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Art Museum Attendance: The Influence of Personality. Comparison of Two Surveys Conducted in France (2005-2013)

ABSTRACT:

This paper aims to compare two different studies carried out in France, 10 years apart, regarding the visiting practice of art museums by young adults. We wanted to determine if the variables highlighted during the first study would also be relevant in the second one.

In the first survey, specifically focused on young adults' access to contemporary art (Vilatte & Gottesdiener, 2006), a large set of sociological and psychological variables were selected (school artistic instruction or extra-curricular and current artistic practice; visiting modalities during childhood or adolescence; influence of family, friends or other recognized by the subject; aesthetic tastes; personality (NEO PI-R); demographic or socio-professional features of subjects and their families) in order to compare their respective weights. To study the factors' specificity which determine access to contemporary art, we carried out a factors comparison which determine the practice of visiting contemporary art museums and those which determine the practice of visiting fine art museums. All analyses that we carried out confirmed the dominant influence of personality and taste in order to establish and structure the art museums' visit.

In the context of a cross-country study both on museum experience of young adults and on factors which lead or prevent them to visit museums, we obtained new data in France which we can compared with the results of the first study. We identified that the weight of the explanatory variables of art museums' attendance is different in the two surveys. We particularly noticed that, although the role of personality is lower in this second study, the influence of this variable remains significant. An interpretation of the observed differences is proposed.

1. Introduction

As early as the 1930s, American museums were concerned with knowing their audiences, understanding visitors' interests and what they were looking for in the museum experience. This type of research has subsequently been developed and refined, giving rise to a considerable number of publications

devoted to museum visitors and involving different epistemological and methodological approaches.

Within this body of research, we find a sociological orientation which has outlined a limited number of socio-demographic factors which appear to be powerful determinants of museum attendance. This focus has been strongly influenced by the work of Bourdieu, and in particular one of his earliest investigations devoted to museums in France: *L'amour de l'art* (1969), which demonstrates statistically that museum attendance is the privilege of the cultured classes, but which was especially influential through its interpretive framework of the inequalities in access to museums. These studies, while carried out in different countries, tend to converge on a consensus that museum visitors are relatively young, educated or currently enrolled as students, usually urban, and with higher than average incomes (see for illustration: Bourdieu & Darbel, 1969; Dixon, Courtney, & Bailey 1974; DiMaggio, Useem, & Brown, 1978; Ganzeboom & Haanstra, 1989; Schuster, 1993; Donnat, 1994; Hill Stratégies Recherche, 2003; Garon, 2005). Furthermore, level of education appears to be the most reliable indicator for predicting attendance at art museums. One of the characteristic features of these studies is a country-level focus and repetition of similar results over time; data from these studies tend to show the socio-demographic profile of museum visitors as stable overall, apart from a few variations. Museum attendance remains unequal and strongly stratified according to indicators such as income, employment or education levels (DiMaggio, 1991). More recent studies confirm this general tendency, such as that carried out in 2011 in France by the CRÉDOC (Research Centre for Study and Observation of Conditions of Life) (Bigot, Daudey, Hoibian & Müller, 2012). Thus, regarding for instance the level of studies and taking into account museums and exhibitions of fine arts, modern and contemporary art, and photography, 29% of the respondents (a representative sample of the French population aged 18 years and older) had visited such a type of museum or exhibition by these criteria. While 63% of those with a university-level education ("Bac+3") and higher had visited an "Arts" exhibition or museum, this percentage is only 34% for those with a high school ("Bac") level and 19% for those with a Secondary School level.

In response to this demographic approach to museum attendance, criticism has gradually arisen concerning the relevance and use of these indicators. These studies are still too often limited to counting attendance (Evrard, 2002). The theories called on to explain museum-going practices are often very general and aim at a universal explanation based on normative

considerations rather than on empirical validation (Gold, 1980). The demographic categories used in the studies are considered too rudimentary (Pronovost, 2002). The idea that these socio-demographic indicators can describe homogeneous groups of visitors is also challenged, requiring reconsideration of the ways in which the observed findings are generalized. Any categorization relating to visitors of cultural facilities is both porous and arbitrary (Donnat & Octobre, 2001). There are significant individual differences in practices within the same socio-demographic class.

