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The Ecology of Culture: *Community Engagement, Co-creation and Cross Fertilization*



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***More is Better!* Crucial Issues and Challenges for Museum Audience Development in a Multicultural Society. A Literature Review**

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Abstract

The purpose of this conceptual paper is to investigate how research on museum management has approached audience development and community engagement in a multicultural society, where cross-cultural understanding and respect for human diversity are a shared commitment. The exploratory research opted for a literature review aiming to grasp both the state of the art on museum visitor studies and the most relevant issues concerning the scientific debate on this topic. After analysing the main features emerging in the last twenty years, the research considers some pilot projects involving immigrant communities, suggesting practice recommendations and guidelines for further research. The expected results concern gaps in research methods and aims, and hypothesis for future field research. The paper fulfils an identified need to promote the development of visitor surveys, in order to support museums in achieving their mission and maximizing value creation, also foreseeing implications for the innovation of cultural policies.

Keywords: audience development; cultural heritage; museum studies; multicultural society; value creation

To find, though, that paintings could be decoded, that they were intellectual as well as aesthetic experiences, was something of a relief because it straight away put them in a familiar and much more English context if only because a lot of iconography, saying who's who and what's what in a painting, could be taken as a higher form of that very English preoccupation, gossip. [...]

The truth is people come in for all sorts of reasons, some of them just to take the weight off their feet or to get out of the rain, to look at the pictures perhaps, or to look at other people looking at the pictures. And the hope is, the faith is, that the paintings will somehow get to them and that they'll take away something they weren't expecting and couldn't predict.

(Alan Bennett, *Going to the Pictures*)

Introduction

The *Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, signed in Faro ten years ago (27 October 2005), definitively shared “the need to involve everyone in society in the ongoing process of defining and managing cultural heritage” (Preamble). Even though the Faro Convention – as a “framework convention” – does not create specific obligations, allowing each State Party to “decide on the most convenient means to implement the convention according to its legal or institutional frameworks, practices and specific experience” (Council of Europe, 2014: 3), it invites the State Parties to develop

cooperation networks for the exchange of experience and launching of future initiatives. Among its priorities there are not only the management of the cultural diversity for cohesive society and the improvement of the living environment and quality of life, but also the development of the democratic participation, through the implementation of a “shared responsibility” (art. 8) involving citizens and civil society and the commitment from all social stakeholders. Finally, according to the Faro Convention everyone “has the right to benefit from the cultural heritage and to contribute towards its enrichment” (art. 4).

Some recent European documents have confirmed and strengthened these objectives, including them in the EU agenda.²⁶ Sharing a dynamic and proactive notion of cultural heritage and with due regard to the principle of subsidiarity, the *Conclusions on cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe* called Member States to “continue to promote education on cultural heritage, raise public awareness on the potential of cultural heritage for sustainable development and to encourage public participation, especially of children and young people, in cooperation with civil society” (Council of the EU, 2014: 3). Two months later, in order to enhance Europe’s position in the field of cultural heritage valorisation, the Communication from the European Commission, *Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe*, stated the need to “encourage the modernisation of the heritage sector, raising awareness and engaging new audiences” (European Commission, 2014b: 6). In line with the objectives of the EU 2020 strategy, the Creative Europe and Horizon 2020 programmes too are contributing to realize these shared objectives and generate social innovation for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

As already stated by John Holden almost ten years ago, cultural policy could not remain a closed conversation among experts: the challenge is “to create a different alignment between culture, politics and the public” (Holden, 2006: 11). If the best answer to the question “why fund culture?” is “because the public wants it”, politicians should understand what the public values about culture and cultural professionals should create and articulate that demand; therefore, the cultural system can work better to generate value for the public (Holden, 2006: 14). In order to face this challenge, more and better research is needed to help cultural organizations to know and satisfy public needs, attracting more funding from politicians and policy-makers and then improving the quality of cultural services (Figure 1).

