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Psychological Aspects of Museum Visits for Undergraduate Italian Students

ABSTRACT:

This chapter presents two studies on museums attendance by young adult participants. The aims of the first study were to explore the representation of the museum and the relationship between the students' major areas of study and the typology of museum visited. The first study also examines whether art training received during the school curriculum (before university) can be related to museum attendance. The second study was carried out to investigate the psychological factors involved in the museum attendance. Personality traits, motivations, emotions, intentions and past museum experiences were considered. The aims were to investigate personality antecedents of past experience about museum, and motivations of museum visits in the last year, and to individuate the best psychological predictors of future visits to museums.

Introduction

Within museology research there is a growing interest in the segment of the population that do not visit museums. This so-called «non-public» includes those people who do not consider museums interesting places to spend their time (Bollo & Gariboldi, 2008; DiMaggio, 1996; Smith & Smith, 2001). Several studies in the field of museology have focused on the differences between people who visit and those who do not visit museums. The sociologist Bourdieu stated that love for the arts has a strong social component; only people with cultural capital can appreciate visiting museums (Bourdieu, 1979). People who visit museums have been shown to have a higher socio-economic status (in education and by profession) than those who do not visit them and that the museum has the potential to emphasize for this group the feeling of belonging, while for people without cultural capital the feeling of exclusion (Bourdieu & Darbel,

1969). From a psychological point of view, Mason and McCarthy (2008) reported two main reasons that prevent people from attending museum: the threshold fear (Fleming, 1999; Prince & Schadla-Hall, 1985), that consists in a «psychological barrier, which dissuades people from entering spaces where they feel uncomfortable» (Mason & McCarthy, 2008: 22), and the personal and social identity related to a sort of dissonance between the cultural meaning represented by the museum and the individual and cultural identity of young people (Bartlett & Kelly, 2000; Kelly, 2009)

Museums are often described as an informal means of learning and with the potential to offer different kinds of knowledge, from art to history, from science to technology (Bartels & Hein, 2003; Nardi, 2004). University students, during their academic career, can gain important benefits from the museum visit experience; in addition to knowledge, it can provide different perspectives of the world useful to enrich their mental openness.

The literature concerning museum visitor studies has shown that there may not be much of an attraction in these temples of culture for adolescents and young adults. In the USA in 2008, a large-scale survey on public participation to different cultural events reported that only the 12.9% of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 years visited at least one museum during the previous year (Williams & Keen, 2009). In Germany, about the 23% of young people between 15 and 25 years reported visiting at least one museum of art, science, or history during the previous 12 months of the survey (Kirchberg, 1996). These findings have been confirmed by other data around the world: in France, people between 15 and 24 years corresponded to about 15% of visitors (Lemerise, 1999); in Australia and New Zealand, art museum visitors between 20 and 29 years formed 26% of the population (Mason & McCarthy, 2006). These results suggest that in different parts of the world, museums do not attract very many young people.

There are a number of reasons that may explain this lack of interest. Young adults often see museums as a place for old people, more focused on the past, while their interests and needs are more oriented to the present and the future (Shrapnel, 2012). What often leads this group to attend a museum is not real interest, but a mere curiosity or «duty» that forces them to take part in an experience. Without being accompanied by a genuine desire, attendance is related to attitudes of indifference (Bartlett & Kelly, 2000). Many young people made the equation museum = school; both are places to acquire knowledge regarding a great number of subjects (art, science, history, anthropology, etc.). Regarding the learning process, it might be difficult for them to distinguish museum from university; the risk is that museums

are seen as an addition to their learning workload and therefore look very unattractive and boring. Most young adults are students or people at the beginning of their careers, both with limited budgets for entertainment and leisure-time activities. Museums are quite expensive and may lose out to other cultural activities, like going to the cinema or concerts.

Bearing in mind all of these explanations, it is important to understand the low interest manifested by young adults towards museums. Therefore, with the intention to study perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of a sample of university students (seen as a group with intellectual curiosity and motivation for knowledge) towards museum and museum visits, two studies were carried out and here presented.

The aims of the first study were to explore the representation of the museum and if there is a relationship between the students' major areas of study and the typology of museum attendance. The first study also examines whether art training received during the school curriculum (before university) can be related to museum attendance. Bourdieu (1979), as stated, talked about the feeling of exclusion for those without family cultural capital; we want to explore if the art training received at school can be related to museum attendance, i.e., if higher level secondary school art training corresponds to an increased number of museum visits. This study also investigates whether Bourdieu's notion of *family cultural capital* can be integrated with the concept of *school cultural capital*.

The second study was carried out to investigate the psychological factors involved in the choice of museum fruition. In the study, personality aspects, motivations, emotions, intentions and past museum experiences were considered. The aims were to investigate personality antecedents of past experience about museum, and motivations of museum visits in the last year (out of the school), and to individuate the best psychological predictors of future visits to museums.

Our final aim of the present contribution is to offer some suggestions to improve communication among students, universities, and museums.

Study 1

Method

Participants. The sample numbered 522 undergraduate students from four Faculties of the University of Rome (Roma Tre, Italy): Education (n = 148), Law (n = 106), Literature (n = 127), and Engineering (n = 141). In

terms of gender, *n* = 297 were women and *n* = 225 men; the mean age was 23.2 and the median 22 (*SD* = 4.1). Students volunteered to participate in the research and there was no compensation offered.

