The representation of people with visual impairments on five art museums' websites.

Images and text analysis

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First chapter

Introduction

<u>Introduction</u>

A matter that is often debated nowadays in tourism is that of accessibility, which works on two levels: the spacial (environment and physical accessibility), and the knowledge (to make information accessible both, on-site and online). Satisfying these realms is key to creating meaningful leisure time experiences for the heterogeneous target groups of tourists (domestic and international) who visit different attractions, webpages, or social networks. An example of the negligence that the tourism industry perpetuates towards impaired visitors is their (mis)representation in promotional discourses. In fact, this thesis analyses how five Dutch and Spanish modern and contemporary art museums represent (in videos, pictures, and texts) people with visual impairments in their promotional websites of the accessible activities they host(ed) for this specific target group.

It seems paradoxical that the topic of this thesis connects people with different degrees of sight loss with art museums, which are by their nature highly visual (Poria et al. 153). It is the social role of museums (Delin 95) which is the one being examined here. Identification is a feeling that helps people to develop a sensation of belonging. In the case of people with impairments, they "may have low expectations of their possible status and achievements, [because of the] absence of clear role models in history showing what is possible" (Delin 84). However, this feeling of belonging goes further than being able to identify oneself with a representation hanging in an art museum or made by an artist one might identify with. To belong somewhere requires both spatial and knowledge accessibility. This is salient when this target group avoids particular tourist draws due to the feeling of dis-attachment they have been built from experience or word of mouth. One instance of this could be the statement included in "Blind People's Tourism Experiences: An Exploratory Study" (2011) by Poria et al. made by a visually impaired man regarding art museums: "after all, it is impossible for us to see pictures … art museums should not invest time and money just for us" (154).

To make something accessible for people with impairments relates to what the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has called Accessible Tourism. Although a clear definition does not exist yet for this term, it can be described as

> "the ongoing endeavour to ensure tourist destinations, products and services are accessible
> to all people, regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age. It encompasses

publicly and privately owned tourist locations. The improvements not only benefit those with permanent physical disabilities, but also parents with small children, elderly travellers, people with temporary injuries such as a broken leg, as well as their travel companions" . (UNWTO 18)

In that sense, Accessible Tourism is a tourist system "For All": people with temporary and permanent impairments either sensory, mental, or physical; elderly visitors; families with toddlers or new-borns; people with intolerances; for those who face language barriers, etc. This label of "For All" does not only need to be implemented in the offline world but online too (Pühretmair and Nussbaum; Michopoulou and Buhalis). Whilst the term "accessibility" tends to be used in reference specifically to impaired people, the expression "For All" seems to provide a broader scope towards providing meaningful leisure experiences for larger groups of beneficiaries not just people with impairments but taking into account larger groups of beneficiaries. Within these groups, elderly tourists happen to be included. The UNWTO, however, warns that not all the elderly population develop impairments, but "the incidence of disability increases with age" (33).

The research

Five museums were selected to study how visually impaired people are being represented by art museums that have provided/ are providing accessible activities for this specific target group. Three of these museums are Spanish, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid), Museo Nacional del Prado (Madrid), and Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (Barcelona); and the rest are Dutch Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven), Van Gogh Museum (Amsterdam).

The primary reason for this selection is the number of accessible programs for visually impaired visitors, curated exhibitions, tour guides, and other isolated activities that these museums have made available for them throughout the years. Other practical factors tilted the scale in choosing this sample: choosing Dutch museums connects to the country where I am studying for the Master Degree in Tourism and Culture; the language was another important fact to take into account in writing this thesis. Dutch art institutions provide information in English and as a bilingual in Spanish and Catalan, the sources from the three museums located in the Iberian Peninsula were not an issue. This selection of art institutions was also interesting as long as the Netherlands and Spain

are members of the European Union, and for this reason, they should be ruled by the same standards towards Accessible Tourism regulations[1].

The hypotheses that we are considering in this thesis are three. First, it is expected to detect national interpretations/ representations of people with visual impairments. Secondly, as long as in the sample there are museums of modern art and contemporary art, it is thought that they are likely to approach accessibility and represent disability differently. Our final expectation relies on a more general hunch: traditional stereotypes of people with visual impairments are still being transmitted in the new media where discourses are shared massively (Hall 3).

The endorsement or denial of these hypotheses will be approached through a research question and four subquestions that will be answered throughout the second part of the thesis, in the analysis. The questions that the thesis will seek to answer are the following:

- How much the representation of people with visual impairments in the promotional websites of accessible activities host(ed) by Van Abbemuseum, Van Gogh Museum, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Museo Nacional del Prado, and Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona adopt or reject the myths around this specific group of society?

    a) How are visually impaired visitors represented by the Dutch museums from the sample compared to the representation offered by the Spanish institutions on the promotional websites for the accessible activities for this specific target group of tourists?

    b) How similar or different is the representation of visually impaired people in the three modalities of discourse we analyse in this thesis (pictures, videos, and texts) from the sources we use as a sample?

    c) How are modern art museums representing visually impaired visitors in the promotional websites of their accessible activities for them compared to the representation offered by contemporary art museums on theirs?

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[1] As specified by the European Parliament, in 2019 the measurements for accessibility applying in the countries members of the EU, were taken and adjusted from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations. Despite not having an official own-produced document on accessibility, the EU has been more concerned of the digital accessibility. They are improving the experience of people with impairments on the digital world and, also started removing architectural/ physical barriers to improve impaired people's accessibility. According to the figures provided by the European Parliament in this document, in the EU there are 70 million people with impairments. They also warn about the fact that this number can increase because of the ageing population of the member states of the EU (Parlamento Europeo).

The motivations

The motivation behind this thesis comes from the fact that audiences are influenced by the media (Long and Robinson 101). For centuries, tourists have been using sources of information as objects of mediation before, during, and after their trip:

"paintings or other images that celebrated particular locations or views, literature, travel narratives, and books written explicitly to tell tourists what to see, where to stay, and how to behave, helped mediate the travel experience". (Zuelow 77)

We can currently add the Internet to this list of sources, especially for the preparation phase of a journey[2] (Fiallos Quinteros 10).

Following the idea of manipulation mentioned in Zuelow's quotation, discourses, either pertaining to traditional or new media, are products of a system in which signs have particular meanings constructed by cultures (Hall 43). In Barthian terms, these signs have denotative and connotative meanings (Hall 38): the first focuses on the description of what one sees, and the second goes further and digs out the layers of information that one perceives to interpret them. This is exactly what this thesis is about, describing and interpreting the representation of visually impaired people found in the pictures, videos, and texts on the websites from the museums that form this thesis's sample.

The mediated information about a destination provided by films, brochures, guidebooks, social media, etc. is what influences how a place is being projected in the media and perceived by the potential visitors. As specified by Olivia Jenkins in "Photography and Travel Brochures: the Circle of Representation" (2003), the perpetuation of these projections and perceptions are based on what she calls "the circle of representation". This phenomenon theorises the powerful role of the visual which inspires and influences the tourists' behaviours at a destination (Jenkins 305). Moreover, as long as usually people feature in these discourses, specific imageries, expectations, and stereotypes (Hallett and Kaplan-Weinger 2010) are created for human-beings too. What is

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[2] According to Ulrike Gretzel and Daniel R. Fesenmaier, tourism consumption is divided in three stages: pre-consumption, consumption, and post-consumption. The first, consists on "gather[ing] information, formulate expectations, inform/support [the person] decision-making, and reserve or purchase the various components (transportation, accommodation, etc.)" (564). In this first step of the tourist experience, currently, the Internet has a relevant role. During the consumption phase, new technologies play also a significant role as long as they are used "to stay connected and to obtain en route information if the need arises" (567). In the third and final stage of tourism consumption the Internet is still meaningfully present, social networks allows you to share "souvenirs, remember special moment, reliving an experience through photographs, sharing travel stories, [etc.]" (569).

more, even the misrepresentation or the lack of representation of objects or subjects in these discourses is relevant given that it provides information about what is being connoted. Scholars as Johan R. Edelheim in "Hidden Messages: A Polysemic Reading of Tourist Brochures" (2007) or Jennie Small in "The Emergence of the Body in the Holiday Accounts of Women and Girls" (2007), concludes that normally, in the promotional discourses of Australia, the elderly (Edelheim 8) and impaired tourists (Edelheim 14) are missing, and "slim, tanned, young, Caucasian, female and bikinied" (Small 87) tourists bodies are the hegemonic, the most recurrent representations on the promotional discourses of the country.

Language

One example of how discourses nurture our culture and shape our mindset is explained by David Bolt in "From Blindness to Visual Impairment: Terminological Typology and the Social Model of Disability" (2005). An expert on Disability Studies, he analyses how the language towards people with visual impairment has changed throughout history and how these shifts have reshaped people's perception of this specific heterogeneous group. Indeed, languages are the "medium [with] which we 'make sense' of things, in which meaning is produced and exchanged" (Hall 1). This is one of the reasons we analyse in this thesis verbal/written discourses.

Projecting Elaine Showalter's critical literary studies theory[3] into Disability studies, Bolt explains that there have been three stages in humankind in which different terms towards people with visual impairments have been used. The first stage, the term "the blind" (544) was used by non-disabled people to refer to this specific group of society; secondly, they were using "visually handicapped", people with "visual inhibition" or "inhibited vision", and as "persons with visual disabilities" (547). In the third stage, the people from this group of society are referred to as "people with impaired vision" or "people with visual impairment" (549). This last phase is the one we are currently living in.

Before explaining the structure of the thesis, it is relevant to make explicit which is the approach of this thesis towards disability. There are two approaches, the medical and the social. The former draws from the premise that someone is defective because of their impairment(s); the latter instead, relies on the fact that the environment is defective, in other words, the elements that surround someone with impairment(s) are what makes them disabled. This thesis sticks to the social approach to disability but the reader must know that it is not perfect either. In fact, according to

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[3] This theory appears in *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1977) by Elaine Showalter.

some scholars, although the social model of disability differentiates between disabilities and impairments, it homogenises the group of people who form this community (SAGE Encyclopedia 2); it also implements shame on the word "disabled", one with which some people identify with (Ellcessor et al. 7). This thesis will follow the third stage of expressions presented by Bolt in his text.

The structure

After outlining the aim of this thesis and the motivations behind it, is pertinent to list the follow-up sections to this document. As part of the first chapter, the *status queastionis* is located hereafter. In it, one could find the most relevant texts regarding disability, digital marketing, and representation of non-impaired and impaired people on the media. Most of the selected sources have been written by scholars whose expertise is in media studies, disability media studies[4], museum studies, and tourism studies.

The theoretical framework is included as well in this first chapter of the thesis which concludes with the methodology. The aim of the former is to present the most significant terms and theories around the topic of representation and digital marketing. It would provide sufficient insight to analyse the pictures, videos, and texts from the sample. Some of the expressions that are useful for the purpose of this thesis are "ableism" (Cheu), "inspiration porn" (Young), or "experience economy" (Drotner and Schrøer; Henning). Regarding the methodology, we have used two analyses: one to approach pictures and videos (Visual Social Semiotics Analysis), and another one to analyse the texts (verbal/written analysis from Multimodal Cultural Analysis). They are both meaningful for the purpose of this thesis, to analyse the cultural charges that the representations featuring people with visual impairments may connote/imply about them.

The second chapter opens once a detailed explanation has been given of how the materials from the sample will be analysed using the prescribed method. This second part of the thesis consists of a qualitative analysis of pictures, videos, and texts found on the official websites where the accessible activities of each art institution of our choice are promoted. After that, the results of

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[4] Disability Media Studies are a critical interdisciplinary field that analyses the way people with impairments are portrayed on the media (Ellcessor et al.). This new field resulted from connecting disability studies and media studies. The former links with activism and it analysis the "status of persons with disabilities" (Ellcessor et al. 5), the latter focuses on the interpretation of "how the media work[s] as cultural, political, and economic institutions, as sites of meaning-making and ideological contestation, and as resources for social and individual identity formation and expression" (Ellcessor et al. 3).

the analysis will be summed up in the discussion. The culmination of this thesis will be provided by the discussion and the conclusion. In the former, the reader can find the answers to the research question and subquestions posed; and in the latter, several suggestions for future research are highlighted together with comments.

Literary Review

In this section of the first chapter of the thesis the most important texts about representation and disability, people with impairments as tourists, and digital promotion of museums will be introduced. This overview of what has been written on these topics will be useful as this information will introduce the reader to the basic knowledge that this thesis will be dealing with: websites and social media; people with impairments, specifically visually impaired people; the conventional representations of this collective group; and accessible tourism.

It is a well-known fact that we live in the Digital Era where the Internet is used by companies and individuals as a tool of communication, interaction, promotion, and commercialisation. Belén Fiallos Quinteros in "E-Communication and Digital Content in the 21st century Art Museums"[5] (my trans.) (2015) highlights these facets of the Web 2.0 and 3.0 (Miller) providing information on how social media and websites are used by three art museums from Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, and Museo Nacional del Prado. —Two of them happen to be included in this thesis's sample—.

Fiallos Quinteros, an expert in new technologies, art, and museums, explains that the Internet has provided the opportunity to these cultural institutions for interacting online with customers, for convincing the customers through their social media and webpages to visit the museums onsite, and for complementing their experiences off-line by going there once having made a decision on whether going or not (4). As a matter of fact, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram aside from other websites "are an efficient type of marketing as long as they are much more economic than the traditional marketing ways of doing" (5). Hence Estelle Thoreau also highlights this characteristic when she writes about the reasons that led the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to devote a webpage, as opposed to another medium, to broaden their audience among people with impairments. Thoreau explains that *Ouch*, the webpage where impaired professionals write about their experiences as impaired people, entertainment, and leisure, among other topics, was launched online because of the number of people with impairments in the UK. The

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[5] The original title is in Spanish: "E-Comunicación y Contenidos Digitales en los Museos de Arte del siglo XXI".

low wages from the members of this group influenced as well the decision of making the program online (445). An explanation in harmony with Marshall McLuhan's proposition of "the medium is the message"[6]. Furthermore, the Internet has provided people with impairments space where they can communicate with other Internet users, create online communities, and creating off-line communities as a result (Kent 267).

Fiallos Quinteros findings show that different platforms have different purposes, either pedagogical or disclosure. Whereas the museums' websites seem to display more general information about what is on in the institution, posts on social networks are usually more specific. For instance, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza Madrid use Facebook and Twitter as tools of interaction with their "followers", as well as to inform them about exhibitions and workshops taking place at the institutions (6). Flickr and YouTube, on the other hand, are being used as image and video libraries, to keep a record of what has happened at the museums (10). Museo Nacional del Prado, for example, uses their social media to post news about the institution (7-8). At the end of the text, Fiallos Quinteros highlights one of the key issues that these platforms owned and managed by these three museums all face: visitors are increasingly using websites and social media prior to visiting the physical site (10). All in all, as highlighted before in the introduction, these platforms are used by people during their decision-making process (Fiallos Quinteros 10; Gretzel and Fesenmaier 564-69).

"New media plays a significant and increasing role in the everyday life of the population. People with disabilities, especially, use the internet even more than people without disabilities" (Pühretmair and Nussbaum 275) but not all the digital platforms are accessible for them (Kent 264). Indeed, despite the opportunity that these platforms have provided to people with disabilities: being able to control their image (Sweeney and Riddell; Thoreau), choosing whether they want to show they have an impairment or not (Kent), creating an online or off-line community (Kent)…, "the amount of users and reproducibility of representations make people lose control of how they are portrayed through social media" (Kent 264). Moreover, on a regular basis, these platforms do not reach the requirements of Design for All (Pühretmair and Nussbaum 274) and people with impairments cannot use them.

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6 "The medium is the message" is a propositions written by Marshall McLuhan in his book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964). The theory implies that the content of a discourse is not only what has meaning but the medium which carries it also influences the content's meaning.

Franz Pühretmair and Gerhard Nussbaum in "Web Design, Assistive Technologies and Accessible Tourism" (2011) explain that, contrary to what popularly people have understood for making something accessible, Design for All looks for a Universal Design (UNWTO 32) that would be "usable for the largest group of [people] possible" (Pühretmair and Nussbaum 274). In fact, the scholars take into account the results of a German study made in 2004 in which one could notice that some impaired tourists reject some destinations over others because of the lack of accessible information about them or the disabling environment they would be in (Pühretmair and Nussbaum 275)[7]. It seems that we have a long way to cover still before offering real Design for All online. What is more, "often disabled people are forced to use a range of assistive technologies to be able to interact with ICTs" (Michopoulous and Buhalis 288). Assistive technologies, according to Pühretmair and Nussbaum, are the tools that "bridge the gap between the standard user interface and the users' ability to interact" (277). They exemplify this concept by explaining that visually impaired people use screen readers on their devices (277). Other steps towards Design for All advised by scholars are to maintain in all the webpages a similar internal structure/ layout like for instance locating the menu at the top part of the sites (Pühretmair and Nussbaum 284), or reducing the noise in them by reducing the number of columns in which the information is structured in or taking out (pop-up) advertisements (Michopoulous and Buhalis 296).