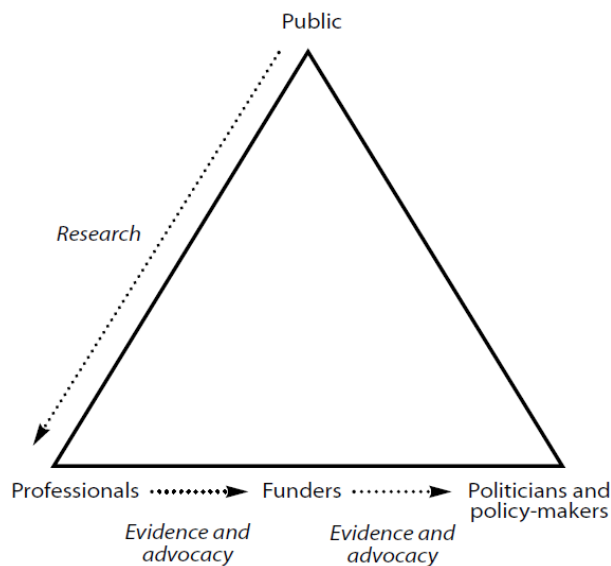


Figure 1. Information flow (Source: Holden, 2006: 48).

²⁶ See also the *Treaty on the European Union* stating that “the Union shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced” (art. 3).

According to accountability and evidence-based policy, information is required from strategic analysis on the actual and potential audiences, their characteristics, preferences and expectations (Reussner, 2003). These crucial issues will become more important in the near future, due to the growing international migration and population change in Europe²⁷ (European Commission, 2014a). In this context cultural heritage plays an important role contributing in the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. More important is the role of museums as institutions that provide a cultural service for the public benefit. Sharing these assumptions the following research investigates how museum studies have approached audience development and community engagement in the last twenty years, highlighting research achievements and advances both in visitor surveys and communication strategies. After showing the role of museums in our multicultural society, a literature review is conducted, in order to grasp both the state of the art and the emerging issues concerning the scientific debate on this topic. In the selection of books, conference papers and journal articles, two electronic databases (Elsevier's SCOPUS and Thomson Reuters Web of Science) too were searched using keywords based on the inclusion criteria. The two databases cover some of the most significant journals within the museum and cultural heritage context: *Museum Management and Curatorship*, *The International Journal of the Inclusive Museum*, *Visitor Studies*, *International Journal of Arts Management*, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *Journal of Cultural Heritage*. In total (in both databases), more than 1,000 records resulted from the search terms in keywords, title and abstract for the period 1995-2015, with several duplications in the two databases, different disciplinary points of view (e.g. education, anthropology, marketing, etc.) and papers analysing policies and case studies from Europe, USA and Asia. This first exploratory analysis focused on the European context – even though including some non-European studies with an international relevance –, selecting and retrieving papers moved by a managerial approach or a marketing perspective. In addition, some recent European pilot projects involving immigrant communities are considered, trying to provide practice recommendations and guidelines. Finally, gaps in research methods and aims, and hypothesis for future field research are discussed.

2. Changing museums in a changing world?

The social role of museums in our society was definitively stated by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in the 22nd General Assembly held in Vienna in 2007. According to the ICOM's definition a museum is an "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". If museums operate "in the service of society and its development", they achieve their mission continually and holistically serving their audiences and communities, creating long-term value both for their stakeholders and future generations. According to a sustainable approach, equity in the treatment of different generations over time (inter-generational equity or inter-temporal distributive justice) is a key issue (Throsby, 2002: 107). In this context the challenge for museums is two-fold: on the one hand, they must reach a wider and more diversified audience, reflecting the complex demographic composition of contemporary society; on the other hand, they must ensure that the

²⁷ At the beginning of 2013, the EU population was 503 million, of which 20.4 million were third-country nationals, corresponding to 4% of the total population. In 2012, 2.1 million first residence permits were issued to third-country nationals. Of these, 32% were given for family reasons, 23% for remunerated activities, 22% for study and 23% for other reasons (including international protection). The countries whose nationals were given the highest number of first permits are: United States of America with 200,000 third-country nationals representing 9.5% from the EU total followed by Ukraine (163,000), China (161,000) and India (157,000) with around 7.5% from EU total. Significant number of permits (between 5% and 2.5% from EU total) were issued to nationals from Morocco (102,000), Russia (66,000), Philippines (62,000), Turkey (59,000) and Brasil (51,000). The total number of asylum applications in 2013 amounted to 434,160, which represents a strong increase of around 100,000 applicants compared to the previous year. The largest group of applicants came from Syria (50,470 i.e. 12% of all applicants), with other significant countries being Russia, Afghanistan, Serbia Pakistan and Kosovo (European Commission, 2014a, from Eurostat data for 2012).

value of cultural heritage is understood and cultural capital increase.

