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*Visiting Museums: Some Do and Some Do Not*

ABSTRACT:

The number of visits in museums is remarkable, in Germany there are roughly 111 million visits per year (Institut für Museumsforschung, 2014). But they are due to only 30-40% of the 80 million inhabitants of Germany, i.e. 60-70% of the inhabitants do not visit museums. The question is: why?

Studies on non-visitors in the past (e.g. Hood, 2004; Schäfer, 1996) usually suffered from (a) being done outside Germany or (b) having used a limited number of respondents. After evaluating several North-German museums, it became obvious that most often (a) well-educated people who are (b) in an advanced age range are the typical museum visitors. Hence, it was necessary to know more about less educated and younger people who do not visit museums. Online surveys are perfectly adequate to reach such people and computer aided surveys allow for quite a lot of measures (a) to avoid biases (e.g. influence of interviewers), (b) using filter items and (c) to reduce order effects. Moreover, we successfully got data from all parts of Germany thus reducing the range of possible negative influences with respect to local peculiarities. Having achieved a sample of more than 3500 respondents the basis was given for detailed analyses. Some of the most important results concern the role of museums in their relation to the respondents. In short: young people do not have any relation to museums! Especially, those of less educated socio-economic status do not see any advantage in visiting museums. They see museums as boring, old-fashioned and being absolutely distant from their ordinary course of life, i.e. museums have a negative image among young people. Details on the results of their leisure time and motivation are given.

Worldwide museums are in the service of their societies to entertain and educate people. The number of visits in museums is remarkable, in Germany there are roughly 111 million visits per year (Institut für Museumsforschung, 2014). But these visits are due to only a minor portion of the 80 million inhabitants (roughly 30-50%; Wegner, 2010), in other words: a majority of German citizens does not visit a museum<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> As there is no general accepted definition of non-visitors they vary from one study to the other; hence the percentage of «real» non-visitors cannot be determined precisely.

Two questions arise: (a) what are the reasons for not visiting? and (b) what could be done to increase the number of visits and visitors, respectively?

There have been studies on non-visitors in the past (e.g. Schäfer, 1997a; Hood, 2004; Höge, 2008) but usually those results suffer from having used a limited number of variables or respondents. Hence, we did a new study using an online research strategy. Based on several evaluations of North-German museums (Höge, 2013 and earlier) we knew (a) that their visitors are well-educated (having received academic degrees or at least have the licence to study at a university) and (b) that they are in an advanced age range (two thirds of visitors are 40-80 years old). Hence, it was necessary to know more about younger people who do not visit museums. Having more than 3500 respondents from all parts of Germany the basis was given for detailed analyses. Some of the most important results concern the role of museums in their relation to the life-situation of respondents. In short, among young non-visitors there is only one relation to museums: that of refusal. Non-visitors do not see any advantage in visiting museums; even worse they regard museums as boring, old-fashioned and being absolutely distant from their careers and their ordinary course of life. Consequences of these results are outlined and suggestions for a new role of museums are given.

### *Introduction*

There are many reasons for not visiting museums. To complain e.g. about museum fatigue is well-known at least since 1916 when Gilman (who was a curator at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts) reported on problems of reading labels in exhibitions. He documented the «physical efforts» photographically (1916: 62-71) and he also made suggestions how to «reduce the muscular effort of good seeing to a minimum» (1916: 71; for a recent review of research on museum fatigue see Davey, 2005). Such complaints increased in number, but even the visitor-orientation-turn of museums in the 1980s did not change the situation completely. Still we find labels which are difficult to read and seats and settees which are either missing completely or are highly uncomfortable (e.g. Höge, 2013 and earlier).

Sure, the situation nowadays is not that bad as back in 1916, there are museums which really take care of visitors and their needs as human beings (Beckmann, 2014). But there may be quite a number of persons who once had bad experiences in museums and, consequently, do not go



Fig. 1 – Typical example of a well-designed museum settee that is hard to sit on (photo: Holger Höge)

for a museum visit anymore. One may suppose that this may be at least one of the reasons why many people believe museums to be environments of discomfort, why museums developed into no-go areas for a considerable part of the society. This is the more important as visiting a museum is a leisure time activity and besides all problems of defining what leisure really means (Parr & Lashua, 2004) one of the core concepts of leisure is recreation, relaxing in a comfortable atmosphere.

Another problem may be seen in the differing interests of visitors and non-visitors. Nearly all evaluations we did in different types of museums showed that visitors stated to have a general interest in culture often accompanied by a special interest in the topic of the exhibition they are visiting (Höge, 2013a, 2013b, 2012, 2007, 2002; Höge & Müller-Dohm, 2006, 2005). This kind of interest seems to be a basic personality factor that leads to a museum visit, i.e. we find visitors who are highly intrinsically motivated (= doing an activity for its own sake because it is interesting and satisfying in itself). It is reasonable to believe that those persons even then go to a museum if the conditions of presentation and the general setting of the museum are not really visitor-friendly, they stand effects of museum fatigue and museum discomfort.