Pühretmair and Nussbaum mention the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) organisation, which ensures the level of accessibility of websites. The oldest document written by them that the scholars mention in their text dates from 1999 (279). Therefore, we should think that since that year, online platforms have been following these Design for All standards. In relation to other scholars, it was not until the 1980s (in the USA and the UK only) that particular companies started to represent more impaired people in their commercials (Bolt 2014; Haller and Ralph). These scholars conclude that this "phenomenon" started because of the laws promoted by the governments in the 1970s. Indeed, it is also something that connects the museums from the sample. They all started to launch accessible activities around 2015. Thus, it is highly likely that these institutions started to supply these kinds of initiatives by then because of laws pushed by particular organisations or governments

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[7] This is what Franz Pühretmair and Gerhard Nussbaum write on "Web Design, Assistive Technologies and Accessible Tourism" about this German study: "70.6% of travellers with disabilities stated that the organisation of their holiday, including the availability of information, is of special importance for their decision-making and destination selection; 38. 9% percent of them pointed out that they encounter difficulties when organising their holidays and 37% said they had previously decided not to go on holiday due to a lack of accessible facilities, equipment or services" (275).

as was the case with inclusive advertisements in the 80s.

With reference to quotation already mentioned by Mike Kent in "Social Media and Disability" (2019) about the lack of control of ones' representations on the Internet —"the amount of users and reproducibility of representations make people lose control of how they are portrayed through social media" (264)—, Colin Barnes, a sociologist and expert on the field of Disability Studies, in *Disability Imagery and the Media* (1992) lists the eleven most recurrent representations of people with impairments on movies. This text could work as a counterpoint of "*Ouch*!: An Examination of the Self-Representation of Disabled People on the Internet" (2006) by Estelle Thoreau and "Mainstreaming Disability on Radio 4" (2003) by Brian Sweeney and Sheila Riddell texts. These articles focus on the analysis of how people with impairments represent people with impairments, and how mainstreaming disabilities for broader audiences affect how impairments are represented respectively. As specified by Barnes, people with impairments are usually portrayed as non-profitable members of society (17), a role that is already debunked by the other scholarly resources mentioned above both Radio 4 programs and *Ouch* are produced by people with impairments, therefore, they have a job and contribute to the whole community of citizens.

Another of the recurrent representations of people with impairments in the media is as the "Other" and as the marginal character that does not add anything to the storyline. On one hand, they are objectified by non-impaired people because of the exoticism the latter confers to them (12). Barnes highlights the phenomenon of the freak shows where impaired people were exhibited during the nineteenth century as a spectacle (12). As a matter of fact, *Ouch* (BBC) and *Does He Take Sugar?* (Radio 4) although they provide a safe space around where a community may emerge for people with impairments as long as it is the main topic of these media, they were platforms "for" this specific group of society (Sweeney and Riddell 152; Thoreau 444). That is why, only in the case of Radio 4, James Boyle, the controller of the channel, decided in 1997 to erase *DHTS?* and create a mainstream program *You and Yours* (Sweeney and Riddell 143). Boyle wanted to de-ghettoise (Sweeney and Riddell 155) the content about disability, something that ended up, according to what the scholars write, destroying the community that *DHTS?* had gathered throughout the years they were on the air (Sweeney and Riddell 158).

The rest of the recurrent roles that the characters with impairments played on the media in accordance with Barnes were as follows: the pitiable and pathetic characters that depend on "the benevolence of others" (8) which is a consequence of the fact that people with impairments are normally being represented as ill persons that need to be taken care of, and are usually approached with medical language (8). On the other hand, disabled people are usually represented as objects of

violence given that they are portrayed as weaker than the rest of the characters. Indeed, Barnes explains that "when disabled characters are included in fictional programmes they are more than three times more likely as non-disabled characters to be dead by the end of the show" (11). Next, they are being represented as evil or given sinister roles. In related to the scholar, the figure of the disabled has been used especially in science fiction and horror movies, in which they play the role of the anti-hero (Barnes 12). The figure of the "super cripple" is a recurrent representation as well. By either representing them with superpowers or as extraordinary people who have overcome their disabilities. This representation, however, is the most criticised by Barnes because it "excludes the central point [,] that disability is a social issue" (13). The scholar goes on by writing about the recurrent portrait of people with impairments on the media as the "funny character", the one that is ridiculed, a representation that Barnes interprets as being the origin of the disability that people with impairments face the most, not being taken seriously (13). As helpless and self-pity characters are other recurrent representations of people with impairments, but these are consequences of being portrayed as a burden for their acquaintances (Barnes 15) because of their "abnormality" (Barnes 14). Barnes ends the list of representations with the figure of the sexual degenerate or asexual, something that depends on the gender of the character (16): most male disabled characters are represented either as impotent, which is connected to a lack of masculinity, and sexual deviants (16). Disabled women tend to be represented as subjects who are being cheated on because of their impairments (Barnes 16).

Theoretical Framework

Having listed the most relevant literature written regarding the stereotypes of people with impairments that have been massively broadcasted on the media and the role of the Internet as a relevant decision-making tool nowadays, including for those tourists who have impairments, we will introduce some theories and terms related to these phenomenons. These concepts will be useful for the analysis of the pictures, videos, and texts from the sample as they will provide insight into the potential connotations for the sources.

- Representation

Taking into account the list of the eleven more recurrent stereotypes of people with impairments that Colin Barnes collects in *Disability Imagery and the Media*, Stuart Hall would identify these representations as part of a system that nurtures the audience's perceptions of the subjects and objects shown there (3). More or less, like the phenomenon of the "circle of

representation" by Olivia Jenkins that has been already mentioned during the *status quaestionis*. In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997), Hall warns that these cultural representations are interpreted by the viewers to be real, trustworthy, and to be the norm (24). Nevertheless, Hall highlights the duality stated by Plato in the Allegory of the Cave: there are two realms, "the *material* world, where things and people exist, and the *symbolic* [world, where] … representation, meaning and language operate" (25). As we are dealing in this thesis with pictures, videos, and texts, all of them discourses and therefore representations, we are analysing the materials that influence the audiences' perceptions towards people with visual impairments. As a matter of fact, to use specific cultural representations means to expose the audience to a limited representational system that might become normal for them (24). Roland Barthes in "Myth Today" (1st ed. 1957) defines these recurrent representations that he calls "myths" as "fixed, regulated, [and] insistent figures" (100) of which people do not know the origin but accepts the discourse (102).

The classification made by Barnes has been largely used by other scholars (Garland-Thomson 2001; Sweeney and Riddell 2003; Thoreau 2006; Delin 2003; Cheu 2009; Bolt 2014) on the field of Disability studies. Rosemary Garland-Thomson in "Seeing the Disabled. Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography" (2001), for instance, reduced to four the eleven stereotypes identified by Barnes: the wondrous, the sentimental, the exotic, and the realistic. In this specific article, Garland-Thomson analyses several photographs and advertisements featuring people with impairments. By doing so she develops a theory considering that the format of these objects of study influence/ enhance the meaning the producers want to confer to what is being represented on them. In order to have portrayals of people with impairments as the wondrous, the equivalent of the "super cripple" (Barnes 13), Garland-Thomson explains that they should be portrayed as monsters or prodigies (340). To enhance this perception, the viewer should feel like watching someone extraordinary. The best way to do so is "position[ing] the disabled figure above the viewer [given that] the rhetoric of wonder enlarges the disabled figure" (341). By contrast, the sentimental representations, which Barnes identifies as the pitiable and the pathetic (8), makes the viewer take the superior position to recall their pity. The result is that "the disabled figure … [adopts] the posture of the sympathetic victim or helpless sufferer needing protection or succour" (341). As a matter of fact, Garland-Thomson highlights the use of children in these kinds of representations to arouse, even more, the pity of the audience, apart from depicting the impaired individual with an unnatural gesture to highlight the suffering of the impaired person (341). The third stereotype listed by Garland-Thomson is "the exotic impaired". She connects these kinds of

representations with the images that western people produced of the Other during Imperialism (Garland-Thomson 345) given that they were created to engender curiosity. In fact, these visual discourses that adopt the stereotype of the exotic present "disabled figures as alien, often sensationalized, eroticised, or [by highlighting] their difference" (Garland-Thomson 342-3). Moreover, unlike the wondrous and sentimental representations, the exotic ones, by the format of the pictures a hierarchy between what is depicted and the viewer does not exist (Garland-Thomson 343). What is more, the subject or object of the pictures is captured in such a way that the viewed is being watched at eye-level. Therefore,

> "the rhetoric of the exotic transforms spectators into tourists or ethnographers who imagine themselves as diverted, enlightened, or titillated by their encounter with the figure of the remote, alien body brought before them at the safe distance the image enforces". (Garland-Thomson 344)

The realistic mode, the last label that Garland-Thomson distinguishes, "normalize[s] and often minimizes the visual mark of disability. [After all,] realism in disability photography is the rhetoric of equality" (Garland-Thomson 344). As well as Stuart Hall, Garland-Thomson is concerned about the perception of the reality that people have about photography: she states that this art is rather a verisimilar or realistic medium that represents reality (Garland-Thomson 344) than a medium that shows reality.

- Gaze

In accordance with Tom Shakespeare, disabled and sociologist, in "Cultural Representation of Disabled People: Dustbins for Disavowal?" (1994), defines the gaze as the "phallic activity … often been suggested [as establishing] a power relationship … [because] 'the ability to scrutinise is premised on power" (287). The dynamic that is established through the gaze is based on the fact that there is someone who sees and another one who is being-looked-at whose being objectified; in general terms, the former exert power towards the latter.

Whereas the gaze is a central element in gender studies (Mulvey; Sontag), diverse literature on disability (Shakespeare, Young; Garland-Thomson) and tourism studies (Urry; Urry and Larsen) have dedicated considerable space to the gaze as well. Among the most recognised gazes are undoubtedly the "male gaze" and the "tourist gaze". While the former relates with the phenomenon of voyeurism and the consequent objectification for the pleasure of the subject/object being looked-at (Mulvey 835), normally a woman; the latter relates with the fact that tourists romanticise and only capture with their cameras the positive and the ideal of their trip (Urry and Larsen 174).

Johnson Cheu, on his behalf, introduces the term of "Blind gaze" in "Seeing Blindness on Screen: the Cinematic Gaze of Blind Female Protagonists" (2009), a much less known type of gaze. It is defined as the assumed gaze of the visually impaired; it is an ableist construction by those without visual impairments. In other words, it is the representation of "how and what the Blind see[s]" (Cheu 485) constructed by non-visually impaired people. As long as in this article he analyses several movies in which visually impaired female characters featured, he highlights that the Blind gaze in these productions was normally made using the cinematographic techniques of darkening or blurring the screen (Cheu 484). In this case, the power over people with visual impairments has been already executed during the edition of the movies given that non-visually impaired people have appropriated (Cheu 484) something that does not belong to them and which might be a misrepresentation.

The gaze towards disability, the point of view provided by the activist, journalist, and comedian with mobility impairment Stella Young, reflects on one of Barnes labels, the "super cripple" (13). During a TED talk in 2014, she came up with the term "inspiration porn" to explain a phenomenon that influenced the way people with impairments are perceived by non-impaired people. Young explains that people with disabilities are admired by non-impaired people when they achieve certain tasks, which without the impairment, no-one would ordinarily care about. Young demands this feeling of admiration to stop because it is grounded on the idea of the exceptionality of impaired or disabled people. This is why Young chooses the word "porn", given that a group of people is objectifying another group of individuals for their own benefit, to cheer themselves up and put their non-impaired people worries into perspective.

This apparent prominence of the gaze is challenged by Garland-Thomson (2001) regarding people with impairments. She differentiates between gazing and staring. Indeed, the scholar's opinion is that people with impairments do not receive gazes but they are rather stared at: "gazing … differs from staring in that it usually encompasses the entirety of the body. [And] staring … in contrast, … telescopes looking toward the physical signifier for disability" (Garland-Thomson 347).

- Websites and social networks

As we highlighted in the introduction, the Internet is just another tool that people use to make decisions about what to visit and what not to visit during their domestic or international trips (Fiallos Quinteros 10; Gretzel and Fesenmaier 564-69). Furthermore, the digital world is a medium in which representations are shared massively (Hall 3). It is striking that the digital platforms where

we can find discourses, for instance, about impaired people, are not accessible for them, although they are the ones who use the Internet the most in accordance with Pühretmair and Nussbaum (275).

According to Kirsten Drotner and Kim Christian Schrøer in *Museum Communication and Social Media* (2017), we live in a society in which there are "experience economies" (19). This means that society and the current economic system have created a market in which something intangible such as an experience is sold. The aim behind this is to provide entertainment and enjoyment to customers —the visitors to a museum within this new paradigm of society are referred to as clients as well (Drotner and Schrøer 19)—. Like Yoo and Gretzel highlight in "The Role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Marketing Tourism Experiences" (2007), the emergence of ICTs seems to have pushed further this "economy of experience". After all, the Internet allows people to travel "to numerous nations and cities, transported not through the planes, trains, buses, cars and legs that move the traditional tourist, but rather through the lexical and visual texts that populate websites and transport the (post-)modern traveler" (Hallet and Kaplan-Weinger 1)

When this phenomenon is studied with regard to the target group of visually impaired people, stakeholders should take into account the social approach to disability instead of the medical one in order to enhance the new paradigm of commodification on somatic experiences (Small and Darcy 79). As a matter of fact, Sally Everett in "Beyond the Visual Gaze?: The Pursuit of an Embodied Experience Through Food Tourism" (2008) relates this "economy of experience" with the trend of food tourism. This kind of tourism debunks the sense of sight as the central one while travelling. It rather enhances "embodied experience[s]" (337), something that we think helps to reach a better understanding of the accessible activities offered by the art museums from the sample promote through their websites.

The Internet has also allowed users to produce content on different platforms although it has not been always like this. Toby Miller in "Tourism and Media Studies 3.0" (2013) explains that at the beginning, digital media was nothing compared to the current peer-to-peer communication but was rather dominated by the one-way-communication/ top-down communication, from businesses to users who were passive (230). This first stage of the Internet is called Web 1.0 which differs from Web 2.0 because, in this second stage, users were able to create their own content and get into contact with other users despite the geographical distance (234). After these stages, the Web 3.0 emerged, which is the current Internet era in which we live in. Here, commercial interests and inter-users communication aside from communication between enterprises and customers is possible (238).

Despite not studying the social networks of the selected museums, we need to be aware of the fact that within this Web 3.0 era, people "are more likely to trust the messages and comments posted by other consumers … compared with those reviewed by … websites" (Kwok and Yu 84). However, these platforms, as we will disclose in the analysis (videos and texts from the sample) have managed to include particular stories onto their layout. After all, "storytelling is growing in importance for marketers and is key to attracting and retaining consumers" (Yoo and Gretzel 418).

Methodology

We have chosen two methods to analyse the pictures, the videos, and the texts from the webpages of Van Abbemuseum, Van Gogh Museum, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Museo Nacional del Prado, and Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona. On one hand, the Visual Social Semiotics Analysis developed by the linguists Gunther Kress and Ton van Leeuwen has been used to analyse the images (pictures and videos) from the sample; whereas the texts have been analysed using the method, developed in 2012 by the expert in communication Luc Pauwels, called Multimodal Cultural Analysis.

Different reasons made us choose these methods over others. Firstly, as we are analysing cultural representations, we chose both methodologies because of their semiotic approach to images and texts. After all, these methods allow us "to decode/ disclose the cultural information that resides both in the form and content" (Pauwels 248) of the pictures, videos, and texts examined here. In other words, it is "effective in bringing out hidden meanings" (Jewitt and Oyama 154) from the objects of study. Secondly, while the Multimodal Cultural Analysis, in accordance with its developer, is suitable for research in which comparisons are made (Pauwels 248), Visual Social Semiotics Analysis provides the researcher with a "systematic analysis of the similarities, differences and patterns in the sample of images" (Jewitt and Oyama 154).

