## Segments of Museum Visitors: Evidence from Italy - Work in Progress

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#### Abstract

This study aims to investigate the various publics of the museums and attempt to segment them using a cluster analysis to explore differences between them with respect to socio-demographic, behavioral and motivational variables. The sample of the study includes museums in Genoa, Italy. A quota sample of 400 museum visitors who accept to contribute in the research will be interviewed. The research instrument will include questions asking about frequency of attendance, reasons for visiting, barriers discouraging museum visits, solutions that would increase visitation. Currently, data collection is going on. The findings will be presented at the conference.

#### Introduction

Today cultural tourism is consistently growing. However, there is no consensus on its definition (Günlü, Yağcı and Pırnar, 2009). In a report compiled for ICCROM - International Center for the Study of the Preservation and the Restoration of Cultural Property – created by UNESCO as an intergovernmental organization dedicated to the conservation of cultural heritage, cultural tourism is defined as "that form of tourism whose object is, among other aims, the discovery of monuments and sites. It exerts on these last a very positive effect insofar as it contributes – to satisfy its own ends – to their maintenance and protection. This form of tourism justifies in fact the efforts which said maintenance and protection demand of the human community because of the socio-cultural and economic benefits which they bestow on all the population concerned" (ICCROM, 2005, p. 25). According to Hughes (1996, p.707; quoted from Richards, 1994), "cultural tourism includes visits to historic buildings and sites, museums, art galleries and also to view contemporary paintings or sculpture or to attend the performing arts" (Hughes, 1996).

Framed within the field of cultural tourism, the current research is focused on the case of museums. Highlighting the important role of museums as places for tangible and intangible heritage, International Council of Museums ICOM adopted the following definition during the 21<sup>st</sup> General Conference in Vienna, Austria in 2007; "A museum is a non-profit , permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment" (ICOM, 2014, para 1). In other words, the museum, as a repository for a part of cultural heritage, offers a public service for the benefit of society as a whole. Its existence enhances community well-being and improves its quality of life (Castilla, 2006).

According to ICCROM (2005, pp. 4-5), "the cultural heritage may be defined as the entire corpus of material signs – either artistic or symbolic – handed on by the past to each culture and, therefore, to the whole of humankind. As a constituent part of the affirmation and enrichment of cultural identities, as a legacy belonging to all humankind, the cultural heritage gives each particular place its recognizable features and is the storehouse of human experience. The preservation and the presentation of the cultural heritage are therefore a corner-stone of any cultural policy." Unfortunately, the situation of the cultural heritage has deteriorated during recent years because of a number of reasons including industrialization, rapid urbanization, the increase in pollution and mass tourism (ICCROM, 2005).

In this regard, the aim of this research is to understand why people visit museums and what can be done to keep them coming and also to attract a greater and more diverse number of visitors. The research is important in the sense that its findings can help in the development and marketing of cultural heritage-based tourism products and as a consequence contribute to the conservation of the tangible and intangible heritage. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Günlü, Yağcı and Pınar (2009), through education and entertainment and the enjoyment of heritage attractions including museums, we believe that, it is possible to develop a climate of public awareness of the value of cultural heritage, conservation and protection in people by all ages and socio-economic groups with different life-styles.

## Literature review

#### Museums: changing roles

Since the 1970s, due to cutbacks in public funding and increasing competition for private support, museums have been changing around the world (McLean, 1995; Ross, 2004; Kotler, Kotler and Kotler, 2008). The significant reductions in public funding over time increased expectations that museums should generate their own revenue. In order to generate revenue and to survive, museums must satisfy the needs of their visitors (Lockstone, 2007). As a consequence of operating in a difficult environment, the relationship between the museums and their many and diverse publics have started to be important as their collections (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, 2000). Yau (2001), one of the curators of the Hong Kong Museum of History, pointed out that, in the past, museums were collection-oriented. Museums have been responsible for collecting and preserving artefacts of human experience and relevance and using them in the creating and dissemination of knowledge through research, educational activities, permanent and temporary exhibitions. However, today, museums are becoming more people-oriented. With the help of the new museology concept introduced as early as the 1980s, as stated by Hooper-Greenhill (1994) "museums are changing from being static storehouses for artifacts into active learning environments for people" (Yau, 2001: para 1).