Seeking to go beyond the simple set of socio-demographic variables, Gottesdiener (1992) focuses specifically on individuals who become regular visitors despite having the least favorable socio-demographic characteristics for access to such cultural outings, as well as those who do not necessarily choose to visit art museums despite having more favorable socio-demographic characteristics. The author compares visitors and non-visitors with equivalent socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., executives vs. employees) and identifies a number of obstacles which vary according to the social group considered. These include feelings of not belonging to the world of art, unfamiliarity, and intimidation (for employees), and a fear of not being able to experience emotions or being confronted with a constructed knowledge (for executives). Additionally, various social facilitators were identified, such as family for the executives, or friends, companions, and passionate teachers for the employees.

Furthermore, it should be noted that cultural practices are unstable and variable in time, the 'careers' of visitors are sometimes continuous, sometimes discontinuous, and that a person is a different visitor at various times in the same life (Eidelman & Roustan, 2007).

For museums, studies focused on the socio-demographic structure of the museum-going public mirror marketing studies which aim to identify their audiences to better meet their expectations, rather than to identify the causes of a loss of interest in those who rarely or never visit, or to learn more about the relationship of the visitor to the museum (Bourdaleix-Manin, 2005).

A parallel line of research has developed very quickly, in which the focus is more on understanding the establishment of a cultural practice than to measure it. This category of research aims to understand the characteristics of those who frequent museums as well as those who do not, and refines the description of visitors by admitting more complexity into what Donnat (2001) calls their social identity. Beyond the socio-demographic characteristics of visitors and non-visitors, this research focuses on more subtle questions related to educational variables, experience,

sociability, attitudes, and representations that can lead to new methods in order to gain a better understanding of the experience of museum visits. For this line of research, it is not so much a question of abandoning the socio-demographic approach, but rather going further, and having a richer and more complex model.

Here we will present some of the directions so far explored in this current – without any pretensions of exhaustiveness – to show how the focus of studies on visitors has inevitably shifted from previous studies.

Some work deals with the collective construction of museum practices and tastes, which vary greatly according to different modes of sociability and socialization, thus contributing an accumulation of data and responses that make the modalities involved in museum practices more intelligible. Researchers were interested in primary forms of socialization (those transmitted by the family and the school for example), but also in secondary forms of socialization that function as an aptitude for creating new practices from life experiences and sociability patterns arising from relational environments (family, siblings, peers, neighbors, spouse, groups of friends, colleagues, etc.) and the nature of such exchanges (regularity, density, temporal situation, etc.). The goal is to identify and understand the ability of some individuals to shift towards practices and tastes, liberating them from determining factors of their social universe through the training of various sociability patterns. The social circle is a resource because so many cultural discoveries operate in contact with others and consolidate certain leisure practices (Pasquier, 2014). One study shows more specifically how, within a couple, the influence of the other person plays out in a predictive way on cultural practices (Uprigth, 2004). The museum visit is an outing shared by a couple, or a social visit with family or friends, rarely a solitary venture (Octobre, 2001).

Another group of studies focuses on the reasons, motivations or expectations that lead people to visit museums, showing that they are quite diverse. Visitors go to the museum for: a desire to learn, grow, expand their knowledge, for fun, entertainment, enjoyment, for the reputation of the museum or exhibition, to feel emotions, share an experience with loved ones, or orient themselves within a story of humanity and society, out of a need for personal accomplishment, among other reasons. Recognizing these reasons and experiences in visits can help explain the establishment (or not) of more regular visits, and to grasp what allows the visitor to move from a single experience to a cumulative experience and to a long-term cultural practice.

