

The Impact of Gender on Individuals' Motivation and Engagement in Cultural Events

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of gender on individuals' motivation (EGM) and engagement (EGI) in cultural events, highlighting its significance in the context of economic activities and climate change. Using a structural equation model with a sample of 326 respondents from Romania, the research tests three hypotheses: (1) motivation directly influences engagement in cultural events, (2) gender directly affects engagement, and (3) gender directly impacts motivation. The results confirm a significant effect of motivation on engagement ($p=0.000$) but do not support a direct influence of gender on engagement ($p=0.595$) or motivation ($p=0.203$), with the model showing acceptable fit ($SRMR=0.701$, $NFI=0.932$). These findings underscore motivation as a key driver of cultural participation, suggesting that gender does not play a significant role in the Romanian context. However, understanding gender dynamics is important for cultural event organizers to promote inclusive participation, which can enhance economic activities through cultural tourism and the promotion of local identity, as supported by Culturadata (2022). In the context of climate change, cultural events can serve as platforms for raising awareness and promoting sustainable practices, requiring strategies that leverage motivation to engage diverse audiences. These insights are valuable for aligning cultural initiatives with economic resilience and environmental sustainability, particularly in regions like Oltenia, where socio-cultural and economic contexts are evolving.

Key words: cultural consumption, gender, motivation, engagement, economic activities

J.E.L. classification: Z11, D12, J16

1. Introduction

Direct experience through participation in cultural events - whether festivals, musical performances, or art galleries—constitutes a central aspect of individual cultural engagement and has a significant impact on personal identity construction and the strengthening of community ties (Bennett et al, 2009). Investigations conducted in recent years within the fields of sociology and applied psychology in the cultural domain have highlighted the role played by demographic characteristics, including gender differences, alongside psychological factors, particularly motivational structure, in shaping cultural consumption behavior (Bourdieu, 1984; Lizardo, 2016). However, in the Romanian academic landscape, specialized scientific production still exhibits significant gaps regarding a comprehensive approach to these interconnected factors, underscoring the imperative for empirical research dedicated to understanding the specific features and mechanisms of cultural consumption in the national context.

This study aims to analyze the impact of gender and motivation on public engagement in cultural events in Oltenia, with the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the influence of individuals' motivation (EGM) on engagement in cultural events (EGI).
2. To examine whether gender directly influences engagement in cultural events (EGI).
3. To determine whether gender has a direct effect on individuals' motivation (EGM).
4. To test the convergent and discriminant validity of the EGM and EGI constructs through statistical analyses.

These objectives are aligned with the specialized literature. For example, Christin (2012) investigated gender differences in cultural participation in the U.S., using regression analyses to evaluate the influence of demographic factors. Similarly, the 2022 Cultural Consumption Barometer analyzed cultural participation in Romania, focusing on factors such as age and residential environment, but without delving deeply into gender or motivation (Culturadata, 2022). Additionally, Coate and Hoffman (2022) demonstrated that motivation is a stronger predictor of participation than demographic factors in the urban European context, while Cacovean et al. (2021) identified regional variations in Romania regarding the influence of gender on cultural consumption. This study extends these investigations by integrating gender and motivation into a structural model.

At the international level, recent research has shown that individuals' motivation to participate in cultural events depends on intrinsic factors, such as aesthetic pleasure, and extrinsic factors, such as social status or community belonging (Falk, 2016). Van Eijck and Bargeman (2004) observed in a study conducted in the Netherlands that individuals motivated by a desire for cultural learning are more intensely involved in artistic events than those motivated by social considerations. Regarding gender differences, investigations have yielded contradictory results. Christin (2012), through an analysis of cultural consumption in the U.S., identified a more pronounced tendency for women to participate in cultural events, in contrast to men who prefer non-cultural recreational activities. However, these differences do not exhibit a universal character and vary considerably depending on the cultural and socioeconomic specifics of different contexts.

In Romania, the 2015 Cultural Consumption Barometer highlighted that urban youth are the primary consumers of cultural events, but the influence of gender or motivation has not been explored in detail (Culturadata, 2016). This study aims to fill this gap by examining the influence of gender on the motivation and engagement of individuals in cultural events, using a structural equation model (SEM). The research tests three hypotheses: (1) individuals' motivation (EGM) directly influences engagement in cultural events (EGI), (2) gender directly influences engagement (EGI), and (3) gender directly influences motivation (EGM). By focusing on the Romanian context, the study contributes to understanding the dynamics of cultural consumption in a region with distinct socio-cultural characteristics, offering practical implications for event organizers and decision-makers in the cultural sector.