With this radical shift in museum function, purpose and priorities, museums have assumed a new role of defining themselves as places for learning and enjoyment, where visitors not only enjoy but learn with excitement and enhanced interest. It appears that today public are looking for a kind of "infotainment/edutainment" from museums; a combination of information/education and entertainment (Yau, 2001). As stated by John Lewis, chairman of the Wallace Collection in London, museums are driven to become more an arm of the entertainment and education industries rather than the academic institutions they used to be (Newsweek, 2004). As a result, today's museums are combining their traditional, functional role with their new purposive role. Their functional role is object-based and relates to activities involving collecting, preserving and displaying these objects. However, the purposive role requires them to focus on visitor services to serve society and its development by means of study, education and enjoyment. In short, today museums are for people to enjoy and to learn from collections which are held in trust for society (Rentschler, 2007). However museums are changing, "they will continue to differ from other forms of entertainment through collections of authentic objects and materials, assembled and conserved in accordance with the core purposes of preservation, enlightenment, edification and education." Although repositioning museums towards an entertainment experience sound as a deliberate strategy to build audiences and improve the museum-going experience, criticisms have been raised in relation to this strategy, "Museums may be in danger of losing focus on their core mission" (Kotler and Kotler, 2000, p. 283).

## Museum marketing

As a result of this new understanding in museology, museums have increased interest in their audiences and marketing (McLean, 1995; Yorke and Jones, 2001; Gilmore and Rentschler, 2002; Kotler, Kotler and Kotler, 2008). The change has led museums to have an increased interest in marketing (Rentschler, 2007). "Marketing approaches have been used to increase visitor numbers and to encourage, change and expand the museum role from one of custodial emphasis to one of audience attraction and increased participation" (Rentschler, 2007, p. 15). As McLean (1995, p. 601) says; "although some museums may not consciously recognize it as such, they are being expected to develop a marketing orientation."

"Marketing orientation can be described as the implementation of the marketing concept" which is "basically a philosophy of business that places the customer at the center of organizational activities" (Farrell, 2002, p. 1). Accordingly, market orientation is defined as "the set of cross-functional processes and activities directed at creating and satisfying customers through continuous needs-assessment" (Deshpande and Farley, 1998, p. 213) and therefore is considered a core concept of marketing (Matsuno et al, 2005). According to empirical research results, there is positive relationship between market orientation and performance, not only in profit organizations (Narver and Slater, 1990; Despande and Farley, 1998), but also in not-for-profit organizations (Cano et al, 2004; Camarero and Garrido, 2008). Hence, McLean (1997) offers marketing orientation as the key to long-term survival and goal achievement for museums.

Every organization recognizes that it is almost impossible to appeal to all consumers in the marketplace. Potential consumers may be too numerous and varied in their needs, wants and preferences. In this regard, market segmentation can help a museum to understand its consumers and potential consumers (Kotler, Kotler and Kotler, 2008). By ACE (2011, p. 4) segmentation is defined as "a market research method where a given market is broken down into distinct groups that behave in similar ways or have similar needs." Therefore, as Kotler, Kotler and Kotler (2008) point out, "the first thing a museum should do is to understand the characteristics of its current consumers and the segments they represent". Museums can make surveys to understand the demographic profile of their audiences. In this way, it is possible for them to distinguish their existing audience in relation to potential new audiences (Kotler, Kotler and Kotler, 2008). By defining, profiling and differentiating the marketing mix for these segments, museums can optimize their offer to meet the needs of their various audiences (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2007).

### Museum attendance

In the area of museum marketing, a substantial amount of research focuses on audience research to help managers profile their visiting publics (Harrison and Shaw, 2004). According to the European Group on Museum Statistics report published in December 2004, within the aggregate population (380.4 million) of the original 15 EU countries, 29.9% visited a museum in the last 12 months. Participation rates were the highest in Sweden and Denmark, while they were the lowest in Greece and Portugal (EGMUS, 2004). Based on the most recent survey on European Cultural Values of the same organization conducted by interviewing 26755 citizens in 27 member states of the EU in 2007, 41% of the participants visited a museum or a gallery at least once in the last 12 months, whereas only 7% visited a museum or a gallery more than five times in the last 12 months (EGMUS, 2007).