In this approach, some researchers are particularly interested in the

values held by those who visit museums and those who don't, trying to identify which values can motivate someone to visit an art museum. This is how DiMaggio (1996) looks at the relationship between museum attendance or non-attendance and social, cultural, and political values along with taste in different forms of art. This research shows that there are significant differences in values and tastes between those who visit museums and those who do not. Those who go to museums exhibit greater tolerance and trust in relation to others, a greater openness to intellectual culture, a 'modern' disposition which is based on faith in progress, scientific and artistic authority, and a cosmopolitan interest in people and cultures. While recognizing that these attitudes characterize a large part of the educated middle and upper classes, the author rejects a static vision and favors the idea of social fluidity. This is supported by showing how individuals can apply strategies to acquire the cultural capital necessary for museum attendance through participation in networks, attraction for cultural forms, and visiting cultural institutions and more specifically museums, and how all of these dimensions feed on and reinforce each other. Luckerhoff (2008) relies on the Schwartz scale of values – the values studied being autonomy, aesthetics, spirituality, benevolence, stimulation and tradition – and shows that the values grouped under «transcendence of self» and «openness to change» were associated with museum visits, while those that are grouped under «tradition» are correlated negatively with visits to art museums. Further, the author shows that these values are weakly correlated with demographic data.

Finally, in their survey of the last 20 years of research in museum studies on visitors (Eidelman, Gottesdiener & Le Marec, 2013), the authors note the increasing attention given to visitors' emotional states. The experience of visiting exhibitions, museums or other heritage sites reflects social, cognitive and emotional dimensions.

Inspired by the various research on museum attendance, we carried out a study in 2005 on young adults' access to contemporary art (museum practices and tastes) in which we pursued several goals: to introduce the dimension of personality traits into the explanation of the establishment (or not) of regular visits; to bring sociological and psychological approaches into dialog; to study the variability of this establishment of a museum-visiting practice in a relatively homogeneous group of students in terms of the variables of education level and age; and finally, to focus on the respective weight of the various sociological and psychological variables (Gottesdiener & Vilatte, 2006). Taking into account the dimension of personality traits leads to observing that a museum visit involves the

person more deeply we usually think or say. In addition to the personality, evaluated by the NEO-PIR (Costa & McCrae, 1998), the following variables are retained: arts education at school or out of school and current artistic practice; conditions of museum visits during childhood or adolescence; influences from family, friends or others; aesthetic tastes; a lasting memory left by a past visit and the influence attributed to the artwork viewed; demographic or socio-professional characteristics of the respondent or his family. In order to study the distinguishing factors that determine access to contemporary art, a comparison was made between the factors determining visits to contemporary art museums and museums of fine art. All analyses confirm the dominant influence of personality and taste. Among the sociological and psychological variables introduced in this study, personality plays the dominant role in explaining individual differences in art museum attendance. Personality traits differ according to whether young adults visit a museum of fine arts or a museum of modern or contemporary art. A young adult was more likely to have visited a museum of fine arts during the past year with a high score in «openness to fantasy»; similarly, a visit to a museum of modern and contemporary art was associated with higher scores in «openness to actions».

It should be noted that the previously cited work on values showed that the value of openness to change differentiates practices; the approach in terms of the value of openness seems related to the «openness» personality trait measured by the NEO-PIR.

The importance of the dimension «openness» can be discussed in the light of the results of the research conducted by Mastandrea, Bartoli & Bove (2009). While the authors seek to demonstrate that people who prefer abstract art score higher in the dimension of «openness» than those who prefer classical art, they do not see any difference for this dimension when comparing the visitors average of an ancient art museum to the average of a modern and contemporary art museum. The difference in the results between this study and ours can be explained through various factors: differences in respondent's age, conditions of use, the measure of the dimension «openness» is not based on the same number of items and analysis methods are not the same.

The study on young adults' access to contemporary art allowed us to better understand the museum visitor and how certain elements can either favor access or make it more difficult. In this context, the international project led by the Department of Education Sciences at the University of Rome 3 on the role of museums in the education of young adults – especially students – provided an opportunity to pursue our study on the role

of personality as a determinant of art museum attendance, to analyze the relationship of personality with other variables than those we had already taken into account, and to compare some of our results nearly a decade later.