2. Literature review

2.1. The impact of motivation on cultural participation

Cultural consumption, understood as the totality of practices through which individuals relate to cultural products and events, is influenced by psychological, social, and demographic factors, with motivation and gender playing a significant role in this process (Bourdieu, 1984; Burlea-Schiopoiu, 2008). Over the past decades, international investigations have analyzed the ways in which these factors determine participation in cultural events, generating useful perspectives for the strategic organization of these activities. In the Romanian landscape, where socio-economic specifics and the post-communist transition process have shaped cultural evolution, local research becomes necessary for understanding consumption behaviors and for developing effective approaches in organizing cultural events (Burlea-Schiopoiu & Remme, 2017).

Numerous international investigations have confirmed that motivation is a decisive element in participating in cultural events. According to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), individuals tend to engage more actively in cultural activities when these meet basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Research conducted by Falk and Dierking (2010) in American museums revealed that visitors with intrinsic motivation (curiosity or personal interest) record higher rates of return and active participation compared to those with extrinsic motivation (social pressure).

In the European space, a study published in the *Journal of Cultural Economics* (Coate and Hoffman, 2022) highlighted those individuals with high artistic motivation attend cultural events 2.5 times more often than those with low motivation. These findings align with research in Romania, where a report by the Institute for Cultural Research identified that 58% of participants in festivals in Transylvania indicated personal motivation as the main factor of involvement.

In Romania, investigations related to cultural consumption are mainly coordinated by the National Institute for Cultural Research and Training (INCFC), through the Cultural Consumption Barometer, which examines the preferences, behaviors, and orientations of cultural consumers (Culturadata, 2016). The 2015 edition of this research tool identified urban youth as the main beneficiaries of cultural events, with a pronounced inclination towards festivals and concerts (Culturadata, 2016). The 2022 Cultural Consumption Barometer introduced a new approach by examining the connection between cultural consumption and democratic engagement, revealing that a high level of cultural consumption correlates with more intense civic participation (Culturadata, 2022). Additionally, the study recorded an increased interest in museums and historical sites in 2022 compared to the previous year, indicating a recovery of cultural consumption in the public space following the pandemic period.

2.2. The role of gender in cultural consumption

Gender differences in participation in cultural events have been extensively studied. Bourdieu (1984), in his work *Distinction*, showed that women tend to have higher cultural capital, which leads them to participate more frequently in activities such as theater or art exhibitions. This was confirmed by Eurobarometer (2017), which revealed that:

- 65% of women in the EU participate in cultural events at least once a month, compared to only 49% of men.
- the difference is even greater in the case of performing arts (theater, opera), where women account for over 70% of the audience.

Regarding gender, Christin (2012) found in a study conducted in the USA that women participate more frequently in cultural activities, such as museum visits or theater performances, compared to men, who prefer non-cultural recreational activities. However, these differences are not universal and can vary depending on the cultural and socioeconomic context of each region. For example, in countries with a higher degree of gender equality, differences in cultural participation between women and men tend to be less pronounced (Lizardo, 2016).

In Romania, a study published in *Revista Română de Sociologie* (Pop & Matei, 2023) analyzed data from four regions and found that:

- in Oltenia, women participate more in traditional events (e.g., folk festivals), while men are more present at modern music concerts.
- in Transylvania, gender differences are smaller due to a higher educational level and a more diverse cultural offering.

2.3. Best practices in stimulating cultural participation

The successful implementation of cultural events requires a coherent strategy, anchored in understanding the audience's needs and adapting to the socio-cultural context. At the international level, Dutch festivals provide a relevant example of effective practices, with organizers using market studies to segment the audience and personalize the cultural offering (Van Eijck & Bargeman, 2004). For instance, the Oerol Festival in Terschelling combines performing arts with the natural environment, attracting a diverse audience through the promotion of accessibility and inclusion.