Measures. A questionnaire with different item formats (closed and open-ended questions) was prepared. The first part concerned socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, type of education received, the level of art training, and two questions regarding museum visits (the number and the type of museums visited in the last 12 months). The second part consisted of four open-ended questions regarding: 1) a general definition of museum; 2) the motivation for visiting or not visiting museums; 3) the usefulness of visiting a museum; 4) suggestions to improve museum visits for young people. Participants were asked to write their answers on three lines, just under each question.

Procedure. The questionnaire was administered to the students after the end of a class. The administration of the questionnaire was conducted during 3 weeks' time, across morning and afternoon on all the days of the week except Saturday and Sunday. Completing the questionnaire took an average of about 15 minutes. Roughly 80% of the potential respondents participated; the primary reason for refusal was lack of time.

Results

Closed questions

About the 70% of the students from the faculties of education, law, and literature had received an education in the humanities in secondary school, while about 80% of the engineering students had received a secondary school scientific education. Regarding the amount of artistic education in secondary schools (on a 7 point Likert-type scale), the total sample had an average score of 4.1 (*SD* 1.6). By faculty, literature students had a mean of 4.4 (*SD* 1.6); law students had a mean of 4.3 (*SD* 1.5); education students had a mean of 4.1 (*SD* 1.5); and, engineering had the lowest rating with a mean of 3.6 (*SD* 1.5). A significant correlation between the artistic training received and the number of museum visits in the last 12 months was found ($r = 24$, $p < 01$). The more artistic education was received by the students, the more likely they were to have visited museums during the last year.

Museum or gallery visits in the last 12 months. Concerning the question of museum visits during the last 12 months, 24.5% of the whole sample did not visit any museum. There are some differences among the faculties

(see Tab. 1): 34.5% of education students, 26.8% from engineering, 18.1% from literature, and 15.2% of law students did not visit any museum in the previous 12 months to the questionnaire. It is quite considerable that a large number of students (one quarter) had not visited any museum or gallery in the last year in the city of Rome; moreover, students from the education faculty reported the maximum of non visits (34.5%).

Tab. 1 – Percentage of museum or gallery visits in the last 12 months by students of the four different faculties

N. of visits	Zero	1	2-3	4-6	7-9	10 or more
Faculties						
Law	15.2%	20.0%	35.2%	22.9%	3.8%	2.9%
Literature	18.1%	22.8%	29.9%	21.3%	5.5%	2.4%
Engineering	26.8%	21.1%	29.6%	13.4%	4.9%	4.2%
Education	34.5%	26.9%	22.1%	12.4%	3.4%	.7%

Law and literature students visited museums and galleries much more frequently than students of other faculties; about 40% of these students had visited more than three museums in the last 12 months.

Another question asked respondents to choose up to two of the most visited museums, according to a typology, in the last 12 months. The museum of modern and contemporary art was the most visited by the whole sample (n = 171), followed by ancient art (n = 77), archeological site/museum (n = 68), science museums (n = 45), history (n = 34) and other museums (n = 14). These differences were statistically significant (χ^2 (5) = 373.5, p < .001). In general, the majority of the students from all the faculties preferred visiting museums of modern and contemporary art, followed by ancient art and archaeological sites. Interesting to note is that engineering students had visited a major number of science museums, as compared to students from other faculties; out of 45 students who visited science museums, more than the half (n = 24) were from engineering. The type of faculty and the interest towards the major area of study seemed to orient the type of museum to visit.

Data analysis of the open-ended questions

For each open-ended question, a written response of three lines was

requested. To analyse the resulting data, it was first needed to establish the shared semantic concepts in order to make them appropriate for the later content analysis. Two external judges have made this task. Similar words and synonyms were unified in the same semantic category. The first open-ended question consisted of 266 lexical units; through the process of aggregation and unification for similarity this was reduced to a set of 74 words/concepts. The second question consisted of 400 lexical units and was reduced to 86 words/concepts. The final two questions, combined, had 1143 lexical units, which were reduced to 96 words/concepts.

At the end of this process the textual material was subjected to content analysis through the use of the software Spad-T (Systeme Portable Pour l'Analyse des Données Textuelles, version 5.6). SPAD is a statistical software program used for the exploratory analysis of large amounts of textual data. A multi-dimensional analysis called Lexical Correspondence Analysis (LCA) was conducted. This technique allows synthesis of all textual material collected in a reduced number of factorial dimensions or factorial axes (Ercolani, Mannetti, & Areni, 1999). Each factorial axis comprises two semi-axes belonging to the positive and negative quadrants. The factorial axes extracted are defined by the contribution of each word/concept present in the textual material and its association with all the other words. Each factor, therefore, is interpreted and described on the basis of the positive and negative semi-axes of which it is composed. It should be also specified that words and phrases given in the tables follow a descending order with respect to a statistical coefficient called absolute contribution (a.c.). The absolute contribution indicates the proportion of variance explained by the element to the principal axis; it allows a weighted evaluation, in terms of importance, of each word/variable in determining the factor. It is therefore clear that the words/variables with a higher absolute contribution are those that characterize and specify better the size factor, as a dimension of meaning.

First open-ended question. The first Lexical Correspondence Analysis (LCA) was conducted on the first open-ended question regarding the definition of the museum: «What is a museum for you?» Two factors were extracted that accounted for about the 25.7% of total variance.