In the first part of this article, we will present our comparison between the two studies, noting that we could only retain those variables that were present in both questionnaires, and keeping in mind that some of the questions could be reformulated and even measured differently, and that there are also some differences between the two samples.

The second part deals with the 2013 study. In the international survey, there are questions we did not have in our first questionnaire, for example: reasons for the visit, feelings during the visit, anticipating next visits. We shall focus on the correlations of these variables with personality compared to the relation between personality and the museum attendance variables we studied in our first survey.

2. Personality, family, school and art museum attendance. Comparison of two studies, 2005 and 2013

The international project led by Roma 3 offered us the chance to make comparisons with results got nearly 10 years after our first study.

The differences between the constructions of the two questionnaires are important but still a comparison is possible taking into account the variables present in the two cases. Some differences also exist between both samples. In 2005, the sample consisted of 422 students aged 20 to 29 and registered in their third university year (L3) and in their first year of a masters in psychology in two universities in Paris (Paris X, Paris VIII). In 2013, the sample consisted of 762 students aged 17 to 69 years (with an average age of 20.52, a mode of 18 and a median of 19), enrolled in the first year of university (L1) in psychology at Paris X, or the first and third years (L1 and L3) in psychology, education sciences, and linguistics, and the masters level in education sciences and teaching sciences in Nancy. The 2013 sample is thus much more heterogeneous as to the age, level of studies and study areas than that of 2005.

To study the effects of different variables on attendance, a variable was created for museum attendance. This variable allowed subjects to be sorted into two groups: those who do not visit either fine arts museums or museums of modern and contemporary art and those who visit at least one of these two types of museums.

Group belonging being the predictable variable, based on the independent variables held, discriminant analysis was used in order to assess

the degree of belonging to one of these two groups. With this method, a score was calculated from which the software sorted each respondent into one of the two groups. The dependent variable thus obtained was called the «classifying score», as it allowed each person to be classified into one of the groups studied. Then the quality of classification was assessed by comparing the original classification (done on the basis of answers to the questionnaire) to the classification carried out using discriminant analysis. With regards to the influence of different variables upon classification, the discriminant analysis method supplied the weight of variables allowing respondents to be classified into groups. The higher the weight, the more the variable influenced the classification.

We find that the weight of the explanatory variables is different in the two surveys (Tab. 1). For the eight variables present in the two questionnaires and for which predictive power is investigated, we performed two analyses in 2013: one on the full sample, the other on the sample of the 20 to 29 age group, since this is the age range of the 2005 sample. The results for these two samples are very close, so the large presence of first-year (L1) students aged 18 and 19 would not explain the differences between 2005 and 2013.

Tab. 1 – Comparison of the discriminant analysis results in 2005 and 2013

2005	Ages 20-29 N=409	2013	Full sample N=654	Ages 20-29 N=296
Openness	.941	Visit with parents	.819	.854
Mother education	.358	Art education out of school	.631	.686
Visit with parents	.267	Visit with school	.607	.514
Art education out of school	.213	Mother education	.535	.496
Father education	.194	Father education	.333	.395
Extraversion	.170	Openness	.235	.169
Art education at school	.040	Art education at school	.309	.163
Visit with school	-.014	Extraversion	.216	.129

There are differences not only in the samples but also in the questionnaires. In 2013 the question «How much artistic education have you

received at school?» (Response from «None» to «Extensive») corresponds in 2005 to the question «While at school, have you been a member of an arts club or workshop?» (Dance, theater, sculpture), with a «yes»/«no» answer only.

The question «How much artistic education have you received out of school?» with for example: drawing, music, theatre, photography classes, etc. (Response from «None» to «Extensive») corresponds in 2005 to the question «out of school, have you had any artistic education?» with a 0 to 4 coding (for any type of workshop the answer is «yes» or «no» and the total of types of workshops and lessons taken is given).

The question dealing with visits with parents or with teachers leads to different temporalities: in 2005 it was in the past (as a child or teenager, did you visit museums or exhibitions? With your family, teachers, etc.) In 2013, practice included all visits made until the day of the survey (Up until now, how often have you visited museums, exhibitions, archaeological sites, etc and in which way? With school, parents?). Besides, the rating scales are also different.