Some adjustments have been made to adapt the Multimodal Cultural Analysis into the needs of this thesis. As the name indicates, Pauwels has developed a method that allows researchers to analyse different modalities of discourses, images, texts, sounds, etc. separately (mono-modal), and provides a framework to analyse how they intermingle in a webpage (multi-modal). Pauwels himself advises "to involve both the mono-modal and the multimodal meanings as a result of both deliberate and inadvertent multiauthored choices and combinations" (260). Despite that he provides all the necessary steps to approach the mono-modal needs in the Multimodal Cultural Analysis, we chose Visual Social Semiotics Analysis by Kress and van Leeuwen as the mono-modal method to approach pictures and videos because of the level of detail that this analysis has compared to the

amount of detail Pauwels provides in his framework. Nevertheless, we have decided to use the mono-modal approach to texts that Pauwels provides in Multimodal Cultural Analysis given that other mono-modal methods to analyse written sources were not clearer enough. Moreover, by using Pauwels's multimodal method, we are able to use the particular step of the cross-modal interplay. Thus, from the Multimodal Cultural Analysis consisting of six steps, we will only use two: the intra-modal analysis of the verbal/written signifiers and the analysis of cross-modal interplay.

Firstly, Kress and van Leeuwen take Michael Halliday's classification of three different semiotic approaches: representational, interactive, and compositional meaning (Jewitt and Oyama 140). Applied together, they provide different information about images: through representational meaning, we highlight the recurrent elements (motifs) of the images "to show that they have something in common, that they belong to the same class" (Jewitt and Oyama 144); on the second step, the interactive meaning, we analyse the interaction between the viewer and the viewed; and, thirdly, we study the organisation of the representations from the sample in the compositional meaning.

Both, the interactive and the compositional meaning ask the researcher to take into account particular elements. To analyse the degree of interaction between the viewer and viewed, Kress and van Leeuwen determine that one should analyse the contact, the distance, and the point of view. The contact determines whether the subjects depicted are offering or demanding something from the viewer by their gestures (Jewitt and Oyama 145). One instance could be that the viewed is looking at the camera lens appearing as if they were looking at the viewer, if it is not happening, according to Jewitt and Oyama, it would mean that the viewed "are specimens in a display case" (146). The element of the distance is what defines that the object or subject depicted in an image is close or far from the viewer (Jewitt and Oyama 146), therefore, it depends on the scale of the things captured by the camera (close-up, medium shot…). The last element from the interactive meaning is the point of view, i.e. from where the shot has been taken (eye-level, from above…) and what power relationships it establishes (Jewitt and Oyama 135). For these last two elements, we will use vocabulary from cinema and photography studies from *Film Art. An Introduction* (2015) by David Bordwell et al. given that they give a larger range of terms that cannot be found in the text by Jewitt and Oyama.

The compositional meaning asks the researcher to take into account informative value, framing, salience, and modality. The first guides the researcher to scrutinise where subjects and objects are placed in the composition and what is their potential meaning by having been captured on the left-right, top-down (Jewitt and Oyama 147). Through this binarism, Jewitt and Oyama

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explain that whatever is placed on the left should be interpreted as the familiar, therefore, what occupies the right side of the composition should be understood as the new, "as something to which the viewer … must pay special attention" (Jewitt and Oyama 148). Moreover, "what is placed on top is presented as … the 'deal' and what is placed at the bottom as the 'real'" (Jewitt and Oyama 147). Apart from this, the elements that are located in the central part of the composition are what, in relation to the methodologists, "holds the 'marginal' elements together" (Jewitt and Oyama 149). Framing makes the researcher look for lines or other additions to the pictures that may reveal disconnection in the composition or not (Jewitt and Oyama 149). Salience is the element that allows the researcher to define whether something is more eye-catching than other elements within the image. This is usually made by contrasting colours, lights, size…. Finally, Kress and van Leeuwen differentiate three types of modalities: the naturalistic, scientific, and sensory. The naturalistic is characterised by the fact that what can be seen in the composition shall be equally seen by the naked eye (Jewitt and Oyama 151); secondly, the scientific modality is the one that captures details, it is nearly abstract (Jewitt and Oyama 151). Finally, the sensory modality focuses "on the emotion and affect of the event rather than on … realism" (Jewitt and Oyama 152).

Turning to the other methodology, the verbal/written signifier analysis guides the researcher in interpreting "potential culturally specific meanings that reside in the explicit and implicit content of the written" (Pauwels 253) sources. The first step in analysing the texts consists of reviewing their content to highlight what are the "topics and issues that are being dealt with" (Pauwels 254). The second of the steps is pointing out the stylistic features found in the texts from the sample. In this phase of the analysis, the semantic aspects of the language will be taken into account to interpret the potential meanings of the expressions and terms used within the text. We will examine the connotations of the words from the written discourses in order to suggest an explanation how, by using particular expressions, these texts would influence the behaviour of the receivers. After all, texts are representations like images and, consequently, they have the same power of construction and supply highly culturally charged content (Hall 51). The third step of the verbal/written signifier analysis is to pay attention to the style of the texts, the register, the verbal tenses, redundancies, metaphors, gender statements… According to Pauwels, this last step is the one that allows the researcher to get information about the message "sender(s) "social background, position, preferences, intended audience, purpose, belief, etc." (254).

Finally, the analysis of cross-modal interplay within the Multimodal Cultural Analysis allows the researcher to interpret what kind of relationship is established between different modalities. The producers of the websites might have been implying something through the

construction of the interplay among the different modalities of discourse one can found on a webpage. It is "a tightly bound or a loose relation: a mere illustrative, redundant or highly complimentary one" (Pauwels 256)? This last part of the analysis will be given in the discussion for space reasons (subquestion b).

Second chapter

Analysis

In this section, we will use the terms already introduced in the theoretical framework and make reference to the sources from the *status quaestionis*. The analysis of the photographs, videos and texts found in the websites of the museums from the sample will adopt the steps of the methodologies explained above. This section aims to pinpoint what are the connotations behind online discourses representing visually impaired people produced by Spanish and Dutch art museums. We will be comparing the representation of visually impaired people between museums in the two countries and between modern and contemporary art museums.

Included in the analysis of pictures, videos, and texts are five Dutch and three Spanish museums, namely Van Gogh Museum, Van Abbemuseum, Museo Nacional del Prado, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, and Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB). Van Gogh Museum provides a tour through the permanent collection of the museum and a workshop for people with visual impairments in *Feeling Van Gogh*. Original pieces of art are not directly accessible for them during this activity, Van Gogh Museum provides 3D reproductions, tactile diagrams, and models to ease the comprehension of van Gogh's masterpieces for visually impaired visitors. The majority of their collection consists of Vincent van Gogh's paintings although, they own other modern artists' pieces from the late nineteenth and 20th-century inspired in the Dutch artist. Among their most celebrated pieces, they have one of the five paintings of the *Sunflowers* (1889) which has been reproduced through 3D technology for *Feeling Van Gogh*.

Van Abbemuseum is a Contemporary art institution located in Eindhoven where art pieces by Joseph Beuys, Marc Chagall, Pablo Picasso, or Oskar Kokoschka are permanently exhibited. Their temporary exhibitions tend to treat present day social issues such as the Refugee Crisis or the Black Lives Matter movement. On social media such as Twitter and Instagram, the museum presents itself as an institution that focuses on inclusivity on their social media. In fact, they seem to be the institution from the sample the most activities for people with different impairments either physical, sensory, or mental. Under the name of *Special Guests* program, Van Abbemuseum supply tour guides for deaf and hard of hearing visitors, visually impaired people, or people with aphasia. The museum also provides a telepresence robot to allow those who are otherwise unable to visit the museum in person, such as sue to hospitalisation, to experience the space in a natural way (Van Abbemuseum). Part of the pieces Van Abbemuseum makes accessible for visually impaired visitors are original sculptures and installations, photographs, paintings, tactile diagrams and models.

Museo Nacional del Prado, despite being a 200 years old art institution, does not have a long history of making their facilities and exhibitions accessible for those with impairments compared to Van Abbemuseum. Starting in 2006 (Museo Nacional del Prado), the Madrilene institution has been working on *El Prado para Todos*, an educational program to make art more approachable for different target groups like children, families, and people with impairments. In 2015, El Prado hosted their first ever accessible exhibition for people with visual impairments called *Hoy Toca el Prado*. Visitors could find six reproductions of the most significant pieces of their collection like *El Caballero de la Mano en el Pecho* (1580) by El Greco. Museo Nacional del Prado is considered as a modern art museum given that the collection they own dating from the 15th to 18th century.

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía is a contemporary art museum located in the capital of Spain. Within their permanent collection, one could find the *Gernika* (1936) by Pablo Picasso and other pieces by international artists like Marcel Duchamp, Louise Bourgeois, Luis Buñuel, and Salvador Dalí. Their accessible activity regarding visually impaired visitors have the name of *Museo a Mano* and unlike the rest of the museums analysed, they only offer access to original sculptures. It is, moreover, the only program that offers an outdoor activity. The institution takes advantage of the museum's gardens to place some pieces from its collection such as Joan Miró's *Oiseau Lunaire* (1940), included in *Museo a Mano* tour.

Finally, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB), is a multidisciplinary cultural center where social hot topics are dealt. Through temporary exhibitions and conferences the visitors are encouraged to consider topics like feminisms, sustainability, or video-games. The tour guides for people with visual impairments CCCB offers are not frequent. Since they have not developed a regular program for impaired visitors comparable to the other institutions analysed, we will be referring only to the accessible activity CCCB offered regarding Stanley Kubrick's monographic exhibition. In this initiative they made accessible some original pieces like celuloides from the filmmaker's movies in addition to scale models.

1. **Visual Social Semiotics Analysis**

Picture Analysis

In this first part of the analysis, five pictures, one from each museum from the sample, are analysed.

Image 1. Van Gogh Museum

Image 2. Museo Nacional del Prado

Image 3. Van Abbemuseum

Image 4. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

Image 5. Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona

1. <u>Representational meaning</u>

      In this first section we will classify the most recurrent elements appear in the five photographs. These motifs are: hands, eyes, age, gender, ethnicity, setting, clothes, and pieces of art. A point about what has been omitted from the pictures is provided at the end. After all, what is missing from an image is as valuable as what it explicitly shown.

- Hands

      This part of the body is captured in all of the pictures that we analysed. This tendency leads us to interpret the hands as synecdoches, where a whole is represented by a part. In this case, visually impaired people as a whole are represented by the haptic sense they retain.

      By the fact that the actions these photographs are depicting will influence tourists' behaviours (Jenkins 308), visually impaired people and the rest of these pictures' viewers will potentially reproduce what they have seen in these images: bare hands touching paintings and sculptures. All in all, it is what is expected during the accessible activities.

- Eyes

      Despite the fact that not all the photographs from the sample show parts of the body other than hands, the representation of eyes in some pictures has been embraced as another synecdoche. Van Gogh Museum, Van Abbemuseum, and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía place the subject being depicted further from the camera allowing the viewer to deduce depth and the environment surrounding the individual.

      These synecdochical representations of the eyes of those with visual impairments links with the dynamic of staring explained by Garland-Thomson. Indeed, we are looking at the only part of a whole being that is impaired, something that, in accordance with the scholar, enhanced the sense of difference between viewer and viewed (346-7). After all, as she claims, "the dominant mode of looking at disability in the culture is staring" (346). Added to that, for the great majority of people, someone who has visual impairments is immediately perceived as blind. The definition of "blind" is "unable to see" (Lexicon. Oxford Dictionary). However, by portraying the eyes of visually impaired people, Van Gogh Museum, Van Abbemuseum and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía are

stating that the visually impaired community is heterogeneous, that some of them see more than others[8].

Whereas Van Abbemuseum and Reina Sofía depict someone with opened or ajar eyes respectively, Van Gogh Museum shows a male with his eyes closed (Image 1). As for this last matter, we have interpreted Image 1 as an ableist representation of the Blind Gaze (Cheu). Although we do not know whether the depicted individual in the photograph is visually impaired or not, we will adopt the assumption that he is not blind nor partially sighted. The interpretation relies on the possibility that what Van Gogh Museum is actually representing in Image 1 is someone who is not visually impaired but closes his eyes to experience how someone with a visual impairment would sense the 3D reproduction of the *Sunflowers*. After all, Van Gogh Museum encourages every visitor of the museum in their promotional text on the website to touch the Dutch's artist masterpiece (Van Gogh Museum).

Something similar happens in Image 2. It corresponds to the cover pictures used by Museo Nacional del Prado in their official website promoting *Hoy Toca el Prado*. The extreme close-up photograph shows Apollo's eyes —from *Apollo in the Forge of Vulcan* (1630) by Diego Velazquez — being touched by the hands that occupies nearly all the frame of the composition. We interpret this picture as another ableist representation of the Blind Gaze given that the gesture towards Apollo could be making reference to the opaque glasses that El Prado distributes (Museo del Prado) to all the non-visually impaired visitors to "Hoy Toca el Prado" to get the "real" experience of being "blind".

- Age

Another recurrent representation that has been found within the pictures of the sample is the depiction of middle-aged people. Van Gogh Museum (Image 1), however, is the only one showing a different age-range in their promotional photograph. What is evident in this difference is that the museum located in Amsterdam is willing to attract younger generations to their facilities. On the other hand, Van Abbemuseum or Reina Sofía —CCCB and El Prado are not included in this category because we cannot determine the age of someone by their hands— seem to allude to the

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[8] In fact, the World Health Organisation (HWO) differentiates between blind and people with low vision using the term "visually impaired". This expression works as an umbrella term to refer to both, those who are blind and those who are partially sighted: "the estimated number of people visually impaired in the world is 285 million, 39 million blind and 246 million having low vision" (World Health Organisation 3).

older generations of visually impaired visitors. After all, the European population is getting older and impairments start to appear commonly when one comes to a certain age (UNWTO 32).

- Gender

"More women than men are involved in heritage tourism" (Timothy 28). Despite this fact, none of the pictures from the sample depict women. The lack of disabled female representation links with the apparent systematic process of erasing women from art institutions and public spaces. Several scholars warned already about the fact that women with disabilities were not as depicted on the media as males with impairments (Cheu 480; Barnes 19-18). As we will se in the video analysis section, one of the gender roles that women have been confined to is the figure of the carer giver. Thus, how would they be represented as disabled if in this situation they would need to be taken care of instead?

Focusing now on what we can actually see in the pictures, males are presented in isolation, unlike in Image 3 (Van Abbemuseum). By depicting men alone, one seems to be highlighting their masculinity, independency, and individuality, something that is highly praised in accordance with Jewitt and Oyama (144). Other masculine gender roles will be further treated in the video analysis.

- Settings

Resuming the topic of gender, it is a well-known fact that women have been relegated to the domestic (inside) world whereas men have dominated the public spaces (outside). Despite being depicted in public spaces, all the men of the pictures are found inside the museums' facilities —only Image 4 is taken in the open air—. This brings up to the question of whether this shift in the hegemonic representation of "the men" in public spaces has to do more with their impairments than their sex. After all, according to Barnes, people with disabilities have been largely represented as weak, ill, and dependent individuals who need to be protected (11 and 8). Therefore, the presence of blind men inside museums would be more linked to their status as disabled people than as men.

- Ethnicity

Whiteness is a predominant element in the pictures from the sample. People with non-Caucasian features do not appear in the photographs from the sample. As specified by Thoreau, not even those who are impaired represent entirely how diverse the community of people with impairments is: "ethnic diversity and ethnicity was presented as something foreign. [That] Britishness was represented as being white and nondiverse ethnically" (450). Thus, we can either interpret the lack of non-Caucasian representation in the pictures from the sample as the depiction

of how much homogeneity exists inside the impaired community or the national citizenship. Nevertheless, if we go further on this interpretation, the lack of diversity depicted in the five pictures from the chosen museums to study might send the message that non-pale-skinned visitors are not welcomed to their facilities; or that only white-skinned population can be born with or develop visual impairments.

- Clothes

Smart casual is the repetitive style of the people we can see in the selected pictures. Colour blue and black are the most used. Shirts with vertical strips appear several times as well (Van Abbemuseum and Reina Sofía). All in all, we determine that the promotional pictures of the five museums analysed here are respectful with visually impaired visitors' styles/look-books. They do not represent them wearing mismatching colours or dissimilar patterns on their clothes.

- Pieces of art

The presence of 3D reproductions in the pictures examined opens up the door to add another image in our system of representation regarding people with visual impairments. Van Gogh Museum and El Prado shows two reproductions of paintings, CCCB depicts original celluloid of Kubrick's movies, Reina Sofía pictures a sculpture being touched, and Van Abbemuseum shows a tactile diagram, supposedly, from an original. This unfolding of the pieces of art that the museums show in the pictures from their websites is part of the activities promotion.