The first factor (13.8% of variance explained) was characterized by a semantic dimension (positive semi-axis) that can be called *Place for critical thinking and learning*. This answer suggests a definition of museum as a representation of a cultural space for the development of critical thinking useful for learning processes. The negative semi-axis, called *Building for collecting objects*, defines the museum as a cold building mainly for objects

conservation. The positive semi-axis was characterized by words like critical thinking, place of cultural training; the negative semi axis had terms like building, keeping object, but also a boring place (see Tab. 2).

Tab. 2 – First factor with positive and negative semi axis of the LCA to the question regarding the definition of museum

Positive semi-axis		Negative semi-axis	
Textual variables	a.c.	Textual variables	a.c.
Critical thinking	4.	Building	5.6
Place of cultural training	3.4	Collecting objects	5.4
Learning	2.7	Boring place	3.7
Education	2.3	Storage	3.5
Experience	2.1	Container of history	3.2
Artistic expression	2.1	Exhibition place	1.1

The second factor explained 11.9% of the variance. The positive semi-axis was interpreted as, *Place for education, culture, and creativity*; this factor focused on the education, creativity, and admiration for the objects exhibited. The negative semi axis-focused mainly on the future, the interest and the transmission of culture and it was called *Cultural heritage transmission* (see Tab. 3).

Tab. 3 – Second factor with positive and negative semi axis of the LCA to the question regarding the definition of museum

Positive semi-axis		Negative semi-axis	
Textual variables	a.c.	Textual variables	a.c.
Place of cultural education	5.1	Future	4.6
Place of value	4.2	Place of interest	4.5
Place of admiration	3.5	Civilization	4.2
Place of discovery	3.5	Transmitting	3.3
Human creativity	2.0	Artistic attraction	3.0
Education	1.6	Diffusion of Culture	2.3
Learning	1.6	Underestimated place	2.2

Second open-ended question. The second open question concerned the motivation for visiting or not a museum: *What is your main motivation*

when you decide, or not, to visit a museum? Results of the LCA conducted to one-factor solution, accounting for about the 28.5% of the variance. The two semi-axis can be called *Intrinsic motivations vs. Motives for not visiting museums.* In the positive semi-axis were items like *interest* and *curiosity* that drive the visit to museum; on the contrary, the explanations for not visiting museums were a lack of time, or interest, little information about exhibitions, the cost of the tickets. The positive semi-axis showed the personal interest of the respondent. The most used word was «interest»: participants wrote sentences like «particular interest to the artist» or «*interest in art in general*» or «personal interest to get in touch with the work» (see Tab. 4).

Tab. 4 – First and single factor with positive and negative semi axis of the LCA to the question regarding the motivations for visiting or not museums

Positive semi-axis		Negative semi-axis	
Textual variables	a.c.	Textual variables	a.c.
Interest	5.8	Lack of time	26.6
Curiosity	4.2	Lack of interest	22.0
Personal passion	1.6	Lack of chances	12.9
		Commitments	2.0
		Lack of information	1.9
		High price	1.8

On the negative semi-axis, the most frequent reason why people had not visited a museum was lack of time. This was followed by: little interest on the topic, little chance to share this experience with a friend, and the high price for the tickets.

Third and fourth open-ended questions. The analysis of the third (*Do you think that visiting a museum could be useful for your education?*) and the fourth open ended questions (*What could be done for the promotion of visits in museums among young people?*) were combined because they were interrelated. Results of the LCA yielded two main factors. The first factor (10.9% of the variance) was articulated in two positive and negative semi-axes. The first semi-axis can be called *Aesthetic approach*; the content of the concepts expressed by participants dealt with the opportunity to see beautiful objects that can be approached with passion. It referred also to the pleasure and the emotional arousing potential of the artworks and that the experience can give the opportunity to the stimuli encountered to create an open mind. The negative semi-axis can be defined *Educational*

approach: artworks, objects displayed in an exhibition are extremely important for a cultural enrichment. Museum visits can extend the cultural education received at school and in some cases can supply the lack of arts education that is not received at school. In some cases museums are not useful to personal education, according to a group of participants, because they are experienced as boring places (see Tab. 5).

Tab. 5 – First factor with positive and negative semi axis of the LCA to the questions regarding the usefulness and promotion of museum visits

Positive semi-axis		Negative semi-axis	
Textual variables	a.c.	Textual variables	a.c.
Beautiful	5.4	Exhibition	3.8
Passion	4.8	Civilization	3.5
Transmission	4.0	Education	3.4
Experiencing art works	3.6	Visual	3.1
Arousing	2.1	Knowledge	2.1
Pleasure	1.7	Boring	1.5
Openness	1.0		

The second factor (8.8% of the variance explained) was also articulated in two positive and negative axes. The first semi-axis can be called *Promotion*; it refers to the importance of promoting the knowledge of museums to attract more young people, because they can be useful experiences for the learning process. The second semi-axis, *Artworks appreciation*, can be explained by as museums should be places open to different kinds of people in the public, to allow them to appreciate artworks (see Tab. 6).

