

Bachelor's in Tourism and Leisure Management

FINAL DEGREE PROJECT

The Importance of landmark for urban tourism :
The case of The City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia

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Table of abbreviations

1. CAC : City of Arts and Sciences
2. GO : General objective
3. MDC : Museo de las Ciencias
4. PA : Palau las Artes
5. SO : Specific objectives
6. UNWTO : United Nations World Tourism Organization
7. VLC : Valencia

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Abstract

Iconic landmarks significantly contribute to the identity of a place, city, or precinct. The various dimensions of architecture, along with cultural aspects, offer unique characteristics that captivate and attract tourists. This research aims to examine the importance of iconic buildings in urban tourism, with a particular focus on the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia, Spain. An in-depth research has been conducted to illustrate the value and importance of these emblematic monuments.

Los monumentos icónicos contribuyen significativamente a la identidad de un lugar, ciudad o destino. Las diferentes dimensiones de la arquitectura, junto con los aspectos culturales, ofrecen características únicas que cautivan y atraen a los y las turistas. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo examinar la importancia de los edificios icónicos en el turismo urbano, con un enfoque particular en la Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias de Valencia, España. Se ha llevado a cabo una investigación exhaustiva para ilustrar el valor y la importancia de estos monumentos emblemáticos.

Keywords : Urban tourism, iconic landmarks, architecture, culture, City of Arts and Sciences, touristic flagship

Palabras clave: Turismo urbano, monumentos icónicos, arquitectura, cultura, Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias, joyas turísticas

1. Introduction

1.1. Justification of the theme and interest

Tourism, architecture, and culture are intricately linked and shape the identity and appeal of urban destinations. Iconic landmarks, which combine architectural magnificence and cultural significance, serve as focal points to attract tourists from around the world (Ginting et al., 2020). This study explores the relationship between iconic buildings and urban tourism, focusing on the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia, Spain.

Cities are dynamic centers of culture, history, and innovation, each with unique architectural wonders that tell their story. Iconic sites not only highlight a city's culture but also significantly influence its tourism industry. It is essential for urban planners, policymakers, and tourism stakeholders to recognize the role of these landmarks to enhance the tourism potential of urban destinations.

While the importance of iconic buildings in urban tourism is widely recognized, a better understanding of how these landmarks influence tourists' behavior, perceptions, and experiences is necessary. Specifically, the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia presents a compelling case for examining these dynamics due to its unique architectural and cultural offerings. Urban tourism plays a crucial role in economic growth, cultural exchange, and sustainable development of cities worldwide (UNWTO, 2023). Understanding the role of iconic buildings in attracting and engaging tourists is essential to enhance the tourism potential of urban destinations.

The allure of iconic sites as cornerstones of urban tourism serves as the foundation for this research. Among these sites, the City of Arts and Sciences stands out due to its central presence in the university city where this academic journey takes place. This exceptional venue offers a unique combination of attractions: its cultural offerings, remarkable architecture, the charm of its surroundings, and the diversity of activities within its premises. As a student in the tourism sector, it appears undeniable that this site warrants analysis. These attributes justify the deep desire for an in-depth examination of its tourist appeal, leading to the decision to dedicate this thesis to exploring the City of Arts and Sciences.

Thus, we hypothesize that the presence of a flagship tourist attraction, such as the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia, has a significant impact on attracting tourists to cities, stimulating the local economy, and contributing to the region's tourism development.

1.2. Objectives of the research

This study has one general objective and several specific objectives.

General objective (GO) : To explore the importance of iconic buildings in the development of urban tourism.

This first general objective aims to understand how iconic buildings influence and stimulate the urban tourism industry.

Specific objectives (SO) :

SO1. Assess the role of emblematic buildings in attracting tourists.

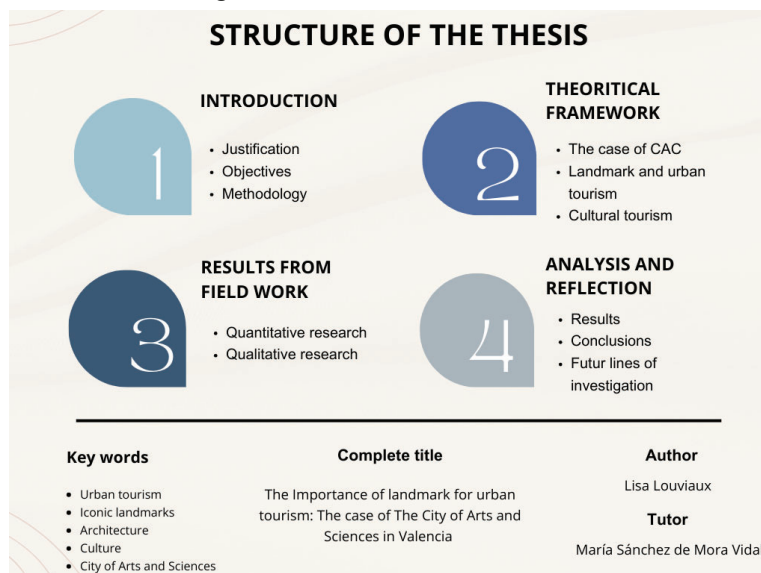
SO2. Understand tourist perceptions of iconic buildings.

SO3. Examine the factors that contribute to the appeal of the City of Arts and Sciences.

1.3. Structure of the research

This document is structured into four main parts: the introduction, the theoretical framework, the results of field studies, and the analyses and conclusions.

Image 1 : Thesis structure outline



Source : Own elaboration realised with Canvas

The first part, the introduction, provides a preliminary overview of the topic at hand. It establishes the general context with justification, outlines the research objectives and the importance of the subject studied, and elaborates on the research methodology in detail.

The second part delves into existing research on the role of landmarks in urban tourism. Definitions and concepts related to landmarks and flagship developments are discussed, with a focus on their image and architectural significance. is the theoretical framework. It then comprises a case study of the City of Arts and Sciences, covering its history, architectural features, and unique characteristics, including an analysis of the evolution of tourism in Valencia and its correlation with the evolution of tourism at the City of Arts and Sciences. A section is devoted to cultural tourism given the significant cultural offerings of the location.

Next, the document unveils the results of field studies, including both quantitative and qualitative research conducted. It presents the study's results, highlighting key insights from surveys and interviews followed by an interpretation of these findings within the broader literature on urban tourism and landmarks.

Finally, the last part is the conclusion. It verifies the hypothesis and reviews the achievement of objectives, followed by discussing the limitations of the research and its future lines of investigation. Lastly, it offers a final reflection.

1.4. Methodology

As part of this work, several field studies were conducted to collect data using various methods. Data collection is a critical phase of research during which information is gathered and analyzed to test initial hypotheses and address a research problem. Once processed, this data provides the researcher with answers to their problem and hypotheses (Claude, 2019). To enhance the validity of the results, a method triangulation approach was used in this research.

Method triangulation involves using multiple approaches to collect and analyze data related to the same research question or phenomenon. By using various methods, we can study a situation or phenomenon from different perspectives, thereby reducing the biases and limitations associated with a single method (Rugg, 2010).

In this context, we combined the theoretical framework, quantitative data collection, and qualitative methods to achieve a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject under study.

Quantitative research allows for the collection of informative data through survey techniques such as questionnaires and polls (Claude, 2019). In this specific case, a questionnaire was designed to collect data from tourists who have or wish to visit the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia. This structured questionnaire included a series of closed questions aimed at gathering relevant information. Participants from Spain, France, Belgium, and other countries took part in this study, offering a rich and varied international perspective. In-depth interviews were favored to gather rich and detailed qualitative data, while questionnaires were used to obtain large-scale quantitative data. This combination enabled data triangulation and a deeper understanding of the study's subject. This approach allowed for the quantification of the various dimensions of tourism at the CAC, thus providing a solid foundation for the arguments presented in this research.

On the other hand, qualitative research involves the exploration of concepts, ideas, or experiences through descriptive narratives rather than numerical data. It allows for a deeper investigation of topics that may not be fully elucidated by quantitative methods, offering a richer understanding of complex phenomena (Streefkerk, 2019).

To ensure the reliability and validity of the collected information, this study relies almost entirely on recent and credible academic sources. The documents have been carefully selected to reflect the current state of knowledge in the field, emphasizing recent and relevant works. By adopting this rigorous methodological approach, the research aims to provide significant results while minimizing potential biases and ensuring data quality.

Image 2 : Research techniques used for the achievement of objectives

OBJECTIVE	TYPE OF OBJECTIVE	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	SURVEY	INTERVIEWS	CONTENT ANALYSIS
EXPLORE THE IMPORTANCE OF ICONIC BUILDINGS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN TOURISM	GO	✓			✓
ASSESS THE ROLE OF EMBLEMATIC BUILDINGS IN ATTRACTING TOURISTS	SO 1	✓	✓	✓	✓
UNDERSTAND TOURIST PERCEPTIONS OF ICONIC BUILDINGS	SO 2		✓		✓
EXAMINE THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE APPEAL OF THE CITY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES	SO 3		✓	✓	✓

Source : Own elaboration realised with canvas

1.4.1. Quantitative method

In this specific case, a questionnaire consisting of 23 closed questions was developed to gather data from tourists who have visited or wish to visit the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia. This structured questionnaire included a series of closed questions aimed at gathering relevant information about visitor profiles, their motivations and desires to visit, their experiences, and their perceptions and interests regarding this tourist site. The questionnaire design was based on an in-depth literature review and a preliminary analysis of tourism trends at the City of Arts and Sciences, as well as existing case studies and theoretical frameworks. This approach ensured the collection of the most relevant information for this research, facilitating a comprehensive data collection process conducive to drawing well-founded conclusions. The data collection spanned approximately four months.

To support this research endeavor, two identical questionnaires, one in English and the other in French, were meticulously crafted and disseminated via Google Forms. A total of 63 responses were garnered.

The survey was distributed primarily through social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn), word of mouth, friends and family as well as teachers, and requests to friends and family to share it with their contacts. On Facebook, the questionnaire was shared in groups such as "Tourists in Valencia" and "Expats in Valencia." The aim was to evaluate the importance of the CAC as a landmark tourist attraction for the city of Valencia.

This questionnaire is divided into two main parts.

The first part focuses on the socio-demographic variables of the participants. The questions address the respondents' country of residence, gender, age group, and status. This information helps create a demographic profile of potential and actual visitors, facilitating the analysis of visit trends.

The second part of the questionnaire gathers specific data concerning the CAC. The questions initially explore whether respondents have visited Valencia and their motivations for doing so. Those who did not include the CAC in their initial motivations are asked about the reasons for this omission, particularly if they were unaware of its existence. Conversely, those for whom the CAC was a motivation must rate their desire to visit the site on a scale of 1 to 10.

For those who discovered the CAC during their stay, a question assesses their motivation to visit it before the end of their trip. Additionally, participants who were unable to visit the CAC despite their interest are invited to express how much they would have liked to go also on a scale of 1 to 10.

The questionnaire then examines what sparks or could spark interest in the CAC and asks participants if they have explored the interior of its buildings. They must specify their favorite parts and evaluate their overall satisfaction.

Finally, questions also assess the likelihood of revisiting the CAC and the propensity to recommend it to friends or family. The importance of the site for tourism in Valencia is estimated, as well as the impact of personal recommendations.

1.4.2. Qualitative method

Subsequently, data collection using the qualitative method was conducted. Three interviews were conducted: one with Eduardo Cifuentes, front desk manager at Ilunion, one with Victor Gil, head of educational projects at the Reina Sofía Palau de las Artes, and another with Pepa Jordá Vázquez, head of the Valencia Film Office.

As the front desk manager of a hotel located directly next to the City of Arts and Sciences, Eduardo provided information on the seasonal fluctuations in hotel occupancy due to the busy periods at CAS, the impact of these busy periods on the hotel, as well as customer perceptions and feedback mainly related to the proximity of the site. He also discussed the strategies implemented between the hotel and the landmark, as well as the potential challenges and opportunities linked to this proximity. Additionally, it's worth noting that the interview with Eduardo was conducted via Teams and lasted for approximately 30 minutes. The interview utilized semi-structured questions, allowing for exploration and divergence into various topics, rather than adhering strictly to a closed-question format. In total, there were 9 questions posed during the interview.

The interview with Victor from the Palace of Arts was conducted via Teams and lasted for approximately 40 minutes. The interview utilized semi-structured questions, allowing for exploration and divergence as well. In total, there were 6 questions posed during the interview. Victor provided in-depth details about the PA, such as the origin of tourists and the number of visits. He emphasized the importance of the Palace to the CAS and to the city of Valencia. The attractive aspects of the Palace were also discussed, as well as the significance of this site in tourists' decisions to choose Valencia as a destination.