Particular attention should be addressed to social changes that are occurring not only in Europe, which also create challenges and opportunities for cultural heritage management (Black 2005; American Association of Museums 2010; European Foresight Platform 2012). Hence, international migration and an aging population play an important role in European population change. These changes set new goals for museums: international migration increases the cultural diversity of population and, as a consequence, creates a greater diversity of culture providers and consumers to satisfy, whereas an aging population implies more spare time for an increasing number of people, hence a wider potential audience for museums. Furthermore, the increasing familiarity of young generations with ICT, e.g. Prensky's digital natives reshapes the way that museums provide services, improving users' involvement and participation.

In this context, museums are required to become agents of social cohesion. The volume *Looking Reality in the Eye. Museums and Social Responsibility* (Janes & Conaty, 2005) provides a wide set of case studies, focusing on social responsibility and museum accountability towards communities through deep relationships with all stakeholders. For example, Sutter and Worts consider museums as agents and active facilitators of social change because of their contribution to history and cultural diversity being understood. Finally,

just as today's societies are incredibly diverse and complex, museums are no longer the monolithic institutions of the past. Instead, many are focusing their efforts more narrowly, telling particular stories with larger meanings. Often, these stories reflect issues and people that have been marginalized by mainstream society – First Nations, immigrants, and chronic illness. This approach can also lead to an activism that embraces community issues and inspirations, in an effort to provide value and meaning (Janes & Conaty, 2005: 3).

Sharing this approach, the European Commission too recognizes that:

museums are increasingly community-oriented, led by people and stories, for instance proposing heritage-based narratives that weave the personal stories of community members into the interpretation of larger historical events. They place audiences on a par with collections, at the heart of their activities, do not shy away from exploring sensitive and difficult issues, and address contemporary topics that speak to more diverse audiences (European Commission, 2014b: 5-6).

In this context value-creation becomes a democratic mandate and the measurement, communication and evaluation of the value that museums create become a crucial issue (Koster 2006; Weil 2006; Koster & Falk 2007; Scott 2013). Scott (2008) identifies a use value, which is direct consumption, an institutional value, when well managed institutions generate trust in the public realm and add value to government, and an instrumental value, describing governments' expected return on public investments related to evidence of the achievement of social and economic policy objectives: "the recipients are (a) the economy – through civic branding, tourism, employment and the multiplier effect on local economies; (b) communities – through increased social capital, social cohesion, tolerance for cultural diversity, urban regeneration and civic participation; and (c) individuals – through benefits such as learning, personal well-being and health" (Scott, 2008: 34-35).

In summary, activating a virtuous cycle, the museum that succeeds in creating cultural value for its users creates economic value for itself, attracting more resources to guarantee the long-term conservation of its tangible and intangible cultural heritage – directly, through revenue from tickets, and indirectly, through public and private funding. Consequently, continuously improving its performance, the museum could innovate its offer, satisfying new audiences that increase in number and creating benefits for the local

context, e.g. development of economic and professional opportunities and higher quality of life (Montella 2009; Cerquetti 2014).

Shifting from theory to practice, despite a shared and increasing interest in value-creation in museum studies, data on museum attendance reveals several gaps to fulfil. A survey on the participation of Europeans in cultural activities conducted by European Commission in 2013²⁸ registered that under half of respondents had undertaken a range of cultural activities once or more in the last years: among them, only 37% visited a museum or gallery (-4%, if compared to 2007) while 62% did not visit a museum or gallery in the last 12 months (Figure 2).