Tab. 6 – Second factor with positive and negative semi axis of the LCA to the questions regarding the usefulness and promotion of museum visits

Positive semi-axis		Negative semi-axis	
Textual variables	a.c.	Textual variables	a.c.
Promoting	6.8	Artworks	3.3
Integrate	4.5	People	2.5
Learning	3.9	Appreciation	2.4
Useful	3.2	Openness	1.9
Arousing	2.4		
Transmit	2.3		
Youth	2.1		

Discussion

The representation of the museum that emerged can be classified into three categories: 1) *Warm definition*, in which the museum is seen as an «on-going laboratory» in which artworks are displayed and where there is a strong interaction with the public, with the opportunity to allow visitors to understand the meaning of the arts through explanation. 2) *Cold definition*, in which the museum is seen as a place where artworks are kept and exhibited. As one participant said, «Museum gave me the idea to collect the past». This definition supports the idea of a museum as a place of conservation. Some others defined museums as a boring places. 3) The *museum as a cultural system of learning*, in which a focus of the answer for this category was dedicated to the learning processes that can take place in the museum as a place that offers an opportunity for informal education through the visual experience of artworks and other human products and/or a place where the creativity can be developed. People who perceive the museum in the warm and learning process representations are most likely more willing to make the experience of a visit, as they feel more comfortable compared to people that selected the cold representation and see a museum as a distant and uncomfortable place.

These findings confirm previous research regarding museum visits (Kirchberg, 1996; Lemerise, 1999; Mason & McCarthy, 2008; Williams & Keen, 2009) that show that a great number of students do not go to museums. About 25% of the total sample had not visited any museum in the 12 months preceding the survey, and for one group of students the percentage of non-visits reached 34%. The motives that dissuade participants from museum attendance, according to the responses given, were mainly lack of time, lack of interest, lack of information, lack of chances and the high price of the ticket. Most of these reasons can be related to what was said at the beginning: museums are more focused on the past and are often perceived as a continuation of school duties (Bartlett & Kelly, 2000; Shrapnel, 2012). But what arises from the open questions is that beyond these reasons there is an emerging favorable disposition and a potential interest towards the museum experience. A good number of students who had not gone to a museum in the previous 12 months would be willing to conduct a visit, but they indicated that they need a help to realize this. What is surprising in analysing the participants' responses was the fact that many do not go to the museum for lack of opportunities and information; several participants responded, «Because I had no chance but I would like doing it». In this case, it would be interesting to know whether

more opportunities would lead to greater appreciation of museum visits.

On the contrary, many other participants expressed no interest because they consider museums as boring places that do not attract the attention and the interest of young people, because they use a language for the initiated that did not allow interactions.

Despite all these matters, there was a general agreement among participants (from their responses to the open-ended questions) that visiting museums can give several opportunities. Museums can be useful to «create an open mind» and be «useful to form a critical consciousness». The visits to art museums can give some notions of art history that many students did not receive at school because of the lack of importance given to this discipline. Moreover, seeing beautiful artworks can provide possibilities for experiencing emotions and pleasure.

The findings showed also that art education training received at the secondary school produced an interest that drive people to enjoy museum visits (a positive significant correlation was found). This is interesting because in some ways it gives more hope for museum attendance, contradicting or going beyond the Bourdieu cultural capital transmitted by the family from one generation to the other. The school curriculum, where there is the discipline of art, can provide useful tools of knowledge about art that can lead students to visit museums. Related to this, the choice of the museum typology for this sample was related to the subject studied at the university; engineering students attended more science museums as compared to other students.

An overall finding is that participants preferred visiting museums of modern and contemporary art; probably because this type of museum is perceived as very different from a formal educational institution (Mastandrea, Bartoli & Bove, 2007). Contemporary languages, close to their life experience, can tell them something about the present and the future.

In conclusion, it can be said that museums have difficulties in reaching and engaging young people. The university can be an intermediary institution that can develop some strategies to create links between young adults and museums through specific activities in which students are guided and encouraged to conduct visits. The visit experience should aim not only to enrich knowledge, but also to provide enjoyment in different personal ways, and to give the possibility of sharing experiences with other people. It is very well known that the phenomenon of aggregation in young people is relevant for the development of their identity (Brown 2000); the social dimension and the sharing of the visit experience with peers may be important components to improve the motivation for museum attendance.

Study 2

This study is part of a larger international project with 9 countries from Asia, Europe, and North America, Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, New Zealand, Portugal, Taiwan, and the USA. The title of the project is, *The role of the museum in the education of attitudes, motivations, emotions and learning processes in the young adults*. The study has been funded by and is based at the University of Roma Tre, Italy.

The major goals of the study regarded the investigation of the museum visit experiences of undergraduate students, with particular relevance to personality, motivation, emotional experience and learning processes, with the aim to compare all these issues among the samples from the 9 countries. The questionnaire created consists of closed questions of different formats (multiple choice, Likert scale, etc.) obtained, in part, from the open-ended questions of the present study.

In particular in this contribution we report the data of Italian sample. The aims of the present study about psychological aspects are to investigate: (1) past experience about museum; (2) personality factors of museum visits; (3) motivational and emotional aspects of last museum visits; and (4) the best psychological predictors of future visits to museums.

Method

Participants. 665 (93% F) Italian University students, age 19-30 (m = 21; SD = 2), from the second year of Educational courses of the University of Roma Tre (Rome, Italy). Students volunteered to participate in the research and there was no compensation offered.