Taking into account the topic of conservation, it is a general trend nowadays to develop interactive strategies to engage with the visitors better. The hands-on approach is very popular although "earlier interpretive planners saw [it] as being antithetical to the purpose of museums and site (i.e. protection)" (Timothy 241). After all, this accessible approach to reproductions and original pieces of art has been influenced by the "economy of experience" (Drotner and Schrøer) apart from promoting embodied experiences (Everett). Indeed, people with visual impairments, apart from the rest of the people who can access to the reproductions, need to use other parts of their bodies in place of their eyes, which occupies a secondary role in the accessible activities of the sample as it has been already highlighted in the former sections about "hands" (on this page, 27).

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- Elements not represented in these pictures

Despite having highlighted some absent elements in the photographs already like ethnic or gender diversity, there are other missing features that have been culturally related to visually impaired people: canes, Braille language, and assistive dogs.

• Canes

The former prop is only found in Image 3 despite the fact that it is difficult to identify given that it might be mistaken by the striped skirt the principal subject of the photograph is wearing.

• Braille

That several objects on display during the accessible activities are represented in the pictures, give hints about some of the materials with which the participants will be interacting with. Nevertheless, the photographs do not show any trace of how visually impaired people would interact with exhibit labels. Despite the fact that only a small percentage of people who are visually impaired know how to read Braille[9], this language has been largely presented as the only way people with visual impairments can read information. El Prado, for instance, in their promotional text, explains that they use Braille in billboards and placards although they do not show it in Image 2. Furthermore, it seems that the museums from the sample are more willing to make visually impaired visitors use other senses to receive information, like hearing for instance: either tour guides (Van Abbemuseum, Van Gogh Museum, CCCB, and Reina Sofía) or the audio-descriptive device (El Prado).

• Assistive dogs

Assistive dogs are another element that we conceived as one of the most characteristic features/props of someone who is visually impaired. The only trace of these helpers within the materials from the sample is in Van Gogh Museum's video, in which one can see two assistive dogs. At a European and Dutch level, there is not yet been written a law advocating for their right to admission in public spaces like museums. Taking into account the museums under study, three of

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[9] According to an article published in a regional newspaper from Spain, *La Voz de Galicia*, only the 10% of the population that is denominated as blind knows how to read Braille. In other words, out of the 70.000 affiliates of the Spanish National Organisation of the Blind (ONCE), only 7.000 uses Braille (Gómez).

them state explicitly that guide dogs are permitted in their facilities (CCCB, Van Abbemuseum, and Reina Sofía), the other two do not specify[10].

2. Interactive meaning

In this second part of the Visual Social semiotic Analysis method, we will analyse whether the subjects/objects depicted in the five pictures from the sample are or are not making contact with the viewer(s), and which kind of power relationships between viewer and viewed are established through camera distance and camera heigh (point of view).

- Contact

As specified by Jewitt and Oyama, there are two ways of making contact in photography: through offering or demanding pictures. Whereas in the first type the contact between the viewer and viewed is missing, in the latter predominates. Contact can be established by the gestures from the people depicted in the shots. For instance, Image 3 is a demanding photography the man's frontality welcomes the viewers' gaze. Jewitt and Oyama explain that profile connotes detachment while frontality allows engagement between the viewer and the subject being looked at (3). Van Gogh Museum's promotional image (Image 1) is also demanding since the strategic location of the subject's arms enables the viewer to see his facial expression: the man's left arm is the furthest from the viewer, and its position is higher than the right arm. The latter arm is located lower not to block the viewers' gaze. By contrast, the pictures from El Prado and CCCB are offering photographs, they are only displaying elements to the viewer (Jewitt and Oyama 146): they only present two hands which are already making contact with objects that are depicted which are in the same photographic composition. Nevertheless, Image 4 is a medium shot and it is an offering picture too. The gesture of the subject against us and towards the sculpture makes the viewer unable to establish any kind of contact with the viewed.

Thus, among the analysed pictures, there are more offering pictures than demanding. In other words, the pictures from the sample in which visually impaired people are represented make the viewer feel detached from the viewed, whereas the demanding pictures establish bonds between the two parties. What is more, only the Spanish museums have used offering photographies and

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[10] This information can be found in their websites under the title of "better practices on space" (CCCB), "house rules" (Van Abbemuseum), and "Visual accessibility" (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía).

Dutch demanding, something that can mean the level of inclusion and integration of visually impaired people in society.

- Distance

This element depends on the scale of the subjects featuring in the photographs. This sample is very varied: there are extreme close-ups (Image 2 and 4), medium shots (Image 3), medium long shots (Image 4), and medium close-ups (Image 1).

According to Bordwell et al., "the extreme close-up singles out a portion of the face or isolates and magnifies an object" (189). And according to Jewitt and Oyama, these kinds of representations should be interpreted as photographs that let the viewer know the viewed as if they were acquaintances (146). Therefore, the more the viewer sees the body of someone depicted in a picture, the less the viewed will be considered as "friend" by the viewer: "we see them in outline, impersonally, as types rather than as individuals" (Jewitt and Oyama 146).

Jewitt and Oyama also explain that close-ups should give us more information about the subjects or objects depicted in a photograph rather than medium long shots (146). We interpret this the other way around: the closer the lens is from the object depicted, the less information someone can have from the depicted subject. In the cases of Image 2 and 4, for instance, is even harder, given that they depict hands, not eyes or mouths which would probably be easier to read and relate with.

Medium shots and medium long shots allow the viewer to see even the surroundings where the human figures in the representations are located at (Bordwell et al. 189). Although the viewer can identify the background of Image 1 and 3 (medium shots), it is more salient in Image 4. It is not a coincidence, given that *Museo a Mano* provides the participants to the tour guide with a route outside the conventional museum halls, therefore, the surroundings play a significant role in the in the experience provided by Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. This is another of the reasons to state that despite the fact that Jewitt and Oyama suggest a potential meaning for close-ups and other shots taken from afar, we interpret the pictures from the sample conversely.

- Point of View

In this part of the interactive meaning of pictures, we would determine whether a photograph has been taken from above (high angle), or below (low angle), eye-level (straight-on angle). Our aim is to discover the "audience['s] identification and involvement with represented participants" (Jewitt and Oyama 138). On the other hand, we also identify who has the power over the other. This part of the analysis resembles Rosemary Garland-Thomson's analysis of pictures and

advertisements featuring people with impairments. Low angles depict the subject in a position of power over the viewers; the contrary would happen with high angles; whereas straight-on angles bring equality between viewed and viewer, although it might increase the sense of curiosity of the viewer towards the subjects depicted and, therefore, their Otherness. Garland-Thomson labels these representations as exotic given that they "demedicalizes, fascinates, seduces with exaggeration, and creates and often sensationalized, embellished alien" (358).

The pictures from the sample could be classified as follows: CCCB's, Van Gogh's Museum, and El Prado's have high angles; and Reina Sofía and Van Abbemuseum have low angles. It means that Image 5, 1, and 2 establishes the viewer like the one with power over the subjects and objects represented in the pictures; while Image 4 and 3 give the power to the viewed. As a matter of fact, Garland-Thomson also highlights the fact that low angles always depicts the subjects as extraordinary given that they are presented above the viewer's point of view (340).

3. Compositional meaning

In this last step of the Visual Social Semiotics Methodology one studies where the elements are placed in the pictures (information value), if there is any disconnection among the depicted elements (framing), whether some elements are more eye-catchers than others (salience), and whether the representations are plausible (modality).

- Information value

In this step the photographs are divided into five portions: left, right, top, bottom, and centrality. On one hand, the Spanish museums place on the right at their photographs the bodies of people with visual impairments. In accordance with Jewitt and Oyama, by locating something or someone on the right of composition their novelty is being enhanced and the "viewer … must pay special attention" (Jewitt and Oyama 148) to it. Therefore, this target group is being represented as something new by all the Spanish museums from the sample. Moreover, as well as placing the hands on the right of the composition, Image 5 also puts them on top, which means that is something ideal (Jewitt and Oyama 148). This photograph, therefore, can be interpreted as the wish of the Catalan institution: to be more accessible for visually impaired visitors.

By contrast, Dutch museums, in their promotional pictures, visually impaired either on the left of the composition (Image 1) or occupying the central space of the photograph (Image 3). Thus, they are stating that this target group is familiar at least for these museums, Van Gogh Museum and Van Abbemuseum. Going further on Image 1 interpretation, the fact that the institution using this

picture locates the visually impaired subject on the left, as something familiar, enhances the possibilities for this image to be an ableist representation as already stated in representational meaning. After all, both visually impaired and non-visually impaired visitors could close their eyes while touching the 3D reproduction of the *Sunflowers*, which is located on the right, thus as the new and unfamiliar, which the museums want to highlight the most.

The Spanish institutions, in their pictures, place the visually impaired figures on the right-top, and the Dutch ones locate the individual on the left/central-down. However, the same action in all the compositions occupies the middle of the pictures: hands touching the reproductions, the models, or the original pieces of art featuring in them. According to Jewitt and Oyama, "centrality … means [that] … what is placed in the centre is thereby seen as what hold the 'marginal' elements together" (149). Due to this, we can interpret the action of touching the art as admitting the participants to be part of the cultural heritage surrounding these pieces.

- Framing

> "'Framing' indicates that elements of a composition can either be given separate identities, or represented as belonging together … Disconnection can be created … through framelines …, through empty space between elements, but also through contrast of colour or form, …. Connection can be achieved … through similarities and rhymes of colour and form, through vectors that connects elements, and of course through the absence of frame lines or empty space between elements". (Jewitt and Oyama 149-50)

Disconnections have been found in three pictures from the sample: Image 1, 2, 3, and 5. The first two photographs have the museum logo, the three stripes in the horizontal one above the other that indicates that when the client from the website clicks they unfold the menu and the title of the accessible activity being promoted on the page. Thus, these elements of the composition are disconnected from what is depicted in the photograph because they have been superimposed on it. On the other hand, Van Abbemuseum's picture cut out of the frame of the picture on the left one of the people featuring in it. Void spaces are another of the elements that, as specified by Jewitt's and Oyama's quotation, can create disconnection in the photograph: Image 5 is an example of this. After all, the action of touching and the elements being touched are located in the right-upper part of the composition, leaving the left-bottom part of it being "abandoned" from the interactions. Moreover, the diagonal line drawn by the celluloid being touched by the person's hands depicted draws a line between the two spaces in which we are dividing the photograph.

There are also frames inside the photographs. Image 1 and 4 are relevant examples of this phenomenon. Through rectangular shapes[11], the composition is itself guiding the gaze of the viewer onto the enframed figures of the picture. In Image 4, the man depicted is located not only within the frame of the photograph but the frame of the window from Reina Sofia's museum building located behind him. In Image 1 the 3D reproduction of the *Sunflowers* appears enframed within the frame of the picture. However, given that the man depicted in it is touching the painting, his arms and hands are as well part of the elements that the frame within the frame make salient on the composition.

After all, the elements depicted in each of the photographs are connected to each other. As stated before, the act of touching is located in the central part of the compositions: this interaction is what unites the elements featuring in the photographs, the pieces of art made accessible to the disabled visitors.

- Salience

The technique of frame within a frame, highlighted in the "framing" section from this thesis, has been interpreted here as a way of making the elements they frame salient. Nevertheless, Image 4 uses colour contrast to make certain elements of the composition more eye-catchy. According to Jewitt and Oyama, "through size, through colour contrasts …, tonal contrasts… [etc.]" (Jewitt and Oyama 150) one could make something salient in a picture. In this sample, the colour contrast is recurrent. In Image 4, the darkness of the sculpture contrast with the light walls of the building behind it, the darker space that the window creates (frame within a frame) contrasts with the lighter clothes the man depicted in the photograph is wearing. Image 5 obtains the saliency of the celluloid and the hands touching them through the contrast black-white that the lighted table they photograph provides them by means of backlighting. Image 3 also contrast darker and lighter colours: the maroon from the walls with the white striped skirt being worn by the man occupying the center of the composition.

In a much less dark-light colours opposition, Van Gogh Museum and El Prado use more subtle contrast by using complementary colours in their compositions. In Image 1 all the present colours are pastel, light, and soft: light blue in the walls, light yellow from the background of the 3D *Sunflower*'s reproduction, or the pale skin tone from the man depicted. The darker tones of the composition remain in the subject's brown hair, the dark gold colour of the *Sunflower*'s framework,

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[11] Image 5, despite having a frame within a frame, it is not rectangular but triangular.

and the dark blue blazer worn by the individual depicted in the photograph. In fact, the contrast between yellow and blue are highly successful as long as they are complementary colours. El Prado, in Image 2 uses the same tones blue/yellow: —there is not much depth in this photograph given that it is an extreme close-up, its background is a detail from Diego Velázquez painting called *Apollo in the Forge of Vulcano* (1630)— the light skin of the person whose hands the viewer can see, seems to amalgamate with the warm colours from Apollo's hair and halo; both of these elements, which have kind of a yellow-ish tone, contrast with the gradually darker blue background from the painting's reproduction.

The high contrast of the elements in the pictures might have been deliberately done by all the producers of the photographs in order to ease the visually impaired website customers to perceive the images. Of course, this is something difficult to determine whether it is true or not. Neither is it easy to make accessible images for everyone. There are visually impaired people that can easily identify red or yellow over grey but not white or black over grey, something that for another person with a visual impairment will not be experienced the same way[12].

- Modality

Modality is the level of realness that a picture has. However, and recalling Garland-Thomson, Reality in photography does not exist but realistic pictures do (344). According to Hall, pictures are representations, and they belong to the symbolic world (24). Due to this, then, photographs cannot depict reality but can be realistic (Garland-Thomson 344). In the opinion of Kress and van Leeuwen, there are three modalities, naturalistic, scientific, and sensory, each of them depict reality differently.

Image 3 and 4 have been interpreted as naturalistic given that the scenes they depicts can be perceived without any change through the naked eye (Jewitt and Oyama 151). Image 2 and 5, as extreme close-ups are categorised as part of the scientific modality because they do not depict depth or a lot of background, they are more of an abstraction of reality (Jewitt and Oyama 151). Image 1 has been classified as belonging to the sensory modality, after all, what it is being depicted is a

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[12] This information was given to us by a member of the staff from MuZIEum. As part of the Tourism and Culture: Theories and Trends' program from the Tourism and Culture master's program, the students went to this particular museum in Nijmegen. Once there, one of the activities we did was a tour through the city with virtual reality googles. Through these devices, the students, non of us visually impaired, could experience different visual impairments, as if we were partially sighted people. The tour guide of our group explained that he identifies certain colours better than others. He also warned us that not every visually impaired person could differentiate easily these specific colours but others.

feeling that has been interpreted as ecstasy. The representation of emotions in this composition is a characteristic feature of this picture despite the fact that what is represented here can be perceived by the naked eye (Jewitt and Oyama 151).

• Video Analysis

Only three museums out of the five that form the sample of this thesis have videos attached to their promotional websites of the accessible activities they host(ed). However, only the videos found in Van Gogh Museum's and Van Abbemuseum's sites have been analysed. Museo Nacional del Prado is the other museum from the sample that provides a video on their webpage. Nevertheless, its content was not appropriate for this thesis's aim. Therefore, only three videos have been analysed: the one attached in the Van Gogh Museum website and the two of Van Abbemuseum.

1. Representational meaning

In this section of the Visual Social Semiotic Analysis the motifs from the selected videos to be analysed are separated in different labels. Some of the recurrent elements that one can see in the videos have already been mentioned and explained in the analysis of the pictures such as the synecdochical images of hands and eyes. The demographic representation (age, ethnicities, sex) is the same as in the pictures too although in one of the videos, there is someone

Figure 1

with non-Caucasian features. Despite this fact, this person is a non-impaired man who works in the Van Gogh Museum as a tour guide (Figure 1).
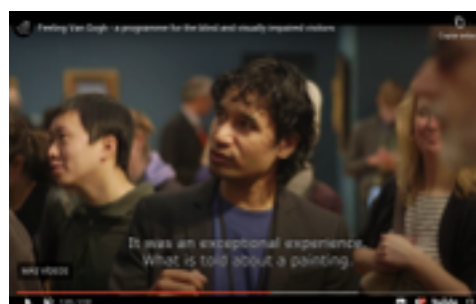
Regarding the motifs found in the three videos studied in-depth:

- Settings

In general, both pictures and videos show people with visual impairments inside the facilities of the institutions from the sample. Long shots are used at some points during the videos. This type of camera distance consists of depicting "figures [as] … prominent, but the background still dominates" (Bordwell 189). Given this characteristic, the viewer is more prone to focus on the surroundings where the subjects are being depicted. Due to this, we are able to establish a difference between the representation of people with visual impairments in pictures and videos: the moving

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images depict groups of people, unlike the individualistic photographs. Therefore, people with visual impairments, even impaired men, are represented as social beings.