As the head of the Valencia Film Office, Pepa provided valuable insights into the significance of the City of Arts and Sciences for the film industry in Valencia. She highlighted how the unique and futuristic architecture of the site makes it the most filmed location in the city, attracting numerous producers with its versatile and visually striking settings. She also discussed the challenges and strategies related to promoting Valencia as a filming destination, as well as the potential impact of these film and advertising productions on tourism.

The interview was conducted using a Word document containing seven pre-set questions, to which she directly responded in the document. She then returned the completed document by email.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Landmark and urban tourism

2.1.1. Definition of landmarks

At its origins, the term "landmark" emerges from the depths of Old English, a harmonious fusion of "land" and "maerc," evoking the concept of a "mark" (Van Niekerk, 2014). It was once described as an "object erected to delineate the boundaries of a kingdom, estate, or other domain," a poetic combination of "land" (n.) and "maerc," signifying an "object marking a boundary or limit" (Etymology online dictionary, 2024). Today, the "landmark" still stands, solemn and imposing, as

an eminent object, visible on land, serving as a guide, especially for sailors at sea or travelers on the road; a characteristic element of the landscape, marking a site or location (Dictionary, 2024).

But a landmark is much more than a mere navigational marker. It is a symbol of grandeur and importance, a reminder of the history and culture that have shaped our cities and societies. It embodies the soul of a community, reflecting its values, aspirations, and identity. In this sense, each landmark is a work of art, a unique expression of human creativity and architectural ingenuity (Dictionary, 2024).

A landmark can also be defined as "a building or place easily recognizable, especially one that enables someone to determine their location," as well as "a building or structure considered particularly important" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024). This expanded definition captures the complexity and richness of the concept of a landmark, highlighting its essential role in the construction and preservation of our built environment.

2.1.2. Role of landmark in shaping the city image

A key aspect of a city's image and identity is the presence of landmarks (Hussain, 2018). As a distinctive element of tourism, the landmark plays a crucial role in enhancing the city's identity, making it more attractive and recognizable often due to its architecture and grandeur (Ginting et al., 2020).

As noted by Proceedings & Corp (2009), when one thinks of Paris, the Eiffel Tower comes to mind; in Sydney, the Opera House; and in San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge. But why? These monuments represent their city like a brand, an emblem, a symbol that resonates beyond the city's boundaries. Landmarks are important symbols associated with a place whose importance has grown over time through their usage. For example, the Eiffel Tower in Paris attracts millions of visitors each year, generating significant revenue for the city and reinforcing its status as a global tourist destination.

Architectural landmarks are predominant buildings that are qualitatively different in their specifications and high artistic characteristics from regular buildings. An architectural landmark can be a group of buildings or an individual building. They play a major part in forming the contours and panoramas of cities (Kosenkova et al., 2019, p. 3)

Historically, these structures were often religious buildings or public monuments, but their role has diversified over time to include modern infrastructures such as skyscrapers, iconic bridges, and cultural complexes (Kosenkova et al., 2019).

Furthermore, architectural landmarks have a considerable economic impact. By attracting tourists, they stimulate the local economy, create jobs, and encourage investments in urban infrastructure. For example, the success of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao not only transformed the city's image but also revitalized its local economy (Lucas, 2023).

2.1.3. Flagship development

After delving into the theoretical aspects of landmark, we now shift our focus to examining the concepts related to flagship developments. This research is centered on the City of Arts and Sciences, which can be regarded as both a significant cultural landmark and an flagship development or an iconic architectural feature of Valencia.

In Guachalla Gutierrez's paper, Bianchini et al. (1990) define a flagship development 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" (Francisco & Gutierrez, 2011, p. 76). This concept suggests that flagship tourism projects have the potential to drive urban growth by attracting various other elements to their surroundings. This is evident in the City of Arts and Sciences, where different institutions have developed nearby, such as the Aqua Shopping Mall, various hotels like the Barceló, numerous food and beverage amenities, and new residential buildings. This point was vividly articulated in the two interviews conducted for this research. The interviewees detailed the progressive transformation of the areas surrounding the City of Arts and Sciences over the years since its establishment. This development has not only enhanced the safety of the adjacent neighborhoods but has also elevated them into more attractive and desirable places to live. Additionally, major infrastructure developments, such as the El Saler Shopping Center, which opened in 1995 and underwent renovations in 2001, further illustrate this catalytic effect. While we lack solid proof, it's reasonable to believe that the extensive renovation project worth over €25 million undertaken in 2020 might also be connected to the CAS and its increase in number of visitors. This renovation effort involved not only a complete redesign of the main facade but also the expansion of terraces with direct views on the CAS, allowing visitors to take in the panoramic scenery of this iconic site. Moreover, the project aimed to update the building's appearance, giving it a more futuristic look by incorporating more green spaces and vegetation (Ferrando, 2019). This modernization effort also mirrored the aspiration to align with the avant-garde aesthetics of the City of Arts and Sciences. The renovation project was designed to transform the shopping center and make it more appealing, thereby harmonizing its appearance with the innovative character of the adjacent cultural complex. It can therefore be said that this development follows the concept proposed by Bianchini et al. (1990) in Guachalla's paper (Francisco & Gutierrez, 2011).

Thus, one could argue that flagship projects can act as a focal point for attracting additional investments and making them a strategic asset in promoting a destination. These developments have the potential to create representations that can be associated with the overall identity of the location (Francisco & Gutierrez, 2011).

And as Wing Thai Wai (2004;245) acknowledges in "Cultural flagships and their role in the perception and experience of urban areas for tourism and culture", "as cities strive to achieve globality, flagship developments play an indispensable role in conveying messages of economic development and cultural dynamism" (Guachalla Gutierrez, 2011). This suggests that culture can act as a lever for urban development.

Montgomery (2003) also says this in Guachalla's paper, explaining that the identity of tourist and cultural districts can often be greatly impacted by the presence of an

emblematic cultural project, which increases the competitiveness of a destination in a tourist environment (Guachalla Gutierrez, 2011).

2.1.4. Valuing architecture

Further in Guachalla Gutierrez's paper, Crosby is cited as saying that "the image of a city largely depends on its architectural assets, including buildings, landmarks, and monuments, which interact with visitors' perceptions to form their impression of the destination" (Francisco & Gutierrez, 2011, p. 75). This underscores the significance of landmark developments in shaping the urban landscape, impacting tourists' perception and contributing to a city's overall image (Chen et al., 2021). These architectural elements do more than just enhance aesthetics; they also send signals of economic growth and cultural vibrancy (Guachalla Gutierrez, 2011).

Each building can be seen as a story in its own right. According to Guachalla Gutierrez, some researchers argue that these stories are often intrinsically linked to the values and culture of a society (Francisco & Gutierrez, 2011). Some buildings even acquire such importance that they become symbols or icons, embodying the culture and identity of a place. So when we talk about architecture, we also talk about how buildings reflect the culture that surrounds them (Sayed Farhad Alavi & Tanaka, 2023). This perspective helps to explain why certain places hold such special significance for tourists, residents and even the entire surrounding region.

One of Maitland and Newman's key findings is that visitors are not drawn solely to traditional tourist attractions. Rather, their interest is captivated by 'qualities of place and culture', encompassing a range of elements such as architecture, culture and diversity (Maitland & Newman, 2009, 2014). Thus, addressing cultural flagships necessarily involves a discussion of architecture as well as culture which will be explored later in this document. Architecture transcends its mere cultural capital to become a tourist consumer product. Iconic buildings, whether they are imposing structures, recognisable urban landmarks or famous monuments, exert a powerful attraction because of their ability to distinctly identify a place, whether national or local (Scerri et al., 2016). The City of Arts and Sciences is a perfect illustration of this concept, given the diversity of its architectural and cultural elements such as its science museum, aquarium and planetarium, as well as its spaces dedicated to the arts and culture.

Distinctive architecture is a crucial element in defining and characterizing a given location (Sayed Farhad Alavi & Tanaka, 2023). It acts as a true symbol and representative icon of its environment. As explained in Bate's document where he recalls that, in the first century BC, the Roman architect and theorist Vitruvius stated that

each building is assessed based on its structural integrity, practical and social utility, as well as its aesthetic appeal. The solidity of a building lies in the quality of its construction materials, its robust design, and the rationality of its interior spaces. The utility of buildings is reflected in their ability to meet the practical and social needs of the community (Bate, 2011). Each space is carefully designed to accommodate a diverse range of activities and functions, thus contributing to enriching the daily lives of residents and visitors.

Lastly, the appeal of buildings is manifested through their remarkable aesthetics, which evoke admiration and inspiration in those who behold them. The elegant architectural lines and innovative forms of the Palais des Arts Reina Sofía captivate spectators, creating an immersive atmosphere for artistic performances and cultural exhibitions. Similarly, the Hemisfèric, with its futuristic design and innovative architecture, offers a unique visual experience, captivating the imagination of visitors and transporting them into an artistic and scientific realm (ExperiencesValencia, 2023). RETRIVED

The City of Arts and Sciences embodies aesthetic and cultural assets through its distinctive architecture and innovative facilities. Its globally recognized iconic buildings exemplify a harmonious blend of architectural and technological innovation (Generalitat Valenciana, 2024b). The galleries and museums within this complex, notably the Príncipe Felipe Science Museum and the Oceanogràfic, along with the prestigious Palais des Arts Reina Sofía, showcase a diverse array of artistic and scientific works, enriching Valencia's cultural landscape. Serving as hubs for interaction and exchange, these cultural institutions foster intercultural dialogues (European Union, 2014) and enhance Valencia's reputation as a major center for culture and science.

Despite its undeniable importance, assessing the impact of architecture on tourism through Valencia's City of Arts and Sciences remains a challenge. While it attracts visitors from around the world and generates significant economic and social benefits for the region (Generalitat valenciana, 2020), a thorough analysis is necessary to precisely quantify its influence on local and international tourism. However, thanks to data collected through studies such as the questionnaire developed as part of this research and the analysis of academic documents, it is nonetheless possible to confirm that the architecture of this complex plays a central role in motivating tourists to visit this site, thus contributing to Valencia's tourism industry.

2.2. The case of the City of Arts and Sciences

2.2.1. Historical background

Valencia stands as a prominent municipality and city in Spain, serving as the capital of both its eponymous province and the Valencian Community. Nestled along the banks of the Turia River, on the Levantine coast of the Iberian Peninsula, Valencia boasts a rich historical legacy. Initially established by the Romans on a river island approximately four kilometers from the sea, Valencia's urban landscape underwent significant transformation over the centuries (Ajuntament de València, 2024).

Image 3 : Valencia's location



Source: (Google Map, 2024) retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3yUjLTO>

After the catastrophic flood on October 14, 1957, which caused severe damage to the city, the Turia River's course was redirected to the south. This intervention created a vast strip of land running from west to east through the city. Officially opened in 1986, this reclaimed land has been transformed into one of Spain's largest urban green spaces, stretching over nine kilometers. Designed by various urban planners and landscape architects, the revitalized riverbed now features a unique mix of recreational areas, sports facilities, and scenic promenades (VisitValencia, 2024).

The park is lush with palm and orange trees, and adorned with fountains, pine groves, aromatic plants, and ponds. It provides an idyllic setting for leisurely walks and romantic moments. This transformation stands as a testament to Valencia's resilience and innovation, maintaining the essence of its historical river landscape while incorporating modern urban planning principles (VisitValencia, 2024).

Towards the end of the 1980s, under the enlightened vision of the then President of the Generalitat Valenciana, an ambitious project began to take shape : the creation of a scientific and cultural complex designed to bring fulfillment to the whole community and its visitors.

The initiative was the brainchild of José Maria Lopez, an important professor of the history of science at the University of Valencia (López, 2010), who dreamt of creating a place where entertainment and intellectual stimulation could be combined in harmony, nurturing curiosity about and commitment to science, technology and art (Rutas con Historia , 2024).

The adventure began when Calatrava won a competition for the project, initially envisaged as communication towers to be erected at the western end of the Turia (EUmiesaward, 2024). That same year, Calatrava was given responsibility for developing the entire complex, which also included a science museum and planetarium. In 1996, following a change of government, the famous communications tower was replaced by an opera house, now known as the Palau de les Arts (Tola & Vokshi, 2013). In May 1991, permission was finally granted to transfer the land needed to build this ambitious project. Barely four months later, the project conceived by the illustrious architect Santiago Calatrava was revealed to the public, arousing enthusiasm, admiration but also criticism. At that time, a public company was set up to coordinate the contractors and bring this ambitious vision to fruition, launching the beginnings of an unprecedented architectural and cultural adventure. Work finally began at the end of 1994, marking the start of a spectacular transformation of the region (Rutas con Historia, 2024).

Lerma, driven by a forward-thinking vision, assembled an elite team to scour the world for similar projects. Their transcendent mission was to understand the public's aspirations and craft a masterpiece that would resonate with their soul. This exceptional team included creative geniuses such as Santiago Calatrava and Félix Candela, the brilliant architects behind the project, and engineers Alberto Domingo and Carlos Lázaro, who were responsible for the structural design of the Oceanographic's majestic roofs (Rutas con Historia , 2024).