Measures. A questionnaire with different item formats (closed and open-ended questions) was prepared. Participant were asked about:

Museum Experience; modalities of past visits (with school, parents, friends, alone; scale: never, 1-2 times, 3-5 times, 5-10 times, 11-20 times, more than 20 times); amount of visit in the last year (scale: never, 1 time, 2-3 times, 4-5 times, more than 5 times); museum types visited in the last year (modern art, ancient art, house museum, archaeological, ethnographic, science, architecture; yes/no scale: 1-0);

Psychological aspects: Personality - 10 pairs of adjectives (TIPI 2 items for each of Big Five); Motives - 9 items (3 for each cultural, emotional, and extrinsic motive); Emotions felt during museum past visits - 10 items (7 positive - interest and pleasure, and 3 negative emotions);

Future visit intentions - 1 item (1-5 likert).

Procedure. The questionnaire was administered to the students during a class. The administration of the questionnaire was conducted during 3 weeks' time, across morning and afternoon on all the days of the week except Saturday and Sunday. Completing the questionnaire took an average of about 20 minutes.

Data analysis. To explore museum past experience of the participants, frequencies distribution analyses were carried out. With the aim of verifying the relationship of psychological, motivational, and emotional aspects with visit experiences and future visit intentions, correlations and regression analyses were carried out.

Results

Museum experiences

A first question asked to the participants about their museum experience, was «How much they had visited a museum in their life in the following modalities: alone, with friend/s, with parent/s, with teacher (school)». For each modality, the options of answer were: never, 1-2 times, 3-5 times, 6-10 times, 11-20 times, more than 20 times. Frequencies distribution (see Fig. 1) showed that most participants visited museums many times with the teacher/school (about 30% of respondents visited museum with school between 6 and 20 times), only few times with parents or friends (about 30% one or two times), and never alone (about 77% of respondents never visited museum alone).

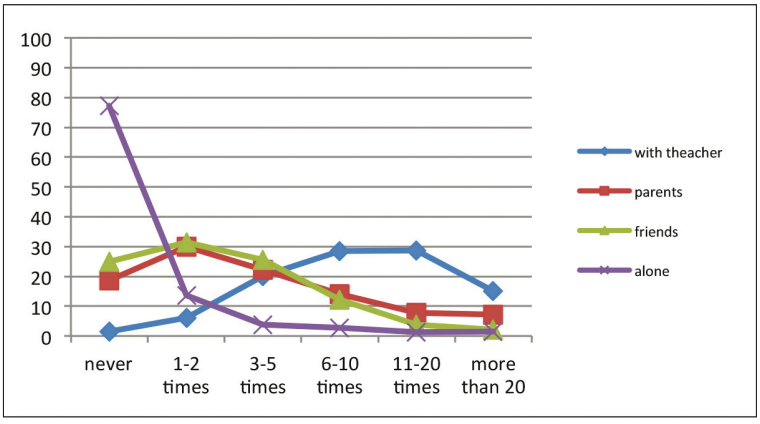

Fig. 1 – Percentage frequencies of answers about modalities of visits to museum

About the question on the amount of museum visits in the past 12 months, frequencies distribution (Fig. 2) showed that more than 30% of participants never visited a museum during the past year and almost 60% visited museum between 1 and 3 times. Only the 6% visited museums more than 5 times.

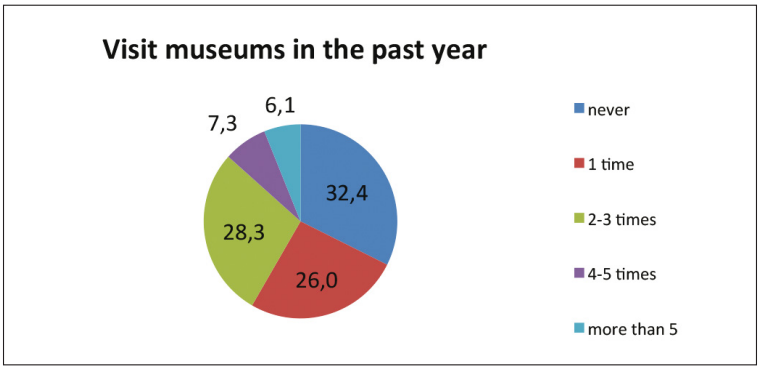

Fig. 2 – Percentage frequencies of answers about amount of museum visit in the last year

Regarding the types of museum visited by the participants during the last years only the about 70% of respondents who answered almost 1 time to the previous question (on the amount of museum visits in the last year) were considered as respondents. Descriptive analyses (Fig. 3) showed that museums of modern art were the most visited (31.1%), then museums of ancient art (22,6%), whereas architectural museums were visited by only 8,9% of the respondents.

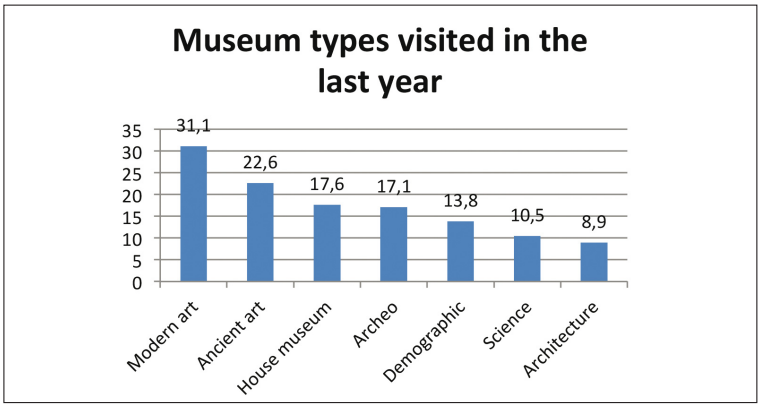

Fig. 3 – Percentage frequencies of answers about the types of museums visited during the last years

Personality correlates to museum visits

From the personality scale were extracted the Big Five traits, to individuate the relationship between personality and museum experiences of the participants. A correlational analyses between personality aspects and modality of visits of museum in the past was carried out. The Tab. 7 shows the significant correlations, which outline a unsurprising situation.