The wider scope that the long shots offer to the viewer allows us to go further with the interpretation of the settings. We can state that Van Gogh Museum (Figure 2) in *Feeling Van Gogh* supply a more inclusive experience to the main target group of the activity given that, in several scenes, one can see that the group of participants is mingled with the rest of the museum's visitors, at least, in the halls where the permanent collection is exhibited. On the other hand, Figure 3 (Van Abbemuseum), presents a more sterile kind of hall and crowd-less. It seems like the institution located in Eindhoven had closed the museum or the area where they were filming the promotional video for the *Special Guests* program for blind and visually impaired people. In other words, they seem to be offering an exclusive activity for this target group, unlike the Van Gogh Museum. This aseptic

Figure 2

Figure 3

sensation that comes from the depiction of the settings without any other visitors in the images is increased in the other video that Van Abbemuseum has attached to the website where they promote the accessible tour guide. After all, it shows how one person accompanied by one tour guide from the museum roam different halls of the institution without interacting with any others than themselves.
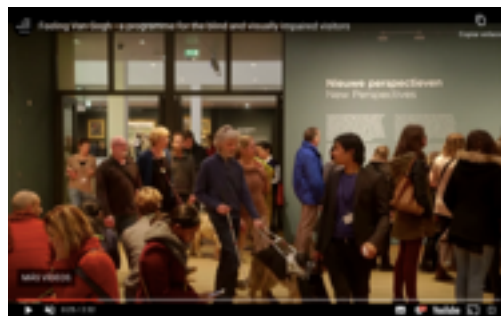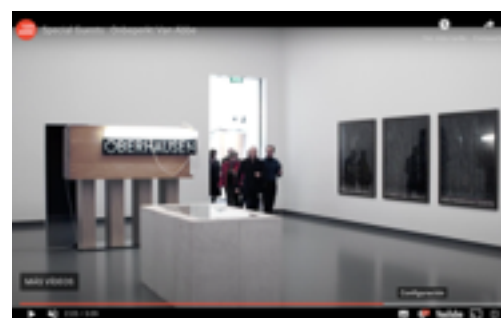
- Binaries

There are also several scenes in which two people, normally a man and a woman, are shown interacting. Although we cannot know whether they are partners/ couples, we can state that these different-sex representations (Figure 4) are the most numerous compared to same-sex representations (Figure 5). This difference has been interpreted as if the community of visually impaired people was being represented as non-permissive with same-sex interactions. However, this motif debunks the general stereotype of people with impairments being represented as sexual deviants (Barnes 16). In these examples, they are being represented as suitable to have partners.
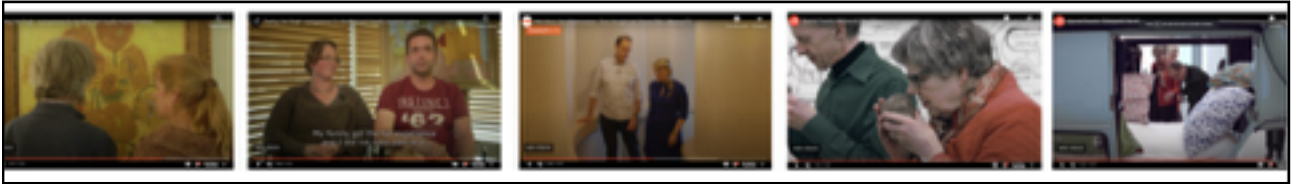
Figure 4

Figure 5

- Gender roles (gestures)

Not even in these moving images women with visual impairments are represented. At least though, by contrast with the analysed pictures, women are being depicted in the videos. Nevertheless, their involvement in the production stereotypes them. Women are being represented in their traditional role of the carer in different two ways: being the figure of the wives, companions, or partners of visually impaired men and as being responsible for the satisfaction of the visitors. Moreover, as long as all the visually impaired people in the videos are men, the connotations go further and seem like women are not only relegated to the figure of the carer but consigned to men.

In contrast to this traditional representation of women, it seems that the hegemonic masculinity is not represented in the videos as it has been interpreted to be present in the pictures already studied. During the promotional videos shared by Van Abbemuseum, one can see two visually impaired participants, all of them male, interacting (Figure 5), something that is missing in Van Gogh Museum, where the interaction is only made between one participants and his companion. Apart from this, one can see also the gestures between the visually impaired participant and tour guides (Figure 6).

Figure 6

None of these interpretations of the representations are stating that they diminish the masculinity of the visually impaired men who are feature in the videos from the sample. Tom

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Shakespeare, for instance, uses a feminist point of view to determine that the role that non-impaired people grant to people with impairments is that one of the inferior, like men have granted to women, or like white people have granted to non-white people (294). These power dynamics can be seen in gestures seen in the videos and word choices in texts. Dependency is one of these power dynamics that have been identified in the sample in these two modes of representation. Let me exemplify this concept by providing further interpretation on Figure 4: in these images, we can identify how the visually impaired male visitors are taking the tour guides' arms to be easily guided throughout the facilities of the building they are in. This gesture does not correspond to the western cultural representation of a man and clashes with the individualistic and independent representations of visually impaired men from the photographs already analysed. Indeed, visually impaired men who feature in Figure 4 relate more with the stereotype of the dependent impaired person (Barnes 8) than to anything else. Nevertheless, we must not understand this gesture as non-masculine —there are new masculinities, and traditional masculinities are oppressive—, but rather empowering people who are visually impaired to make them feel safer in the "new" environment they are interacting with.

- Making the pieces of art approachable

Garland-Thomson was already advancing that photographs freeze moments (336), videos instead, as they have the trait of duration, are more prone to complete the information that we have not been able to get through the pictures from the sample. One instance of this characteristic could be that the three videos we are analysing here show and add more information on how the pieces of art are approached during *Feeling Van Gogh* and *Special Guests for blind and visually impaired* tour guides.

Van Abbemuseum allows original pieces to be touched on their accessible activity for people with visual impairments. In both of their videos (Figure 7) there are scenes in which participants are touching the originals with gloves instead of bare-hands as shown in Image 4. Apart from original pieces of art, the videos from both of the Dutch museums show other ways that they have been investing in to

Figure 7

make art accessible for visually impaired visitors: models, tactile diagrams and 3D reproductions feature the videos. In Figure 8, for instance, one can see a scale model of the painting titled *The Room* (1888) by Vincent Van Gogh.
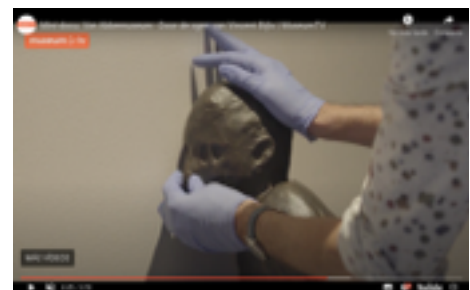
- Other disabilities

In Figure 8 we can also see that the person who is introduced as visually impaired because of participating in *Feeling Van Gogh*, has another impairment, he is hard of hearing. In fact, he wears a cochlear implant. This prop is also visible for the viewer in one of the videos attached to the Van Abbemuseum website of *Special Guests for blind and visually impaired*.

Figure 8

The representation of double impairments is relevant as far as it visibilises that part of the community that has more than only one impairment. In this case, Dutch museums represent deaf-blind participants in their videos. The only disadvantage of this focalisation on dual sensory impairment is that people who might have a physical and a sensory, or a sensory and mental[13] impairment might not identify enough with these images.

- Props

By contrast with the pictures from the sample, in the videos, canes are easily identifiable. Moreover, assistive dogs are represented in them, and the participants of the accessible activities wear glasses and sunglasses.

- Assistive dogs

Whereas in the pictures assistant dogs were missing in the representations of people with visual impairments, in the promotional video of *Feeling Van Gogh* one can see two of them inside the halls of Van Gogh Museum.

- Canes

For the great majority of western people, canes are highly identifiable with visually impaired people, in other words, is part of the western system of representation around them. Figure 9 is one of the instances in the videos, in this case from Van Abbemuseum, from the sample that one can see canes represented. What is missing here though, is the
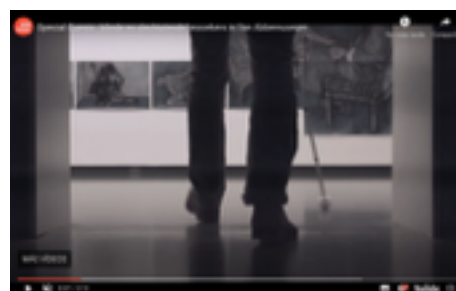

Figure 9

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[13] Mental illnesses are difficult to determine anyway because they are, in the majority of the cases, invisible to ones' eyes (UNWTO 30).

podotactile pavement with which people with visual impairments using canes can identify whether they are in front of a crossing for instance.

- Glasses

In the text analysis we will analyse which words the five museums from the sample used to refer to visually impaired visitors. As a preview, we determined that they all take into account the different degrees of sight loss inside the community, in other words, they do not only use the term "blind" but other words which meanings are broader.

Comparable to this, Dutch museums show the diversity within the visually impaired community by depicting people who are perceived as visually impaired in the videos with glasses to see. This prop has been interpreted this way because it clashes with the common idea of the blind person. If they wear glasses it is because they see.

In Van Gogh Museum's video, the viewer sees one of the participants in *Feeling Van Gogh* using sunglasses. This prop has been used by visually impaired characters in the media to cover their eyes which is not the case in the video. Furthermore, there are some scenes in which the same participant is shown with the sunglasses on his head (Figure 10).
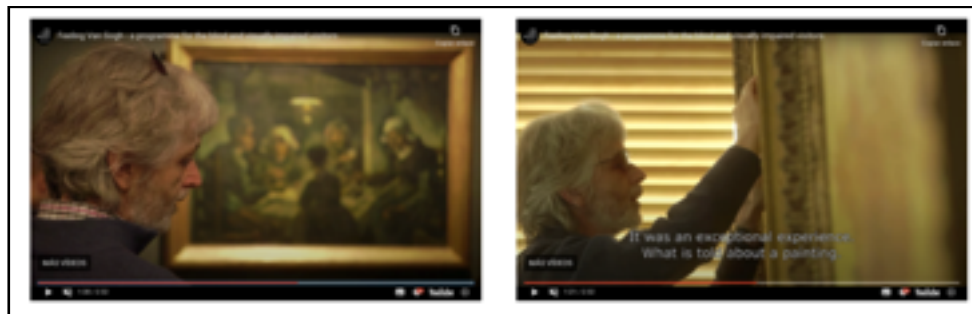

Figure 10

2. <u>Interactive meaning</u>

- Contact

In these three videos being analysed in this part of the thesis, there are scenes in which the people featuring in them are in demanding postures because they look at the camera (second image from the left in Figure 4). They are being interviewed and their body posture is frontal towards the viewers.

Other scenes are offering images because they display (Jewitt and Oyama 146) people making contact with other elements of the video. They do not face the camera as long as they are

interacting with people and objects of the space they are placed in. By contrast with the frontal postures of the demanding scenes, offering shots are taken from aside or even from behind the individuals being depicted as it happens in Figure 8, 9 or 10.

- Distance

Throughout the videos from the sample, one could see extreme close-ups, close-ups, and long shots. For instance, the demanding scenes mentioned above were always taken from a medium shot distance which allows the viewer to distinguish gestures and expressions from people as long as their bodies are depicted from the waist up (Bordwell et al. 189). Close-ups shots, on the other hand, were used to capture the movement of visually impaired participants' heads and hands while interacting with the pieces of art. Moreover, as it has been pointed out in the "settings" (on these pages, 38-9), medium long shots (Figures 2 and 3) allows the viewers not only to get information about the subjects/objects depicted in a scene but also their surroundings.

Jewitt and Oyama suggest that close-ups "reveal [the depicted subjects] individuality and their personality" (146). However, we cannot agree with this potential meaning of close-ups. Indeed, the more distant the people are depicted (being medium long shots the furthest), the better for the viewer to identify with them.

- Point of view

The eye-level is predominant throughout all the videos from the sample. This height of the camera confers equity into the relationship between the viewer and the viewed (Garland-Thomson 358). This means that no power is given neither of both (Jewitt and Oyama 136). Nevertheless, this equality conferred by the camera height according to Garlan-Thomson potentiates the figure of the "Other" on the subjects who are being depicted: "forms of casual or disinterested looking, staring estranges and discomforts both people engaged in this awkward partnership" (346). Thus, the representation of people with visual impairments in the videos is triggering the viewers' curiosity and highlighting their differences.

3. Compositional meaning

- Information value

The nature of the moving images does not enable us to determine easily which are the elements occupying the left, right, top, or down of the scenes. It seems for us that the main aim of

the producers of the videos was to provide symmetrical images. This relates especially with the fact that centrality is a key element of a composition given that it is the place where every element converges (Jewitt and Oyama 149). In relation to this potential meaning, Van Abbemuseum and Van Gogh Museum might be sending the message of being accessible environments both physically and in terms of knowledge accessibility.

We will analyse in-depth two medium shots, one from the promotional video attached to Van Gogh Museum's *Feeling Van Gogh* website (Figure 11), and another one from Van Abbemuseum (Figure 12). In both of the scenes, the viewer can see one person tilted towards the right of the frame. Therefore, they are being presented as non-familiar elements. As a matter of fact, they are being introduced to the audience given that their names and occupations appear written at the bottom of both compositions. And it is this element the one we should focus on: Figure 11 locates this information at the bottom-left, which, in accordance with Jewitt and Oyama, means that it is presented as something familiar and real, therefore, Ann Blockland a Senior Educator from Van Gogh Museum is represented as such. On the other hand, in Figure 12 this same piece of information about the person who is talking to the camera is situated on the bottom-right, thus, as given but new. As spectators of the video, we believe that this man's name is Vincent Bijlo, nevertheless, our assumption is that the reason for this specific location in the composition of the "personal" information about Bijlo is given by the fact that they present a visually impaired person who has a career, a job. Moreover, as specified by Barnes, impaired people have been recurrently being depicted as passive citizens of a society in which they were not contributing to (17).
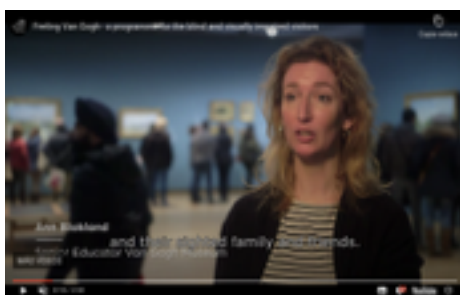

| Figure 11 | Figure 12 |

- Framing

Whereas in the pictures we could found frames within frames (on these pages, 35-6), in the videos from the sample we could find the representation of the Blind Gaze (Figure 13). Van Abbemuseum is the only institution that uses different cinematographic techniques to edit the

scenes captured by the camera as if the lens of the machine was the eyes of someone who is visually impaired, according to someone who is not visually impaired. We referred to this ableist phenomenon in the theoretical framework through Johnson Cheu's text in which he explains that non-visually impaired people construct the image of how someone with visual impairments sees. In other words, they appropriate from something foreigner to them.

Figure 13

The scenes in which we identified the ableist representation of the Blind Gaze are in the video called "Special Guests: Onbeperkt Van Abbe". The art institution located in Eindhoven provides both of the most recurrent ways of representation of the Blind Gaze in movies as specified by Cheu, darkening and blurring the scenes (Cheu 484) as it can be perceived in Figure 11. Furthermore, at the beginning of the video (sec. 30), a voice-over can be heard while the screen is totally dark and let the viewer gradually see someone who is visually impaired talking to someone who is not in-framed (Figure 14).
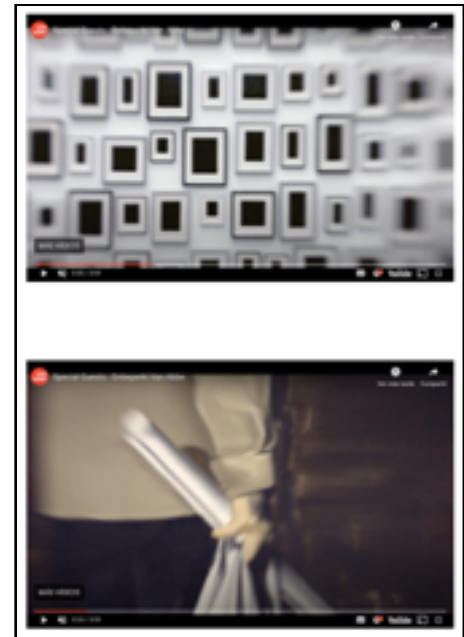

Figure 14

In Figures 11 and 12, we can identify that the subtitles (Figure 11) and the words introducing the subjects who are talking to the camera (both) do not pertain to the images captured by the camera. They have been added during the edition of the content filmed. The presence of these words then, cause a disconnection between this written element and the images being seen.