Initially, the genesis of the City of Arts and Sciences was greeted with scepticism and criticism by the public. Some denounced the project as excessive, seeing it as an ostentatious manifestation of the political power in place. Despite these misgivings, Lerma was able to overcome the obstacles and break ground a few months later. However, the dissenting voices succeeded in bending the course of construction by proposing an alternative project, deemed more moderate in terms of scale and investment (Rutas con Historia , 2024).

After countless debates and heated discussions, the crucial decision was taken: the project would go ahead. With scrupulous respect for the legacy of the Lerma government, the project preserved two emblematic buildings: the Science Museum and

the Planetarium. The communications tower, once envisaged, gave way to a grandiose opera house, while a new addition stood proudly: a visionary oceanographic park, designed by the architectural genius Félix Candela.

Like a meticulous symphonist, Calatrava reworked his initial work, unveiling a second dazzling project that gave birth to three architectural gems: The Hemisphere, the Palace of Arts, and the Science Museum. After a two-year break, work resumed in 1997, under the expert guidance of engineers Alberto Domingo and Carlos Lázaro, those maestros of structural design who also worked on the Oceanografic's underwater restaurant (Rutas con Historia, 2024).

Finally, after years of hard work and dedication, the long-awaited complex saw the light of day, dazzling the world with its splendour. L'Hemisfèric was the first to open its doors to the general public in 1998 (Visit Valencia, 2024).

2.2.2. Overview of the city of Arts and Sciences

Image 4 : City of Arts and Sciences skyview



Source : Generalitat Valenciana (2024)

The majestic City of Arts and Sciences, located in Valencia, Spain, stands out as one of the largest scientific and cultural complexes in Europe, as highlighted by the official

Spanish tourism website (2024). This ambitious project harmoniously combines art, science and technology in a futuristic complex that captivates visitors from all over the world. Dominated by imposing buildings such as the Hemisfèric and the Oceanogràfic, designed by eminent architects Santiago Calatrava and Félix Candela (Generalitat Valenciana & La Ciutat de Les Arts i Les Ciències, 2024), the city stands out for its avant-garde architecture and impressive structures. Nestling at the end of a two-kilometre stretch along the old bed of the River Turia, it offers an exceptional landscape (Tola & Vokshi, 2013).

The CAC is made up of six main elements, arranged as follows.

The first is the Opera House, also known as the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía, one of the buildings of the complex. Dedicated to music, dance, theatre, and ballet, it houses four vast halls: the main hall, the Aula Magistral, the amphitheatre, and the chamber theatre, totaling 40,000 square meters and standing 75 meters high (Les Arts Valencia, 2024).

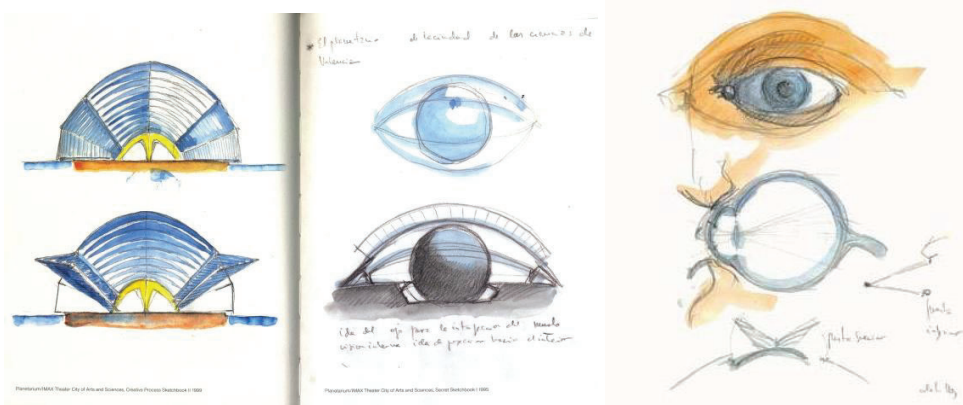
Platforms extend at various levels with pathways and Mediterranean gardens. Visitors can access different areas via panoramic lifts and staircases integrated into the building's metal sides. The interplay between the metal structure and glass foyers creates a dynamic visual experience. A striking metal plume on the footbridge at the main entrance appears to float over the structure. From the main entrance, where the Box Office is situated, two symmetrical corridors lead to the lobby of the Main Concert Hall. The plume is supported at only one point, leaving its eastern end seemingly floating (Les Arts Valencia, 2024).

The building's structural supports are covered in fine white concrete, while the reflecting pools are adorned with broken mosaic tiles (trencadís). The Palau is surrounded by over 60,000 square meters of gardens and pathways, with 11,000 square meters of water in the reflecting pools below.

Next, the Planetarium or Hemisfèric Theatre, an IMAX cinema and digital film projection venue, offers a unique immersive experience for film lovers (Visit Valencia, 2024). Inaugurated in 1998, it was the first building in the City of Arts and Sciences to open its doors to the public. Over 100 metres long, it has the largest projection room in Europe, with a system of three projections on a 900 square metre concave screen. Its outside shape, as we will look deeper later on in this text, is reminiscent of a human eye. It is located at the centre of a 24,000 square metre swimming pool, creating the image of a globe with its reflection in the water (Visit Valencia, 2024). It features a 1,300-seat auditorium suitable for operas, ballets and concerts. There is also a 400-seat auditorium and a theatre. Finally, there is an open-air auditorium sheltered by the roof, which can seat up to 2,000 people (EUmiesaward, 2024).

Santiago Calatrava's visionary inspiration gave rise to a remarkable architectural design using three main elements in the creation of this building. The eye, the sunshade and the swooping anchor. The eye, also known as the "Eye of the Knowledge", is an innovative idea revealed in Calatrava's captivating sketches, which show a majestic eye reflected in a mirror plane on the surface of the water. The singular accessibility of this building, which seems to emerge from the water like a lighthouse of knowledge, is shaped by two curved sides, which unfold like the eyelids of this gigantic eye. These two sides, the veritable axes of Calatrava's architectural vision, can open and close with mechanical grace, providing both fluid access to the surrounding pool and acting as dynamic sunshades. This sunshade is moved by telescopic jacks that move hydraulically outwards from the structure, revealing the central dome designed to evoke the pupil of this monumental eye. This "pupil" serves as the dome essential for IMAX film projections and also symbolizes the sphere of the cosmos (Tola & Vokshi, 2013).

Image 5 : Calatrava's sketches of the Hemisferic



Source : Tola & Vokshi (2013)

To conclude, the impressive swooping anchor that anchors firmly to the base of the building subtly evokes the iconic aesthetic of the famous Lyon-Saint Exupéry Airport train station, also designed by Santiago Calatrava. This distinctive feature, masterfully used in his structures, is a testament to his singular talent for fusing art and engineering with timeless elegance (Tola & Vokshi, 2013).

Between these two main buildings lies the Montolivet Bridge. The bridge features two spans, each equipped with a roadway and a pedestrian path. They are anchored at the ends and rest upon arborescent structures below (paseando, 2021). And although its design appears to have been conceived by Calatrava, it is difficult to find evidence of this. Indeed, the project is not listed as one of his confirmed projects on his website.

Next to this, the majestic Príncipe Felipe Science Museum stands like a beacon of knowledge and innovation, inviting visitors on an interactive journey through the wonders of science and technology. Designed between 1991 and 1995, and erected

between 1996 and 2001 (Tola & Vokshi, 2013), this architectural gem spans an impressive 40,000 square metres spread over three captivating floors. With over 26,000 square metres of exhibition space, it is the largest museum in Spain in terms of total surface area (La Ciutat de Les Arts i Les Ciències, 2024), 13,500 square metres of which are surrounded by water, creating an enchanting and immersive setting (Tola & Vokshi, 2013). This architectural prodigy, measuring 220 metres long, 80 metres wide and 55 metres high, impresses with its colossal dimensions and imposing allure.

Subsequently, a fifth structure was built facing the science museum, called Umbracle, designed from 1995 to 1997 and built in 1997 until 2001. It is a garden teeming with plants such as lotuses, palms, mini palms and even orange trees, as well as a variety of fragrant flowers (Generalitat Valenciana, 2024c). It is easily recognisable thanks to its skeletal balcony structure made up of 55 arches and 54 floating arches rising to a height of over 18 metres, as well as its broken mosaic tiles, particularly along the road. The Umbracle, with its 'umbrella' structure, is the ideal spot from which to enjoy a panoramic view of the entire complex (Tola & Vokshi, 2013).

Stretching 320 metres long and 60 metres wide, the Umbracle also hosts seasonal cultural exhibitions such as "The Astronomy Garden", a free exhibition on celestial movements, as well as art events and markets (Verrassend Valencia, 2024). Other exhibitions and even small markets are also held there at certain times of the year. In the evenings, particularly during the summer months, the Terraza, an elegantly decorated part of the Umbracle, becomes the scene of lively evenings, adding a festive touch to the area. There's also a music venue, MYA, in the basement of the Umbracle (Umbracle Terraza, 2024).

Just past the majestic Museo de las Ciencias and the Umbracle stands the Pont l'Assaut de l'Or (Golden Assault Bridge), with its graceful white cables supported by a curved pylon that rises to the top of Valencia, an impressive 125 metres above sea level (Tola & Vokshi, 2013). Right next door is the CaixaForum, nestled in the heart of the Agora, an architectural masterpiece by Enric Ruiz-Geli and his Cloud 9 studio. Like a beacon of knowledge and culture, the CaixaForum stands out for its bold fusion of history, art, science and technology (CaixaForum, 2024). This exhibition space, a veritable jewel of knowledge, houses a restaurant reminiscent of an aromatic plant garden, offices that seem to rise like palms to the sky, an educational classroom reminiscent of a cloud floating in space, and finally, an auditorium transformed into a veritable inverted forest. With its two vast exhibition rooms, each ranging in size from 400 to 700 square metres, CaixaForum offers fertile ground for captivating exhibitions, reflections on ancient civilisations, technological developments and fascinating artistic explorations (Visit Valencia, 2023).

But CaixaForum is more than just an exhibition space. It is also the setting for captivating musical performances, enlightening conferences, inspiring social events, and stimulating educational workshops open to all ages. In short, CaixaForum is a

cultural oasis, a sanctuary where curiosity and creativity flourish, offering visitors an enriching and unforgettable experience (Visit Valencia, 2023).

Last but not least, on the edge of the complex stands the imposing Oceanogràfic

This is the largest aquarium in Europe, with the capacity to house 45,000 living creatures from 500 different species. The planet's main marine ecosystems are represented here. Its avant-garde architecture, the layout of the different aquaria and its scientific, recreational, and educational objectives bring the marine world to the public, raising awareness about protection of its flora and fauna. It serves, moreover, as a platform for scientific research (Visit Valencia, 2024).

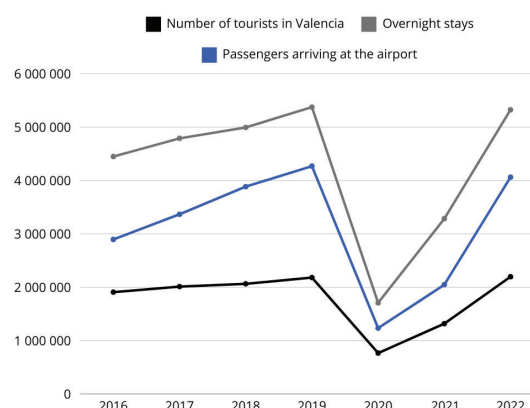
From the majesty of the coral reefs to the mysterious depths of the oceans, every visitor can discover the richness and beauty of underwater life in this fascinating place.

2.2.3. Evolution of tourism in Valencia

After a careful analysis of the tourism data for the city of Valencia from 2012 to 2022 listed in the tourism statistics documents published by Visit Valencia, it is undeniable that there has been a positive and growing evolution in tourism in recent years. Indeed, the number of visitors has shown an upward trend, rising from 1,663,394 in 2012 to a peak of almost 2,200,000 in 2022. Despite a drop in 2020 due to the Covid global health crisis, which reduced the figures to 766,144 visitors, this still represents a 32.13% increase in visitor numbers between 2012 and 2022 as we can see in table 2.

This increase in visitor numbers is naturally accompanied by a rise in the number of overnight stays, reaching over 5,300,000 in 2022, compared with 3,502,697 in 2012.

Image 6 : Graph showing the evolution of the number of tourists in Valencia, as well as the number of overnight stays and arrivals at the airport.



Source : Own elaboration realised with canvas from data extracted in Generalitat valenciana (2020)

These figures lead us to take a closer look at visitor numbers to the various sites of the City of Arts and Sciences.