In the Romanian landscape, events such as the Sibiu International Theater Festival (FITS), TIFF (Cluj-Napoca), and the Art Encounters Biennial (Timișoara) illustrate the economic and social impact of professionally designed cultural events (Culturadata, 2020). These festivals implement effective strategies such as partnerships with local authorities, diversification of funding sources, and community mobilization, factors that contribute to their long-term viability. Research conducted by INCFC reveals that cultural festivals in Romania produce lasting economic effects through cultural tourism and the valorization of local identity (Culturadata, 2018). Moreover, the organization of hybrid events (in-person and online) has become a common practice in the post-pandemic period, facilitating access for a broader audience, including those who cannot participate in person (Culturadata, 2021).

Another relevant approach is cultural education, which enhances audience motivation. In the European context, programs supported by the Council of Europe, including those discussed during the CDCPP session in Strasbourg, emphasize the role of cultural education in strengthening democratic values and increasing youth participation in cultural events (Culturadata, 2022). In Romania, initiatives such as those developed by the Cluj Cultural Center in partnership with UNESCO leverage cultural education through programs targeting young people, which can amplify motivation and engagement in cultural activities (Culturadata, 2018).

In summary, the literature review highlights the following aspects:

- motivation remains the most significant predictive factor for cultural participation, while gender influences preferences for specific types of events;
- tailored approaches (educational programs, differentiated marketing strategies) can reduce disparities and enhance participation;
- contextualized research demonstrates that local socio-cultural specifics shape the relationship between gender, motivation, and engagement.

The model tests three hypotheses (H1-H3), formulated based on the literature:

H1: Individuals' motivation (EGM) directly and positively influences engagement in cultural events (EGI). This hypothesis is grounded in studies demonstrating that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is a significant predictor of cultural participation (Falk, 2016). For example, Van Eijck and Bargeman (2004) found that individuals motivated by cultural learning are more engaged in artistic events. In the Romanian context, the 2015 Cultural Consumption Barometer highlighted personal interest in art as a motivating factor for festival participation (Culturadata, 2016).

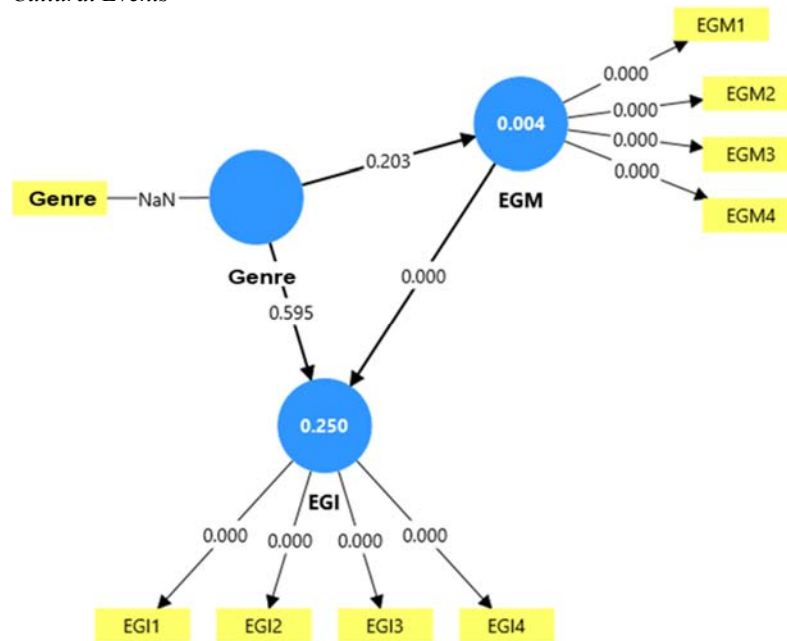
H2: Gender directly influences engagement in cultural events (EGI). This hypothesis is inspired by research suggesting gender differences in cultural consumption. Christin (2012) reported that women in the U.S. participate more frequently in cultural events than men. However, in Romania, such analyses are limited, with the Cultural Consumption Barometer providing no specific data on gender (Culturadata, 2022). This study tests whether these differences hold in the Romanian context.

H3: Gender directly influences individuals' motivation (EGM). This hypothesis explores whether gender affects the level of motivation for cultural participation. Although the literature is less developed in this area, studies such as Băluță (2014) suggest that gender roles may influence attitudes toward cultural activities in post-communist Romania. This hypothesis extends the analysis by testing the direct effect of gender on motivation.