One of the standard methods of increasing usage of a service or selling goods is to be seen in adding to an existing layer of intrinsic motivation that of extrinsic motivation (=doing an activity for reaching an external goal). Rackow (2008) showed in studying the audiences of three different types of museums under reference to Deci & Ryan's Self-Determination-Theory (1985) that their motivational structure is different. Also, it turned out that Deci & Ryan's basic factors (autonomy, competence and psychological relatedness) were not fully met by the results instead there was an eight factor structure in the motivation of museum visitors (1 self-enlargement, 2 competence, 3 voluntariness, 4 social relatedness, 5 change of perspective, 6 visit as obligingness, 7 understanding, 8 opportunity for explorative behavior).

As complex as this may be, if the fit of personal interests and the topic of exhibitions is able to stand an uncomfortable museum setting a lack of such an interest will at least contribute to a refusal of museum visits. Therefore we asked about what the interests of non-visitors may be and tried to find out if there might be attractors sufficient to function as extrinsic motivators.

As interest may not be the only reason for museum visits and as we do not know enough on young non-visitors, especially, it is possible that there may be several differences between the two groups that could explain the refusal of museum-going among young non-visitors. Consequently, to reduce wrong interpretations we took some control variables into consideration. As visiting museums is a leisure time activity we asked about the amount of leisure time available for visitors and non-visitors to find out if such a difference might give an explanation. The field of leisure, however, is still not well understood (even the term is under discussion and some prefer to call it free-time; Stebbins, 2003). Although it seems unquestionable that during leisure time a kind of non-work experience seems to be essential, it is up to further research to determine what kind of experience this may be and in what way it may emerge (see Neville, 2014). Moreover, during leisure (or free-time) a lot of other activities compete with the museum visit. As the leisure time orientation of visitors and non-visitors may be different we implied a measure of the general attitude towards leisure (Crandall & Slivken, 1982) to find out if such a difference could explain the preference or refusal of museums visits.

Also, we wanted to have data on the educational status of non-visitors as this might be a predictor of museums visits – the literature often reports that the higher the educational level the more likely is a museum visit (Wengner, 2010).

Another finding in studies on the audiences of museums is that their age-distribution is shifted in the direction of higher ages (see Höge, 2013 and

earlier). Usually, persons between roughly 20 and 35 years of age are the rare case among visitors. Hence, we tried to get especially young non-visitors to answer a questionnaire on museum visits. Finally, as we expected that non-visitors will not work on a «museum questionnaire» the purpose of the study was concealed by announcing it as an investigation on leisure time. However, concealing was not only a measure to reach the persons we are interested in, much more it had the advantage that we could ask about leisure time activities that may be more attractive for non-visitors than to go to a museum.

### *Method*

In an online survey (using LimeSurvey software; version 1.91 RC4; online from March 2011 to July 2012 = 17 months) we achieved to contact internet-users from all areas of Germany. Online studies generally do not give access to the full range of the population as not all households have admission to the internet and especially older people neither have admission nor are they familiar with computers. However, this was an advantage as it was intended to have young German inhabitants in the sample. Unfortunately, it was not possible to get groups of such young people involved who could be expected to have low socio-economic status: it was not possible to reach fan-clubs of football teams or youth groups of trade unions. Sure, it is questionable if they really would have participated in this survey but it would have been great to have a look into quite another section of the younger population. Also, we took advantage of a computer assisted questionnaire as it allows for quite a lot of measures to avoid biases (e.g. reducing influence of interviewers; considerable reduction of order effects by randomization, arrangement of special types of statements or questions, filtering, etc.). Moreover, some studies comparing the responses resulting from a paper and a computer version of the same questionnaires did not show differences between both versions (von Lindern, 2006; Blank, 2013).

The items (presented on 10 screen pages in total) consisted of different aspects measuring

1. the frequency of museum visits per year. According to this data Ss were divided into three groups for further analyses:
  - (a) Non-Visitors (= GNV = group of non-visitors; they go to museums «nearly never»<sup>2</sup>),

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<sup>2</sup>The term «nearly never» (instead of «never») was used, because German schools usually visit museums, i.e. nearly everybody at least once visited a museum, especially among the younger generation.

- (b) Potential Museum Visitors (= PMV = group of visitors going to museums 1-4 times per year; they were termed *potential visitors* as they potentially could go more often to museums), and
  - (c) Museum Fans (= MSF = group of visitors going to museums 5 times or more per year);
2. the general attitude towards leisure (Leisure Attitude Scale; Crandall & Slivken, 1982; 10 items translated by the author, complemented by 2 additional items according to Opaschowksi, 2006: 12-13; i.e. items No. 11 and 12: Sometimes I have no idea what to do with my leisure time/If I really have free time it is already planned by others);
  3. specified leisure activities. Respondents had to select from a list of 22 different leisure activities 5 which they ranged according to personal preference. Also, as leisure time activities are highly individual (see Stalker, 2011; Opaschowski, 2006) an open question asked about the «most liked» leisure activity in case it was different from the activities offered in the list;
  4. group-specific reasons to go/not go for museums: These analyses were done separately for GNV, PMV, MSF respondents and differ in the topics aimed at. From the group of Non-Visitors we wanted to learn (a) why they do *not* go to museums (they could select up to 5 reasons from a list of 18) and (b) what reasons they believe could make them visit yet (19 reasons to select from). PMV and MSF persons were asked about the reasons to go to a museum (they selected up to 5 from a list of 15 given reasons). Also, Potential Museum Visitors were asked to tell what reasons could increase their number of visits and the Museum Fans were asked if they had suggestions for making museums better.

