

# In Awe! The Commercial Staging of Grandeur in Cultural Tourism Servicescapes

**ATHINODOROS CHRONIS**  
California State University, Stanislaus

Cite as:

CHRONIS ATHINODOROS (2023), In Awe! The Commercial Staging of Grandeur in Cultural Tourism Servicescapes. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 52nd, (113974)

Paper from the 52nd Annual EMAC Conference, Odense/Denmark, May 23-26, 2023



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## **Abstract**

Whether in reference to heritage sites or imposing buildings, grandeur is a pole of attraction and generative of tourist awe and satisfaction. But while it is easier to apprehend grandeur in nature, grasping its qualities when facing products of culture is not a straightforward task. Importantly, can marketers stage-manage grandeur? The purpose of this research is to explore the ways in which service providers can stage grandeur in cultural servicescapes. We draw from extant philosophical conceptions of the sublime and we adopt the metaphor of commercial staging. We conducted ethnographic research in St. Petersburg – the “cultural capital” of Russia – where we followed the practices of tour guides leading groups of international tourists. Our findings reveal seven “techniques of grandeur” through which service providers can stage grandeur; build on extant literature on sight sacralization; and provide insight on eliciting awe in tourism servicescapes.

**Subject Areas:** *Consumer Services, Hedonic Products, Service Marketing*

**Track:** Tourism Marketing