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Taiwanese Young Adults' Attitudes Toward Museum Visiting

ABSTRACT:

This study uses «past conditioned experience» as a stimulus to understand young Taiwanese adults' attitudes toward museum visiting regarding their habits, feelings and values about museums. A total of 348 university students were investigated by a structured questionnaire. 62.6% were female and 37.4% were male.

The findings indicate how attitude formation is related to conditioned experiences. Taiwanese young adults' attitudes toward museum visiting show a positively circulating cycle between self-identity, habits, and values. On the other hand, we also find there is a discrepancy between the values of the museum experience itself and the experience in the context of teacher education. Meaningful information were uncovered for museum education to be enhanced in Taiwan.

Keywords: museum; virtual museum; school museum; school sky museum.

Introduction

Museums play a big role in preserving, gathering, displaying, communicating and interpreting knowledge materials on artifacts that have historical values for the purpose of learning and public view (Thyne, 2001). More importantly, museum is viewed as meaningful places for public dialogues and informal learning institutes. Today, museums are not just reaching out to larger audiences and building demand among new groups. They are also designing proactively the arrangements, services and offerings which will generate satisfaction and positive outcomes for their visitors. Therefore, how to bridge the learning connection between school and museum becomes a contemporary issue in art education.

Background

Art education is a required discipline across elementary, junior high and senior high grade levels. For elementary and junior high school, student has

to take at least three arts class per week except 1G and 2G students. Arts education falls under the learning domain called «Arts and Humanities» and is divided into visual arts, music and performing arts (including dance and theatre). Each class at elementary school level has 40minutes and 45 minutes for junior high. It means that all students have one class of visual arts learning per week at different grade levels. On the other hand, teaching methodology and textbooks are based on the National Curriculum Standards. The first National Curriculum Standards was written in 1912 (Chen, 2011). After ten decades, we found that the National Curriculum Standards consistently highlight the importance of teaching appreciation and making works of art.

At university level, except art majors, students have arts learning from general education. Usually, different kinds of arts class might be offered based on each university educational goals and its specific curriculum design. In general, each university values students' arts competency, and uses it as a key index to symbolize school characters. Under this concern, how to cultivate aesthetic citizen challenges academic affairs in each university. Museum visiting is popularly used as course assignments or part of teaching and learning requirement.

In National Taiwan Normal University, «Arts and Aesthetics» is required at least 2 credits (two hours per week) for each students. But how does students look museum visiting? How are museum visiting related to their leanings?

Literature review

In 1999, Fleming suggests a psychological barrier preventing young adults attending museums, claiming that it is caused by the notion of «threshold fear», which dissuades people from entering spaces where they feel uncomfortable. Following, Mokhtar & Kasim (2011) used a questionnaire survey to understand young adults' motivations for visiting and not visiting museums. The findings indicate that youth within the study context has higher predisposition to visit museums and could be a potential sub segment to target when marketing museums to young adults. In addition, a majority of them has an overall positive image of museums, thereby contrasting the theory that young adults tend to see museums as boring, didactic and unapproachable. They also highlight that among respondents who have never visited museums in the last three years, the main reason for not visiting was the lack of time, followed by lack of interest in museum, and lack of information about the museum offerings. Other reasons for not visiting museum include the preference for other

activities, difficulties in getting required information about museums and the tendency to put off visiting until a later date and the perception that museum admission fees are too pricy. A very small percentage of the respondents simply indicated that they do not like to visit museum.

Except these findings, past experiences of museum visiting from childhood also have been identified as a significant preventative of museum attendance among young adults. Negative memories of museums such as having to fill out boring worksheets at enforced school visits may cause them to associate museums strictly with education, not entertainment (Kelly, 2009). Another significant barrier preventing young adults attending museums as identified by a variety of scholars is the lack of relevance to their needs and wants (Shrapnel, 2012).

In all, knowing young adults' museum visiting habit, feeling and value become important issues in museum studies.

Research questions and purposes

This research project is intended to study perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of a sample of university students towards museum and museum visits. Our aim is to offer some suggestions to improve communication among students, universities, and museums.

Research method and subjects

Attitude research is an important issue for social psychology. How people form their evaluation of an attitude object becomes an important topic in attitude formation field. While a vast amount of empirical work and a high degree of theoretical elaboration have been devoted to the topic of attitude concept, attitude functions, attitude measurement, and attitude-behavior relationship, etc., social psychology is comparatively silent on the question of where likes and dislikes of (Chang, 2008).

A total of 348 National Taiwan Normal University students were investigated based on a 5 scales questionnaire with 31 questions¹. 62.6% were female and 37.4% were male. Data collected from general education classes with a variety of majors in 2013.

¹ The questionnaire was developed by Prof. Stefano Mastandrea's museum project team from Tre University Italy. The data collected here also joining the discussion with this cross-cultural investigation project.

Tab. 1 – Students' Majors and Size

Major type	Size
Education (Psy/Social)	67
Literature	159
Art	15
Others(Business etc.)	107
N	348

The questionnaire covers three parts. The first one is about past experiences in museum. The second one is about recent visit and future visiting plans. The last part is about basic information of the interviewees.