In the UK, the average number of museum visits per year is under three. However, 24% of museumgoers visit on five or more times (MGC, 1999). More recent research findings with 4000 adults suggest that around a quarter and a third of the adult population visits a museum at least once a year (MORI, 2004). A study conducted by London School of Economics for Museums, Libraries and Archives claimed that each year number of visits to major museums and galleries in the UK is over 42 million (HLF, 2012). According to the "Taking Part" survey run by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, launched in 2005 and reaches an annual sample size of 29000 adults, in 2012, 48.9% of the respondents had attended a museum or a gallery at least once in the previous 12 months (HLF, 2012). Museums are mostly visited by women (56%) and people with middle ages between 35-44 years old (26%) (MLA, 2005). Young adults aged 15-24 years old with no children have the lowest average visit frequency. This age group is the most under-represented in museum and gallery visitors (MORI, 2004). 73% of the visitors go with their partners or friends, 35% go with their children, only 16% go alone. The main reason for visiting a specific museum is the interest in the collection (40%). Good communication seems to affect visitors. 15% say that they were encouraged by advertising. Another 15% cited personal recommendation (MGC, 1999). The cinema is the most popular leisure time activity (59%), followed by libraries (51%), well-known parks and gardens (37%), museums and art galleries (37%), famous cathedrals/churches (33%), historic buildings (32%) in the UK (MORI, 2004).

Taking Part Survey also show that 84% of the population rarely or only 'now and then' attends arts activities. As social scientists at the Cambridge University found education and social status are the two most important factors influencing participation. Gender, ethnicity, age, region, having young children and health were also found to be important (HLF, 2012). According to the research findings of DCMS (2010), visiting museums and galleries, heritage sites and archives is influenced by sex, educational attainment, socio-economic group and economic status. Probability of visiting a museum increases with age and the extent that people visited museums as a child. In other words, those individuals who visited museums as children are more likely to visit museums as adults. In fact, this effect is maintained throughout the lifetime of the individuals.

In the US, there also seems to be close correlation between lifestyle and arts participation, including visiting arts museums. As an example, 57.2% of individuals who attended arts activities visited art museums (Nichols, 2002). In the US, 2/3 of the museum visitors consist of adults (Smithsonian Institution, 2004). Most museum visitors have higher education and income level from the general public. Arts and science museums attract audiences with the highest educational level (Kotler, Kotler and Kotler, 2008). Highest attendance rates are seen in science and technology museums, followed by children's and youth museums, natural history museums, arts museums and history museums (AAM, 2006). There are approximately 850 million visits each year to American museums, more than the attendance for all major sporting events and theme parks combined. Of the 850 million visits, approximately 55 million visits belong to students in school groups. Consequently, museums directly generate 21 billion USD to the US economy each year. Still, more than 2/3 of museums reported economic stress at their institutions in 2012 (AAM, 2014).

In Italy, according to EGMUS (2012), the total number of museums is 435, 90% of which are open for public more than 200 days of the year. Italy like Greece has the highest number of Art, Archeology and History museums in the EU. Most recent figures in 2008 indicates that total number of visits to museums were over 33 million; 53% of which was with free admission. As a consequence, income generated by these museums is over 104 million euros. Available statistics also show that average number of visits per museum was 82758 in Italy; the highest figure after Sweden's 85958.

Regarding attitudes to museums, research results suggest that 82% of the visitors believe in the importance of having a local town museum or gallery, 91% thought that the museum they visited was good and 82% of the visitors felt that they gained new knowledge from their museum visit. However, 14% of the visitors said that they would feel out of place in a gallery, museum or a theatre (MLA, 2005).