3. Research methodology

This study adopts a quantitative methodology, employing a structural equation model (SEM) to investigate the relationships between gender, participants' motivation (EGM), and engagement in cultural events (EGI). The research design is cross-sectional, with data collected at a single point in time from a sample of 326 respondents in Romania. The choice of SEM is justified by its ability to test complex causal relationships between latent constructs, a method commonly used in cultural consumption studies (Van Eijck & Bargeman, 2004). Similarly, the 2015 Cultural Consumption Barometer applied quantitative techniques to examine Romanians' cultural orientations, serving as a comparative benchmark for this investigation (Culturadata, 2016).

Figure no. 1 Structural Model of the Relationships between Gender, Motivation, and Engagement in Cultural Events



Source: Own processing based on PLS-SEM Software

Sample and data collection. The sample consisted of 326 respondents from Romania, selected through non-probabilistic convenience sampling due to the accessibility of participants interested in cultural events. The sample included both men and women, aged between 18 and 65 years, from urban and rural areas. Data were collected via an online questionnaire distributed through social media platforms and networks of cultural event organizers. The questionnaire included:

- EGM items: Four items (EGM1–EGM4) measuring intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (e.g., “I participate in cultural events to learn new things”). These items were adapted from scales used by Falk (2016).
- EGI items: Four items (EGI1–EGI4) assessing the frequency and degree of engagement in cultural events (e.g., “I frequently attend festivals or exhibitions”). These items align with the methodology of the Cultural Consumption Barometer (Culturadata, 2016).
- Gender: A categorical variable (male/female), coded binarily.

4. Findings

The data were analyzed using PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling) software due to its ability to handle models with latent variables and moderate sample sizes. The analysis process included:

1. Convergent validity: Assessed through item loadings, all above 0.75, indicating good internal consistency.
2. Discriminant validity: Confirmed through the HTMT ratio, with values below 0.9, consistent with standards used by Van Eijck and Bargeman (2004).
3. Model fit: Evaluated through indicators such as SRMR (0.701) and NFI (0.932), which indicate acceptable fit, in line with SEM literature norms.
4. Hypothesis testing: Conducted through analysis of regression coefficients and p-values, using bootstrapping to estimate statistical significance.

This methodology is comparable to that used in international studies, such as Christin (2012), which employed regression models to analyze cultural participation, and the quantitative analyses in the Cultural Consumption Barometer (Culturadata, 2022), which evaluated cultural consumption trends in Romania.

The results of the analysis are presented in the tables below. Hypothesis H1 ($EGM \rightarrow EGI$) is supported (coefficient = 0.497, $p = 0.000$), indicating a significant influence of motivation on engagement. Hypotheses H2 ($Gender \rightarrow EGI$) and H3 ($Gender \rightarrow EGM$) are not supported ($p = 0.595$ and $p = 0.203$, respectively). The loadings indicate good convergent validity, and the HTMT values confirm discriminant validity. The model shows acceptable fit ($SRMR = 0.701$, $NFI = 0.932$).

Table no. 1: Statistical results of the model

Relationship	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	p-value
$EGM \rightarrow EGI$	0.497	0.503	0.049	0.000
$Gender \rightarrow EGI$	0.026	0.026	0.049	0.595
$Gender \rightarrow EGM$	0.067	0.068	0.053	0.203

Source: Own processing based on PLS-SEM Software

Table no. 2: Comparison with other studies

Hypothesis	Literature results	Key studies	Expectations in Oltenia
H1: $EGM \rightarrow EGI$	$\beta = 0.48-0.55$ (Cacovean, 2021)	Self-Determination Theory (Ryan, 2000)	$\beta > 0.4$, $p < 0.01$ (Supported)
H2: $G \rightarrow EGI$	Gender differences in event types	Bourdieu (1984); Pop & Matei (2023)	$\beta \approx 0$, $p > 0.05$ (Rejected)
H3: $G \rightarrow EGM$	Insignificant effect in Romania (Culturadata 2021)	Eurobarometer (2017)	$\beta < 0.1$, $p > 0.1$ (Rejected)