Moreover, we looked for some other aspects of museums and leisure (e.g. knowledge of types of museums and amusement parks; the degree of familiarity of Oldenburg museums and leisure parks) which are omitted here for reasons of space (full details are to be found in Höge, 2013a). Finally, we asked for data on socio-economic variables like age or educational level etc.

In total we had 4296 participants; 699 questionnaires, however, were not completely finished, consequently, they were excluded from the sample, i.e. we had 3597 participants who completely filled in the questionnaire. Results reported here are based on this sample.

### Results and discussion

First, we should note that we were successful in getting younger people as respondents: 92.4% of them are between 14 and 30 years of age, hence, there are only a few participants who are older than 40 (see Fig. 2).

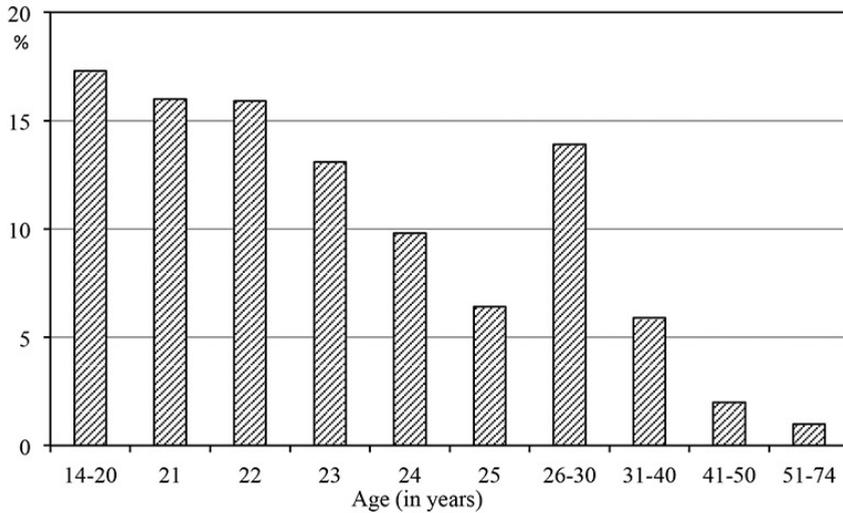


Fig. 2 – Age distribution (in %) of the sample ( $N=3597$ )

### Frequency of visits per year

According to the self-ratings of the yearly frequency of museum visits we found that 35.9% of the respondents belonged to the group of non-visitors (GNV as defined above), 56.2% were potential museum visitors (PMV), and 7.9% were museum fans (MSF; see Tab. 1). As bad as it is for museums that there are only very few museum fans (visiting museums more than 5 times/year) we were satisfied to have 1291 (= 35.9%) young persons who *nearly never* go to museums. The reasons why these persons do not visit museums should give some insight to their motivational basis and it should be possible to give some ideas how to make museums more attractive for this group. One may argue, however, that it is not the missing motivation that might hinder museum visits but simply the time available or the general attitude on leisure time that may be different for the groups. Hence, we asked about the amount of leisure time.

*Tab. 1 – Mean leisure time in hours (M) per week*

Groups of visit frequencies	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Non-visitors (GNV)	28,09	17,4	1247
Potential visitors (PMV)	25,16	15,8	1973
Museum fans (MSF)	24,25	17,7	275
Total			3495*

Note: \*Due to omissions of respondents the number of entries at the question about leisure time did not reach 3597

An analysis of variance revealed that indeed the group of non-visitors reported to have significantly more leisure time (roughly 28 hours per week) than the other groups ( $F = 13.95$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2_{\text{part}} = 8\%$ ). Therefore it is very unlikely that a lack of time is the reason for non-visitors not to go to museums. Especially, as the MSF reported the lowest amount of leisure time (roughly 24 hours per week) one may conclude that time is no decisive reason at all to dismiss museum visits.

#### *Educational level and frequency of visits*

As we knew from different evaluations of museums that most visitors are well educated one could expect that non-visitors participating in the online survey might show a lower educational status. However, these differences are small: 93.2 % of the group of non-visitors had either a university entrance diploma (in German: Abitur) or an entrance licence for a university of applied sciences (according to the German educational system: Fachhochschulreife) or even a university degree (BA / MA; Diploma). The respective percentages for the PMV and MSF groups are 97.6% or 96.5%. Put differently, there were only a few respondents who had lower educational status. Although the highest percentage of lower educational level is to be found among non-visitors, 6.8% is not enough to give intensive interpretation to this fact. It is regrettable that all trials to reach young people of less educated status were not successful as it would have been highly interesting to find out more about this specific section of non-visitors. Anyway, based on the results it seems clear that a difference

in educational level does not account for the differences in the number of museum visits.