Regarding visitor motivations, available research indicates that visitors look for a variety of experiences (e.g. amusement, excitement, learning etc.) and different types of visitors look for different experiences (Kotler, Kotler, and Kotler, 2008). In an earlier study of the reasons behind frequent attendance and nonattendance at museums, Hood (1983, 2000) finds out that museum publics are divided into three groups as *frequent participants*, *occasional participants* and *nonparticipants* based on their leisure values, interests and expectations. This differs from the two groups of participants and nonparticipants as traditionally assumed. Frequent visitors, who go to museums at least three times a year, are a minority in the community, value having an opportunity to learn, having the challenge of new experiences and doing something worthwhile in their leisure time. Nonparticipants, on the other hand, represent almost the opposite pole; they value being with people, participants, who go to museums once or twice a year, more closely resemble the nonparticipants since they also value socialization patterns and leisure values.

Like Hood (1983, 2000), Strang and Gutman (1980) identify three groups of target audiences for arts organizations. In terms of the role and objectives of promotion programs, target audiences may be classified as "enthusiasts", "interested" and "non-attenders". Enthusiasts are those people with a strong interest in a specific art form who seek out information about future performances without the benefit of extensive promotion. The interested are those with a lesser level of commitment who may be

persuaded with incentives. Non-attenders are those members of the community who have little knowledge of a particular art form but may become active if they learn to appreciate its value. Accordingly, Strang and Gutman (1980) determine the objectives of promotional activities to be informing the enthusiasts, persuading the interested and educating the non-attenders. Informing involves providing basic information on the event itself, its location, date, time, and cost of tickets and how they may be obtained. Such information helps patrons to make their decision whether to attend or not. Persuasion involves the additional incentives that may encourage prospective patrons to attend. Educating, on the other hand, involves educating the prospective patrons about the value of the art form, and therefore most likely requires personal contact, though it has high cost. According to Strang and Gutman (1980, p. 226), "For most people an appreciation of the performing arts is learned and acquired over time. This means that the expansion of the audience for the arts requires the development of a level of understanding sufficient to arouse the desire to attend an arts event".

Recently, taking the findings of the Taking Part Survey, Arts Council England analyzed arts audiences in England and developed a new arts-based segmentation of English adults. Based on the analysis of the patterns of arts engagement, attitudes towards the arts among English adults (aged 16 and over) and information on socio-demographic characteristics, lifestyle habits and media profile, the Council identified 13 distinct arts consumer segments which were then grouped into three as "highly engaged", with "some engagement" and "not currently engaged". As mentioned in the report, segmentation research provides insight into why and how different kinds of people with different attitudes, opinions and motivations engage with the arts. From a marketing perspective, by identifying target segments and developing tailored marketing strategies, segmentation research can help any organization to increase its arts engagement (ACE, 2011).

By undertaking a survey of existing research on museum and gallery audiences in the UK, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2007) identified and quantified the range of motivations that people have for visiting museums and galleries. Segmenting visitors by their principal motivation, in other words, by the needs that they satisfy by visiting museums and galleries, their classification identified four key drivers; social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. Individuals with social drivers see museums as an enjoyable place to spend time with friends and family, they look for ease of access and orientation, good facilities and services and welcoming staff. Individuals with intellectual drivers are keen to foster their children's or their own interest and knowledge, may have professional interest in the subject, look for a journey of discovery and to find out new things. Individuals with emotional drivers may have a personal connection to the subject matter, they desire to see fascinating objects in an inspiring setting, value ambience, deep sensory and intellectual experience. Finally, individuals with spiritual drivers look for creative stimulation and quiet contemplation, they see museums as an opportunity to escape and recharge their batteries and food for the soul. These drivers are hierarchical; while social drivers are located at the lowest level, spiritual drivers are located at the top of this hierarchy of motivations. In other words, as visitors move up, their visit gets more fulfilling and rewarding.

Prentice, Davis and Beeho (1997) investigated the generic reasons for visiting and not visiting a museum and found that visitors have various reasons to visit museums. Besides gaining general knowledge, visitors come to museums out of curiosity, as part of a general day out, to escape from the routine and be with family and friends. According to the findings of MORI (2004), the main factors in encouraging museum visits include general interest, willingness to visit the same museum again, and interest in particular temporary exhibition. MORI (2005) findings suggest that although people have lack of awareness about the museums and what is on, there is also a strong tradition of taking children to museums.