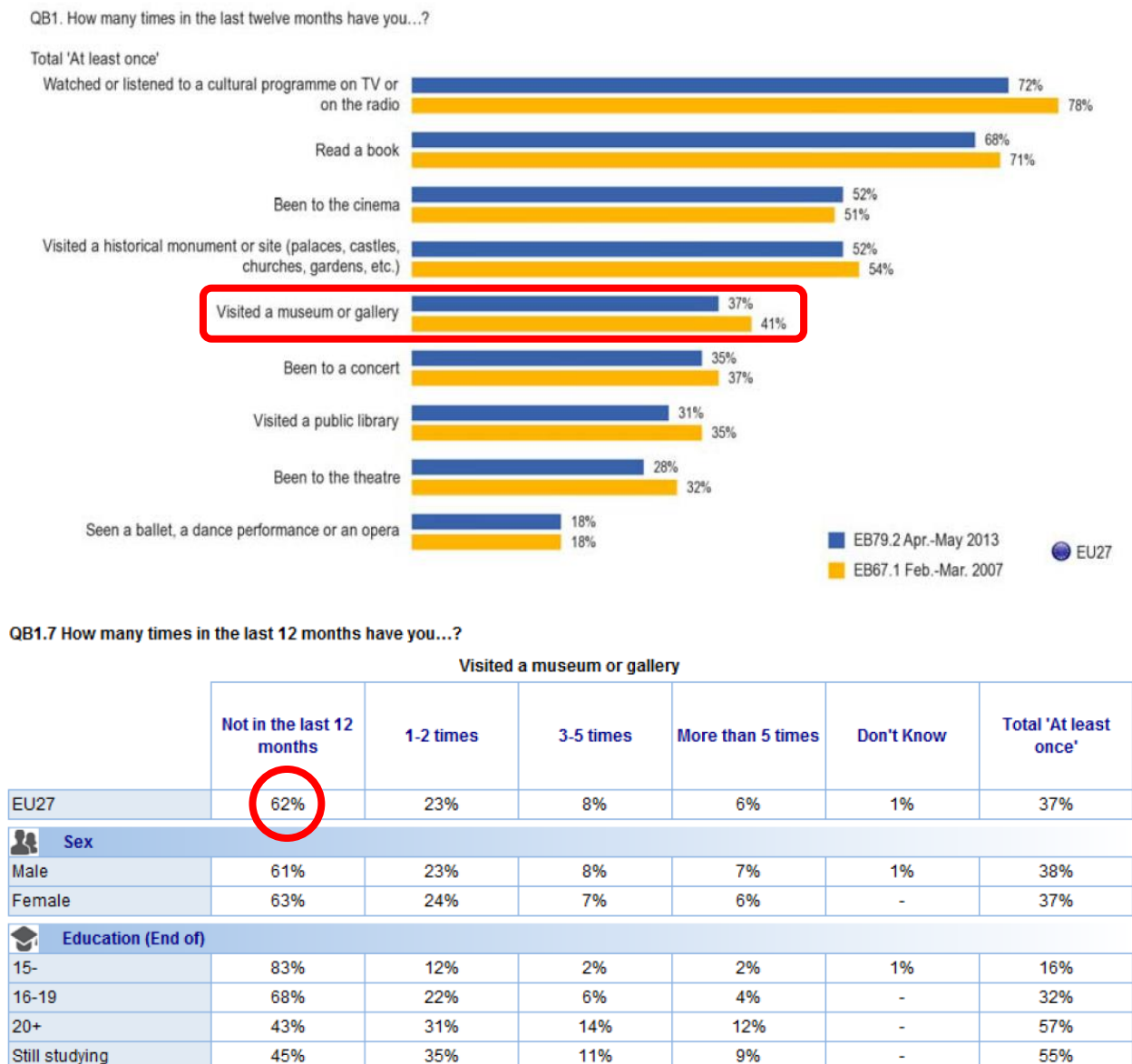


Figure 2. Museum attendance (Source: European Commission, 2013: 9, 19).

²⁸ The survey was carried out by TNS Opinion & Social network in the 27 Member States of the European Union (2013) and in Croatia between 26 April and 14 May 2013. Some 26,563 respondents from different social and demographic groups were interviewed face-to-face at home in their mother tongue.