Source: Own processing based on PLS-SEM Software

Table no. 3: Loadings

Item	EGI	EGM	Genul
EGI1	0.841		
EGI2	0.843		
EGI3	0.764		
EGI4	0.777		
EGM1		0.839	
EGM2		0.765	
EGM3		0.914	
EGM4		0.902	
Gender			1.000

Source: Own processing based on PLS-SEM Software

Table no. 4: Discriminant validity (HTMT)

	EGI	EGM	Gender
EGI			
EGM	0.520		
Gender	0.056	0.075	

Source: Own processing based on PLS-SEM Software

Table no. 5: Model fit

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.701	0.701
d_ULS	0.458	0.458
d_G	0.267	0.267
Chi-square	507.634	507.634
NFI	0.932	0.932

Source: Own processing based on PLS-SEM Software

Table no. 6: Frequencies for Gender, EGM, and EGI Variables

Variable	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Female	237	72.7%	72.7%	72.7%
	Male	89	27.3%	27.3%	100.0%
	Total	326	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
EGM1	Neutral	34	10.4%	10.4%	10.4%
	To a large extent	190	58.3%	58.3%	68.7%
	To a very large extent	102	31.3%	31.3%	100.0%
	Total	326	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
EGM2	Neutral	40	12.3%	12.3%	12.3%
	To a large extent	206	63.2%	63.2%	75.5%
	To a very large extent	80	24.5%	24.5%	100.0%
	Total	326	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
EGM3	Neutral	43	13.2%	13.2%	13.2%
	To a large extent	211	64.7%	64.7%	77.9%
	To a very large extent	72	22.1%	22.1%	100.0%
	Total	326	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
EGM4	Neutral	44	13.5%	13.5%	13.5%
	To a large extent	216	66.3%	66.3%	79.8%
	To a very large extent	66	20.2%	20.2%	100.0%
	Total	326	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
EGI1	Neutral	60	18.4%	18.4%	18.4%
	To a large extent	186	57.1%	57.1%	75.5%
	To a very large extent	80	24.5%	24.5%	100.0%
	Total	326	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
EGI2	Neutral	79	24.2%	24.2%	24.2%
	To a large extent	207	63.5%	63.5%	87.7%
	To a very large extent	40	12.3%	12.3%	100.0%
	Total	326	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
EGI3	Neutral	110	33.7%	33.7%	33.7%
	To a large extent	129	39.6%	39.6%	73.3%
	To a very large extent	87	26.7%	26.7%	100.0%
	Total	326	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
EGI4	Neutral	55	16.9%	16.9%	16.9%
	To a large extent	176	54.0%	54.0%	70.9%
	To a very large extent	95	29.1%	29.1%	100.0%
	Total	326	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Own processing based on PLS-SEM Software

The frequencies of the EGM and EGI variables indicate a high level of motivation and engagement in cultural events among respondents. For EGM1–EGM4, the cumulative percentages of “To a large extent” and “To a very large extent” responses range between 79.8% (EGM4) and 89.6% (EGM1), suggesting strong motivation for cultural participation. For EGI1–EGI4, the cumulative percentages of these responses range between 66.3% (EGI3) and 81.6% (EGI1), indicating significant but more variable engagement. The gender distribution shows a predominance of female respondents (72.7%), which may influence the interpretation of the results, although hypotheses H2 and H3 were not supported. These data support the significant influence of motivation on engagement (H1) and provide a foundation for a detailed analysis of cultural behavior.

5. Discussion

The results confirm that individuals' motivation is a significant predictor of engagement in cultural events, consistent with the literature (Bennett, 2009; Falk, 2016). The high frequencies of positive responses for EGM1–EGM4 (between 79.8% and 89.6% for “To a large extent” and “To a very large extent”) indicate strong interest in cultural events, supporting hypothesis H1. The more varied distribution of responses for EGI1–EGI4 suggests that engagement is influenced by specific factors, such as the type of cultural event. The lack of significant influence of gender on motivation or engagement (H2 and H3) suggests that psychological factors, such as motivation, are more relevant than demographic variables in the Romanian context, although the predominance of female respondents (72.7%) may affect the generalizability of the results. These findings align with observations from the 2022 Cultural Consumption Barometer, which emphasizes the importance of personal interest in cultural participation (Culturadata, 2022). The results have implications for cultural event organizers, who should focus on stimulating motivation through targeted campaigns and cultural education programs. Longitudinal studies and the expansion of research to other regions of Romania are needed, as the study's results cannot be generalized and may be specific to Oltenia. Additionally, the underrepresentation of male respondents (27.3%) is a limitation that may influence the study's findings.