- Salience

Compared to the pictures, the videos that are studied in this thesis provide more variety of the techniques used to make something salient out of an image. Although the contrast of colours are present on the moving images, we would focus on what has not been seen yet during the analysis of the pictures. However, it is worth mentioning the fact that Van Abbemuseum obtains contrast in their images because of the setting: the white walls of the contemporary museum make the black pieces of art out-standing from them. The participants also wear dark clothes, which might be helpful for visually impaired customers who enter the website and watch the videos.

The rest of the approaches to make something salient in the videos are connected to cinematographic techniques. While Van Gogh Museum uses the racking focus (Figure 15), Van Abbemuseum chooses to make use of the pedestal movement of the camera (Figure 16).

The former consists of "shifting the area of sharp focus from one plane to another during a shot" (Bordwell et al. 497). This technique was used by Van Gogh Museum video whenever they were introducing visually the extra materials that *Feeling Van Gogh*'s participants will be able to use during the tour. Despite the fading of the image, racking focus is not a technique to represent how people with visual impairments see the world through their sight/ eyes but rather an eye-catcher technique that reveals and hides something to the viewer to guide their sight.

The latter technique consists of moving the camera vertically depicting the object or subject one wants to make salient (Bordwell et al. 194) top-down/ down-top. Van Abbemuseum uses this technique in order to make a cane salient: from the floor to the handle, the cane, a highly identifiable prop used by people who are visually impaired is being highlighted.
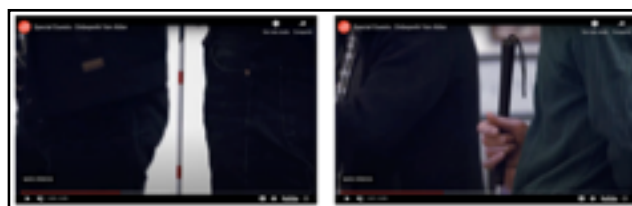

| Figure 15 | Figure 16 |

- Modality

Like in the pictures, we can find in the videos' scenes the three image modalities identified by Kress and van Leeuwen: naturalistic, scientific, and sensory.

The scientific modality scenes are those in which extreme close-ups and close-ups show details and do not open the scope of the frame to identify depth or any other "realistic" features (Jewitt and Oyama 151). These images have been identified as sensory as well given that they have been interpreted as if they were showing sensuality, the viewer was exposed to images of hands, lips, and bodies who were engaging with pieces of art. There are also naturalistic and unnaturalistic representations: while the former are scenes that one can see with the naked eyes, the latter is related to the "'surreal', 'fantastic' or 'ghostly'" (Jewitt and Oyama 151). Instances of this could be Figures 13[14], the ableist Blind Gaze representations because of their blurriness.

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[14] It would be necessary to describe these images to someone with visual impairment(s) given that this interpretation could be ableist. After all, we are not visually impaired persons.

2. Verbal/Written Signifiers Analysis (Multimodal Cultural Analysis)

⬤ **Text Analysis**

In this part of the analysis, we leave images behind to approach written texts. The aim of this section is to study the language that the five museums from the sample have used to promote the accessible activities for people with visual impairments. In accordance with Pauwels' methodology, we have approached the written discourses from a semiotic point of view. It required us to analyse the semantic and pragmatic aspects of the language used in the promotional texts, and to interpret their connotations.

1. Content

By way of introduction to the texts, in this part of their analysis, their content will be analysed to place the reader into the sample of texts with which we are dealing with here. Therefore, in this section, a description of the texts is given. Two central topics are being dealt with in all the promotional texts. On one hand, the pieces of art that have been made accessible, how the institutions have conferred this status to them (with what technique), and which senses they allude more to. On the other hand, the visibility and authority that has been given to people with visual impairments. In other words, whether the five museums being studied in this thesis refer to visually impaired people/ organisations as active members of society or not.

- Accessible pieces of art and extra materials

Pictures and videos have determined that the sense of touch is the most relevant one for the five museums from the sample to promote. Due to this, it has been concluded that people with visual impairments are reduced to their haptic sense over the others. Texts are not different: Van Gogh Museum, for instance, repeats four times that they own a 3D reproduction of the *Sunflowers*; El Prado highlights their six paintings reproduced with an outbreaking technique called Didú. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and CCCB label their tour guides as haptic visits and haptic experiences. And Van Abbemuseum although promoting *Special Guests* as a multi-sensory experience, the sense of touch is the first one they allude to in their text.

The other senses the institutions from the sample allude to are hearing/talking, smell, and taste. *Museo a Mano*, *Feeling Van Gogh*, *Special Guests*, and the adapted tour for visually impaired visitors from CCCB consist of a conventional guide in which a dialogue is established between visitors and professional tour guides from the institutions. El Prado, instead, supplies visitors with

an audio-descriptive device that guides the fingertips through each of the paintings they reproduced for the exhibition *Hoy Toca el Prado*. Added to this, the Van Gogh Museum offers its visually impaired customers with an auditory transcreation[15] of the *Sunflowers*. Dutch museums are the only ones alluding to smell, and only Van Abbemuseum alludes to the sense of taste.

Paradoxically or not, Museo Nacional del Prado promotes Hoy Toca el Prado alluding to the sense of sight also. They encourage visitors without visual impairments to take opaque glasses to experience the exhibition as if they were visually impaired, which relates to the ableist representation of the Blind Gaze.

- "Nothing About Us Without Us", visually impaired people's opinions

"Nothing About Us Without Us" is a statement that has been used for numerous social movements to fight for rights (Loebner 348). This demand claims the presence and involvement of people who are oppressed by the social structures in media productions and other realms of public life. The intention behind the proclamation is to avoid misrepresentations and allow "minorities" the opportunity to represent themselves more realistically, stepping away from the ableist assumptions through which they have been generally represented.

The Spanish museums, Centre de Cultural Contemporània de Barcelona and Museo Nacional del Prado, both mention in their respective texts the ONCE, the Spanish National Organisation of the Blind. The former museum recommends that participants of Stanley Kubrick's adapted tour visit the library where there are audio-described movies before the activity. On the other hand, the Madrilene museum explains that *Hoy Toca el Prado* has been developed together with visually impaired professional technicians from the ONCE[16].

We have already highlighted in the video analysis that Dutch museums give voice to some participants of *Feeling Van Gogh* and *Special Guests*. Van Abbemuseum, apart from Vincent Bijlo, who features in one of the videos attached to their website, mentions Simon Dogger. He has developed a navigation app for visually impaired visitors who use the facilities of the institution.

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[15] Josélia Neves, and expert in translation explains that transcreation "aims to 'substitute' the original form by an equivalent and yet new art form" (290).

[16] Fernando Suescun in the video attached to the website of *Hoy Toca el Prado*, which has not been analysed in this thesis, gives insight on which were the suggestions from the technicians. One instance of this is the fact that they recommended to tilt the reproductions up to 16º backward. This measure avoids people with visual impairments getting tired in their wrists while doing the haptic tour of the paintings' reproductions.

Van Gogh Museum, on the other hand, quotes Leroy who gives his point of view on the accessible tour guide provided by the museum in Amsterdam.

These representations then provide to the web-users the point of view from members of the target group that these institutions are specifically referring to by these initiatives. Presenting them as people with opinions, producers of an app, or professionals in their jobs, the recurrent cultural representation of impaired people as non-productive members of society (Barnes 17) is questioned.

Despite this, Leroy is introduced as a "participant try-out and blind from birth" which reduces him to his impairment, as if he does not have more insight than this feature (Shakespeare 286). Furthermore, all the individuals to whom the museums have given a voice to, are men, therefore, we are still missing disabled female representations.

2. Stylistic features (terminology)

- "Visually impaired", "blind", "low vision"

The museums from the sample use different combinations of words to refer to the main target group of *Hoy Toca el Prado*, *Feeling Van Gogh*, *Museo a Mano*, *Special Guests*, and the adapted tour to Stanley Kubrick monograph: "the blind and partially sighted" (Van Abbemuseum); "blind people or with low vision" (CCCB); "blind people or with residual sight", "blind participants" (Reina Sofía), "the blind and visually impaired" (Van Gogh Museum), "blind people, with rest of vision or diverse pathologies associated to the sight" (El Prado). What all of them have in common is the presence of the word "blind" at the beginning and a word with a broader meaning afterwards. This second part always alludes to the people from the community with different degrees of visual impairment. In fact, this could be equivalent to the scenes of the videos in which some participants of the accessible activities wear glasses, a factor that has been interpreted as suggesting the possibility that someone is visually impaired and still sees. What is more, as stated before (on these pages, 27-8), the World Health Organisation (WHO) use the term visual impairments as an umbrella term in which blind people and people with low vision are taken into account. All in all, the presence of different concepts to refer to people with visual impairments connotes that the group of people who have this impairment is heterogeneous.

Museo Nacional del Prado might be the only museum from the sample that refers to a larger range of visual impairments than the rest. As stated in the introduction of this thesis, there are two

hegemonic ways to approach disability, the medical and the social model[17] (Bolt 547-8; Barnes 20). The Spanish museum, by using the term "pathologies" is nearer to the former one. This does not mean, however, that El Prado would treat the target group of visually impaired visitors as patients. The rest of the museums seem to use less medicalised terminology regarding visual impairments.

Other words that museums use to refer to the visually impaired audiences are "people" (CCCB and Reina Sofía), "visitors" (Van Abbe), and "participants" (Reina Sofía). El Prado and Van Gogh Museum, on their part, limit themselves to referring to this target group as "impaired". Let us focus for a moment on the term "participant": it has been interpreted as connoting co-creation, it seems to suggest that visually impaired people doing the *Museo a Mano* tour take an active role from the beginning. What is more, although our chosen museums are selling experience as a commodity, something proper from the economy of experience (Drotner and Schrøer 19), in any case they use the term "client" or "customer". A potential reason to this might be that the museums want to position themselves as altruist institutions, not as companies who want money from people (Barnes 19).

- "Companions", "mentors", "carers"

While we are considering how visually impaired people are being referred to through words, we should also take into account how their acquaintances are being labelled. This kind of information, although it might seem outside the realm of the main aim of the thesis, is relevant to showing how this specific target group is being represented. After all, Barnes states that impaired people have been generally represented in television and cinema as dependent on other persons (Barnes 8). Therefore, what we are mainly concerned about here is how the representation of visually impaired "companions" implies something about people with visual impairments themselves.

Firstly, only the Dutch museums from the sample refer to the companions of visually impaired participants to accessible activities. Whilst they advertise the possibility of inviting some friends on the tours, the Spanish museums' activities seem to be, on the whole, more exclusive and

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[17] There is another approach to disability, it is called the "biopsychosocial model" (Thoreau 462). Since 2003 it is included in the International Classification of Functioning and Disability (ICIDH-2) since 2003. According to Estelle Thoreau, "this model acknowledges that disability was dependent on both a person's social environment *and* their experience of impairment" (462).

hermetic. It seems that they are more concerned with how many people they are capable of managing per group[18].

Van Abbemuseum uses the term "mentor" to refer to the people with which visually impaired visitors socialise with. This word is a literal translation from the Dutch "begeleider" which can mean companion. Other meanings of the term are tutor or advisor which implies a vertical hierarchy. This term then has been interpreted as increasing the level of dependency with which people with impairments have been traditionally connected to (Barnes 8).

Regarding Van Gogh Museum's choice of words, the institution located in Amsterdam, different terms are used to refer to the visually impaired visitors' companions: "carer", "family members" and "seeing friends". The first concept relates to the medical model of disability: it refers to the action of someone worrying and taking care of another individual, which also implies dependency. Similar inferences can be made from the second expression, "family members". Again suggestive of the view that impaired people are dependent, as relatives have been traditionally their "carers"[19]. Finally, the term "seeing friends" has been interpreted as the most inclusive of the three terms which Van Abbemuseum uses in their promotional text on their webpage. This concept implies inclusivity because the term implies that visually impaired people can be friends with non-impaired people. By contrast, it also gives the impression that people with impairments need help from non-impaired people to interact with the world. At the same time, this interpretation implies that people with impairments cannot be friends with other impaired people. Nevertheless, we would need to take into account the fact that *Feeling Van Gogh* is an experience that is open to every visitor of the museum impaired or not.

Overall, Dutch museums present visually impaired people as social human-beings who like to be accompanied to enjoy their leisure time, and who they are not socially isolated (Barnes 9).

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[18] Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona warn that they have limited places available for their accessible tours. They even notify the website-users to call or send an e-mail before in order to book their place.

[19] As specified by Werk & Mantelzorg in their 2017 report, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of cases of unpaid non-professional care (2). On the same token, Kennisplein, a digital Dutch platform where people can exchange points of views on the matter of disability, published an article about the phenomenon of the "informal care". Indeed, most of these unpaid activities are done, in the majority of the cases, by female relatives of the person who is being taken care of (Kennisplein).

- Accessibility, inclusivity, adaptability

One of the most striking features of the sample of texts we are analysing here is the scarce presence of the term "accessible" and associated derivatives. As a matter of fact, we believe that this absence is explained by the fact that the word "accessible" has been connected to disability and impairments. Something similar happens with the label "Design for All". It has been related to specific groups of society instead of having been understood as something beneficial for society as a whole (Pühretmair and Nussbaum 274).

Both of the Madrilene museums, Museo Nacional del Prado and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, use it when referring to the aim of the exhibition, "make accessible to people with any kind of visual disability a key selection of pieces of art from El Prado collection" (my trans.) (El Prado); and the degree of approachability to the pieces of art "guarantee the compatibility between accessibility to original pieces and their conservation" (my trans.) (Reina Sofía). Van Gogh Museum, on the other hand, uses the concept to refer to the non-visually impaired visitors that visit their facilities: "the permanent place is accessible to all visitors of the museum". Thus, the Dutch institution presents the 3D reproduction of the *Sunflowers* as something accessible for non-impaired visitors aside from those visitors who are visually impaired, which implies a change of roles.

Concerning Van Abbemuseum and CCCB, they make use of other terms rather than "accessible"/"accessibility". The former institution uses "inclusive" and "inclusion" which relates to the fact that *Special Guests* is not exclusionary. The problem here is that in the promotional videos (Figure 3), Van Abbemuseum's halls were empty, in other words, the group of participants seems to be alone in the museum. As specified by the Oxford Dictionary, "inclusivity" is "the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those having physical or mental disabilities or belonging to other minority groups" (Lexicon. Oxford Dictionary). This definition seems to be the one to which Van Abbemuseum subscribes *Special Guests*. It seems that Van Gogh Museum, based on what we see in Figure 2, has another interpretation of the term as it implies not only the presence of "minorities" in spaces where they have not been welcomed years before, but added to that, these "minorities" are given the opportunity to mingle with the rest of the people that have not been excluded from the discourse and actions of the institutions.

CCCB, on its part, uses the term "adapted" to refer to the nature of the tour guide they are supplying to visually impaired visitors. This term connotes that the activity is rather secondary given that "adapted" implies something already made then altered to become suitable for what they

want to supply[20]. The meaning of "adapt" is what makes us conclude that CCCB does not have in their agenda people with visual impairments as a prime target group.

- Other concepts

Before starting the content analysis of the texts from the sample, two terms used by the CCCB and the Van Gogh Museum in their promotional texts have been remarkably outstanding.

• "Discovering"

The Catalan museum uses the term "discovering" regarding the outcome that visually impaired people would take from their guide tour. One of the definitions of the term, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is "become aware of (a fact or situation)" (Lexicon. Oxford Dictionary). This implies that there is ignorance before the activity but knowledge after it. It is common knowledge that we live in a highly visual society (Faulkner et al.) but this does not mean that people with visual impairments do not know certain things regarding the visual arts like cinema, which is the case of the exhibition promoted by CCCB in this instance. This kind of vocabulary, suggestive of revealing or discovering something, links with the rhetorics of the exotic that Garland-Thomson writes about in "Seeing the Disabled. Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular photography". Whilst she analyses pictures of people with impairments in her research and we are analysing written sources here, Garland-Thomson connects the representations she is studying with the European Imperialism (358).

• "Specially trained"

The Dutch museum acknowledges, by referring to their tour guides as "specially trained", one of the biggest concerns that visually impaired people have when traveling in accordance with Poria et al., how the staff working in the hospitality field will approach them (154-55). This explicitness suggests that the Van Gogh Museum has invested their resources in ensuring the experience of visually impaired visitors is worthwhile. Accordingly, it is indicative that this target group represent highly important customers for the museum.