### *Leisure Attitude*

Another idea to explain for differences in museum visits is that the general attitude towards leisure time may be different between the three groups. Therefore, we compared the groups by using a German translation of the 10-item Leisure Attitude Scale (Crandall & Slivken, 1982; complemented by 2 further items based on Opaschowski, 2006) and found indeed that respondents do differ in this respect. A multivariate analysis of variance revealed that there are significant differences (Wilks-Lambda = 0.955;  $F = 7.01$ ;  $df_{\text{hypothesis}} = 24$ ;  $df_{\text{error}} = 7166$ ;  $p < .001$ ) but the effect ( $\eta^2_{\text{part}} = 2,3\%$ ) is not very strong. Post hoc multiple comparisons by Scheffé Tests proved differences at 5 items of the Leisure Attitude Scale (6-point scale: 0 = does not apply; 5 = does fully apply):

- Item 1: My leisure is my most enjoyable time – non-visitors (GNV) agree to this item the most ( $M = 3.59$ ), followed by the group of potential visitors ( $M = 3.41$ ), but the least agreement is found with Museum Fans (MSF;  $M = 3.21$ ; all  $p_s < .02$ ).
- Item 10 (Leisure time is great) shows a similar picture: it is significantly more liked by GNV ( $M = 4.30$ ) than by MSF persons ( $M = 4.13$ ;  $p < .01$ ; no significant difference of MSF and PMV group).
- Item 5: I would like to lead a life of complete leisure – is rejected by all groups, but significantly more by the MSF ( $M = 1.35$ ) and PMV ( $M = 1.45$ ) groups compared to the non-visitors (GNV;  $M = 1.58$ ; both  $p_s < .04$ ).
- Item 8 (People should seek as much leisure as possible in their lives) is rather rejected (GNV:  $M = 2.80$ ; PMV:  $M = 2.73$ ) but the Museum fans (MSF) reject it more intensively ( $M = 2.56$ ) than the other 2 groups (the difference between MSF and GNV:  $p < .01$ ).
- Item 12 (Sometimes I don't know what to do with my leisure time) is rejected by all groups but strongly by the MSF persons ( $M = 1.35$ ), to lesser degrees by the PMV ( $M = 1.84$ ) and GNV group ( $M = 2.10$ ) and all groups do differ significantly from each other (all  $p_s < .001$ ).

In sum, the group of non-visitors is more leisure time oriented than the other 2 groups, GNVs believe that leisure time is most enjoyable and they want more of it. Conversely, museum fans (MSF) seem to be more work-oriented, they possibly regard learning and education in general as more attractive. It might be possible that they enjoy serious leisure more than

casual leisure (see Shen & Yarnal, 2010 for a discussion of these concepts; Orr, 2006). But things are more complicated.

Opaschowski (2006: 12-13) called attention to the taboos of leisure time attitudes, i.e. people in fact spend time for doing nothing or watching TV but do not tell about this as it is a kind of relative inactivity (so-called sedentary leisure activities; but Rhodes & Dean, 2009, report that such behaviors are planned as well as e.g. health behaviors). And if they tell about not having full control on their leisure time it might diminish their feeling of personal independence (the voluntariness factor; Rackow, 2008). Usually, leisure time receives highly positive values – it is an ideal that distorts reports on leisure time (Opaschowski, 2006: 21). To have more insight into such processes we confronted Ss with item 12 (Sometimes I don't know what to do with my leisure time) and item 2 (If I really have time for leisure it is planned by others) to get some indicator for (a) a possibly boring undecidedness in leisure time (item 12) and (b) on influences on leisure time that may come from other persons (item 2). While item 12 was more often agreed upon by the non-visitors (i.e. they are more often undecided) this was not the case for MSF persons (see above). With respect to the influences from other persons (i.e. others decide what to do during leisure time) all groups reject strongly to suffer from such an effect (no significant differences between the groups; grand  $M = 1.87$ ). Hence, the picture we broadly get from these data on non-visitors is that they are longing for more leisure time – and this time is not influenced by other persons –, but they have not always an idea what to do with it. This may result in boredom which may have rather negative consequences (see Stebbins, 2003).

### *Specified leisure activities*

The survey provided 22 randomly presented leisure activities (see [Tab. 2](#)) in part based on activities reported in the literature (see e.g. Carius & Gernig, 2010; Rhodes & Dean, 2009; Opaschowkski, 2006; Hartel, 2003) out of which Ss should select 5 and range them according to their personal preference (rank 1 = most preferred). This allows to identify how frequently which activities are given to range 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. As the literature reports that leisure time activities can be highly different (see e.g. Shen & Yarnal, 2010; Carius & Gernig, 2010; Opaschowkski, 2006) one of the 22 items was *to pursue another hobby* to give room for specific personal leisure-activities (and Ss could specify later what kind of hobby this is).

The analyses of the responses to the 22 leisure activities resulted in 11 tables which cannot be given here for reasons of space (full details are to be

found in Höge, 2013a: 599-610). Instead we present (a) a table listing the 22 activities which were selected for the first two ranks by the total sample of respondents (see Tab. 2) and give (b) three summary reports describing main results for each of the visitor groups (GNV, PMV, MSF; see below).