Image 6 : Table showing the number of visitors in the City of Arts and Science of Valencia (Visit Valencia, 2023b)

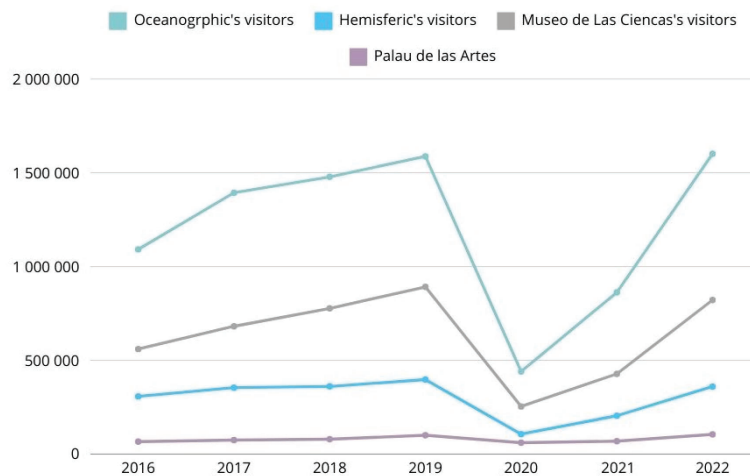
Year	Buildings			
	Oceanogràfic	Hemisfèric	Museo de Las Cienas	Palau Les Arts
2016	1 091 717	307 959	560 400	66 642
2017	1 393 789	354 624	681 555	74 782
2018	1 478 140	360 900	777 027	79 486
2019	1 587 521	397 358	891 645	100 734
2020	440 462	106 833	254 299	60 993
2021	862 233	204 634	427 982	69 228
2022	1 601 229	360 396	821 718	105 492

Source : Own elaboration retrieved from Visit Valencia (2023b)

As image 6 shows, four of the CAS buildings have seen significant growth in visitor numbers in recent years. The Oceanografic stands out as the most visited site, recording over one million visitors in 2016, and reaching 1,601,229 visitors alone in 2022. Similarly, the Museum of Arts and Sciences has made remarkable progress, welcoming nearly 821,718 visitors in 2022, an increase of 45% on 2016.

The Hemisferic has also seen fluctuations, with an average of 300,000 to almost 400,000 visitors before 2020, a year impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there was a significant upturn in 2021, with visitor numbers rising from 106,833 in 2020 to 360,396 in 2022. Although the Palau de les Arts experiences a lower number of ticket sales, there has been a significant increase in recent years, rising from 66,600 ticket sales in 2016 to slightly over 120,000 in 2023, thus doubling over the past seven years. The number of entries sold in 2023 is not indicated in the table because the data for other buildings has not yet been released. It is important to note that the number of entries at the Palau de les Arts is not comparable to that of the Oceanogràfic for example, which has significantly more days and hours of operation. The Palau is open to the public for artistic performances when they are scheduled. Although guided tours are available during the day, it remains a performance venue rather than a place open to the public all day long.

Image 7 : Graph showing the evolution of visitor numbers in four of the site's buildings



Source : Own elaboration realised with Canvas from data extracted in Generalitat Valenciana (2020)

It's important to note that many tourists visit the site to explore the surroundings or admire the architecture without purchasing tickets, which means that a considerable number of visitors to the City of Arts and Sciences cannot be accurately quantified. This lack of data clarity is due to the difficulty of tracking non-paying visitors, as only the ticketed buildings provided reliable statistics.

Despite the uncertainty associated with quantifying all visitors, it is clear that a large proportion of those who come to Valencia spend time at one or more of the attractions at the City of Arts and Sciences. This observation highlights the rise of tourism in Valencia and suggests a convincing correlation between the overall growth of tourism in the city and the increase in the number of visitors to the City of Arts and Sciences. This reflects the popularity of the complex among tourists and demonstrates its appeal as a must-see destination when visiting Valencia.

The steady rise in tourist arrivals to Valencia is indicative of the city's enduring allure and its evolving status as a premier tourist destination. Concurrently, the escalating footfall at the City of Arts and Sciences signals the profound appeal and magnetism of this iconic cultural complex.

Moreover, the sustained increase in visitor numbers to the City of Arts and Sciences accentuates the significance of these emblematic sites as major draws for both domestic and international tourists. As cultural landmarks of international renown, these attractions serve as focal points for travelers seeking enriching cultural experiences and immersive encounters with art, science, and innovation. The profound impact of these sites extends beyond mere visitor numbers, as they play a pivotal role in shaping the narrative and identity of Valencia as a vibrant cultural hub.

Furthermore, the contribution of the City of Arts and Sciences to the region's tourism economy cannot be overstated. As a magnet for tourism, this iconic site stimulates economic activity through visitor spending on accommodations, dining, transportation, and souvenirs, thus bolstering the local economy and supporting jobs in various sectors. Additionally, they serve as catalysts for the development of ancillary industries such as hospitality, retail, and entertainment, further enhancing the overall tourism ecosystem of Valencia.

As indicated by the 2019 Report on the Economic and Social Impact of CACSA (Maudos, 2020), the complex generated €69.7 million in terms of GDP for the Valencian economy and created 2,842 full-time jobs. Each euro spent on its operation yields €2.6 in tourist spending and €2.2 in GDP. Additionally, each euro spent is equivalent to €1.3 in individual training, underscoring the significant cultural and educational impact of the City of Arts and Sciences.

When comparing the results obtained in this report for 2019 with those of the 2018 report, the total impact on income and employment increased by nearly the same amount: 13.2% and 13.6%, respectively. This favorable trend is explained by the increase in visitor tourist spending, which rose by 14.8% to a maximum of €155.4 million (Maudos et al., 2019). This positive trend in tourist spending is attributed to the fact that the number of visitors to the City of Arts and Sciences increased by 10%.

In 2019, over 2.8 million tickets were sold, representing a 10% increase compared to 2018. This increase in attendance contributed to the overall revenue and economic impact of the complex (Maudos , 2020).

2.3. Cultural tourism

Following these studies, we identify the significance of highlighting the importance of culture, which in the case studied, is a fundamental aspect.

Cultural tourism is one of the oldest forms of tourism (du Cros & McKercher, 2002/2020, pp. 3–12), with roots that reach back long before the term was even coined. In the 18th century, for instance, young European aristocrats embarked on the Grand Tour, an educational journey across Europe that often centered on Italy (Sweet et al., 2017). This period is often considered the beginning of modern tourism, though the concept of cultural travel dates back to ancient Rome. The Romans, for example, traveled to Greece and Egypt, frequently to visit historical sites or to experience different cultures.

Toward the end of the Roman Republican era, young people from wealthy families traveled to Greece, especially Athens, to advance their education. These trips allowed them to gain what the Greeks called "paideia," a comprehensive education in subjects like literature, rhetoric, grammar, history, and science. Octavian, who would later

become Emperor Augustus, was one such traveler; he was sent to Apollonia to study under Arius of Alexandria, a renowned philosopher.

The Romans had a profound respect for Greek culture. As they expanded their empire eastward in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, they facilitated the spread of Greek knowledge in Rome, encouraging Romans to visit places like Alexandria and Pergamum, known for their impressive libraries. These trips combined education with exploration of the centers of Greek learning (Tilloi d'Ambrosi, 2023).

Nowadays, tourism is no longer the preserve of the wealthy and intellectual elite, but has become a mass phenomenon accessible to all. This democratization of tourism has been amplified by technological innovations, including photography, cinema, and the internet, which have profoundly changed the way tourists make their decisions (Specht, 2009).

However, the term "cultural tourism" was not explicitly used at the time. Today, what constitutes cultural tourism is still a matter of debate, as travel by its very nature involves exposure to different cultural elements when one leaves home to explore other places. Many assume that exposure to various cultures is synonymous with cultural tourism, but this overly simplistic interpretation can lead to misunderstandings about what it truly encompasses. The lack of a clear consensus on the definition of cultural tourism complicates its accurate assessment, even as it becomes a more significant segment of the tourism market. This ambiguity makes it challenging to collect reliable statistics and to define specific tourism products (du Cros & McKercher, 2002, pp. 3-12).

According to the definition adopted by the UN General Assembly on Tourism at its 22nd session (2017), cultural tourism involves :

a type of tourism activity in which the main motivation of the visitor is to learn about, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products of a tourist destination. These attractions/products are linked to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional characteristics of a society, encompassing arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions" (UNWTO, 2017).

This means that a destination's cultural resources are resources that tourists seek out and consume, having a significant impact on attracting tourists to a particular place and stimulating its local economy. This in turn contributes to the development of tourism in the city, helping to make it more attractive to tourists (UNESCO, 2022). This means that a destination's cultural resources can be powerful draws for tourists, significantly impacting their decision to visit and thereby stimulating the local economy. Such

attractions contribute to the overall development of tourism in a city, making it more appealing to potential visitors.

It is in this context that Valencia's City of Arts and Sciences (CAC) finds its place, serving as a symbol of Spain and offering a cultural and leisure experience of European renown. This harmonious alliance between culture and modernity resonates strongly within the framework of cultural tourism. The CAC embodies the fundamental principles of cultural tourism, as defined by the United Nations General Assembly, by providing a multitude of tangible and intangible cultural attractions and products. Visitors are encouraged to explore, experiment and immerse themselves in the different dimensions of artistic and scientific culture offered by the City of Arts and Sciences. From exploring the interactive exhibitions, to sensory experiences in music and science, to admiring the iconic architectural installations, every aspect of the visit offers a unique opportunity to discover and appreciate the cultural riches of this space.

In this way, the City of Arts and Sciences transcends its status as a simple tourist attraction to become a genuine catalyst for cultural experiences centred on the arts and sciences. By offering visitors an authentic immersion in these fields, it becomes a key pillar of cultural tourism in Valencia, helping to enrich the city's cultural life and boost its local economy.

3. Results from fieldwork

3.1. Quantitative research

In order to support this research endeavor, two identical questionnaires, one in English and the other in French, were meticulously crafted and disseminated via Google Forms. A total of 63 responses were garnered.

Regarding demographic variables, the majority of respondents were female, constituting 35 responses, while male respondents accounted for 28. Age demographics spanned primarily between 18 and 52 years and beyond, with the most prominent groups being those aged 18-23 and 24-29, followed by those aged 52 and above. This diversity facilitates an insightful examination of motivations and interests pertaining to the City of

Arts and Sciences across various generational cohorts. As for occupational status, respondents encompassed a spectrum ranging from students to employees, including non-employed individuals and self-employed workers. This broad spectrum reflects diverse economic and social perspectives in the assessment of visitation motivations and cultural preferences.

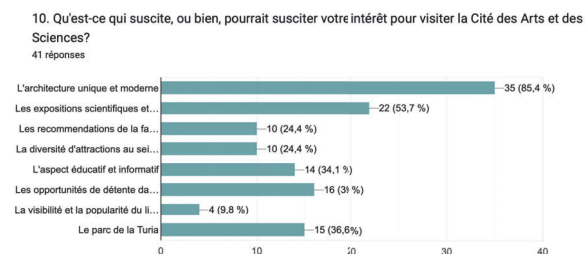
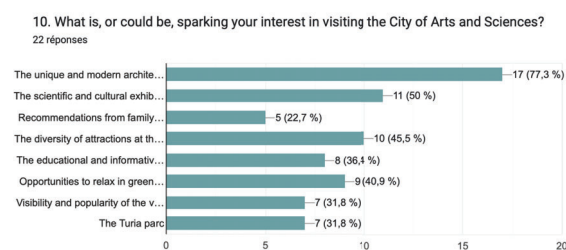
In the latter segment of the questionnaire, 72% of participants indicated having previously visited the city of Valencia, while 17% had not, and 11% expressed a desire to do so.

The primary motivation cited by participants for visiting Valencia was its allure as a "sun and beach" destination, with 81% selecting this as their foremost reason. Culinary experiences and local gastronomy followed closely behind, attracting 58% of respondents. In the third and fourth positions, interests in the city's cultural richness and its cultural sites were identified. Subsequent motivations included visiting friends and family, as well as participating in festivals or events.

However, 41% of participants indicated that the CAC was not among their primary motivations due to their unawareness of its existence. Among those for whom the CAC constituted a motivation, the level of desire to visit was also measured: three individuals expressed a desire below 5 out of 10, seven individuals estimated their desire to visit between 5 and 7 out of 10, fifteen individuals noted their desire between 8 and 9 out of 10, and nine individuals declared a desire rating of 10 out of 10 to visit this site. Moreover, 36 individuals who discovered the City of Arts and Sciences during their travels expressed a desire to visit ranging from 7 to 10 out of 10.

Among individuals who were unable to visit the site due to various reasons, 73% expressed a desire to visit the site, with a rating ranging between 7 and 10 out of 10.