The inquired questions as: I see my self as...; How much artistic education have you received at school? How much artistic education have you received out of school? Up until now, how often have you visited museums, exhibitions, archaeological sites, etc. and in which way? Indicate up to 3 of the museums (or exhibitions, archaeological sites, etc.) that you remember best among those you've visited, and indicate briefly why these were so memorable. During your visits to museums or to exhibitions, how often have you participated in the following activities? How often have you visited a museum, exhibition, etc. in the past 12 months? What kind of museum, exhibition, etc. was it? In general, how satisfied have you been with your visit(s) to these, over the past 12 months? How much have you learned from the visit(s) taken over the past 12 months? Which of the following reasons motivated you to visit museums or exhibitions in the past 12 months? Which of the following did you feel during any visits to museums or exhibitions in the past 12 months? If you have not visited any museum or exhibition in the past 12 months, what were the reasons? For each of the following statements about the museum visits, please indicate how much you agree or disagree, using the scale below; How eager are you to visit a museum in the next 6 months? If yes, what kind of museum or exhibition would you like to visit? If you were to visit a museum or an exhibition in the next 6 months, which of the following emotions do you expect to feel? Do you think that, in the education of a teacher, the museum visit is useful?

Except visiting information, the interviewee's and his/her parent's education background, occupation status, study majors, working experiences were asked to respond.

For data analysis, these questions were categorized into three sects as «Habits», «Feeling» and «Value» to interpret their perceptions, attitudes and behaviours when encountering museum setting. Habitual behavior that goes unnoticed in persons exhibiting it. Habit sect examines students' museum visiting frequency, the types of museum and what they usually do when visiting. Feeling here is reserved for the subjective experience of emotion. Value is about subject belief. Here we check how students think about museum existence, functions or what museum 'ought' to be.

Results

Subjects description

These interviewed students self-identify as «open to new experiences, complex» (78.2% combining agree little, agree moderately, and strongly), «sympathetic, warm» (71.9%), «dependable, self-disciplined» (67.8%), «reserved, quiet» (63.5%) and «anxious, easily upset» (58.7%), but also «extroverted, enthusiastic» (58.5%).

Even though arts courses are required for each student from primary to high school, when asking how much artistic education have you received at school, 35.4% of the students responded «a little bit», 35.4% said «some», 20.7% with «moderate» and 7.8% as «extensive». On the other hand, when it comes to artistic education out of school, 15.2% of the students responded that they had no experience, and the others said they had some experiences.

Habits

In the past 12 months, 70% of the students visited museums or exhibitions at least 2-3 times. 46.7% of arts major students visited more than 5 times that was significantly more often than other majors. On the other hand, when asking why they did not going to museum, more than 70% of the students responds they are lacking of time. When visiting museum, exhibitions, archaeological sites, they usually went with schoolteachers, friends, or parents. The most important reasons that motivated students to visit museums or exhibitions were «the pleasure I feel during the visit», «the interest for the artist, the scientist, the exhibition», and «the desire for cultural enrichment», respectively. They sometimes participated in «multimedia activities» (44.4%), «guided tours» (41.1%), «responding to

questionnaires» (37.2%), and more often likely to «graphic and pictorial activities» (with 31.8%). When asking why they did not going to museum, more than 80% of the responses are lacking of time.

Feelings

During the visits, students feel «fun» (89.5%), «well being» (85.2%), and less commonly, «distress» (2.45) and «boredom» (3.2%). Students tend to have positive felling with museum settings or related activities. In general, 61.3% of the students were satisfied with their visiting experiences. During the visit, most of the students experienced positive feelings such as «aesthetic enjoyment» (65.7%), «pleasure» (60.0%), «curiosity» (58.2%), «well being» (51.3%), and «wonder» (49.1%). They also expressed that they do learn from the visiting, 37.2% said they learned some, 29.3% said much, and 4.4% said very much.

Values

When asking about the value of the museums, more than 50% of the students agree with «as a place of learning, museums provide a valuable contribution to knowledge», «attending museums can develop an open mind», «my faculty should encourage more the attendance at museums», and «admiring what is exhibited in a museum produces a feeling of well-being». As to the future visiting, 34.2% of the students somewhat eager to visit a museum, and 45.5% of the students would like to go. The types of museums that students would like to visit most are «modern and contemporary», «archaeological site or archaeological museum», «architecture, design, and fashion», and «ancient art». When asking why they did not going to museum, More than 80% of the students think museum visits are somewhat useful to teacher education, but only 29.7% of the students think it is very useful, and 10.6% express that it is very useful. Their values about museum visiting and teacher education is not as positive as other countries in this respect (24.6% of Italy students, 27.7% of Austria students, 29.5% Hungry students and 45.2% of Portugal students said it was very useful).

Conclusion

These findings indicate how attitude formation is related to conditioned experiences. Taiwanese young adults' attitudes toward museum

visiting show a positively circulating cycle between self-identity, habits, and values.

The results of the survey have shown that young adults students average aged 20 years old think that museums visiting are full of fun, aesthetic enjoyment and learning experiences. However, from the survey results, we found there are several reasons stopping them from attending museums. One of the reasons is lacking of time. The other one is to do with the type of the museum. They like to see and experience something new, modern and contemporary. As Shrapnel (2012) indicates Young adults want to see and experience something new, unique and entertaining. Therefore, museum type should take into concerns when organizing a museum trip for class teaching. The results also shows that when students attend museum, most often with school teachers. It means museum visiting is for schooling instead of their social life. If we expect students to be a life long learner and best using museum as rich learning sites in the future, then there are still ways to work on.

On the other hand, we also find there is a discrepancy between the values of the museum experience itself and the experience in the context of teacher education. All in all, this study uncovers meaningful information for museum education to be enhanced in Taiwan.

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