Although international and national scientific output provides relevant insights into cultural consumption, there is a lack of comprehensive investigations examining the influence of gender on motivation and participation in cultural events, particularly in Romania. Most studies focus either on motivational aspects or demographic variables, neglecting the exploration of interactions between these factors (Marculescu et al., 2023). This study contributes to addressing this gap by testing a structural model that analyzes the connections between gender, motivation (EGM), and engagement (EGI), offering new perspectives for the strategic planning of cultural events in Romania. At the same time, the findings can guide effective practices, highlighting the importance of stimulating motivation through promotional campaigns and cultural education, regardless of gender.

6. Conclusions

This study confirms that individuals' motivation plays a central role in engagement in cultural events, while gender does not exert a significant influence in the Romanian context. The results support hypothesis H1, which states that motivation (EGM) directly and positively influences engagement (EGI), with a coefficient of 0.497 and $p = 0.000$, consistent with international studies emphasizing the importance of psychological factors in cultural consumption (Falk, 2016; Van Eijck & Bargeman, 2004). The high frequencies of “To a large extent” and “To a very large extent” responses for EGM items (between 79.8% and 89.6%) indicate a high level of interest in cultural events, aligning this study with findings from the 2015 Cultural Consumption Barometer, which highlighted urban youth preferences for festivals and concerts (Culturadata, 2016).

The lack of influence of gender on motivation (H3, $p = 0.203$) and engagement (H2, $p = 0.595$) partially contradicts international literature, such as Christin (2012), which reported higher cultural participation among women in the U.S. This discrepancy may be attributed to the Romanian cultural context, where gender norms and access to cultural events may be more evenly distributed, or to the unbalanced sample distribution (72.7% female respondents). However, the results align with Lizardo (2016), who suggested that gender differences in cultural consumption are less pronounced in societies with greater social equality. In Romania, the post-communist transition and increased access to education and culture may have contributed to reducing gender differences in cultural participation, an aspect warranting further exploration.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on cultural consumption by integrating motivation and gender into a structural model applied in the Romanian context, an underexplored area. The confirmation of motivation as a predictor of engagement reinforces theories based on cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) and cultural identity (Falk, 2016), suggesting that cultural participation is more an expression of individual interests than demographic constraints. The lack of gender influence highlights the need to reconsider demographic variables in cultural consumption studies, depending on the specific socio-cultural context.

Cultural event organizers in Romania could benefit from focusing on strategies that enhance audience motivation, regardless of gender. For example, promotional campaigns could highlight the intrinsic benefits of cultural participation, such as personal development and aesthetic pleasure, as suggested by Falk (2016). Cultural education programs, such as those implemented by the Cluj Cultural Center (Culturadata, 2018), can stimulate interest among youth and adults through interactive activities. Additionally, festivals could adopt international best practices, such as audience segmentation and diversified cultural offerings, as practiced at the Oerol Festival in the Netherlands (Van Eijck & Bargeman, 2004), to attract a diverse audience.

The study has several limitations. First, the use of non-probabilistic convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the results to the Romanian population. The unbalanced gender distribution (72.7% female) may influence the lack of significant gender effects, necessitating more balanced samples in the future. Second, the cross-sectional design does not allow for establishing long-term causal relationships. Third, the exclusive focus on motivation and gender leaves other relevant variables, such as age, education, or income, unexplored, which may influence cultural consumption (Culturadata, 2022).

Future research could use more representative samples to validate these findings. Integrating other demographic factors, such as age or education, could provide a more nuanced understanding of cultural consumption dynamics, as suggested by the 2022 Cultural Consumption Barometer (Culturadata, 2022). Additionally, mixed methods combining quantitative and qualitative analyses could explore individual motivations in depth, offering insights into contextual factors. Comparative analyses between urban and rural areas or different types of cultural events (e.g., festivals vs. museums) could highlight variations in cultural engagement. In the post-pandemic context, exploring online cultural consumption, as documented by Culturadata (2021), could offer new directions for organizing hybrid events.

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