In terms of visitors' primary attraction to this iconic site, it primarily centers on its distinctive and contemporary architecture, undeniably occupying the foremost position in their interest. Following closely are the cultural and scientific exhibitions, which also significantly capture their attention.

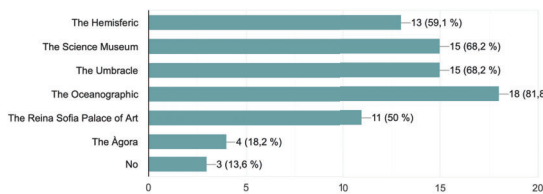


The opportunities to relax in green spaces emerged subsequently as a major point of interest, followed by the educational and informative aspect and the Turia park. The

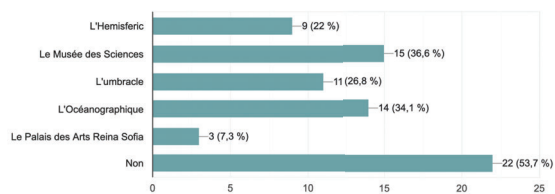
diversity of available offerings and the recommendations from friends or family play a substantial role in visitors' motivations, while the site's social media popularity, though present, holds a less determinative position in their decision to visit.

Within this complex, the Oceanogràfic is the most frequently visited building, with 58% of visitors reporting having been there, followed by the Museum of Sciences, with a visitation rate of 52%. The other most visited structures include the Umbracle and the Hemisfèric, followed by the Palace of Arts.

12. Have you explored the interior of one (or more) of the buildings of the City of Arts and Sciences ? (Tick the building(s) visited)
22 réponses

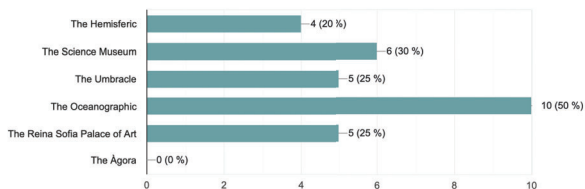


12. Avez-vous exploré l'intérieur de l'un des bâtiments de la Cité des Arts et des Sciences ? (Cochez le/ les bâtiment(s) visité(s))
41 réponses

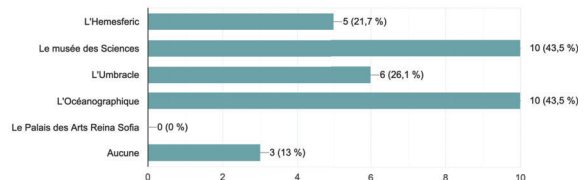


The Oceanogràfic appears to be the preferred building, with 18 participants selecting it as their favorite, closely followed by the Museum of Sciences, with 16 participants designating it as their preference.

13. Which part(s) of the City of Arts and Sciences do you prefer? (Skip if you are not concerned)
20 réponses

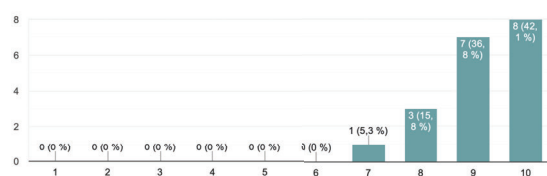


13. Quelle(s) partie(s) de la Cité des Arts et des Sciences préférez-vous? (Passez si vous n'êtes pas concerné)
23 réponses

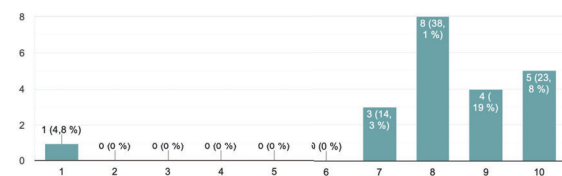


Regarding the overall appreciation of the site, 32.7% of visitors awarded the maximum score of 10 out of 10, while 53% rated their appreciation between 7 and 9 out of 10.

14. If you have already visited this iconic place, how much did you like it on a scale of 1 to 10? (Skip if you are not concerned)
19 réponses



14. Si vous avez déjà visité ce lieu emblématique, à quel point avez-vous aimé cet endroit sur une échelle de 1 à 10 ? (Passez si vous n'êtes pas concerné)
21 réponses

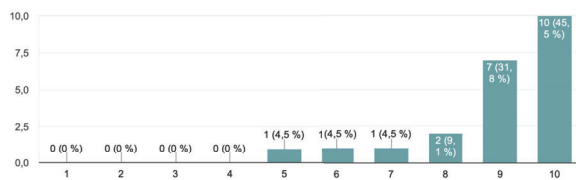


Moreover, 87% of participants believe it is likely that they will return to the CAC, and 95% would recommend the site to their friends and family, assigning a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5 to this recommendation.

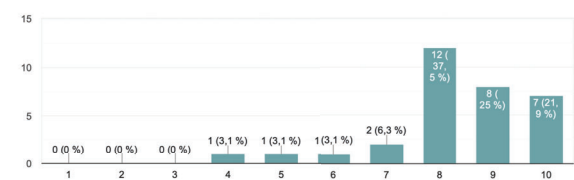
As for the significance of the CAC for tourism in the city of Valencia, the results indicate a positive evaluation, with 35% assigning an importance rating of 7 out of 10, 44% assigning a rating of 9 out of 10, and 45% assigning the highest importance rating of 10 out of 10.

Additionally, a majority of 51% of participants acknowledge the importance of such iconic sites in influencing the choice of a holiday destination, and 60% have already received recommendations to visit the CAC. Lastly, 54% of respondents state that their interest in the CAC has increased after participating in this questionnaire.

17. How important do you think this site is for tourism in Valencia?
22 réponses



17. A combien estimez-vous l'importance de ce lieu pour le tourisme dans la ville de Valence?
32 réponses



3.1.1. Results

In summary, this study underscores the City of Arts and Sciences (CAC) in Valencia as a pivotal attraction, significantly enhancing the city's tourism landscape. The research highlights the architectural and cultural allure of the CAC, with the Oceanogràfic and Museum of Sciences emerging as the most visited and favored buildings. Visitor satisfaction is notably high, with a strong propensity to recommend the site, reflecting its appeal and positive impact on tourists.

The findings demonstrate that the CAC's unique and contemporary architecture, along with its diverse cultural exhibitions, are the primary factors driving its appeal. These elements not only enhance the aesthetic experience but also signal economic growth and cultural vibrancy, making the CAC a crucial component of Valencia's identity and attractiveness as a tourist destination.

Overall, the study affirms that the CAC plays a vital role in shaping tourists' perceptions and motivations. Its architectural beauty and rich cultural offerings are key to its success, ensuring that it continues to be a major draw for visitors. By maintaining and promoting these strengths, the CAC can sustain its significant contribution to Valencia's tourism industry and solidify its reputation as a leading destination.

3.2. Qualitative research

3.2.1. Introduction

The present section describes the qualitative methodology adopted in this research to deepen the understanding of perceptions and dynamics related to the City of Arts and Sciences (CAC) of Valencia. Two semi-structured and one structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders directly involved in the tourism and cultural sector of the city. These interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of the perspectives and experiences of the front desk manager of the Ilunion hotel, the representative of the Palace of Arts, as well as the head of the film office in Valencia. The main objective of this qualitative approach was to gather detailed and contextualized information, thereby enriching the overall analysis of the CAC and its impact on tourism and culture in Valencia.

Image 8 : Table summarizing the interviewees, their profession, and the type of information collected from each.

INTERVIEWEE	TYPE OF INTERVIEW	WORK	TYPE OF INFORMATION
EDUARDO CIFUENTES	SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW	Front desk manager at Ilunion hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban tourism trends in the region • Statistics on hotel tourist attendance • Information on the impact of tourism on the hotel
VICTOR GIL	SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW	Head of educational projects at the Reina sofia Palau de Las Artes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban importance of CAC for tourism in VLC • Architectural significance of the Palau • Role of iconic landmarks in tourists' decision-making
PEPA JORDÁ VÁZQUEZ	STRUCTURED INTERVIEW	Head of the Spanish film Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance of CAC for film industry in VLC • Importance of the architecture for attracting production • Impact of shootings in CAC for promotion of the city

Source : Own creation realised with Canvas

3.2.2. Ilunion hotel

During the interview with the reception manager of the Ilunion Hotel, several key points emerged regarding the impact of proximity to the City of Arts and Sciences (CAC) on the hotel and the region's tourist flow. Eduardo noted that the hotel experiences a significant increase in demand during periods when events take place at the CAC, particularly in the summer. For instance, the early June concerts dedicated to reggaeton and the 90s attract a very diverse clientele, consistently filling the hotel. Similarly, sporting events like the Valencia Ironman, held in April, draw numerous participants and spectators, boosting the hotel's occupancy.

Eduardo also emphasized that the hotel's proximity to the CAC plays a crucial role in guests' choice of accommodation. Approximately 60% of the guests choose the Ilunion Hotel primarily because of its proximity to the CAC. These guests are generally more interested in the CAC than in Valencia's city center.

The few rooms offering a direct view of the City are particularly sought after, regardless of the cost. Guests are primarily looking for an experience, no matter the price. Online reviews on sites like Booking.com and TripAdvisor often reflect the guests' appreciation for this proximity. Moreover, he explained that the fame of the CAC positively influences the perception of the hotel and has significantly strengthened its reputation among guests and tourists. This association naturally enhances the hotel's appeal, as visitors associate the proximity to a renowned landmark with a quality experience. Conversely, if the City of Arts and Sciences closes a building or if the Oceanogràfic loses popularity, the Ilunion Hotel notices a decline in occupancy. Although there is no formal partnership between the hotel and the CAC, it is common for the CAC to recommend this hotel to its visitors during major events or conferences, due to the hotel's recognized quality of service. This mutual recommendation between the CAC and Ilunion Agua helps enhance the overall tourist experience, thereby increasing satisfaction and loyalty.

He also mentioned some challenges of running a hotel near a major tourist attraction like the CAC. However, Eduardo explains that, in his view, every challenge is an opportunity. For example, when the hotel is fully booked due to an event at one of the City of Arts and Sciences buildings, managing certain aspects can become complex. Take the example of the flow of guests wanting to have breakfast: to avoid everyone coming at the same time, the hotel seizes this situation as an opportunity. By asking guests to specify their preferred breakfast time, the hotel's management can better organize the service, which also allows the housekeeping staff to plan the cleaning more efficiently. This leads to better operational efficiency. By improving internal communication and scheduling systems, Ilunion ensures that all guests receive timely quality service.

3.2.3. Palau de Les Arts

On the other hand, the interview conducted with Victor from the Palau de les Arts confirms that it plays a crucial role in attracting visitors for various reasons. Firstly, its architectural grandeur stands out as a landmark of modern design. As the inaugural structure of the complex, its design, reminiscent of a spaceship or a ship, captivates visitors with its futuristic and innovative aesthetics. This architectural marvel is a prime attraction for those interested in modern design and engineering.

Secondly, the Palau de les Arts is a cornerstone of the opera world, both at the European and national levels. It ranks among the top four opera houses in Spain, alongside Madrid, Barcelona, and Seville. The quality of its productions and the reputation of its orchestra, created from scratch in 2006, are exemplary. The orchestra is led by some of the best conductors in the contemporary music scene, further enhancing its status. Additionally, the Palau de les Arts stands out for its technical capabilities. The main stage, known as the Sala Principal, is equipped with state-of-the-art technological facilities that allow for the staging of complex and grandiose opera productions that might be difficult to realize elsewhere. These technical prowess enable the Palau de les Arts to easily host new and complex productions, making it a landmark for enthusiasts of both traditional and modern opera. Beyond this, its diverse programming, featuring a variety of musical genres, as well as its community engagement initiatives, further enhance its appeal.

Over the past two decades, the CAC has played a crucial role in the tourism development of Valencia. It has transformed the urban landscape, attracting tourists and catalyzing urban growth. The accessibility and quality of its cultural offerings, including the Palau de les Arts, have significantly boosted Valencia's appeal as a tourist destination. However, the influx of tourists also poses challenges such as potential inflation and housing accessibility issues, highlighting the need for sustainable tourism practices. Nonetheless, it is clear that such iconic places play a decisive role in tourists' destination choices. The CAC has become synonymous with Valencia's identity, symbolizing its architectural innovation and cultural dynamism. Its appeal extends to various audiences, from architecture enthusiasts to social media-savvy travelers, thus supporting Valencia's tourism industry and economic growth.

This is just regarding the Palau de les Arts. Considering that each building in the City of Arts and Sciences has its own story, we can imagine the site's overall importance for tourism. Each structure, whether it's the Oceanogràfic, the Science Museum, or the Hemisfèric, uniquely contributes to the overall appeal of the City. Each has distinctive features that attract specific visitors, creating a mosaic of enriching and diverse experiences. Together, these buildings form a complex and fascinating network that not only defines Valencia's landscape but also makes it an essential tourist destination, rooted in culture and innovation.