There are also differences in the measure of personality. In 2005, the students answer the complete NEO PI-R but in our questionnaire they have only to put their results for each of the 6 facets and the total score for the two dimensions: extraversion and openness to experience. In NEO PI-R there are 48 items for each of the dimensions. In 2013, a short version for the Big Five (2 items for each dimension) was used. Are we measuring exactly the same trait and with the same validity?

We see here how it is difficult to study evolution when the questionnaires and samples are not the same. Number and content of visits in museums with schools may also have changed (different types of mediation) and their impact may be different for predicting visits.

Given this set of elements that could cause the differences in observed results, as far as the role of the personality is concerned, rather than be surprised by the lower weight of the personality dimensions, we may be surprised that their influence remains significant.

3. Personality, family, school – but also motivations, emotions and satisfaction at play in establishing a museum visiting habit

In the 2013 survey, next to the influence of the family, the school, personality, there is also a role for satisfaction, motivation and emotions experienced during visits. («Which of the following reasons motivated you

to visit museums or exhibitions in the past 12 months?») We will see how all of these variables can play into attendance or plans for future visits.

We can adopt the hypothesis that the nature of motives or emotions experienced during visits will either dampen or promote the desire to seek out this type of environment.

The satisfaction experienced during previous visits may also play into the decision to visit a museum or exhibition. Its importance is emphasized in the study *À l'écoute des visiteurs (Listening to visitors) - 2010* (cited in Eidelman, Gottesdiener, & Le Marec, 2013) which is the first French national survey of satisfaction in museum visitors. This survey reveals distinct categories of visitors when comparing relationships among factors of satisfaction, cultural familiarity and age classes.

3.1 The determinants of visit frequency over the past 12 months

Of all of the people (N = 762) interviewed on question Q7: «How often have you visited a museum, exhibition, etc. in the past 12 months?» 31% reported not having visited any museum or exhibition during this period. Conducted 1 visit: 19.6%; 2-3 visits: 29.9%; 4-5 visits: 11.5%; and more than 5 visits: 8%. The percentage for 'no visit' is similar to that given in the CRÉDOC study (2012) conducted on a representative sample of the French population aged 18 years and older: among students, the results include 29% who did not visit any museums.

To study the determinants of art museum visits, we first performed a multiple regression analysis, taking as independent variables the 8 variables used in the discriminant analysis (see Tab. 1), and comparing their effects on the two dependent variables found in Tab. 2: in the first column the variable represents the «number of visits to museums or exhibitions in the past 12 months» for the entire sample, and in the second column the variable is the frequency of visits for people with at least one visit to an art museum.

The values of the coefficient of determination (R = .530 and R = .439) demonstrate a significant effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Museum visit frequency is best predicted by the frequency of visits with parents, school or teachers, and the «openness» personality trait.

It should be noted that «openness» has a stronger predictive value on the frequency of visits during the past year within the group of those who have visited at least one art museum: The higher their score in openness, the greater the frequency of their visits.

Tab. 2 – Multiple regression analysis of educational and personality trait variables on the frequency of museum visits

Model	Number of visits for the whole sample, all museums included (N=648)	Number of visits for those who made one art museum visit at least (N=304)
	standardized coefficients	standardized coefficients
	Beta	Beta
Q2. Artistic Education at School	.001ns	-.030ns
Q3. Artistic Education out of School	.149***	.086ns
Q4. Visit with School/Teacher	.199***	.199**
Q4. Visit with Parents	.325***	.277***
Q28. Father Education	-.060ns	-.081ns
Q29. Mother Education	.026ns	-.036ns
Extraversion	.025ns	.007ns
Openness	.085*	.166**

Legend: Significance level *** < .001, ** < .01, * < .10, ns not significant

This is consistent with the results we obtained in our study in 2005. It should also be noted that certain sociological variables (e.g., parents' level of education) are non-significant, as their effect is negated by the presence of variables related to visits with family or teachers.