*Tab. 2 – Most liked leisure time activities of the total sample (N = 3597), which were selected for the first two ranks. Pos = position within rank; f = absolute frequencies; % = relative frequencies*

Pos	Items at rank 1	f	%	Items at rank 2	f	%
1	Spending time with friends	1043	29,1	Spending time with friends	736	20,5
2	Spending time with my family	627	17,5	Spending time with my family	497	13,9
3	Sports	485	13,5	Sports	354	9,9
4	Trips/travelling	199	5,6	Spending time in the garden/nature	230	6,4
5	Relaxing	173	4,8	Trips/travelling	227	6,3
6	Spending time in the garden/nature	153	4,3	Reading	221	6,2
7	Reading	145	4,0	Relaxing	178	5,0
8	Plying parlor/card/ computer games	118	3,3	Surfing in the internet	174	4,9
9	Making music/singing	110	3,1	Watching TV/Video/DVD	164	4,6
10	Pursuing another hobby	102	2,8	Listening to music	155	4,3
11	Surfing in the internet	90	2,5	Plying parlor/card/ computer games	152	4,2
12	Listening to music	86	2,4	Making music/singing	94	2,6
13	Watching TV/Video/DVD	80	2,2	Volunteering	76	2,1
14	Volunteering	50	1,4	Shopping	59	1,6
15	Shopping	32	0,9	Being active manually	54	1,5

Tab. 2 – Most liked leisure time activities of the total sample ( $N = 3597$ ), which were selected for the first two ranks. Pos = position within rank;  $f$  = absolute frequencies; % = relative frequencies

16	Being active manually	29	0,8	Pursuing another hobby	49	1,4
17	Photographing	21	0,6	Going to concerts	47	1,3
18	Continuing education	16	0,4	Going to the cinema	40	1,1
19	Going to the cinema	12	0,3	Continuing education	29	0,8
20	Going to concerts	10	0,3	Photographing	28	0,8
21	Going to the theater	2	0,1	Going to the theater	16	0,4
22	Visiting an exhibition	2	0,1	Visiting an exhibition	5	0,1
	Subtotal	3585	100,0	Subtotal	3585	100,0
	Missing	12		Missing	12	
	Total	3597		Total	3597	

As is shown in Tab. 2 the most impressive frequencies of the whole sample are given to 3 activities: *spending time with friends*, *spending time with my family*, and *sports*. At rank 1 these variables sum up to 60.1% of responses. Rank 2 shows 44.3% of responses for the same variables, so one may conclude that leisure time activities have their center in the sociability function of leisure. Also, it is obvious that activities like *continuing education*, *going to cinemas/concerts/theaters* or *photographing*, *visiting an exhibition* are the least liked ones and sum up to only 1.2% (rank 1) and to 3.2% at rank 2. So, it is clear that activities like these have no chance to reach any greater importance in the leisure time of younger people. This picture does not change very much if we look at the results of the three groups (GNV, PMV, MSF) separately (for all five ranks). Especially, even the Museum Fans do not put *visiting an exhibition* on more prominent positions.

1. The results for the full sample surely determine the general picture in leisure time activities but to discriminate between the three groups of visitors we give a summary report on their responses:
2. Non-visitors (GNV): The activity receiving highest frequencies (= position 1) at rank 1-4 is *spending time with friends* which is

followed (= position 2) by *spending time with my family* (at ranks 1 and 2; position 3 at rank 3). At rank 5 the first position is different: *Watching TV/Video/DVD*. This means that none of the ‘cultural’<sup>3</sup> activities reaches a first place, indeed *going to the theater* or *visiting an exhibition* are given the last position possible (22) at all ranks (1-5). However, *continuing education* is placed better (position 18) than *visiting an exhibition*.

3. Potential Museum Visitors (PMV): The activity receiving highest frequencies (position 1) at rank 1 is *spending time with friends* and this continues at ranks 2 and 3. It is followed by *spending time with my family* (position 2 at ranks 1 and 2). Ranks 4 and 5 show a different picture; rank 4, position 1: *spending time in the garden/nature*; rank 5, position 1: *reading*. Similar to the GNV the PMV group places *going to the theater* or *visiting an exhibition* at last positions (21 and 22) at rank 1-4. Only a minor change is to be found at rank 5: *visiting an exhibition* is at position 22 and position 21 is *photographing*. *Continuing education* does not reach a much better position (18-20) at all ranks compared to the GNV respondents.

Museum Fans (MSF) do not differ strongly from the other two groups. First, the activities *spending time with friends* (position 1 at ranks 1-3) is followed by *spending time with my family* (position 2 in ranks 1 and 2). Ranks 4 and 5, however, differ in position 1: at rank 4 it is occupied by *reading* and at rank 5 by *trips/travelling*. *Continuing education* as well as *visiting an exhibition* are placed differently compared to the other 2 groups. At rank 1 *continuing education* is listed at position 17 and *visiting an exhibition* at position 18. At rank 2 *continuing education* moves up to position 14 while *visiting an exhibition* is placed at position 20. This picture continues at ranks 3-5, i.e. both activities reach higher positions (12 and 13 at rank 5).

Seen in context it seems clear that leisure time is mainly occupied by contacts to friends and families – for all three groups and very much in line with the life conditions of human beings between 14 and 30 years of age (see Tab. 2). Remarkably, ‘cultural’ activities do not reach first positions, i.e. they are not among the most liked leisure activities although the respondents belong to the well-educated part of the society. Even *Sports* (position 3 in Tab. 2) ranges better than *reading* (position 7 and 6 in Tab. 2) and *volunteering* as well as *working manually* range better than *going to*

<sup>3</sup>This term is questionable as there is no generally accepted definition of culture. We use it here to discriminate some activities like *reading* or *going to a theater* from the group of recreational variables like «relaxing» or activities that imply bodily movements like *sports*. For a discussion of the problems in doing research on culture see Chick, 2009.