3.2.4. Film office

Finally, an interview with Pepa Jordá shed light on the crucial importance of the City of Arts and Sciences for the film industry in Valencia. Its unique and futuristic architecture makes it the most filmed location in the city, attracting numerous producers thanks to its countless perspectives and vast spaces. Pepa Jordá emphasizes that this architecture offers brands a fresh, modern, and avant-garde image, which explains why many advertisements, particularly for cars, as well as fashion and mobile phone shoots, take place there.

On this subject, the interview with Pepa Jordá (2024) revealed the significant impact of the City of Arts and Sciences as a popular filming location. She explained how the unique and futuristic architecture of the City attracts numerous film and advertising productions, thus giving Valencia global visibility. This exposure through films and series often inspires viewers to visit the locations they see on screen (Bolan, 2017), demonstrating the growing influence of visual media on the decision-making process of modern tourists and once again highlighting the importance of this iconic location (Jaynes, 2017).

The interview also revealed that although there are no concrete studies demonstrating the direct impact of filming on tourism, there is a strong belief that films and series shot at the City of Arts and Sciences generate growing interest in film tourism in Valencia. This means that viewers who see the iconic structures of the City on screen are often inspired to visit the site in person, thereby increasing the number of visitors. However, she notes that this phenomenon is mainly associated with films and series rather than advertisement.

3.2.5. Results

In summary, the interviews conducted with the reception manager of the Ilunion Hotel and Victor from the Palau de les Arts underscore the profound impact of the City of Arts and Sciences on Valencia's tourism and local economy. The CAC, with its architectural grandeur and cultural significance, attracts a diverse range of visitors, significantly increasing demand for nearby accommodations like the Ilunion Hotel. This attraction is evident as approximately 60% of the hotel's guests choose it primarily for its proximity to the landmark, often valuing the experience over cost. Proximity to this flagship tourist attraction is a decisive factor in tourists' choices. Moreover events at the CAC, such as concerts, sporting events and so on, drive consistent occupancy at the hotel, while online reviews reflect the high appreciation for this proximity.

The Palau de les Arts, with its intricate architecture and multifaceted offerings, exemplifies the complexity and depth of each building within the CAC, making the entire complex a marvel in terms of tourist appeal within a single site. Its architectural brilliance and diverse programming enhance its allure, making it a cultural landmark that captivates visitors from around the world. The CAC's influence extends beyond mere attraction; it boosts the hotel's reputation and helps manage challenges by turning them into opportunities for operational efficiency.

Adding to these insights, the interview with Pepa Jordá highlighted another dimension of the CAC's impact: its significance for the film industry. The unique and futuristic architecture of the site has made it the most filmed location in Valencia, attracting numerous film and advertising productions. This visual appeal not only enhances the city's modern and dynamic image but also has the potential to inspire film tourism, as viewers who see these iconic structures on screen may be motivated to visit in person.

Overall, the CAC stands as a symbol of Valencia's innovation and cultural dynamism, significantly contributing to the city's identity and economic growth. Its presence not only attracts tourists but also supports local businesses, reinforcing the hypothesis that iconic landmarks are crucial for regional tourism and economic development. The synergy between the CAC and surrounding hotels exemplifies how cultural flagships can transform urban landscapes and foster sustainable tourism.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Verification of the hypothesis

At this stage of our study, our ultimate objective after meticulously exploring and analyzing the collected data is to proceed with the argumentation aimed at validating the relevance of our research hypothesis. Our hypothesis posited that "the presence of an emblematic tourist attraction, such as the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia, has a significant impact on attracting tourists to cities, stimulating the local economy, and contributing to the attractiveness of the city." Through a thorough analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, our research has revealed several key findings that support this hypothesis.

Firstly, the presence of the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia has been identified as a major factor in attracting tourists to the city and shaping its image. Quantitative data

showed that 51% of participants considered the presence of such emblematic sites to be "very important" when choosing a travel destination, while 44% deemed it "important." Moreover, over 85% of respondents rated the importance of this site for the city of Valencia between 8 and 10 on a scale of 10. This high level of appreciation is further evidenced by the desire expressed by the majority of respondents to return to Valencia and recommend the city to others. These results indicate a widespread enthusiasm for the City of Arts and Sciences among respondents, both in terms of appreciation and travel decisions.

Furthermore, qualitative data collected during an interview with a staff member of Ilunion Hotel shed light on the significant impact of the City of Arts and Sciences on the hotel's image, reputation, and occupancy. Approximately 60% of Ilunion Hotel's clients selected the establishment due to its proximity to this renowned tourist site. Moreover, customer comments and feedback corroborated this observation, emphasizing the importance of the hotel's proximity to the CAC in their decision to book a stay. This finding reinforces the notion that the presence of this cultural emblem exerts a considerable influence on travelers' accommodation choices. Conversely, a negative correlation is observable when one of the buildings in the city closes or experiences a decline in popularity. This decline is reflected in the hotel's occupancy rates, demonstrating the direct impact of the CAC on local accommodation demand.

In addition, our theoretical framework underscores the significance of landmarks in shaping a city's identity and its appeal to tourists. The City of Arts and Sciences thus serves to distinguish the city of Valencia on a national and even global scale (Guachalla Gutierrez, 2011). This notion is further reinforced by the very definition of a landmark, which is a prominently visible and recognizable location from a distance, aiding in a geographically situated city (Etymology online dictionary , 2024). The architecture and grandeur of the City of Arts and Sciences contribute to its overall allure for the city, rendering it more memorable and distinctive. This distinctive architecture acts as a primary motivator for tourists, enticing them to explore iconic buildings and landmarks. The research sheds light on the profound impact of architecture and urban grandeur on a city's overall appeal, endowing it with a distinctive and memorable aura. Indeed, the distinctive architecture of monuments and landmarks plays a central role in motivating tourists, encouraging them to explore these cultural and artistic symbols. The innovative and aesthetically appealing design of structures such as the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia and the Hemisfèric captivates visitors, offering immersive experiences that enrich their appreciation of culture and art. This research reveals that the artistic and architectural features of these monuments distinctly set them apart from ordinary structures, a distinction particularly evident in the case of the City of Arts and Sciences. Indeed, the architectural attributes and image of this cultural emblem have been consistently praised and emphasized, both by questionnaire participants and

interviewees. Furthermore, Pepa explicitly highlighted that the architectural and artistic uniqueness of this place makes it a preferred destination for numerous film shoots, be it for advertisements, films, or series. The image of a city is profoundly influenced by its architectural characteristics, monuments, and landmarks. These elements interact with visitors' perceptions to shape their impression of the destination, highlighting the crucial importance of architectural developments in shaping the urban landscape.

The implementation of flagship projects, referring to major and highly publicized initiatives that act as catalysts in urban regeneration, holds paramount importance in our research (UNESCO, 2022). The City of Arts and Sciences stands out as an exemplary instance of such a flagship project, having led to the emergence of various institutions and amenities in its vicinity, including shopping centers, hotels, restaurants, and residential buildings. This wave of development has profoundly reshaped the surrounding areas, making them not only safer but also more pleasant to inhabit, as mentioned during the interviews.

Flagship projects, such as this one, serve as focal points for attracting investments and promoting the identity of a destination (Lucas, 2023). They play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of economic development and cultural dynamism, thereby enhancing the region's competitiveness in the tourism industry (Guachalla Gutierrez, 2011). Moreover, distinctive architecture and flagship projects generate significant economic and social benefits for the region. By drawing visitors from around the world, the City of Arts and Sciences substantially contributes to Valencia's tourism industry, thus stimulating the local economy and providing opportunities for cultural exchange and dialogue.

Despite a slight decrease in attendance due to the COVID-19 crisis, each building within the City of Arts and Sciences complex continues to experience steady growth, attesting to its sustained attractiveness among visitors. Furthermore, the City of Arts and Sciences plays a vital role in stimulating the regional economy, making a significant contribution to the gross domestic product and the creation of full-time employment opportunities. Visitor expenditures on various goods and services also stimulate local economic activity, thus reinforcing the economic importance of tourism in Valencia.

Beyond its economic benefits, the City of Arts and Sciences is also a valuable cultural and educational resource. Every euro invested in its operation yields substantial returns in terms of tourist spending, GDP, and individual development. In summary, the City of Arts and Sciences embodies the intersection of culture, economic development, and urban regeneration, playing a crucial role in the transformation and promotion of Valencia as a leading tourist destination.

Therefore, we can affirm that the presence of the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia fully confirms our research hypothesis. This iconic attraction draws a significant number

of tourists to the city, stimulates the local economy, and contributes to enhancing Valencia's attractiveness as a leading tourist destination.

4.2. Achievement of the proposed objectives

Returning to the initial research objectives, the accomplishment of the primary goal, which aimed to examine the role of iconic architectural sites in the development of urban tourism, is fully validated by this study. This validation is anchored in the adoption of a multifaceted methodological approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Through on-the-ground efforts encompassing detailed surveys, extensive interviews, and interactive focus group discussions, a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the perceptions and experiences of various stakeholders within the sector was obtained.

Throughout the various stages of this thesis, we progressively examined the diverse factors contributing to tourist attraction and explored tourists' perceptions of iconic buildings, as well as elucidated the factors contributing to the appeal of the CAC in particular. At the outset of our research, we undertook a thorough analysis of existing literature to comprehend the multiple dimensions influencing tourists' perceptions of iconic buildings and making them attractive destinations. This initial phase enabled us to delineate the primary aspects to investigate and the appropriate methodologies to address this complex question.

Subsequently, we employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, to gather data from diverse sources, including surveys, in-depth interviews, and field observations. These data provided essential insights to achieve our objectives.

SO1. Assess the role of emblematic buildings in attracting tourists.

This study successfully examines the multifaceted importance of iconic buildings in attracting tourists. Through in-depth examination, iconic buildings are identified as pivotal elements in tourist landscapes, serving as focal points for visitor interest and exploration. These buildings are recognised not only as architectural wonders, but also as catalysts for economic growth and job creation. By analysing the communicative and tourism dimensions, this research highlights the need to perceive emblematic buildings as powerful factors in the tourism sector. In addition, the study highlights the importance

of measuring quantitative and qualitative feedback to assess the importance of these sites both to tourists and to the local businesses affected by them.

SO2. Understand tourist perceptions of iconic buildings.

This research endeavors to unravel the intricate tapestry of tourists' perceptions regarding iconic buildings. Iconic buildings are recognized as integral components of destination experiences, shaping visitors' perceptions and behaviors. Drawing from an analysis of the distinctive characteristics of iconic buildings, this study sheds light on their pivotal role in shaping tourists' perceptions towards a destination. Moreover, quantitative surveys elucidate the nuanced dimensions of tourists' perceptions, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of their experiential encounters with iconic buildings. By systematically analyzing these data, several key aspects influencing tourists' perceptions of iconic buildings have been identified. These include architecture and design, history and cultural heritage associated with the buildings, as well as social interactions and personal experiences of visitors. By examining these factors from different angles and placing them in their broader context, we have been able to develop a comprehensive understanding of how tourists perceive and respond to iconic buildings.

SO3. Examine the factors that contribute to the appeal of the City of Arts and Sciences.

By thoroughly analyzing these data, we have identified several key factors that contribute to the appeal of the CAS. These include its distinctive architecture, diverse cultural offerings, impact on the image of the city of Valencia, as well as its role as a center of culture, innovation and technology. By examining these factors from different perspectives and placing them within their broader context, we have been able to develop a holistic understanding of what makes the CAS so attractive to visitors.

4.3. Limitations of the research

It is crucial to acknowledge several limitations in this research. Firstly, locals were not directly consulted in the data collection process, which could have provided valuable local insights into the appeal of the City of Arts and Sciences. Additionally, while the questionnaire addressed various aspects of tourism, its entirety was not specifically focused on tourists' interest in this particular location, but rather general with a few specific questions for analyzing the significance of this tourist site. This approach may have limited the depth of our understanding of the specific appeal of the City of Arts and Sciences for visitors.

Furthermore, the fact that the questionnaire was only available in English and French may have posed a barrier to collecting direct information from Spanish tourists, which could have provided important local perspectives. Similarly, the questionnaire was not widely disseminated to the public or distributed to visitors directly at the studied location, which may have limited the diversity of responses obtained. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the study's results and emphasize the need for future research that is more targeted and inclusive.

4.4. Future lines of research

Continuing the exploration of tourists' perceptions provides an opportunity to deepen our understanding of visitors' nuanced experiences and interpretations of iconic sites, particularly focusing on the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia. The findings of this study can serve as a starting point for future research, employing more in-depth methodologies such as additional qualitative interviews, observational studies, or experimental approaches to grasp a comprehensive understanding of tourists' perspectives, thereby enriching our knowledge of their interactions with these cultural symbols.