Beside lack of time, lack of interest (the first answer given in 21 Member States) is the main barrier to visiting museums and galleries more often.²⁹ The analysis of the results by socio-demographic categories reveals other interesting patterns by education and occupation, that appear to be important factors: among the most frequent reasons given for not visiting a museum or gallery in the last year, only 21% of managers gave lack of interest as a reason, “compared to 42% of the unemployed or 39% of manual workers. Similarly 48% of the respondents who left school before the age of 16 mention lack of interest as a reason, whereas this figure falls to 23% for those leaving education after the age of 19” (European Commission, 2013: 37).

Even though changes having happened in society since the beginning of the 21st century, it seems that museum visitors are still upper education, upper occupation and upper income groups (Hood 1993; Coffee 2007). What about unemployed or manual workers, immigrants or less-educated audiences? The lack of visitors belonging to these categories confirm a need of innovation that could no more be ignored.

This picture looks even more complex if we consider an interim finding from a study-in-progress aiming to examine long-term changes in cultural attendance in the UK (Voase, 2013). The researcher expected the growth of knowledge economy and the expansion of the middle class in the 2000³⁰ to generate an expansion in levels of cultural attendance: “however, the picture is one of unchanging levels of attendance at cultural events and facilities. These two facts could be reconciled by theorising that an expanded middle class somehow loses its specificity: that its middle-class behaviours become diluted and as it expands. Thus, its propensity for cultural attendance lessens” (Voase, 2013: 171).

In summary, considering public funding being made available to cultural organisations, if museums are supported by public expenditure, they should create value for a higher percentage of people, attracting and satisfying new audiences and measuring how valuable are their visits through a strategic marketing approach (Arts Council of England, 2011). Sharing this need, the following literature review tries to highlight the contribution that museum studies have provided on this topic during the last twenty years.

3. Towards an audience-centred approach: main topics and crucial issues

In 1933, when studying museum fatigue, Edward S. Robinson, the first scholar to carry out extensive and systematic museum audience research, wrote that if visitors could not discern the museum’s philosophy, the philosophy must be changed and the outlook of the curators must change (quoted in Hood, 1993: 18). At the end of the 1990 this need for change in museum management definitively arrived at a turning point, supported by the wide sharing of a new notion of museums and their role in society (Adams 1999; Briggs 2000; Hooper-Greenhill 2000): from places of exclusion to places of inclusion (Coffee, 2008), from places of education to places of learning, or rather “free-choice, or informal, learning environments”, mediators of “information and knowledge for a range of users to access on their own terms, through their own choice, and within their own place and time” (Kelly, 2004: 47). Moreover, in 1999 Weil argued that museums need to change their vision from being *about something* to being *for somebody*, strengthening the role of museum responsiveness (Lang, Reeve, & Woollard 2006; Ocello, 2011). Therefore, the challenges museums face (e.g. the increased competition and the proliferation of leisure choices) have resulted in a conceptual shift “from being primarily curator-driven to becoming market-responsive, focusing on the needs of audiences and their learning” (Kelly, 2004: 48-49).

²⁹ Respondents are least interested in visiting museums and galleries in Cyprus, where 61% said this was the main barrier; this is also the main obstacle for more than half of respondents in Malta (52%) and Portugal (51%). Lack of time is mentioned as the main barrier in the UK (41%), Latvia, Luxembourg (both 39%), Sweden (35%), Estonia (34%) and Romania (32%). The cost of museums or galleries is generally a secondary issue, but was mentioned by 18% of respondents in Hungary, 15% in Italy and 14% in Portugal. The quality and choice of museums and galleries was mentioned by 26% of respondents in Romania and by 17% in Greece, Estonia and Sweden (Eurobarometer, 2013: 28).

³⁰ The middle class of the 2000 is much greater than that of the early 1990: “the number of middle-class, ABC1 households increased from some 19 million to 27 million. The number of C2DE households declined from 26 million to something over 21 million” (Voase, 2013: 172).

Today, an audience-centric approach is considered a vehicle to achieve museum sustainability (Villeneuve 2013; Di Pietro *et al.* 2014) and audience development is a relevant democratic mandate for museums in contemporary society. For this reason, since the beginning of the 21st century handbooks, toolkits and guidelines have been provided all over the world to support cultural institutions in this process and many museums have already adopted an audience development strategy or plan. Audience development is an interdisciplinary domain, including museology and education, sociology and psychology, leisure and information science, consumer behaviour and marketing: indeed, all these disciplines are involved in “reaching and engaging people in local communities by increasing the number or types of people who participate in arts activities, or deepening an existing audience’s level of participation. It includes serving both new audiences and the present audience more deeply” (Connolly & Hinand Cady, 2001: 7).