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[20] According to the Oxford Dictionary, to "adapt" is to "make (something) suitable for a new use or purpose; modify" (Lexicon. Oxford Dictionary).

3. <u>Representation</u>

- Register

    All the texts from the sample use a semi-formal register to promote their accessible activities except Museo Nacional del Prado. This Spanish institution uses extensively subordinate sentences which hampers understanding and decreases comprehensibility of their written materials. We consider this way of writing more formal than the simple sentences that the rest of the museums' text uses. Regarding assistive technologies, Van Abbemuseum is the only institution that offers this tool on their webpage without it being necessary to have some programs installed on your devices. Taking into consideration what Thoreau pinpoints about the fact that in *Ouch* most of the articles are written in an oral style because in the end they would be transmitted orally to the people impaired on the other side of the screen through screen readers (459), we do not think that the register used by El Prado is the most suitable for attracting visually impaired people to *Hoy Toca el Prado*.

- Verbs

    CCCB, and Van Gogh Museum use the first person of the plural to approach the reader personally. By doing so, they are achieving a sense of connection by not addressing them as a third party, like El Prado or Van Abbemuseum do, and as if they were already acquainted. Indeed, this characteristic ties in with the fact that Reina Sofía also suggests such a connection with their use of the noun "participants" in their discourse (on this page, 50). Apart from this, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and CCCB use verbs that indicate suggestion instead of being imperative: "invite", "propose".

    The museums use different tenses in their promotional texts. CCCB uses verbal structures in future form, after all, they are promoting something that back then was not available yet. El Prado uses the past to make it evident that they have been working to make the museum accessible for people with visual impairments since 2015, and the future to promote the new sites where the exhibition *Hoy Toca el Prado* was displayed in 2019. The rest of the art institutions use the present to promote their accessible initiatives.

- The term "experience"

    The word "experience" can be found in every single text of the sample. As stated in the theoretical framework, the economy of experience has commodified any kind of participation (Yoo

and Gretzel 412). Irrespective of any impairment, nowadays tourism is based on this paradigm of the experience, and in relation to Sally Everett, tourists look to engage with their environment as well as having more embodied (337) or somatic experiences (342) that they are willing to pay for. Nevertheless, it seems intrinsic for visually impaired visitors to museums to have somatic experiences when visiting, at least, the museums from the sample.

- The titles of the accessible activities

All the titles for the accessible activities involve a play on words (El Prado, Reina Sofía, Van Gogh Museum), apart from CCCB's which is wholly descriptive, and Van Abbemuseum's which represents visually impaired people as the Other.

Regarding the first group of titles, *Hoy Toca el Prado*, *Museo a Mano*, and *Feeling Van Gogh* are all terms which recall the sense of touch. As highlighted previously, the haptic sense is the most relevant to promote for the museums from the sample. With respect to Museo Nacional del Prado, *Hoy Toca el Prado* can be translated as "today we touch El Prado" (my trans.), or "today we choose El Prado" (my trans.). Each of these meanings makes reference to both of the target groups the institution wants to promote the activity among, those who are visually impaired and those who are not. The name of *Museo a Mano*, "Museum On Hand" or "Available Museum" in English (my trans.), in one way, touches upon the centrality of the haptic sense Museo Reina Sofía confers to touch, thus, the word "hand" works as a synecdoche. The name of the activity can be interpreted also as if it is referring to the approachability of the institution, it is somewhere where people are welcomed. Van Gogh Museum's tour guide called *Feeling Van Gogh*, like the previous museums, makes reference to the sense of touch. The term "feeling" has a broader meaning than touch alone as it also refers to recalling emotions in general (Lexicon. Oxford Dictionary). This ties in with the different approaches Van Gogh Museum supplies to visitors to apprehend some of the artist's masterpieces. We consider that the verb "to feel" refers closer to the sense of touch than any other senses, in the end, when we listen we are hearing, when we taste we are savouring, when we see we are gazing or staring, etc. but when we touch we are feeling.

It is also relevant to pinpoint the fact that both, the Van Gogh Museum and Museo Nacional del Prado uses in the titles of their accessible initiatives as well as referring to the senses of the target group as outlined above, we think that this is an auto-promotion strategy.

Van Abbemuseum, for its part, uses the expression *Special Guests* as the title for all their accessible activities developed for mental, physical, and sensory impaired visitors. The name of the program itself is problematic because they are idealising and "othering" these target groups. The

term "special" confers otherness, in fact, people with Alzheimer's, physically impaired, visually impaired, autistic, hard of hearing…, all of them are being labeled this way because of only one word. This term related to Stella Young's concept of the "inspiration porn": the people who are being allured by Van Abbemuseum through this program are being separated out by their impairments. Nevertheless, they do not only use the word special for the tours but also for the pieces of art that have been replicated to make art accessible for people with impairments, connoting somehow the uniqueness of these reproductions.

CCCB on the contrary choose a very descriptive title. "<<Stanley Kubrick>> for blind people. Adapter visit for blind people or people with low vision". They are promoting a guided tour for people with different degrees of sight loss on the exhibition they were hosting at the beginning of the year 2020 about the filmmaker Stanley Kubrick.

- Non-visually impaired people

We have already pointed out the labels with which the companions of visually impaired participants to these activities are referred to in the texts from the sample and usually, they are referred as able-bodied people, or at least non-visually impaired as in the case of the Van Gogh Museum —"seeing friends"—. As a result, people who do not have visual impairments are represented as beings without impairments in general.

- Gender of words

Gender neutrality is maintained in all the texts from the sample, even the ones in Spanish and Catalan, two languages that implement either masculine or feminine to nouns by the norm. Visually impaired visitors have been referred to, by the museums located in the Iberian Peninsula, as "people", a word that in both languages, Catalan and Spanish, is feminine. Nevertheless, in both languages, the universal or generic masculine is the most utilised and grammatically acceptable way to refer to both of the traditional sexes. Paradoxically, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía highlights the sex of the tour guides: "una educadora acompaña a las personas ciegas o con resto visual durante la actividad", "an educator accompanies blind people or with partial sight throughout the activity" (my trans.).

We are offering here two possible interpretations regarding the use of the feminine form in Spanish that Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía has used in their text to promote *Museo a Mano*. Firstly, it can be related to the fact that traditionally, women have been relegated to the role of the carer, furthermore, teaching has also long been viewed as a feminine occupation at least in

kindergarten and high schools, in other words, within the basic levels of education. If this is the case, people who have visual impairments fall again into the stereotype of someone who needs the help of others to find a way to deal with their environment (Barnes 8). The apparent deliberate decision to use the feminine form of the term "educator" in Spanish makes us think about it as a practical solution. Maybe, the education department of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía only has only hired women. Going further, this feminine form is more radical and, by using the feminine as the generic, it highlights feminist ideals and is a particular trend currently in Spain especially among left-wing parties[21].

- Information missing

Again, there is no reference to assistant dogs, gloves to touch original pieces of art or non-Caucasian or female visually impaired individuals.

Discussion/ Results

a) How are visually impaired visitors represented by the Dutch museums from the sample compared to the representation offered by the Spanish institutions on the promotional websites for the accessible activities for this specific target group of tourists?

- Multisensory

Both, Dutch and Spanish museums seem to be aware of the "economy of experience" paradigm (Drotner and Schrøer 19). As it has already been explained during the analysis of the texts, every written source from the sample makes reference to the word "experience". This new criterion has given way to somatic tourist activities where the body plays a central role. Moreover, this phenomenon of supplying more tourists body-centered experiences has been normal for visually impaired visitors since the beginning of their integration in heritage attractions. Indeed, as we have been seeing in all the discourse modalities we have analysed (image and written), touch is the central sense of the experiences the museums are promoting in this sample regardless of their geographical location. Nevertheless, Dutch art museums allures to a bigger range of senses compared to Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, CCCB, and Museo Nacional del Prado.

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[21] More information about this phenomenon can be read in this article: "The Vocabulary that One Needs to Understand the 'Feminist' Language of the New Government" (my trans.) by I. Trujillo. The article is originally written in Spanish and the title is "El Vocabulario que Necesitas para Entender el Lenguaje 'Feminista' del Nuevo Gobierno".

Ultimately, whereas the Spanish institutions promote the sense of touch and hearing, the Dutch ones add into this list the smell and the taste. Despite going unnoticed in the texts and photographs from the sample, we can determine from the videos of Dutch museums that the sense of sight is also being used by the participants to interact with the pieces of art exhibited in *Feeling Van Gogh* and *Special Guests*.

As a matter of fact, given that the five museums selected present several senses in their promotional webpages for the accessible activities they host(ed), people with visual impairments are being represented as multi-sensory human-beings. Nevertheless, for the matter, this group of society seems to be reduced to the haptic sense given that the five pictures analysed, the images from videos, and the importance of the sense of touch in the texts shows it in a synecdochical way as if their hands represented all their being. These representations, despite representing people with visually impaired as multi-sensory persons, highlight their impairment(s) and "enforces the acceptance of difference" (Garland-Thomson 346-7). After all, the viewer is staring a part of a whole instead of gazing a whole itself (Garland-Thomson 346-7).

- Leisure time in group

Another difference between what the Dutch and Spanish institutions from the sample represent visually impaired people on their website is their sociability. Van Abbemuseum and Van Gogh Museum show them interacting not only with pieces of art, which is found in the pictures of the Spanish institutions and implied in their promotional texts, but other participants of the initiatives. Whereas the Spanish museums represent people with visual impairments alone in their pictures, Dutch art institutions provide through their videos group representations. Not to forget that they are the only museums from the sample referring to the companions of the visually impaired participants. Nevertheless, the isolation of these individuals is also portrayed in Van Abbemuseum's (Image 3) and Van Gogh Museum's pictures (Image 1).

- Demographics: sex, age, and ethnicity[22]

Spanish and Dutch museums portray the same demography in their videos and pictures: white middle-aged males. Due to this, the system of representation that Van Gogh Museum, Van Abbemuseum, CCCB, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, and Museo Nacional del Prado create seems to represent national hegemonies rather than the specific group of people with visual

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[22] The topic of the age will be further developed in subquestion b (on these pages, 64-5).

impairments. In view of the disregard for women and non-Caucasian visually impaired members of the community, the museums from the sample are representing the visually impaired collective as non-diverse. Moreover, they are representing Spain and the Netherlands societies as homogenous.

Tom Shakespeare in "Cultural Representation of Disabled People: Dustbins for Disavowal?" already explains that traditionally, disabled people have been equated to other oppressed minorities like women, black citizens, etc. (283). As a matter of fact, in the analysis of the pictures and videos, we highlighted the matter of the settings. Let me exemplify this by giving an account of how women have been relegated to the inside world to take care of the children and the house. Possibly caused by this connection that Shakespeare highlights between female gender roles and impaired people, the latter are depicted in indoor areas by the Spanish and Dutch institutions we are studying here. What this might connote is the absence of accessible, secure, and non-disabled public opened spaces for visually impaired citizens.

The representation of women in the sample's discourses is reduced to the videos. In these moving images, they are portrayed as non-visually impaired and reduced to the role of the carer. As a matter of fact, the women featuring in the videos are either the wives or partners of the participants to the accessible activities or the professional educators from the museums' staff. What is more, in one of the texts from the sample (Reina Sofía), tour guides are referred in feminine which, again, relegates women to the traditional role of the carer.

In all the pictures and videos from the sample, seem that a relationship between age and impairments/ disabilities is established. Despite this recurrent representation of middle-aged visually impaired white males in these discourses, the UNWTO warns that not all the elderly have or will become impaired or disabled although they have more chances for this to happen (33). Another interpretation that might give a reason of the representation of this specific age demography instead of others is the fact that Van Gogh Museum, Van Abbemuseum, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Museo Nacional del Prado, and CCCB have decided to start representing older people due to the aging of the European population. After all, the museums are projecting in their promotional discourses the demographical reality of Europe, they are providing this increasing group of tourists the possibility to identify themselves within the tourist discourses, something that until now was not possible —in accordance with Edelheim (14, 8) and Small (87), only young and abled bodies were being portrayed on the tourism industry spread using traditional and new media.

- Terminology[23]

Unlike what we have seen in the demographic representation, the language used in the texts gives us a sense of a more diverse community of visually impaired people. We determined that all the museums from the sample represented through language the different degrees of sight loss. All of them refer firstly to the blind, so people who are visually impaired but do not see anything. Secondly, they mention the people that still have remnants of sight. Nevertheless, to refer to these members of the community it seems that there is not any consensus on how to address them: some museums use the expression "partially sighted" (Van Abbemuseum), some others "low vision" (CCCB), or they even use terms specific from the medical approach to a disability. This is the case of Museo Nacional del Prado for using the word "pathologies" whose connotations are stigmatising for the community of people with visual impairments.

- Information value and contact

Information value argues that the elements of an image that are on the right are considered to mean newness, something to which the "viewer … must pay special attention" (Jewitt and Oyama 148). The elements that are placed on the left of a composition/ scene must be considered, according to the methodologists, as the contrary of it, as familiar and given (Jewitt and Oyama 148). Furthermore, what is in-framed on the top of the images has the potential meaning of implying idealism, and what is on the bottom is recognised as the specific and real (Jewitt and Oyama 148).

The promotional photographs analysed from the Spanish museums place the subject with visual impairments on the right unlike Dutch museums, that put them on the left side of the composition —although in Image 3 the subject depicted is more on the center—. Taking into account the information above displayed as a refreshment of what Visual Social Semiotic Analysis method explains about information value, we can provide several propositions. On one hand, that Dutch museums seem to have integrated already visually impaired people into their facilities compared to the Spanish art institutions from the sample, which are still displaying them as a novelty. In fact, they might have chosen to arrange the compositions this way to present themselves as compassionate and generous institutions (Barnes 11). On the same token, however, whereas the Spanish museums present the pieces of art on the left of the compositions, thus as familiar elements, Dutch museums locate these objects on the right side and center of their compositions. Because of

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[23] This aspect has been studied earlier in the thesis, specifically in the text analysis section (on these pages, 50-4).

this fact, they seem to be more interested in the promotion of their new acquisitions and innovative tools to approach art to people with visual impairments.

This difference between Dutch and Spanish art museums is also given by the contact which establishes whether a scene or photograph is a demanding composition or an offering one (Jewitt and Oyama 145-6). Indeed, the Spanish institutions' pictures do not have elements in the composition with which the viewers can make contact with, therefore, they are offering photographs. Dutch museums' pictures, instead, are demanding given that they represent visually impaired subjects as active individuals who make contact with the viewers through their body position.

- Props

Assistive dogs, canes[24], and sunglasses covering visually impaired people's eyes are some of the elements that we can see as props in the videos analysed in this thesis. This list of props relates highly with the current system of representation that Europeans relate with the "blind" community.

The moving images show also other elements that provide viewers with new information about visually impaired people that would, eventually, broaden their system of representation about them (Hall 25). Dutch museums add into the traditional discourse around this specific group of society the facts that some of them are partially blind and they can have more than one impairment. Regarding the first characteristic, Van Abbemuseum and Van Gogh Museum show several participants with glasses. This prop relates to the wide range of visual impairments that exist (on this page, 60). If someone who is being perceived as "blind" is wearing glasses it is because they are not blind but still retain some sight. Regarding the second characteristic, Dutch museums show some participants with cochlear implants, a device that is used by deaf impaired people for stimulating their auditory nerves and hear. The presence of this object in the promotional videos and Van Abbemuseum's text, connotes the fact that impaired people, in general, can have more than one impairment. As a curiosity, both of the Dutch institutions from the sample represents the same "double" impairment, deaf-blind. Although its representation confers a bigger sense of diversity to the visually impaired people community, it could be still improved by representing, for instance, different modalities of impairments (physical-sensory, sensory-mental[25]…) instead of two sensory impairments like Van Gogh Museum and Van Abbemuseum do.

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[24] Only one cane has been identified in one picture, Image 3 (Van Abbemuseum).

[25] Although mental impairments are not easily distinguishable bared eye (UNWTO 30).

Not Dutch museums nor the Spanish ones represent people with visual impairments with mismatching clothes, an assumption that some body-abled people might have.

An element that only has appeared in one of the analysed texts is the Braille language. As it seems, Museo Nacional del Prado is the only institution that we have studied in this thesis providing information in Braille to *Hoy Toca el Prado* visitors. This might be also given by the fact that the Madrilene museum does not offer a tour guide like the rest of the art institutions from the sample. They, instead, supply audio-description devices. Museo Nacional del Prado, then, offers a more independent accessible activity than Van Gogh Museum, Van Abbemuseum, CCCB, and Museo Nacional de Arte Reina Sofía. Regarding how affects this scarce representation of the Braille to how people with visual impairments are perceived by non-visually impaired people, it gives insight on the fact that, although Braille is commonly linked to people with visual impairments, it does not seem to be as relevant as it seems. After all, the percentage of visually impaired people who know how to read Braille is lower than the total amount of people with visual impairments (Gómez).