Furthermore, it would be valuable to examine sustainable tourism management strategies in Valencia, particularly concerning the management of tourist influx while preserving the city's cultural heritage and environmental integrity. The conclusions of this research can guide future fieldwork, exploring innovative strategies and best practices for sustainable tourism management, considering factors such as carrying capacity, visitor behavior analysis, destination marketing, and community engagement.

Moreover, evaluating the effectiveness of tourism planning policies and initiatives in Valencia, especially those related to iconic sites like the City of Arts and Sciences, is essential. The data collected in this study can be used as a reference to assess the implementation and impact of existing policies, identify gaps or shortcomings, and propose evidence-based recommendations to enhance policies. By critically evaluating the alignment between tourism planning objectives and on-the-ground outcomes, researchers can inform policy decision-making processes and promote a more sustainable and equitable tourism development in the region.

4.5. Final thought

In conclusion, this study has illuminated the indispensable role of iconic landmarks in driving the growth of urban tourism. Beyond mere physical structures, these emblematic landmarks embody the very essence of a city's identity and character. They serve as indispensable landmarks for travelers, anchoring their experiences and drawing them

into the unique narratives of the cities they grace. By comprehending the significance of these monuments and committing to their preservation and promotion, urban destinations stand to not only attract a greater influx of visitors but also to enrich their cultural and economic vitality over the long term.

As we contemplate the trajectory of urban tourism, it becomes increasingly evident that recognizing the value of iconic landmarks is not merely a matter of aesthetics but a strategic imperative. Integrating them thoughtfully into urban planning and development initiatives is paramount, ensuring that they continue to serve as beacons of cultural heritage and symbols of civic pride. Ultimately, these landmarks transcend their physical presence to become vital catalysts, shaping a future where urban tourism flourishes harmoniously with the authentic identity and cultural wealth of each city.

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Annexes

Interview with Ilunion's front desk manager

- 1. Are there times of the year when you see a significant increase in room demand due to events or tourist seasons at the City of Arts and Sciences?**

Yes, the Ilunion Hotel experiences significant increases in room demand during various times of the year, primarily driven by events and tourist seasons at the City of Arts and Sciences (CAC).

Concerts and Festivals: During the summer months, especially on weekends, the hotel reaches full occupancy due to numerous concerts held around the CAC. For example, at the beginning of June, two major concerts – one dedicated to reggaeton and another themed around 'Love the 90s' – draw large crowds. These events attract different types of guests, resulting in back-to-back fully booked nights but with distinct guest profiles each night. This diversity in event programming ensures a consistent influx of visitors to the hotel.

Sports Events: Another peak period is during significant sports events such as the Ironman Valencia in April. During this time, the hotel fills up with athletes and their supporters, leading to a substantial increase in occupancy rates. The Ironman event not only attracts participants but also their friends and families, creating a vibrant and bustling atmosphere at the hotel.

Year-Round Events: Throughout the year, various events held at the CAC contribute to high occupancy rates at the Ilunion Hotel. The hotel's proximity to the CAC makes it a preferred choice for event attendees. Whether it's cultural festivals, scientific conferences, or international exhibitions, the CAC hosts a multitude of events that consistently drive hotel bookings.

Anticipated Full Bookings: Given the regularity and popularity of events at the CAC, the Ilunion Hotel often anticipates full bookings whenever there is an event scheduled. The staff is well-prepared for these periods of high demand, ensuring that they can accommodate the influx of guests seamlessly.

2. Can you describe how the proximity to the tourist landmark has affected the development and reputation of your hotel in the urban tourism sector? (including changes to the surrounding areas, impact on marketing strategy, partnerships, etc.)

Enhanced Room Demand and Unique Experiences: The Ilunion Hotel benefits significantly from its proximity to the City of Arts and Sciences (CAC). Certain rooms in the hotel offer direct views of this iconic landmark, making them highly sought after by guests. These rooms, which provide wide-open vistas of the CAC, are particularly popular and often booked well in advance. This unique feature not only enhances the

hotel's reputation but also elevates the overall guest experience, as visitors often come with high expectations to enjoy these exclusive views. As a result, the hotel staff is dedicated to ensuring that these guests receive exceptional service, meeting their high expectations and enhancing their stay.

Marketing and Reputation: The hotel's strategic location near the CAC is a cornerstone of its marketing strategy. Highlighting the spectacular views and proximity to the landmark attracts tourists who value a unique and memorable experience over the cost. This emphasis on experience has significantly bolstered the hotel's reputation in the urban tourism sector. The ability to offer a distinctive stay with stunning views of a world-renowned site positions the Ilunion Hotel as a premium choice for visitors to Valencia.

Economic Impact and Surrounding Development: The development of the CAC has spurred significant growth and transformation in the surrounding areas, positively impacting the Ilunion Hotel. The neighborhood has seen the emergence of new amenities, such as restaurants, shops, and cultural attractions, which further enhance the appeal of staying at the hotel. This continuous development creates a vibrant environment that attracts more tourists and boosts the hotel's business.

Impact of CAC Events on Hotel Occupancy: The Ilunion Hotel experiences fluctuations in occupancy directly linked to the schedule and accessibility of the CAC. If parts of the CAC are temporarily closed or if there are restrictions on visitor numbers, the hotel immediately feels the impact. Conversely, a busy event schedule at the CAC translates to higher occupancy rates at the hotel, with many guests planning their stay around attending events at the landmark.

Weekend Tourism from Madrid: The advent of fast train connections has made it convenient for tourists from Madrid to visit Valencia for the weekend. Typically, these visitors spend a day exploring the CAC and then stay overnight at the Ilunion Hotel, returning to Madrid the next day. This trend has become a significant aspect of the hotel's clientele, integrating the hotel experience as a key part of their visit to the CAC.

Travel Agency Partnerships: The Ilunion Hotel has formed strategic partnerships with travel agencies, offering package deals that include entrance tickets to various attractions within the CAC along with accommodation. These packages are particularly popular with families, providing a hassle-free and enjoyable experience that combines cultural exploration with a comfortable stay. These partnerships not only drive bookings but also reinforce the hotel's reputation as a family-friendly and convenient lodging option.

3. How has the image and fame of the tourist landmark influenced the perception of your hotel among clients and tourists?

Enhanced Reputation and Synergy: The City of Arts and Sciences (CAC) has significantly bolstered the reputation and perception of the Ilunion Hotel among clients and tourists. When potential guests research the hotel online on platforms like TripAdvisor, they often notice the high ratings and positive reviews associated with the CAC. This association naturally enhances the hotel's appeal, as visitors equate the proximity to a renowned landmark with a quality experience. The symbiotic relationship between the CAC and the hotel, even without a formal partnership, has been mutually beneficial since the inception of the CAC.

Increased Demand Due to Development: The continuous development around the CAC, including new residential buildings and businesses, has positively impacted the Ilunion Hotel. The thriving area attracts more visitors, many of whom choose the Ilunion Hotel for its prime location near the CAC. This urban growth has enhanced the hotel's visibility and appeal, making it a preferred choice for tourists and business travelers alike.

Indirect Partnerships and Referrals: While there is no formal partnership between the Ilunion Hotel and the CAC, there is an implicit understanding and cooperation. During major events at the CAC, the venue often refers attendees to the Ilunion Hotel, knowing that the hotel can deliver a high standard of service. This mutual referral system ensures that event attendees have a seamless experience, from participating in events at the CAC to enjoying their stay at the hotel.

Hosting Special Guests: The CAC often entrusts the Ilunion Hotel with hosting their special guests and invitees. This trust is based on the hotel's reputation for quality service and its ability to cater to the specific needs of VIP guests. The high standards maintained by the Ilunion Hotel complement the prestige of the CAC, creating a harmonious experience for guests. This synergy enhances the overall tourist experience, as visitors appreciate the seamless transition from the landmark to their accommodation.

Overall Guest Experience: The interconnectedness between the CAC and the Ilunion Hotel enriches the guest experience. Visitors who enjoy their time at the CAC and then continue their positive experience at the Ilunion Hotel are more likely to have a memorable and satisfying trip. This holistic approach to tourism ensures that both the CAC and the Ilunion Hotel benefit from satisfied visitors, fostering a positive reputation for both entities.

In conclusion, the image and fame of the City of Arts and Sciences have greatly influenced the perception of the Ilunion Hotel. The landmark's prestigious reputation, coupled with the hotel's commitment to high-quality service, creates a powerful synergy that enhances the appeal of both. This relationship, although informal, ensures that visitors enjoy a cohesive and enriching experience, thereby boosting the hotel's standing in the urban tourism sector.

4. What challenges or opportunities have you faced as a manager of a hotel located near a major tourist landmark?

"I think every challenge is an opportunity".

As the manager of the Ilunion Hotel located near the City of Arts and Sciences (CAC), I encounter several challenges that also present unique opportunities for improvement and growth.

One of the primary challenges we face is managing the high volume of guests, especially during peak times such as breakfast. When the hotel is fully booked, everyone tends to want breakfast at the same time, creating congestion and a less pleasant experience for guests. To address this, we've turned the challenge into an opportunity by implementing a system where we ask guests their preferred breakfast times upon check-in. This allows us to stagger breakfast times, ensuring a smoother flow and a better dining experience for everyone. It also helps our housekeeping staff to plan their cleaning schedules more efficiently, knowing when guests are likely to be out of their rooms.

Coordinating activities and services in a fully booked hotel near a major tourist landmark requires precise organizational skills. The influx of guests attending events at the CAC means we must be exceptionally well-organized to meet the varying needs and expectations of our visitors. This challenge has pushed us to enhance our operational efficiency. By improving our internal communication and scheduling systems, we can ensure that all guests receive timely and high-quality service. This focus on organization not only improves the guest experience but also boosts staff morale, as they can work more effectively and without undue stress.

Guests staying at the Ilunion Hotel often have high expectations due to our proximity to the CAC. They anticipate a level of service and experience that matches the prestige of the landmark. This expectation drives us to continuously elevate our service standards. We see it as an opportunity to exceed guest expectations by providing personalized and

attentive service. By doing so, we can leverage our location to build a strong reputation and foster guest loyalty.

Ensuring that we have the right amount of resources, from staffing to supplies, during high-demand periods is another challenge. The ebb and flow of guest numbers can sometimes make this difficult to manage. However, we view this as an opportunity to develop more strategic resource allocation plans. By analyzing booking patterns and event schedules at the CAC, we can better anticipate demand and allocate resources more effectively. This proactive approach minimizes waste and ensures that we are always prepared to meet our guests' needs.

Although we are not formally partnered with the CAC, there is an implicit expectation from guests that their experience at our hotel will complement their visit to the landmark. This challenge presents an opportunity to build informal partnerships with the CAC and other local attractions. By coordinating with them, we can offer package deals, insider tips, and special services that enhance the overall experience for our guests. This collaborative approach not only benefits our guests but also strengthens our ties with the local community and boosts our hotel's profile.

5. Do you believe that the majority of your clients choose your hotel primarily because of your proximity to the City of Arts and Sciences?

Yes, without a doubt. The majority of our clients choose Ilunion Hotel specifically because of its proximity to the City of Arts and Sciences (CAC). Guests are well aware of the hotel's location and the attractions surrounding it. At least 60% of our visitors inquire about the CAC upon arrival, indicating that their primary reason for staying with us is to visit this iconic landmark rather than the city center.

Our hotel's strategic location next to the CAC is a significant draw for tourists who are eager to explore this renowned cultural and architectural site. The convenience of being able to walk to the CAC from the hotel is a major selling point. Visitors appreciate the ease of access to the CAC's attractions, including the Hemisfèric, the Science Museum, and the Oceanogràfic, all of which are highlights of their trip to Valencia.

Moreover, our guests often plan their itineraries around events and exhibitions held at the CAC. This makes our hotel an ideal choice for those attending concerts, opera performances, and other cultural events at the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia. The close proximity means that guests can fully enjoy these events without worrying about transportation or lengthy commutes.

In addition to our prime location, another aspect that guests frequently commend is our commitment to accessibility and inclusivity. Our hotel is fully adapted for people with reduced mobility, and we strive to create an inclusive environment where everyone, regardless of disabilities, can enjoy their stay. This inclusive approach extends to our hiring practices, as we are dedicated to employing people with disabilities, making us stand out from other hotels.

In 2020, despite the challenges posed by the global crisis, Ilunion was one of the few hotel chains able to expand, opening two new hotels. This resilience and growth are testament to our strong performance, and it is reflected in the positive feedback and high occupancy rates at our Valencia location.

6. What feedback have you received from clients regarding the proximity to the tourist landmark? Does it affect their opinions about your hotel?

Yes, the feedback we receive from clients overwhelmingly highlights the importance of our proximity to the City of Arts and Sciences (CAC). If you check our reviews on platforms such as Booking.com, Google, and TripAdvisor, you'll notice numerous comments praising our hotel's location near the CAC. Guests frequently mention this in their reviews, reflecting that they primarily choose our hotel to be close to this attraction.