Tab. 7 – Significant correlations between BF traits and modality of museum visits: r(p)

	Extraversion	Conscientiousness	Emotional stability	Openness to experiences	Agreeableness
Visit with Teacher		,094 * (,015)			
Visit with Parents				,125 ** (,001)	
Visit with Friends	,096 * (,013)			,238 **(,000)	
Visit Alone			,147 **(,000)	,151 **(,000)	

Openness to experiences is the trait which most significantly correlates with the museum visits, except for visit with teacher. Extraversion trait correlates with visit museum with friends. Conscientiousness is related to visit with school and Emotional stability is significantly correlated with the visit museum alone.

This result is confirmed in the successive regression analysis, carried out with the aim to understand which BF trait most predicts museum visit in the last year. How it was predictable, only openness to the experience significantly predicts ($\beta = .141$; $p = .000$) museum visits in the past 12 months (for other BF traits, excluded from equation, $\beta < |.064|$, $p > .101$).

In the prediction of visit in the last year there are also a mediation of other variables, regarding the modalities of visiting museum in the past. As shown in Fig. 4, mediation analyses demonstrate that Openness to experiences predicts museum visit in the last year through visit with parents, friends, or alone.

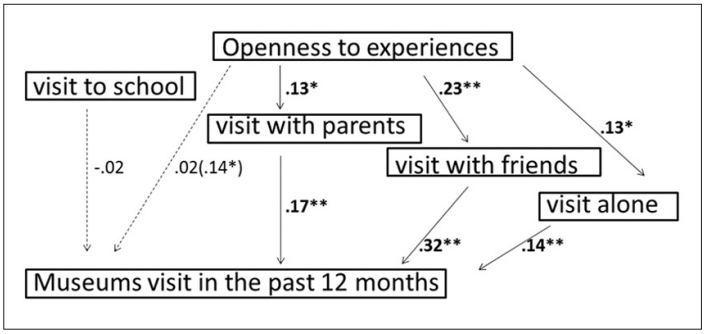

Fig. 4 – Mediated predictions (β values; *p <. 05; **p < .001) of Openness amount of visits to museums in the last year

Personality also can predict the types of museum participants visited in the last 12 months. We conducted seven logistic regression with each type of museum visited (0-1 scale) as criterion (dependent variable) and the bf traits as predictors.

Tab. 8 shows significant prediction of personality traits on different types of museum visited in the last year. Again here we can see that openness predicts many types of museum visited, i.e. Modern art, Architecture, and Science museum, confirming the willing to know new things of open individuals. Emotional stability predicts Science museum and Ancient art museum. Conscientiousness and Agreeableness predict only one type o museum visited, respectively House museum and Science museum. Whereas, Extraversion trait does not predict particular type of museum. Note that visits to Archeological and Demo-Ethnographic museums are not significantly predicted by particular personality traits.

*Tab. 8 – Significant predictors of type of museum visited in the last year (B, *p < .05; **p < .001)*

	Extraversion	Conscientiousness	Emotional stability	Openness	Agreeableness
Modern art				.30**	
Ancient art			.15*		
House museum		.18*			
Archeo					
Ethnographic					
Science			.18*	.34**	.27*
Architecture				.34**	

Motivational and emotional aspects

Regarding the motives which had induced students to visit museums in the last year («How each motives was important for your museum visits in the last year»; 1-5 likert scale), we individuate three general dimensions of motivation that we have synthetized as in the graph, which shows the averages. Among intrinsic motivations, the first dimension, which we called Cultural motives, is composed by: view original works, cultural enrichment, and art experience; the second dimension we labelled Emotional motivations like: interest for artwork, willing to feel pleasure, and to feel emotions. A last dimension we called Extrinsic motivations regarding mainly contextual motives (public events, learning science, use of multimedia). As shown in the graph (Fig. 5), cultural motivation had higher means than emotional or extrinsic ones.

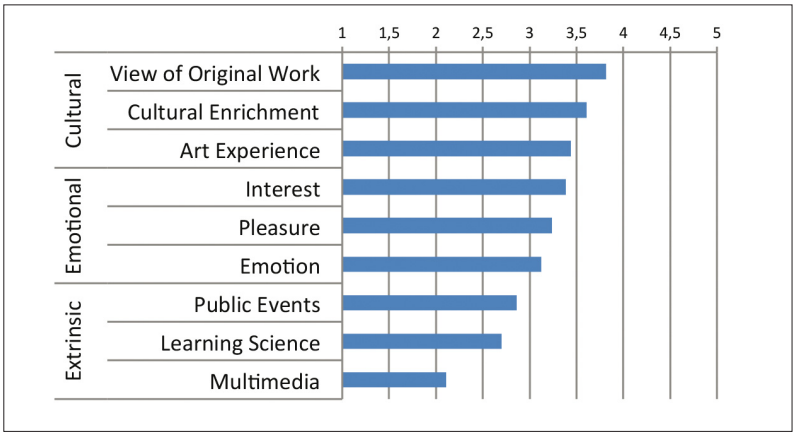

Fig. 5 – Means of motives to visit museum in the past years grouped in three dimensions

We carried out a linear regression analysis to verify which dimension about motives more predicts the museum visits during the past 12 months, using the average score among items of each dimension, and we found that the dimension of emotional motivations was the best predictor ($\beta = .22$, $p < .01$) of the criterion (past visits) and then cultural motives ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$); extrinsic motivations do not predict ($\beta = -.06$, n.s.) the last visits.