When analysing publications on museum audiences of the last twenty years, two different, but tightly linked, research paths emerge: on the one hand, audience research, including both visitors and non-visitors, theory and practice, methods and objectives; on the other hand, strategies for visitor involvement.

As far as the audience research is concerned, even though the first visitor studies have been conducted in the USA since the beginning of the 20th century, only during the 1990 the proliferation of empirical studies has been accompanied worldwide by a new theoretical approach to audience research, shifting the focus from museum collections to museum services. At the beginning of the 1990 Marilyn G. Hood pointed out that “most of the things people object to in museums are related to amenities and services, or lack of them, rather than to the collections, exhibits, or programmes” (Hood, 1993: 24). As institutions supposed to function for the public benefit, museums have been required to ensure the critical understanding of the value of their collections. This kind of innovation has been developed above all in science museums, more aware than other institutions that “effective communication takes account of and involves museum audiences in shaping a museum’s messages” (Fitzgerald & Webb, 1994: 278).

According to a visitor-oriented approach, the need to identify, understand and respond to different interests and perspectives has been highlighted, considering demographic data as useful tools for museums to compare the profile of their audiences to that of their communities, “identify fast-growing populations they might want to target, check assumptions, and reexamine standard operating procedures, as the world changes around them” (Mintz, 1998: 67). Since the 1990 at least, in order to explain cultural consumptions, the analysis of social structure has been integrated by arguments relating to individual or culturalistic characteristics (i.e. lifestyle or milieu-based or dynamic-temporary states) (Kirchberg & Kuchar, 2014: 175). Above all, the concept of audience identity has progressively broken down in favour of audience diversity, shifting from audience to audiences (Werner, Hayward, & Larouche, 2014).

Finally, at the beginning of the 21st century, a research culture arose, moving from *practice* to *theory of practice*. This approach is supported by different methods and focuses on “visitor experiences and learning that, in turn, contributes to organisational learning and change” (Kelly, 2004: 62): “audience research in museums is uniquely placed to add value to organisations, not only through attending to the interests, learning needs and understandings of those who use their services, but to provide a meaningful and strategic role in the learning that takes place within the organisation” (Kelly, 2004: 67). Moving from these assumptions, a new paradigm has been adopted based on a transaction approach. In this model audience research is the intermediary between mission and market approaches to museum programme development (Figure 3).

When closely scrutinising research methods and objectives, during the last fifteen years studies have demonstrated an increasing attention to qualitative research replacing traditional quantitative approaches, adopting unobtrusive audio or video-recording of visitors’ behaviours and conversations and narrative methodologies to investigate museum experience (Everett & Barrett, 2009).

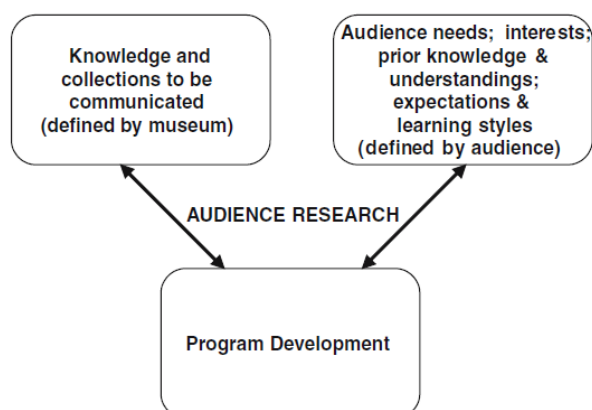


Figure 3. A transaction approach to museum programme development (Source: Kelly, 2004: 50).