In addition to the 8 variables presented, we have then introduced the motivations measured by question 11: «Which of the following reasons motivated you to visit museums or exhibitions in the past 12 months?»

Tab. 3 – The multiple regression analysis of the educational variables and personality trait variables on the frequency of museum visits, combined with motivation-related variables

	Number of visits for those who made one art museum visit at least (N = 298)
Model	standardized coefficients
	Beta
Q2. Artistic Education at School	-.085ns
Q3. Artistic Education out of School	.094*
Q4. Visit with School/Teacher	.174**
Q4. Visit with Parents	.225***
Q28. Father Education	-.099ns
Q29. Mother Education	.032ns
Extraversion	.012ns
Openness	.112*
Q11. Motivation : pleasure during the visit	.058ns
Q11. Motivation : interest for the artist/scientist/exhibition	.138*
Q11. Motivation : emotional responses	.177**

Legend: Significance level *** <.001, ** <.01, * <.10, ns not significant

The introduction of the motivational variable increases the explanatory power of the model: the value of the coefficient of determination increases R = .513 (compared to R = .439). Next to the frequency of visits with teachers or parents, the best predictors are interest in the artist, scientist or exhibition or reported emotions experienced (Tab. 3). One might expect motivation to be related to the anticipation of what has already been experienced during previous visits. Strong correlations have been observed between question 11 dealing with the reasons that motivate the visit and question 12 dealing with what the visitor felt, which sets correlation between the well-being experienced and the emotion as the reason to visit at .50.

It should also be noted that the «openness» trait retains a real predictive power even when motivations are introduced.

3.2 Determinants of the intention to visit a museum over the next 6 months

The intention to visit a museum, as measured by question 15 («How eager are you to visit a museum in the next 6 months?»), is predicted by the same variables as those predicting the frequency of visits: the frequency of visits with teachers or parents, together with personality traits. The coefficients of determination are R = .464 and R = .408 (Tab. 4).

Tab. 4 – Multiple regression analysis of educational and personality trait variables on intention to visit museums

Model	Intention to visit for the whole sample N = 642	Intention to visit for those who made one art museum visit at least N = 300
	standardized coefficients	standardized coefficients
	Beta	Beta
Q2. Artistic Education at School	.056ns	.034ns
Q3. Artistic Education out of School	.098*	.045ns
Q4. Visit with School/Teacher	.155***	.126*
Q4. Visit with Parents	.282***	.294**
Q28. Father Education	-.010ns	.018ns
Q29. Mother Education	-.007ns	-.014ns
Extraversion	.049ns	.009ns
Openness	.104**	.099*

Legend: Significance level *** <.001, ** <.01, * <.10, ns not significant

The introduction of emotions (Q12 «Which of the following did you feel during any visits to museums or exhibitions in the past 12 months?») and satisfaction (Q9 «In general, how satisfied have you been with your visit(s) to these, over the past 12 months?») significantly increases the explanatory power of the model: the value of the coefficient of determination rises from R = .408 to R = .582 (Tab. 5). These last variables take precedence besides the visit with parents, which seems coherent as they reflect visiting experiences.

Tab. 5 – Multiple regression analysis of educational, personality trait variables, and feelings on intention to visit museums

Model	Intention of visit for those who made one art museum visit at least N = 286
	standardized coefficients
	Beta
Q2. Artistic Education at School	-.017ns
Q3. Artistic Education out of School	.012ns
Q4. Visit with School/Teacher	.081ns
Q4. Visit with Parents	.209**
Q28. Father Education	.031ns
Q29. Mother Education	.046ns
Extraversion	.017ns
Openness	.034ns
Q9. Satisfaction of visits, over the past 12 months	.105*
Q12. Feelings which motivated the visits: Pleasure	.050ns
Q12. Feelings which motivated the visits: Well Being	.120*
Q12. Feelings which motivated the visits: Fun	-.051ns
Q12. Feelings which motivated the visit: Interest	.296***

Legend: Significance level *** <.001, ** <.01, * <.10, ns not significant

However, while the addition of variables has a positive impact on the total variance explained by the model, it poses a drawback as it lowers the impact of some variables because of the existing correlations between these variables and the newly introduced variables.