*concerts, theaters or exhibitions* (not to speak of *shopping* or *watching TV*; see [Tab. 2](#)). As the Museum Fans (MSF) do go more often to museums than the PMVs or non-visitors it is still obvious that even among the MFS this activity does not receive one of the first positions. Hence, the term *Museum Fans* is not really descriptive – it does make sense only with respect to the definition applied here, i.e. they show more museum visits than the other groups.

### *Group-specific reasons to go/not go to museums*

(a) Non-visitors (GNV). They were asked to select up to 5 reasons they believed to apply from a list of 18 reasons that could be expected to be relevant for *not going* to museums (see [Tab. 3](#) and [Fig. 3](#)).

*Tab. 3 – List of 18 reasons not to go to a museum. Ss of the group of non-visitors could select up to 5 reasons.  $f$  = absolute frequencies; % = relative frequencies*

No.	Reasons, not to go to a museum	Abbreviation (as given in Fig. 3)	Responses		% of cases
			$f$	%	
1	There are more exciting things	more exciting	790	14,6	62,2
2	The interesting museums are far away	far away	754	13,9	59,3
3	It is boring	boring	557	10,3	43,8
4	I don't have time for it	no time	449	8,3	35,3
5	None of my friends goes to a museum	no friends	440	8,1	34,6
6	The admission charge is too expensive	too expensive	435	8,0	34,2
7	There is nothing to act on (except looking at things)	nothing to act on	388	7,2	30,5
8	It has no meaning to me	insignificant	303	5,6	23,8
9	What is interesting to me is not shown in any museum	no reference	233	4,3	18,3
10	I don't like those intellectual affectations	affectation	205	3,8	16,1

Tab. 3 – List of 18 reasons not to go to a museum. Ss of the group of non-visitors could select up to 5 reasons. *f* = absolute frequencies; % = relative frequencies

No.	Reasons, not to go to a museum	Abbreviation (as given in Fig. 3)	Responses		% of cases
			<i>F</i>	%	
11	Museums have no importance to me	no importance	183	3,4	14,4
12	It doesn't tell me anything	tells nothing	162	3,0	12,7
13	There is stale air	stale air	136	2,5	10,7
14	I feel queasy there	unwell	130	2,4	10,2
15	I don't have interest in old things	no interest	93	1,7	7,3
16	Museums are outmoded	outmoded	86	1,6	6,8
17	I don't want to be taught	not taught	37	0,7	2,9
18	It's nothing for my children	not for children	27	0,5	2,1
Total			5408	100,0	425,5

The most often chosen reason by GNV respondents is that there are more exciting things than going to a museum (*more exciting* in Fig. 3), i.e. for 62.2% of all persons this is the most important reason not to go there (see Tab. 3). Also, GNV persons believe that the really interesting museums are *far away*. They do not go into museums because it is *boring* and they tell that they have *no time* to go there (which is rather unlikely as they report to have a greater amount of leisure time than PMV and MSF persons; see Tab. 1). Moreover, they miss their friends as none of them is going to a museum (*no friends*) – these five reasons (= 27.8% of the 18 reasons offered in the list) sum up to 55.2% of all responses, thus indicating a net of reasons that seems to give a strong functional basis for the refusal of museum-going (see also the % of cases in Tab. 3). And it is in line with this picture that they think that the admission fee is *too expensive*. We do not go to the details of the remaining reasons (see Fig. 3 and Tab. 3) but we should note that several of them show that GNV persons feel that museums have absolutely no relation to their life (*insignificant, no reference, no importance, tells nothing*).

All this ends up in calling museums *outmoded*, thus making the members of the GNV feel queasy there (*unwell*), they don't like those intellectual *affectations*. Sure, the latter reasons are of minor frequencies but they certainly contribute to the negative image of museums at least for the GNV persons and this is roughly one third of the respondents in this study (on the negative image of museums cf. Höge, 2010, 2008).

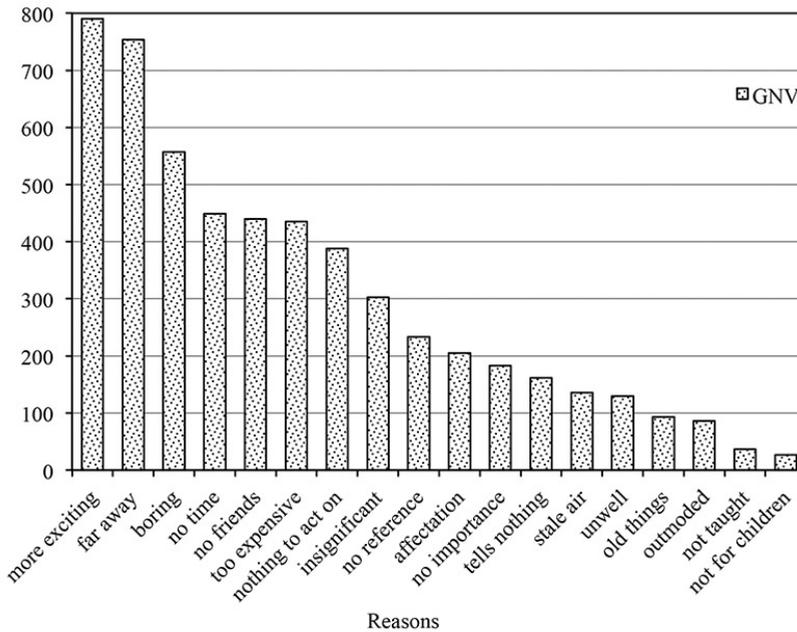


Fig. 3 – Absolute frequencies of non-visitors' responses (GNV; in %) to an 18 item list of reasons not to go to a museum (multiple choice; 4.3 responses per S;  $N_{\text{total}} = 5408$ ; the full text of reasons is given in Tab. 3)