Considering the effects of demographic changes on cultural attendance, the impact of ageing population has also been debated, analysing challenges and opportunities that museums will have to face in the near future (Benitez, 2013). Moreover, the importance to understand the reasons of non-attendance has been debated, focusing on young people. As argued by Mason and McCarthy the younger age groups – teenagers and young adults – are the groups that “museums continually fail to cater to, despite their efforts to broaden and diversify their audiences” (Mason & McCarthy, 2006: 22). In particular, so few young people go to art galleries because they are excluded by a kind of psychological barrier (“threshold fear”): they feel museums are not for them and do not feel as if they are part of museums. New citizens too have been put on the agenda. As suggested by Kirchberg and Kuchar:

The question then arises, for example, as to whether increased efforts to integrate immigrants into German society will decrease their exclusion from high culture events or whether continuing high culture exclusion will reveal that long-term cultural integration is unsuccessful. Non-attendance could, then, reflect either society’s lack of integration (obstacle) or the conscious and understandable refusal of these groups to assimilate to high culture (Kirchberg & Kuchar, 2014: 176).

As some recent projects confirm (Jochems 2008; Bodo, Gibbs, & Sani 2009; Innocenti 2014, 2015; Filippopoliti & Sylaiou 2015):

With their ability to provide possibilities for people to associate, interact and find common ground regardless of ethnic background, museums can play an integral part in helping immigrants to connect to their new home country and society. The full potential of this has not yet been harnessed. In order to make better use of their capacity, museums need to be more active and versatile in their outreach programmes, engage more deeply in work with multiple audiences, and encourage participation (Hautio, 2011: 61).

Analysing strategies for visitor involvement, participation should not only be connected to the notion of museum as a social practice, involving social interaction with other visitors and dialogue with exhibitions (Coffee, 2007), but also be considered a dimension of accessibility, firmly linked to the use of the museum as a public space (Hautio, 2011). For museums, engagement means innovative presentation and interpretation techniques: determinants of engagement that play an important role are interactive panels, guided tours, videos and audios, themed interactive exhibitions (Taheri, Jafari, & O’gorman, 2014). As a consequence, the approach based on one-way mass communication is considered out-of-date and even the concept of

different clusters of users based on socio-demographic categories is facing a crisis in favor of a new paradigm based on the concept of “identity formation in everyday life”, where visitors are simultaneously “members of an audience (*cultural consumers*) and performers (*cultural producers*)” (Stylianou-Lambert, 2010: 135). Moving from this new approach, visitor studies have emphasized the need to encourage the participation of museum users in different forms (Simon, 2010), even through co-production (Davies, 2010). According to a constructivist approach, museum exhibitions have to be designed and set up as an open work, providing different perspectives and viewpoints, to facilitate open-ended learning outcomes (Sandell, 2007: 78).

In particular the role of new technologies and the digital empowerment of museums have been considered crucial issues to attract young generations and achieve new audiences (Parry 2007; Marty & Burton Jones 2008; Tallo & Walker 2008; Carrozzino & Bergamasco 2010; Bakhshi & Throsby 2012; Jarrier & Bourgeon-Renault 2012; Alexandri *et al.* 2014; Rubino *et al.* 2015), both by academics and practitioners: thanks to edutainment, interactivity and immersive experiences (Mencarelli, Marteaux, & Puhl 2010; Brady 2011; Ntalla, 2013-2014), ICTs could stimulate people’s commitment, understanding and creative engagement (Dindler, 2014), also becoming an activating factor in lack of motivation and context (Baradaran Rahimi, 2014). Even though the possible risk of dramatization, trivialization and disneyfication resulting from technologies (Balloffet, Courvoisier, & Lagier, 2014), ICTs could create effective narrative environments (MacLeod, Hanks, & Hale, 2012), facilitating the communication of the historical value of the exhibits through storytelling, thematization, spatialization and scenarization (Mencarelli & Puhl, 2012).

4. Museum studies for audience development: research gaps and future challenges

Since the end of the 20th century important innovations have affected museums studies. In order to face social changes (ageing population, international migration, etc.) and attract and satisfy new audiences (e.g. digital natives and new immigrant communities), a new notion of museum has been debated and finally shared, encouraging museums to become more relevant and responsive: places of learning rather than of education, for somebody rather than about something, inclusive rather than exclusive. Aiming to achieve museum mission, audience research too has progressively developed its theoretical approach, addressing non-audiences and implementing innovative methods and techniques (i.e. qualitative research). As a consequence, visitor involvement has gained a central role: audience participation and engagement have been implemented through ICTs, promoting edutainment, interactivity, immersive experiences and narrative environments (Figure 4).