The reduction or disappearance (in terms of significance test) of the impact of one or several variables is a well known property, often considered as a limit of multiple regression models.

This property clearly appears through the regression analysis with the introduction of the four modes of Q12, causing a strong reduction of the openness impact on Q15, thus losing its significance.

The reduction of impact can be generally explained by the fact that the variance between the dependent variable (i.e. Q15) and an independent variable (openness) gets distributed between a direct effect and indirect effects passing through other variables (i.e. Q12). The impact is said to be mediated.

To assess this phenomenon, a path analysis was led using the AMOS 19.0 software. The openness standardized direct effect on Q15 without taking into account other variables is estimated to be at .145. With the introduction of the four modes of Q12, the standardized direct effect is estimated at .052 and the indirect effect at .093 (it should be noted that the total effect remains at the same level). While the effect of openness does not consequently disappear, it is distributed between a direct part and an indirect part mediated by the various experienced feelings during a museum visit.

For comparison purposes, the same type of analysis was conducted on the model explaining the relations between «openness» and Q7 with and without Q11. The standardized direct effect of Q7 without Q11 is estimated at .196; with the three modes of Q11, the direct effect changes to .137 and the indirect effect via Q11 changes to .059. It should be noted that in this case too, the total effect is at the same level although the direct effect is less impacted by the mediating variables than in the case of the «openness» effect on Q15.

It may then be concluded that there does exist an openness effect on past (Q7) or future (Q15) museum visits and that these effects may be direct or indirect. Here, the indirect effects are the reasons for visiting (Q11) and feelings experienced (Q12).

4. Conclusion

We had the opportunity in this research to compare the visiting practice at ten years intervals and to see if the clear evidence in a first survey of the influence of some variables on this practice could be observed again in the second survey, but we can see how difficult it is to interpret it when questionnaires and samples are not strictly the same. However, when looking at the results from a personality point of view, we see that this variable, in both cases, plays a significant role in explaining art museums

attendance. We can find a confirmation of the interest of going on with this type of study if we want to keep facilitating the access to art museums.

Understanding how visiting practice is established requires a deeper analysis of what is at stake in the visiting experience and the interactions between visitor and museum, and a more effective recognition of the elements fostering or deterring access to these sites. Our results show that what makes sense for visitors during their visit stems from their history, more especially from what they inherited in the course of their social or educational horizons. This is also due to specific personal characteristics such as personality, motivations, experienced emotions, interest (more particularly for the artist, the scientist or the exhibition), satisfaction and well-being obtained during visits. We considered here one age group – young adults – and it would therefore be interesting to analyze how these various characteristics impact the visit from a generational perspective, known for its important role in the differences in museum attendance.

Like for surveys previously mentioned, it is difficult to claim the generalization of results obtained. The visiting experience cannot be reduced to the only social horizons and personal characteristics that have been singled out here. Thus, in the first survey (Gottesdiener & Vilatte, 2006), the role of friends in childhood or adolescence, the acquaintance with an artist or with someone having an artistic practice, up to the influence of taste in art museums attendance have been highlighted. In another survey, by referring to the self-concept (i.e. how the individual perceives himself/ herself, the behaviors, beliefs and feelings he/she has of himself/herself, his/ her way of living, structuring and developing his internal experience and behavior), we have been able to bring to light the predictive role of this psychological variable on the art museums attendance (Gottesdiener, Vilatte & Vrignaud, 2008; Gottesdiener & Vilatte, 2012). The objective was to link the respondents' self-image with the representation they have of museum visitors. The comparison between the visitor's image and the respondents' own self-image has highlighted the existing relation with the museum practice. Other personal variables such as the learning or cognitive styles, other personality models could also be taken into consideration.

The presentation of these results shows the importance of further developing other approaches and the need to identify relevant descriptors of the visiting experience, aiming at better understanding the interactions between visitors and museums.

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