Regarding the emotion felt during the last visits, also here we individuate three general dimensions of emotions, divided into positive and negative emotions. We called the first dimension emotions related to Interest,

such as curiosity, interest, wonder; we called the second dimension emotions related to Pleasure such as pleasure, aesthetic enjoyment, wellbeing and fun. The third dimension was composed by Negative emotions like boredom, distress, melancholy. As shown in the graph in Fig. 6, emotions more felt during the last visits were those related to Interest, in particular, curiosity (m = 4.1), as well as interest (m = 3.8) and pleasure (m = 3.6). The negative ones were less felt (m < 1.5).

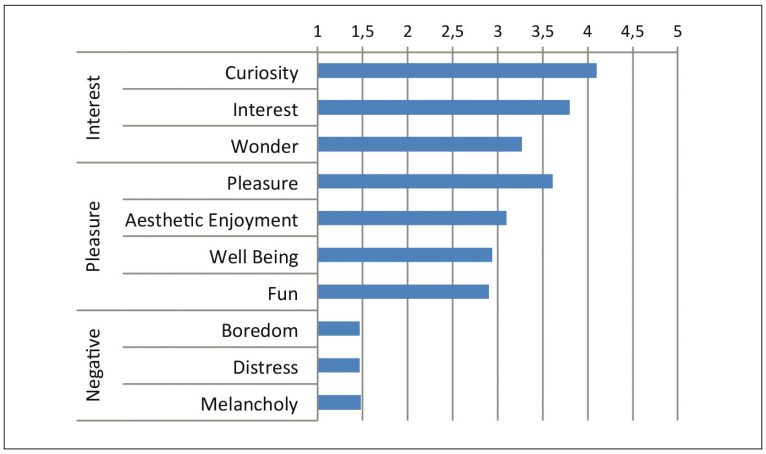

Fig. 6 – Means referred to the emotions felt during the museum visits in the past years grouped in three dimensions

Intention of future visits

The intention to visit museums in the future 6 months also was measured in the questionnaire. We compared the answers regarding past visits (no visits, 1 time, 2-3 times, 4-5 times, more than 5 times) with this last question (intention to visit in the future 6 months: not at all, little, sometimes, much, very much), through a contingent tables of standardized residual (*z*) of answer frequencies, and Chi square.

The association between the answers resulted significant ($\chi^2 = 201.49$, df = 16; $p < .001$). The graph (Fig. 7) shows the standardized residual of the answers association.

If we consider the significant standardized residual ($z > 1.9$), it is possible to note that participants who answered «No» to the question about visit in the past year would have little intention to visit museum in the future 6 months ($z = 6$). Participants that visited museum only 1 time

would have intention to visit sometimes in the future (z = 3.1). Those who visited 2-3 times and 4-5 times in the past year will probably have much intention to visit museums (respectively, z = 5.3, z = 4.1); people who visited museums more than 5 times in the past year is highly probable to have very much intention to visit in the future 6 months (z = 9.1).

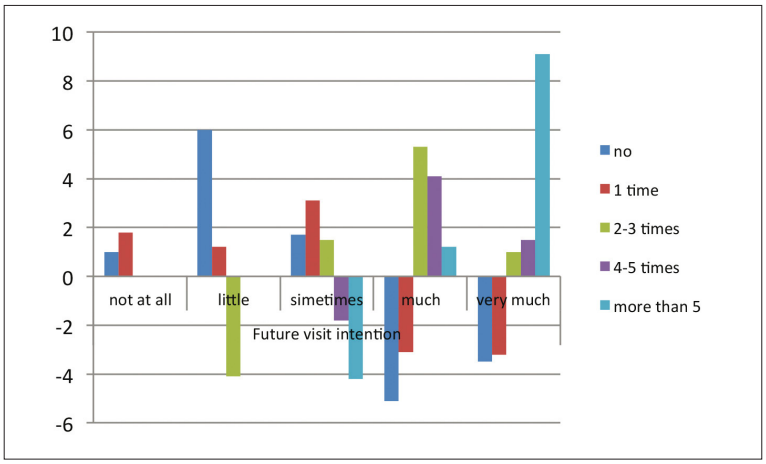

Fig. 7 – Standardized residual of the associations between the answers of the questions about past museum visits and future intention to visit museums (significant standardized residual: z > 1.9)

Through a linear regression we tested the prediction of the emotional dimensions (by the aggregate scores) on the intention of museum visits in the next six months. We found that emotions related to the Pleasure were the better predictor (β = .34; p < .001) of intentions to visit in the future, followed by the emotions related to Interest (β = .24; p < .001). Negative emotions do not predict future museum visits.