Moving from these advances and achievements in museum studies, some possible further developments are here listed:

- much more attention and consideration should be addressed to the multicultural composition of our society. Some studies confirm that many programmes have been developed in anthropological or historical museums like immigrant museums (Horn 2006; Hautio 2011; Dixon 2012; Jöhler 2015; Schorch 2015), rather than in art museums (Ang, 2005), that are also required to innovate their approach to new audiences;
- museum audience research needs to become a museum learning “community of practice” (Kelly, 2004), sharing expertise, methods and objectives. This approach could allow the comparability of the studies and their results in an international framework to identify best practice examples for high-quality analyses (Kirchberg & Kuchar, 2014) and promote the innovation of research: more theoretically based, collaborative, interdisciplinary and longitudinal (Patriarche *et al.*, 2014);
- audience research should develop the theoretical explanations for non-attendance, deepening the investigation of diverse audiences’ needs (e.g. young people, new citizens, etc.) and levels of understanding also through qualitative studies (Kirchberg & Kuchar, 2014);

- new strategies to involve people should not neglect the innovation of communication contents. To become relevant organisations, it is essential that museums form new contents to match different levels of understanding (Montella 2009; Cerquetti 2014).

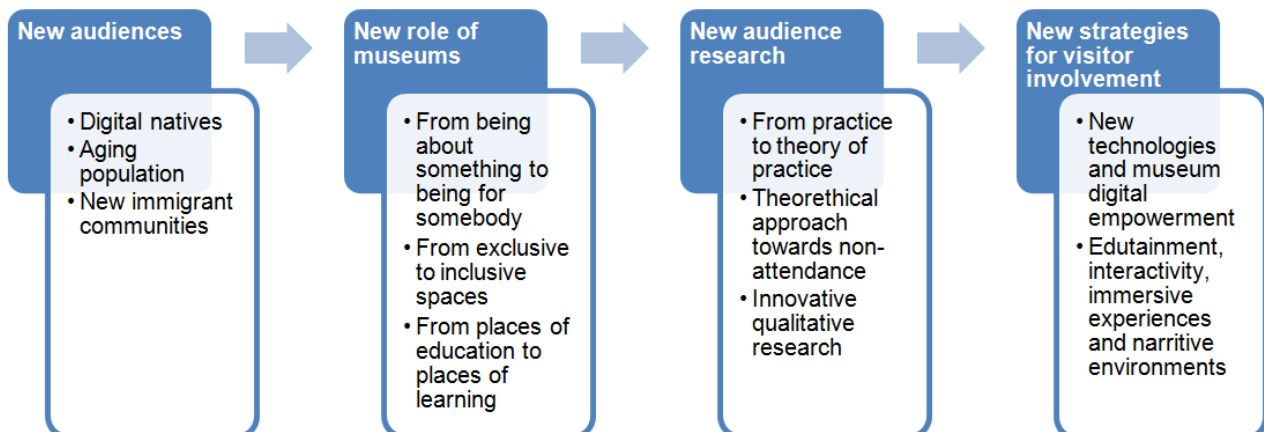


Figure 4. Museums and audience research in a changing world (Source: own elaboration).

Conclusion

This study investigates the increasing attention to audience development in the museum sector through a literature review: scrutinizing two international databases, it discusses the achievements and advances in museum studies, also highlighting emerging issues and future challenges for museum management. The analysis of papers on museum audience confirms the central role of ICT for museum innovation, both for the improvement of service quality and the attraction of new audiences. As far as visitor studies are concerned, a deepened attention to different clusters of visitors is registered, beyond traditional socio-demographic categories. However, the attention to new citizens is still low in museum studies, except some projects in education. Finally, this conceptual paper tries to fulfil an identified need to promote the development of visitor studies, in order to support museums in achieving their mission and maximizing value creation, with implications for the innovation of cultural policies.

The research shows some limitations, which will require further studies in order to suggest future research paths. First of all, a systemic organization of data could be provided. Secondly, it could be useful to refine the research, also analysing papers that are not included in the selected databases. Despite these gaps, the conclusions provide suggestions for future case studies.

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