(b) Reasons to *none the less go* (GNV) or *go more often* to museums (PMV)

To get a detailed picture of the reasons that might be able to give (a) GNV persons an incentive still to go to a museum in spite of their general refusal and (b) what could prompt PMV respondents to go more often to museums both groups received 19 reasons to select from. Both groups could select from the list as many alternatives as they liked. On the average the GNV produced 5.6 responses, the PMV 6.1 – not very different but it may reflect the greater interest of the PMVs in museums.

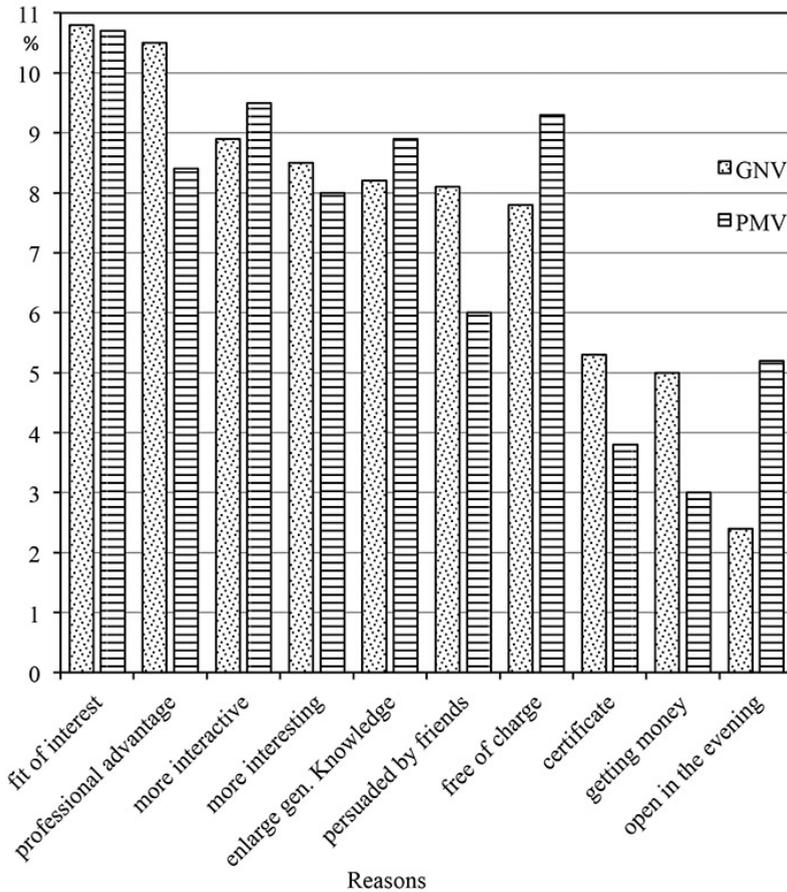


Fig. 4 – Relative frequencies (in %) of selected responses (rank ordered according to GNV values). Non-visitors answered with respect to 19 reasons that could make them *none the less to go* to museums and potential museum visitors (PMV) judged with respect to *go more often* to museums (for reasons of space data for only 10 of the 19 reasons are given)

It is noticeable that the reason receiving most responses is a *fit of interest*. For the non-visitors it means that they would go to a museum if there were a fit of their own interests and the topic a museum presents; for the potential visitors (PMV) it means that they would go more often in case this condition would be fulfilled. At any rate the fit of interest seems to be the central concept that might help to increase the number of visits in a

museum. Secondly, GNVs indicate that they would go if the visit would provide a *professional advantage* and this is slightly more the case for the GNVs compared to the PMVs. Both groups think that *more interactive* and *more interesting* exhibits would be favorable. But GNVs may need a *persuasion by friends* more than the PMVs, while an *admission free of charge* is more important for the PMVs than for the GNV persons. But although *getting money* for a visit seems to be more liked by non-visitors than by potential visitors this aspect did not reach a leading position in frequency – i.e. even offering money to them should not have the same effect as compared to the *fit of interest* and a *professional advantage*. Also, to get a certificate for visiting seems to make more sense for the GNVs than for the PMVs who are fond of *longer opening times* in the evening. As both groups indicate that an *enlargement of their general knowledge* may enhance museum visits it does not seem that they know what museums at least intend to do: namely, making contributions to general knowledge. But as this is in the upper part of frequencies (8% to 9%) museums do not seem to be successful in communicating this aspect of their general task, especially as it is given in the ICOM definition of museums (see e.g. International Council of Museums, 2006).

