n.s.	

Note. n.s. = not significant. \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ . \*\*  $p \leq .010$ . \*  $p \leq .050$ . b = determination coefficient. SE b = standard error.

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<sup>i</sup> The main difference between reflective and formative measures arises from the direction of causality between the latent variable and its indicators (Christophersen & Konradt, 2007). In reflective measurement models, the constructs are interpreted as common effect for all the indicators. In contrast, in formative measures, “the indicators determine a set of dissimilar causes, every one representing a small part of the whole construct” (Diamantopoulos, Riefler, & Roth, 2008).

<sup>ii</sup> In our subsequent analyses, the questionnaires filled out at different points of time did not show any significant differences.

<sup>iii</sup> For the scales “the play’s topicality” and “werktreue”, we offered the response option “I cannot say”. Therefore, the Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR) could not be calculated for these scales.

<sup>iv</sup> (including the play, the play’s topicality, the staging, “werktreue”, the fit within the staging, acting, stage setting, novelty, complexity, visitors’ associations from the performance to their own lives, emotional involvement, empathy, identification, breaching of norms and values, thought-provoking impulses, stimulation for communication and need for further information, other visitors’ behavior during the performance [enriching vs. disturbing], other visitor’s perceived behavior before and after the performance and during the intermission, subjective overall evaluation of a visit to theatre)

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## **Appendix: Scales of the questionnaire**

### **General evaluation of the theatre**

I have a very high opinion of this theatre.

From my perspective, this theatre performs on an artistically high level.

From my point of view, the theatre plays a role in this city that it should play.

I think that the program of this theatre is generally well arranged.

I am very satisfied with the special events offered in addition to regular performances (e.g. presentations, discussions, parties).

### **Visitors' expectations**

I had very high expectations for today's performance

I did not have high expectations for today's performance (e.g., having read bad reviews).

I had pleasant anticipations for the performance

I arrived at the theatre with an open mind, i.e. without specific expectations.

I had very specific expectations for this performance (e.g., regarding the audience, the play or the production).

### **Visitors' mood** (Before entering the theatre, I was...)

in a good mood

irritated

exhausted

energetic

sad

### **Artistic quality**

#### **Play**

I liked the play very much

I think the play was very weak.

The play convinced me because of its great language

The topic of this play appeals to me personally.

The play deals with a relevant and/ or interesting topic.

The topic of this play is of no use to me.

I actually do not want to deal with the topic of today's play.

#### **Play's topicality**

I think it is remarkable how timeless the topic of this play is.

I was impressed with the contemporary connections made in the performance.

I think that the topic of this play greatly affects us.

From my point of view, the contemporary connections were too clear and obvious.

The connection that has been created between the play and current events seemed artificial and false to me.

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### **Stage Direction**

I think the performance of the director was excellent today.  
The production seemed thought-out and conclusive.  
The director bored me with this performance.  
I found the director's take on the material fascinating.  
I think that the director focused mainly on fulfilling and presenting himself.

### **Fit within the production**

The single elements of the production (actors, stage design, etc.) resulted in a coherent atmosphere on the whole.  
I think that the single elements of the production (actors, production, etc.) fit together very well.  
I do not think that the scenery and costumes fit the messages of the production very well.

### **Werktreue (Faithfulness to the original text)**

I think that the production expresses the intentions of the author very well.  
From my perspective, the director succeeded to highlight the topic and the message well.  
From my point of view, the director deviated greatly from the original work.

### **Acting**

Overall, I think that the actors' performance was excellent today.  
I was impressed of how convincingly the actors put themselves in the positions of the different characters.  
Overall I was impressed by the actors' passionateness and enthusiasm.  
Sometimes the actors spoke too quickly and/ or unclear.  
The cast played off each other brilliantly.

### **Stage setting**

I liked the scenery, costumes and props of today's performance very much.  
I was impressed by the scenery and the costumes of today's performance.  
The design of the scenery was not comprehensible for me.  
I was impressed by the brilliant ideas of the scene-painter.

### **Visitors' cognitive response**

#### **Novelty**

The means and effects of this production were innovative and original from my perspective.  
This production included elements that were new to me.  
The stylistic devices seemed boring to me.  
The production contained unusual and surprising elements.