Discussion

In this second study we intended to investigate the museum experience of Italian young adults (university students), in terms of amount, modalities, and type of museums visited and the role of psychological variables, such as personality, motivational, and emotional factors. As far as past museum experiences, results have highlighted that most of the participants had visited museum mainly with school, few times with parents or friends, and hardly ever (or never) alone. Such a result seems to be not very encouraging

and demonstrates that, amongst Italian young people, the modality to visit museums mainly with school is the most carried out. Furthermore, more than one-third of our sample never visited a museum in the last year, that is after to have finished his/her high school program, confirming the study 1. Amongst the participants who visited museums in the last years, more than one-third preferred modern art museums. This result seems to be in line with previous research (Mason & McCarthy, 2006), confirming that young people prefer modern artistic works (abstract, contemporary art, etc.) which they perceive closer to themselves respect to the ancient art (which also are well frequented) or other (non-artistic) types of museums.

Regarding the role of personality in the museum experience, we investigated if personality has a decisive role in the museum visits (Mastandrea, Bartoli & Bove, 2009). People with an openness to the experiences personality are those that mostly frequent museums out of the school programs, but with friends or alone, that is in an autonomous and active way. Mental open people would be those individuals ready to know and to learn also out of the school. Extroverted people, thanks to their sociable temperament, prefer to visit museum in company, especially with friends. Conscientious person, which is responsible and faithful to commitments and duties, mostly visits museum with teacher and school. People with high emotional stability are more comfortable to visit museums alone.

Openness is the only personality trait that predicts museum visits during the last 12 months. The relationship between personality and recent museum visit is mediated by the modalities of visit. In particular, visiting with parents, friends and alone mediated the effect of openness on museum visits in the last year. Visiting museum with school or teacher does not predict the last visits. This would demonstrate that visits made during the school program do not have effect on or not influence the interest and the choice on visiting museums after or out of school.

We investigated which traits predict the type of museum visited by the students in the last year. Results show that openness predicts the visit to most types of museum, that is modern art museum, science, and museum of architecture, design and fashion. While emotional stability predicts the visit to ancient art and science museum; conscientiousness predicts visit to house museum and agreeableness predicts visits to science museum. These results show that the visitors of different museums can be different from personality point of view.

In this study we investigated which motives drove participants to visit museum in the last years. We found that, amongst the motives proposed to the respondents in the questionnaire (from the open question of the

first study), three general dimensions: cultural, emotional, and extrinsic motives. The most indicated motives were cultural and emotional ones, confirming that intrinsic motives are more influent that the extrinsic ones. Furthermore, motives related to emotional states (interest in the artworks, to fill pleasure and emotions) are more predictive of museum visits in the last years than the cultural motives, whereas extrinsic motives do not predict recent museum frequentation. The desire to fill emotions would be therefore the primary driver to the visit of museums out of school.

As far as emotional aspects concerns, from the participants answers we individuate three dimension: pleasure, interest, and negative emotions. The first two emotions were the most indicated by the respondents and the ones that predict intentions of future visits. Comparing the participants' intention to visit museums in the future 6 months with the amount of museum visits in the last year, we found that at least they do not change their behavioural choices. People who visited only few museums in the past showed to have little intention to visit museums in the future. Those that answered to had visited many museums seem to have much intention to frequent museums in the future. Since Intrinsic (emotional and cultural) motivations are more important than extrinsic ones (public events, multimedia) for the museum visits, it is hypothesizable that people who usually go to museum is driven by these types of motives. Furthermore, the emotions related to pleasure more than interest influence the willing to visit museums.

It is possible to individuate some points of reflection regarding the applicative spill over. From an educational point of view, it is needed to focus on intrinsic motivation, i.e. interest, emotion, pleasure, culture, for stimulating the willing of visit and for incenting the fruition of museums from young people. Educational system should stimulate a desire to knowledge and research that is the basis of an openness trait of personality.

Regarding possible museum activities in order to improve the museum fruition from young people, it is needed a focus on positive emotions related to the museum experiences, i.e. pleasure, wellbeing, aesthetic enjoyment, fun, that is those affective state which drive to intention of visiting museums.

These objectives can be achieved also through the analysis of other psychological and educational aspects investigated by our research that are not presented here.

Conclusion

The first study investigated the visions of museums from young people through open questions with the aim to know how they consider museum experience and why they visit museum very little. The second study investigated the role of psychological factors in the museum experience through a questionnaire with different scales. It is emerged that on the one hand young people see museum as a place far from them and difficult to be fruited, indicting most extrinsic motives (lack of information, time, etc.), on the other hand intrinsic motives and emotional drivers are more predictive of visits and intention to visit. Furthermore, openness to experience induce people to visit museums also out of school program, with friend or alone, is more predictive of museum visit and leads people to experience different type of museum, not only classic art museum, but also modern, architectural science and so on. A negative datum is emerged regarding the non-predictive role of museum visits made with school on the museum experience after the end of school program (during university program). Both the studies suggest that it is crucial the intervention of school and university in stimulating interest for new, openness to knowledge, desire to experience and education of personal and internal motivation to improve cultural curiosity. From the other hand, museum system too, beyond focusing on extrinsic factors such as giving more information and opportunities, should create non-boring setting suitable in arousing affective states related to pleasure, enjoyment, wellbeing on the young visitors, as well as in inspiring attention, openness, and curiosity about art and culture, avoiding to scare, depress, or bore the young visitors.

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