### *Conclusions*

Since the beginnings of psychological museum studies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Fechner, 1872) and the visitor-oriented approaches in the 1920s (Robinson, 1928; Melton, 1933, 1935) there have been measures to increase the number of museum visits (currently the free entry or the pay-what-you-want methods are popular but lack empirical control; see Artamis, 2001). This trend is even enforced since politicians and other stakeholders of museums take the number of visits as a central aspect of measuring museum success. And although there is an increase in watching visitors with respect to audience development, it seems that museum professionals still do not know what kinds of human beings are visiting their exhibitions and galleries. Even worse, despite the fact that there is quite a number of studies on general level and also many specific projects and evaluations on local museums and galleries, there is still ignorance on the value of visitor studies, as the results of evaluations are often not implemented into new strategies of making a museum visit attractive and comfortable (but see e.g. Beckmann, 2014; Schäfer, 1996; reporting on clear empirically based restructurings of museums and exhibitions). Even

the «Visitor Bill of Rights» (Rand, 1997; cf. Schäfer, 1997b; Noschka-Roos, 2004) seems to lack acknowledgement by museum professionals.

Although these thoughts became more popular in the 1980s and 1990s especially among members of the museum educational services there is no real reception and implementation of these aspects by museum professionals who are well-educated in history, art history, ethnology and other relevant academic fields that dominate the daily work in museums. Even if there are marketing divisions in the museums their area of operation is limited to analyses of visitor's place of residency (by simply asking for the postal code) and asking about the sources of information visitors use to get information on the museums, exhibitions etc. before they go to the museum. At best this is used to plan for the next newspaper campaign while concepts like visitor satisfaction or service convenience remain disregarded (cf. Berry, Seiders & Grewal, 2002). It seems as if they would not know what kind of cultural, intellectual and emotional experiences museums offer. But if this is the very kind of educational service museums should provide then it deserves much more attention and measures to check if the service achieves what it is said to do.

Similarly, in many cases the museum educational service is regarded as the «children service» that is not relevant for projecting exhibitions or long term strategies for audience development. Moreover, as the official governmental institutions reduce money and positions in public museums the chief executives of museums tend to cancel educational positions and give more room for the scientists (historians, biologists, ethnologists, etc.). In the long run this will result in a less effective educational system, i.e. in a loss of general education offered by museums or more directly: in a neglect of the service on society (see ICOM statutes, 2006).

The results we presented above, however, point to quite another direction. Currently, the socio-economic structure of museum visitors is obviously limited: great parts of the audience are above 40 years of age. Hence, the very task is to get younger human beings involved in the museum sphere, especially young non-visitors. More precisely, the goal of audience development is to turn GNVs into potential museum visitors and, finally, into Museum Fans (MSF). Data clearly indicate that those respondents going to museums do so because there is a greater fit of museum topics and personal interests. They are (a) intrinsically motivated, (b) try to enlarge their general knowledge and (c) have learnt to learn and regard knowledge as a basis for personal growth (self-enlargement; Rackow, 2008). By far the most often given answer in our earlier evaluative studies in several museums is that visitors have a *general interest* in cultural affairs,

often combined by a *special interest* in the exhibits of the museum in question (Höge, 2013 and earlier). Hence, all those who are *not* intrinsically motivated have no reason to go to museums they do not even regard them to be areas of entertainment. Museums are viewed as boring, outmoded and they have nothing to do with one's life. As it is very unlikely that the GNVs will develop an intrinsic motivation just by themselves, it is worth trying to make them extrinsically motivated, i.e. it is necessary to offer a benefit for visiting. Based on their answers one can expect that offering a *professional advantage* by visiting museums may work, especially as young people between 14 and 30 years of age are in the phase of life that is determined to a large extent by getting education and vocational training (on different levels, not only in the academic field). As museum visits require physical, cognitive and emotional efforts a benefit could outweigh the energy-sapping activities.

Seen from a theoretical perspective, according to the theory of self-determination an external motivation can be transformed into an intrinsic one by internalization. Currently, we do not know of any initiative to try this approach in the field of museums. And in context with the most liked leisure time activities (*spending time with friends/family*; see [Tab. 2](#)) it becomes obvious (a) that museums will have to struggle to get the chance of being selected as a possible destination of leisure time activity. However, (b) if the Deci & Ryan theory is correct in postulating psychological relatedness as an innate psychological need it can be predicted that the effect of an external motivator together with fulfilling the need for personal relatedness will be able to increase the likelihood of going to museums – if the museum is a comfortable area and gives a benefit for the visit. If this were successful, i.e. extrinsic motivation will change into an intrinsic one, then a museum visit will be established as a permanent kind of behavior even for the current Group of Non-Visitors (GNV). This cannot be reached in 14 days indeed it needs a longer time to establish a system that can work as external motivation.

As the young non-visitors indicated that museums have nothing to do with their career (*no professional advantage*; see [Fig. 3](#)) it follows that museums should offer attractive verifications of the knowledge acquisition resulting from a museum visit. Consequently, this will strengthen the role of the museum educational service and will open a fully new role for the museums, i.e. entering into the field of continued education (certified life-long learning). Currently, we are working on a project, installing a more effective system of validated education according to the ideas of life-long learning and related political intentions of the European Union (cf. EFQ,

2008 and DQR, 2011; The Copenhagen Declaration, 2002). The pilot project should find out if such a system will be accepted by the audience in general and of the younger generation, especially.

On the other hand, results show that among the sample there are more than 60% being intrinsically motivated people (PMV+MSF respondents). This is good for museums and the general educational level of the society as these persons will continue to go to museums (*continued education*). Also, it may be much easier to persuade them to go more often into museums and exhibitions and it should be possible to enlarge even this percentage of intrinsically motivated persons by help of additional extrinsic motivators.

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