- Language

This matter has not been analysed in this thesis but we think is remarkable to consider it in the discussion given that it adds a relevant piece of information about how people with visual impairments are represented by Spanish and Dutch museums.

The information displayed on the accessible activities websites was automatically given in the official or co-official language from the Netherlands and Spain. In other words, whereas Spanish museums used the Spanish (CCCB's website is in Catalan), Dutch museums provided the information in Dutch. In today's globalised world, however, websites usually have the option of changing languages. Among the museums we have analysed, all of them had the option to translate the information to English, and others even to regional languages (Reina Sofía). Nevertheless, these options in El Prado and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía could not be activated. Therefore, their information about accessible activity is only available in Spanish[26]. These issues do not appear in the Dutch museums' webpages, they translate to English the information if customers clicks on the option to do so. Apart from this, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB) is the only museum from the sample that despite translating the same information from the

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[26] If activated in one's device, the written information from a website can be translated using the Google Translator program. Thus, non-Spanish website-users can access the information in any available language on Google Translator.

Catalan to Spanish and English warns the customer of the website about the fact that the visit will be done in the first language.

Regarding the videos, Van Abbemuseum does not make English subtitles available on them, despite being in Dutch[27]. By contrast, the Van Gogh Museum although had filmed in Dutch as well, they provide their subtitles into the production.

After these evidences, we can recall what Jennie Small and Simon Darcy in "Tourism, Disability and Mobility" (2010) state as a pattern within impaired people communities: they "travel at the same rate for day trips but a much lower rate than the general population for overnight domestic travel (21% less) and international travel (51% less)" (6-7). These figures, determine that, at least in Australia, people with impairments do more domestic travels than internationals. Considering these facts as if they were European, the reason why all the websites from the sample use the official or co-official national languages is relatively solved. It is implied that visually impaired international visitors will not visit other countries and neither their museums. In other words, Van Abbemuseum, Van Gogh Museum, CCCB, Museo Nacional del Prado, and Museo National Centro de Arte Reina Sofia target directly the domestic visually impaired visitors rather than the internationals because they might be aware of this information.

b) How similar or different is the representation of visually impaired people in the three modalities of discourse we analyse in this thesis (pictures, videos, and texts) from the sources we use as a sample? [Interplay Analysis].

The diverse mediums through which the target group that this thesis is concerned about is represented differently depending on whether they are represented in pictures, videos, or texts. Each of the discourse modalities analysed in this thesis adds new layers of information about visually impaired people. In other words, they interplay with each other and are highly complementary. This means, for instance, that if something has not been disclosed on the pictures, is likely to appear in the videos or texts. Due to the fact that the medium in which the information is presented also influences the discourse (McLuhan), the pictures are expected to provide less information that the videos or the texts given that their nature consist in freezing what they capture (Garland-Thomson 336).

Photographs provide the essence of the accessible activities, which has been identified as individuals with visual impairments touching the pieces of art and other interactive materials on

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[27] YouTube has the option of activating the automatic subtitles. Therefore, the information becomes accessible for non-Dutch speakers as well.

display. Videos show the multi-sensory nature of these initiatives, how original art pieces are touched (using gloves), and participants' point of views on their experience. Texts, on the other hand, disclose the names of the paintings and sculptures that have been made accessible apart from giving more practical information about the initiatives' prices and schedules.

The interaction of photographs, videos, and texts can add new information to each other or emphasise particular elements if they appear in all three modes of discourse. Therefore, there might be disconnections or connections between them. One instance of the latter could be that the haptic sense is represented and mentioned by pictures, videos, and texts; or the inexistent representations or mentioning to non-white people with impairments or impaired women in any of the discourse modalities. An example that shows the dependency among pictures, texts, and videos from the sample is that assistive dogs only feature on one of the videos published by Van Abbemuseum. Not in the pictures nor in the texts the art institution clarifies whether it is allowed or not to carry your dog as disabled person in their facilities. Other disconnections could be that Van Gogh Museum does not represent younger generations of visually impaired visitors in their videos as they do in their cover picture promoting *Feeling Van Gogh*. Another example could be that people with visual impairments are only approached using the medical model to disability in texts through the use of terms like "pathologies" (El Prado) or "carer" (Van Gogh Museum).

c) How are modern art museums representing visually impaired visitors in their promotional websites of their accessible activities for them compared to the representation offered by contemporary art museums on theirs?

One of the hypotheses we considered from the beginning of this thesis was the possibility that modern art museums were more conservative than contemporary art museums with respect to the representation of visually impaired people online. It has been like that in a way although in less intensity than we first thought. What is more, they represent similarly the target group we are concerned about within this thesis.

The first difference between modern and contemporary art museums from the sample when it comes to representing people with visual impairments is the use of the medical approach to disability in language. As pointed out before, the terms "pathologies" (El Prado) and "carer" (Van Gogh Museum) medicalises the impairments that blind people and people with residual vision has. It connotes dependency and stigmatises them as if the environment was not abettor of the disabilities visually impaired people encounter in their everyday life (Darcy and Buhalis 26-9).

Another of the characteristics that we have found modern art museums from this sample share is that Museo Nacional del Prado and Van Gogh Museum insert in their accessible activity titles the institution's name. Our interpretation relapse on the fact that it might be as auto-promotion strategy. Whether people would be interested in the exhibition or the tour guides does not matter as long as they read the name of the initiatives and the institution together. On the other hand, both museums allude, in their texts, to the fact that their accessible activities are made for all kinds of people who visit their facilities. Due to this, we interpret that both modern museums want to allude through the names *Hoy Toca el Prado* and *Feeling Van Gogh*, both audiences. On one hand, visually impaired people with the first part of the expression "toca" and "feeling". And, on the other hand, to the rest of non-visually impaired customers of the museum through the second part of the titles, "el Prado" and "Van Gogh". This affects the representation of people with visual impairments insofar as their presence in museums is supported and legitimised by the institutions that host these initiatives that are accessible to them.

Regarding formal aspects of the visual representations from the sample (pictures and videos), it seems that modern art museums are keener on not using strong contrast between dark and light colours as it seems to be the case of contemporary art museums (Van Abbemuseum, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, and CCCB). By contrast, Museo Nacional del Prado and Van Gogh Museum use the contrast that complementary colours enhanced naturally. After all, contemporary art pieces seem to have influenced the way a contemporary art museum is made architectonically and design-wise distributed: black and white are recurrent as contrasting colours, like clean lines and geometrical shapes (minimalism). This utilisation of hard contrasts between colours, as a result, avails visually impaired customers to the websites of the contemporary museums from the sample to distinguish and perceive better what is depicted in the pictures and videos.

We have determined also that Van Gogh Museum and Museo Nacional del Prado supply to their customers' particular pieces of art that contemporary art museums do not. The formers make accessible only embossed reproductions of paintings, whereas the latter give access to sculptures, installations, and other objects to their visitors. Despite these variations, both modern and contemporary art museums invested in scale models, tactile diagrams, and other materials to enhance the experience of visually impaired people and other visitors.

To conclude this section, an element used by both types of museums will be explained, the Blind Gaze. According to Johnson Cheu, this term refers to the appropriation by the hand of able-bodied individuals of the sight of people with visual imapirments (484). It consists of "explor[ing]

how that gaze interacts with a Normative gaze in film and hot it functions on a dominant-submissive structure of able-bodied and disabled characters" (482). This co-optation implemented by the non-visually impaired producers of the discourses can be found in either modern and contemporary art institutions representations regarding people with visual impairments. Evidence of this are these three examples: on one hand, the promotional video called "Special Guests: Onbeperkt Van Abbe" produced by Van Abbemuseum in which the conventional cinematographic techniques of the Blind Gaze used in the cinema, blurring and darkening the images (Cheu 484) are present. On the other hand, the text attached to *Hoy Toca el Prado* official webpage in which reference is made to the opaque glasses. And finally, Van Gogh Museum's cover picture in which the Dutch modern art museum portrays someone who has been considered non-visually impaired with his eyes closed.

All these examples are part of the misrepresentation that people with visual impairments, among other groups, go through on the media. After all, most of the jobs in which decisions are made are not occupied by people belonging to "minorities" but those that are more normative in relation to what society has established as "the normal" (Thoreau 450). The assumption made here is that if the opportunities were equal for everyone regardless of their impairment, ethnicity, or sex and gender, among other features, less misrepresentations would be spread out worldwide through traditional and new media. The content spread would be more realistic and the gazes that are currently co-opted would be accurately represented.

- How much the representation of people with visual impairments in the promotional websites of accessible activities host(ed) by Van Abbemuseum, Van Gogh Museum, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Museo Nacional del Prado, and Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona adopts or rejects the myths around this specific group of society?

Within the sample that we have analysed in this thesis, we have determined that some myths about impaired people are still being perpetuated. Some others are rejected. As a matter of fact, it has been found that the studied photographs, videos, and texts published by the five museums studied in this thesis have even expanded this imagery by adding new representations around them. We have identified three representations that have been maintained in these discourses: the ableist representation of how visually impaired people see, the figure of the super cripple, and the assumed dependency on abled-bodied people. Among the representations they reject are two: on one hand, the useless member of society figure (Barnes 17); and on the other hand, the figure of the sexual deviant (Barnes 16) and isolated character (Barnes 20).

As stated in the section above, the museums from the sample still use the Blind Gaze to engage non-visually impaired audiences. This phenomenon was already happening during the 1960s in Hollywood productions in which "the blind character's point of view [was represented] … by darkening the screen or blurring the shot" (Cheu 484). However, as Museo Nacional del Prado and Van Gogh Museum have proven, it is not necessary to represent the Blind Gaze on the media to provide it. It can be found as well when closing one's eyes or in the shape of opaque goggles. They both prevent non-visually impaired people of seeing for the sake of the enjoyment of an exhibition made primarily for people with visual impairments.

Another perpetuated representation of how people with impairments have been represented and understood so far is the endorsement of their extraordinary beings. Colin Barnes and Rosemary Garland-Thomson in the 1990s were already aware of this characteristic: someone with impairments is either represented as a superhero or someone who despite their impairment achieve unexpected things for someone who is disabled (Barnes 12, Garland-Thomson 340). Van Abbemuseum is the only institution from the sample that evokes this oppressive representation by conferring the title *Special Guests* to their accessible tours. In fact, this figure is still in the spotlight as it is highly controversial. The super cripple or the wondrous (Garland-Thomson 340) is criticised by Stella Young through the term "inspiration porn". After all, the Dutch institution is applying the word "special" to an activity that would not be called after/using this term if made for non-impaired people.

The last of the elements that the museums from the sample reproduce in their discourses about people with visual impairments is the fact that they have been largely represented as dependent individuals under the authority of someone (Barnes 19). The perpetuation of people with impairments as dependent individuals is present in the texts. The medical connoted words like "carer", terms that imply a vertical hierarchy such as "mentor", or expressions like "family members" or "seeing friends", make evident that people with visual impairments are still being attached to their non-impaired acquaintances, relatives, or caregivers. This dependable and helpless (Barnes 11; Shakespeare 283) figure is incarnated in the videos as well. Tour guides and audio-description devices (El Prado) lead the route throughout the facilities of the museums and the haptic itinerary through the paintings' reproductions respectively. However, as stated during the analysis of the moving images (on this page, 40), these representations should not be interpreted as showing dependency but as best practices to provide comfort and security to the visually impaired visitor to the museum (Poria et al. 152).

Regarding assistive dogs and canes, two props highly related to people with visual impairments, they have not been as depicted as expected. One can only see the first once, in the Van Gogh Museum video. The second object is only present in the pictures (Image 3) and videos of the Dutch museums.

As to what the museums from the sample have rejected from the traditional representations of visually impaired people, both, Spanish and Dutch museums, represent them as active members of society (Barnes 17). In fact, when one art institution from the sample does not collaborate with national institutions formed by people with impairments, they refer to well-known people with visual impairments alternatively. Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona and Museo Nacional del Prado empower the Spanish National Organisation of the Blind (ONCE) by suggesting to go to their library and highlighting their partnership in pursuit of the initiative. Van Abbemuseum and Van Gogh Museum add personal points of view. They offer the customers of their webpages the opinions of people who have already experienced *Special Guests* and *Feeling Van Gogh*. This trend of adding someone's perceptions on a commodified product in websites have been taken from the social media. Take into consideration that since Web 2.0, Internet users tend to rely more on the peer-to-peer communication rather than what corporations might disclose: "individuated media world supposedly makes consumers into producers …. In Tourism, the aggregated effect of collective knowledge via social media that is associated with personal recommendation os destinations is a good example of these claims" (Miller 235). In this case, although the opinions of these individuals are located in official websites of cultural institutions, the people whose words are being used in it are independent to speak their minds.

Another of the traditional recurrent representations of people with impairments that Barnes highlights in his text is the sexual deviant or asexual characters (16). Contrary to that, in the analysed videos, viewers are allowed to see how people with visual impairments are married and have partners (heterosexuals). On the same token, they also seem to have established healthy relationships and interactions with other participants of the accessible activities. This characteristic only applied to the Dutch museums from the sample. Van Gogh Museum and Van Abbemuseum are also the only ones that allude to visually impaired participants' companions in their texts and videos. Therefore, they also seem to reject the figure of the isolated impaired person (Barnes 20).

New representations of visually impaired people have been added to the system of representation constructed around them by the discourses provided by the museums studied in this thesis. The scarce mentioning and portrayal of the Braille language have re-oriented with what they are being related to. The art institutions from the sample depict glasses and the sense of touch as

motifs of visually impaired people. Unlike assistive dogs, Braille, or canes, the sense of touch is one of the resources most associated by the five analysed museums with visually impaired people. Because these cultural discourses influence the audience that receives them, we also establish this connection between the haptic sense and people with visual impairments (Jenkins 308). On the other hand, glasses represent people with visual impairments as seeing citizens instead of blind, which is a sub-group within the community. As a matter of fact, this is one of the reasons why the sight is promoted (paradoxically) among the institutions from the sample in their accessible activities for people with visual impairments.

Conclusions

The analysed discourses that one can find in the webpages of Van Gogh Museum, Van Abbemuseum, Museo Nacional del Prado, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, and Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona provide an ambiguous representation of people with visual impairments. First of all, the promotional aim of the websites seems to have influenced the discourses given that the aim of the studied pictures, videos, and texts is commercial. Thus, what they disclose cannot be so groundbreaking that it is rejected by some sections of the museums' audiences but, at the same time, they should be attractive to people from the target group they are alluding to through them. In other words, they have created a mainstream discourse that please both sides (Sweeney and Riddell). The representations of visually impaired people found in these online sources are the result of balancing traditional discourses around people with visual impairments and demystifying representations. In other words, although the museums from the sample represent this target group as active, social, and productive members of society, they also represent conventional stereotypes: ableist representations, national hegemonies, approaching them with the stigmatising medical modality to disability, representing them as helpless and needing the benevolence of others, etc. These are perpetuations of the imagery around visually impaired people that society has constructed either in traditional and new media and shared massively within the Internet. After all, some of the museums studied in this thesis do not only target impaired visitors to their accessible activities but the rest of them. Due to this, the art institutions seem to adapt their discourses to what audiences in general are expected to dislike or willing to understand.

Our lack of knowledge in Dutch made us study the English version of Van Gogh Museum's and Van Abbemuseum's websites. This might have affected the results of this thesis because the meaning of the words in English may differ from the Dutch. Another flaw of this thesis is the fact that we are not impaired persons. Despite mentioning the slogan "Nothing About Us Without Us" (on this page, 49) we do not belong to the community of people with visual impairments or have other impairments. Due to this, is highly possible that some of the interpretations disclosed in this thesis are ableist assumptions. These defects open the door for future research. Scholars might be also interested in studying the level of inclusion of these same five museums —or others—. We propose, for instance, to analyse whether they depict people with impairments in promotional material regarding activities that nothing have to do with accessibility.

Ultimately, we would like to reflect on making art and art institutions accessible for visually impaired people in this time of worldwide health crisis caused by the COVID-19. Despite the multi-sensory approach to art that every single museum studied in this thesis provide in their accessible

activities, it has been proven that the haptic sense is the most relevant one. It has also been seen that original pieces of art, painting reproductions, and scale models are touched without gloves in some cases, an image that would shock everyone currently. Therefore, institutions may adjust the tools they use to approach art to visually impaired visitors in order to ensure their security and enjoyment of the experience as the conservation of the pieces.

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