The positive comments about our location are a significant part of our hotel's online reputation. Visitors often express their satisfaction with the convenience of being able to walk to the CAC, which enhances their overall experience. Even during their stay, guests frequently share their appreciation with our staff, underscoring the value they place on our strategic location.

Moreover, the reviews often highlight other nearby amenities such as shopping centers, which further enhance our hotel's appeal. The centrality of our location is a major factor in guests' decisions to stay with us and contributes greatly to their positive opinions of our hotel.

7. Does your hotel participate in local initiatives or community projects related to the tourist landmark? If so, what impact has this had?

While we do not have formal partnerships or participate directly in community projects related to the CAC, we do promote the CAC to our guests, and the CAC reciprocally promotes our hotel to their visitors. This informal cooperation benefits both entities by enhancing the overall tourist experience. By directing our guests to the CAC and hosting visitors attending events there, we help create a seamless experience that maximizes the enjoyment of both the landmark and our hotel.

Interview with head of educational projects at the Reina Sofia Palau de las Artes

1. Could you provide me with figures indicating how many visitors paid to enter the Palau de les Arts in the last six years?

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
66.642	74.782	79.486	100.734	60.993	69.228	105.492	120.185

2. In your opinion, what is the importance of the Palau de les Arts in attracting visitors to the City of Arts and Sciences?

The Palau de les Arts plays a crucial role in attracting visitors to the City of Arts and Sciences for several reasons. Firstly, the architectural significance of the building cannot be overstated. As the inaugural structure within the complex, its design, reminiscent of a spaceship or a ship, captivates visitors with its futuristic and innovative aesthetics. This architectural marvel serves as a prime attraction for those interested in modern design and engineering.

Secondly, the Palau de les Arts is a cornerstone in the world of opera, both on a European and national level. It stands among the top four opera houses in Spain, alongside Madrid, Barcelona, and Seville. The quality of the productions and the reputation of the orchestra, which was created from scratch in 2006, are exemplary. The orchestra features some of the best conductors in the contemporary music scene, further elevating its status.

Moreover, the technical capabilities of the Palau de les Arts set it apart. The main stage, known as the Sala Principal, boasts advanced technological facilities that make it possible to stage complex and grandiose opera productions that might be challenging elsewhere. This technical prowess ensures that the Palau de les Arts can host new and intricate productions with ease, making it a beacon for both traditional and modern opera enthusiasts.

3. What, in your opinion, is the importance of the City of Arts and Sciences for the city of Valencia as a tourist destination?

Over the past 30 years, the City of Arts and Sciences (CAC) has significantly contributed to the tourist development of Valencia. This transformation has led to the city's expansion and the creation of green spaces, residential buildings, new hotels, and commercial centers, such as Aqua and Saler. Areas that were previously underdeveloped have become vibrant and attractive neighborhoods, fostering a sense of community and enhancing the city's overall appeal.

Since the opening of the Palau de les Arts in 2006, public awareness and accessibility have improved dramatically. Initially, many locals and tourists were unsure of how to reach the venue, but it has since become a well-known landmark. The ease of access to performances and events at the Palau has increased, drawing more visitors and enriching the cultural landscape of Valencia.

The economic benefits of the CAC are also evident. The city has seen substantial growth, with developments such as the Bioparc and the new stadium contributing to its modernization. Formerly less secure neighborhoods around the CAC have undergone revitalization, making them safer and more attractive places to live and visit.

However, this influx of tourism does come with challenges. As the city continues to attract more visitors, there is a risk of inflation, similar to what has been observed in Barcelona. Rising prices and the proliferation of short-term rentals, like those on Airbnb, can make it difficult for locals to afford living in the city center. This potential downside highlights the need for sustainable tourism practices to balance economic growth with the quality of life for residents.

4. What are the main attractions of the City of Arts and Sciences that draw tourists? And what about the Palau de les Arts? Which aspects are the most attractive to visitors?

The City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia is a major tourist magnet, drawing visitors with its unique blend of futuristic architecture, cultural richness, and diverse attractions. Among the standout features are:

1. **Architectural Marvels:** The striking design of the buildings, including the Hemisfèric, the Umbracle, the Science Museum, and the Oceanogràfic, are renowned for their avant-garde architecture. These structures not only serve functional purposes but also act as visual spectacles that captivate visitors.
2. **Educational and Interactive Exhibits:** The Science Museum offers interactive exhibits that appeal to both children and adults, making learning fun and engaging. The Oceanogràfic, Europe's largest aquarium, provides an immersive experience with its extensive marine life displays.
3. **Cultural Events and Festivals:** The City of Arts and Sciences regularly hosts cultural events, exhibitions, and festivals, contributing to its dynamic atmosphere and continuous influx of visitors.

Focusing specifically on the Palau de les Arts, its main attractions include:

1. **Architectural Grandeur:** The Palau de les Arts is itself an architectural masterpiece. Its design, resembling a spaceship or a ship, is a significant draw for architecture enthusiasts and tourists alike.
2. **Technical Sophistication:** The Palau is equipped with state-of-the-art technical facilities, especially in the Sala Principal, allowing for the staging of complex and large-scale opera productions. This technical prowess sets it apart from many other opera houses.
3. **Diverse Programming:** Initially, the Palau de les Arts focused solely on opera and symphony performances. However, it has since expanded its repertoire to include a variety of musical genres and performances, such as flamenco, concerts by renowned artists, dance, ballet, and theatrical productions. This broad range of offerings attracts a diverse audience.
4. **Educational and Inclusive Activities:** The Palau has become more inclusive and engaged with the community, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. It now offers educational programs, social activities, and inclusion initiatives. These activities are designed to reach different segments of the population, including those in neighborhoods and villages with fewer cultural offerings. By organizing events both within and outside the Palau, such as in cultural institutions like the IVAM or the Centre del Carme, the Palau fosters a closer connection with the broader community.
5. **Outreach Programs:** The Palau de les Arts extends its influence beyond its walls by conducting didactic activities in various locations, including smaller villages and cultural centers throughout the Valencia region. These initiatives aim

to bring cultural experiences to areas that might otherwise lack access, thereby fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging among residents. This outreach helps to make the Palau a central cultural hub for the entire community of Valencia.

Through its architectural beauty, technical capabilities, diverse programming, and community engagement, the Palau de les Arts not only enriches the cultural landscape of Valencia but also strengthens its appeal as a premier tourist destination.

5. Do you have statistics on the origin of the visitors? Have you noticed if most visitors are local, come from other regions of Spain, or are international tourists?

Local Audience: Most attendees of performances and programs are locals. The accessibility and convenience of the venue for Valencia residents make it an attractive cultural option.

National Visitors: The high quality of the productions draws visitors from larger cities in Spain, primarily Madrid and Barcelona. The Palau de les Arts strategically schedules some performances, particularly on weekends, to accommodate visitors from Madrid, allowing them to travel to Valencia and return the same day. Additionally, there are occasional bus services that facilitate this travel, making it easier for these visitors to attend.

Tourists from Cruise Ships: While cruise ship passengers may not initially visit Valencia for the opera, guided tours of the Palau de les Arts are a popular activity. These tours are managed by an external company and provide visitors with an opportunity to explore the building's different rooms. There are typically about five guided tours per day, varying in group size from small groups of five to larger groups of around thirty. Visitors must book these tours in advance, though last-minute spots can sometimes be purchased at the entrance, depending on availability.

Retired Expats: A significant portion of the audience comes from the southern part of the Valencian Community, particularly areas like Alicante, Benidorm, and Dénia. These visitors are often retirees from countries such as England, Germany, Norway, and the Netherlands, who have chosen to live by the Mediterranean. They frequently organize group trips to attend performances at the Palau, traveling by bus. This demographic is notable for its consistent attendance, often booking in groups for each new opera production.

Organized Visits: Due to the length and scheduling of operas and other performances (which can last up to three hours), attending a show at the Palau de les Arts requires planning. This planning involves not only securing tickets but also organizing transportation and managing the time commitment. It is rare for visitors to spontaneously attend a performance without prior arrangements.

Guided Tours: The Palau de les Arts offers daily guided tours, which have become a significant attraction, especially for those on cruises. These tours provide an in-depth look at the architectural and technical aspects of the building, enhancing the cultural experience for tourists.

6. Do you believe that iconic places like the City of art and Sciences play a decisive role in tourists' decision when choosing a vacation destination?

Yes, iconic places like the City of Arts and Sciences (CAC) play a decisive role in tourists' decisions when choosing a vacation destination. The CAC has become a symbol and an integral part of Valencia's identity, much like its beaches and Mediterranean coast. The complex, designed by Santiago Calatrava, has elevated Valencia's profile on the global stage, drawing visitors from around the world.

The City of Arts and Sciences is now synonymous with Valencia. When people think of Valencia, they often envision the stunning architecture of the CAC alongside its beautiful beaches. The connection to Calatrava, the renowned architect, further enhances its allure, making it a landmark of modern architecture.

The unique and futuristic design of the CAC makes it a major tourist attraction. The blend of artistic and architectural innovation captivates visitors, making it a must-see destination. The buildings, such as the Palau de les Arts, the Hemisfèric, and the Oceanogràfic, are not only functional but also visual masterpieces that draw architecture enthusiasts and general tourists alike.

The CAC serves as a vibrant cultural and recreational hub, offering a wide range of activities and attractions. Visitors can explore the interactive exhibits at the Science Museum, marvel at the marine life in the Oceanogràfic, or enjoy performances at the Palau de les Arts. This variety ensures that there is something for everyone, enhancing its appeal as a tourist destination.

The visually striking settings of the CAC make it particularly attractive to young tourists who are active on social media. The scenic surroundings along the Turia Riverbed Park

provide ideal photo opportunities, which in turn promote the complex and Valencia as a whole through shared posts and images online.

The area around the CAC offers numerous recreational activities. Visitors can take leisurely walks or bike rides along the river, listen to live music in the park, or enjoy a picnic in the picturesque surroundings. These activities cater to a broad audience, from families to solo travelers, making the CAC a versatile attraction.

The presence of the CAC has significantly boosted Valencia's tourism industry and contributed to the city's economic growth. It has revitalized surrounding neighborhoods, transforming them into vibrant areas that attract both locals and tourists. The influx of visitors driven by the CAC's attractions has also led to the development of new hotels, restaurants, and other amenities, further enhancing the city's appeal.

The CAC is a major factor in Valencia's attractiveness as a tourist destination. Its iconic status, combined with the diverse range of activities and cultural offerings, ensures that it remains a top priority for visitors to the city. The complex's appeal to various demographics, from architecture aficionados to social media influencers, underscores its role in drawing tourists to Valencia.

Interview with the head of the Valencia Film Office

1. What significance does the City of Arts and Sciences hold for the film industry in Valencia?

The City of Arts and Science is, in my opinion, the most important location in Valencia. Its architecture is unique and it is the most filmed venue.

2. What are the main reasons that encourage film producers to select this location as a filming set?

It's futuristic architecture and it's huge. It has hundreds of corners and views.

3. Is the distinctive architecture of the City of Arts and Sciences considered a major advantage in attracting film and advertising productions? If so, what would be its level of importance on a scale of 1 to 10?

Yes, it is. A lot of car advertising above all has been shot there. Its architecture offers brands a fresh, modern, dynamic, avant-garde image. Also for fashion and mobile phone brands.

4. Do you believe that film/series/advertising shootings at the City of Arts and Sciences generate growing interest in film tourism in Valencia, thus increasing the number of tourists interested in the site?

I believe so. The problem is that there are no studies that prove it. We should include in the visitor profile studies the option of whether they learned about the destination through the big screen. But I also must say that I believe that shootings generate growing interest in film tourism if we speak about films and series, not advertising.

5. To what extent have film shootings at the City of Arts and Sciences contributed to boosting tourism in the Valencia region?

As I mentioned before, there are no studies that allowed us to say that shootings at the City of Arts and Science has contributed to boost tourism in the region. By the way, it is important that the shootings are well-known and have lots of viewers. We will see when the 'Andor' series is released for example.

6. Are there partnerships or special programs aimed at attracting entertainment industry professionals to use the City of Arts and Sciences as a filming location?

In Valencia Film Office, which is in Visit Valencia integrated, the local promotion tourist office, we promote the city to attract shootings. We participate in markets such a the Marché du Film during the Cannes Film Festival, Shooting Locations Marketplace... we invite audiovisual professionals to get to know Valencia.

7. How are films and series shot at the City of Arts and Sciences used in tourist promotion campaigns to attract visitors to Valencia?

It is quite difficult to make advantage of this shootings. When we know a big production is coming, we cannot say anything, because of its confidentiality, when they are shooting, we cannot tell anything because of its confidentiality and when the release the production, it is quite difficult that they give us material to use it to take advantage of it. So, we only are able to share trailers, but sometimes Valencia is not recognized, or include the production