#### **Complexity**

I had the feeling to fully understand the message of the director.  
I could not fully understand everything in this production.  
I had no difficulties to follow the plot.  
Overall the production made sense to me.  
For my taste the production was dull and superficial.  
I think the performance had its lengths.



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Overall I felt overtaxed by this production (e.g. overstimulation, speed).

### **Associations to own life**

What I saw onstage today reminded me of my own life.

This play touched me because I recognized parts of myself.

This play did not have anything to do with my own experience.

Parts of this play can be transferred to my personal circumstances and provide new perspectives on my life.

Today's performance made me forget about my own life for a while.

### **Visitor's emotional response**

#### **Emotional involvement**

Today's performance moved and touched me.

During the performance I was constantly very anxious to see what will happen next.

Overall this performance left me pretty cold.

The performance caused me to forget everything around me.

#### **Empathy**

During the performance I felt with the characters.

In between I watched the characters' destiny with great excitement.

I could understand the characters' feelings very well.

During the performance I suffered with the characters.

#### **Identification**

I could identify with one (or more) character(s) very well.

I had no difficulties to put myself in the position of one (or more) character(s).

During some periods I thought about how I would handle a similar situation myself.

#### **Breaching of norms and values**

I think some elements in this production crossed the boundaries of good taste.

Some scenes have been presented too drastically and extreme.

I think sometimes a hint would have been enough.

### **Visitor's conative response**

#### **Thought-provoking impulses**

This performance set something in motion for me.

The pictures of this performance will stay in my mind

Probably, I will think about this performance for a while.

My visit to the theatre will not leave a lasting impression

#### **Stimulation to communication**

I am looking forward to talking to others about this performance.

I am anxious to get to know the opinion of others and to share experiences.

I feel no need to talk about this performance.

#### **Need for further information**

I plan to gather additional information about this production (e.g. in the program, in conversations).

---

The performance stimulated me to take a closer look to the play during the next couple of days (e.g. read the play, read newspaper articles).

I would be interested in getting into a conversation with persons involved in the production.

## **Other visitors' perceived behavior**

### **During the performance**

During the performance I hardly noticed the other visitors in the audience.

During the performance there was a good atmosphere in the audience.

The reactions of other visitors (e.g. laughing, applauding) were contagious.

I found it interesting to observe the reactions of other visitors to the events onstage.

From my point of view the audience reacted too little to the events on-stage.

The reactions of others were enriching my own experience.

During the performance other visitors distracted me due to their inappropriate behavior (e.g. whispering, leaving the auditorium).

I think that some people reacted inappropriately to the events onstage.

### **Before and after the performance or during the break**

I found it interesting to see who else was visiting the theatre (e.g., people that I know).

I appreciated the atmosphere in the audience before the performance and during the break.

I felt comfortable in the audience today.

Today I had the impression of being part of a community.

## **Servicescape**

### **Auditorium** (I am satisfied with..)

the comfort of my seat

the legroom of my seat

my view of the stage

the distance of my seat to the stage

the acoustics of the room

the temperature in the room

the air quality in the room

### **The theatre's service** (I am satisfied with..)

the accessibility of the theatre (e.g. public transport, parking facilities)

the orientation in the theatre building

the collection of the tickets (e.g. finding the ticket office, waiting time)

the friendliness of the staff (e.g. at the ticket office or the admission)

the competence of the staff (e.g. at the ticket office or the admission)

the price-performance ratio of the catering facilities

the promptness of the catering facilities

the first impression when entering the foyer

the design and furnishing of the foyer

the atmosphere of the foyer

the lighting, acoustics and air quality of the foyer

the supply of information in the foyer

the service at the cloakroom (e.g. waiting time)

the size of the sanitary facilities

the tidiness of the sanitary facilities

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### **Overall evaluation of theatre visit**

The theatre visit has been a great experience to me.

From my point of view, the theatre visit today was a complete fail.

It was a good decision to go to the theatre today.

All of my expectations were fulfilled by the theatre and performance

I am very disappointed by today's theatre visit.

Today's theatre visit gets very close to an ideal theatre visit.

I would recommend this production to good friends.

It is probable that I will visit this theatre again.