Similarly, Fitchett (1997, p. 233) found that "different visitors have different reasons and motives for visiting museums" and concluded that they have complex and diverse reasons for attending. There are potentially many reasons in visiting museums, and learning is rarely one of them. Visitors have various needs, wants and expectations and they are more interested in the activity of visiting a museum itself; just being able to do something in their leisure time, rather than seeing and learning

anything in particular. That is why, while one visitor may find the museum experience very rewarding, another finds it of little interest.

Large scale research findings (such as DCMS, 2008; MLA, 2004; MORI, 2001; MORI, 2004) in the UK suggest that barriers that discourage people from visiting museums include "lack of interest", "lack of time", "lack of understanding" and "cost". However, among these barriers, the most significant one is lack of interest. According to DCMS (2008), 33% of the participants claimed that they are not really interested in visiting museums, whereas 27% claimed that they do not have enough time. Although lack of time may be a valid reason preventing some people from visiting museums, it may be an excuse to hide their lack of interest (Lin, 2006). As Lin (2006) says, the general public perceives museums as places for education and learning thus they are boring and dull places; not suitable for leisure purposes. Such perceptions prevent non-visitors from visiting museums.

As pointed out by Thyne (2001), it was found that one-third of museum goers never enter a gallery; they spend all their time in the museum shop or the café. In fact, a large number of citizens are uninterested in museums (McLean, 1995). According to the most recent survey of EGMUS (2007), 58% of the citizens participated in the research (over 26000 individuals) never visited museums or galleries in the last 12 months in 27 member states of the EU. Regarding the different publics of the museum and their values, McLean (1995) emphasizes that since the values of the museum professionals tend to be more in line with frequent visitors, they are emphasizing those qualities that are least appealing to the occasional and non-visiting publics. However, as a recent audience research suggests, the growth and future of museums rests in better understanding the behavior of repeating visitors (Yeh and Lin, 2005). As MORI (2005) suggested, 59% of visitors are repeat visitors of a particular museum or a gallery. Of these repeat visitors, almost three quarters (73%) had already visited in the previous 12 months.

# Methodology

Much of the work on museum visitors has been criticized for its lack of attempt to integrate the results into a coherent framework and failing to use the results to advance an overall understanding of the nature of the visit. What museum curators and related official institutions are good at is collecting numbers. Museums, especially in the public sector, have been slow to transform themselves and internalize the idea of becoming visitor oriented (Goulding, 2000). Therefore, this study aims to understand various publics of the museums and attempt to segment them using a cluster analysis to explore differences between them with respect to socio-demographic, behavioral and motivational variables so that right marketing strategies can be developed not only to keep them coming back but also attract a greater and more diverse number of visitors. The sample of the study includes museums in Genoa, Italy. A quota sample of 400 museum visitors who accept to contribute in the research will be interviewed. The research instrument will include questions asking about frequency of attendance, reasons for visiting, barriers discouraging museum visits, solutions that would increase visitation. Currently, data collection is going on. The findings will be presented at the conference.

## Conclusion

As important cultural organizations in the service of society, museums have been going through a change from being predominantly custodial institutions to becoming increasingly focused on audience attraction (Gilmore and Rentschler, 2002). In order to increase visitation and survive in the long run, today's museums need to understand their visiting and non-visiting publics. Therefore, this research is designed in a way to understand various publics of the museums and attempt to segment them using a cluster analysis to explore differences between them with respect to socio-demographic, behavioral and motivational variables, so that effective marketing strategies can be developed to attract and keep them coming back. Hence, this research is important in the sense that its findings can help in the development and marketing of museums and as a consequence serve for a higher purpose and contribute to the conservation of cultural heritage. Nevertheless, through education and entertainment and the enjoyment of cultural heritage, museums can help develop a climate of public awareness of the

value of cultural heritage, conservation and protection in people by all ages and socio-economic groups with different life-styles.

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