

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE INTERPRETATION OF MUSEUM CATEGORIZATION OF VISITORS

Koniukhov S. V.

Introduction

Prospects for increasing the number of museum visitors are usually based on the current success of cultural tourism. As for the scientists and experts who visit museums, today there is still a lack of empirical knowledge about the factors influencing attendance, interaction with others, patterns of behavior in the museum and, above all, research on the assessment of these categories of visitors.

To understand current events in the museum field, it is necessary to analyze past museum practices and research. Museums and historical sites in one form or another are considered places of public education and non-formal learning. In addition, today museums try to attract as much public as possible and meet the needs of visitors.

Therefore, it is necessary to assess the role of visitors in the perception of the museum exhibition. Due to the growing level of communication in the museum, this issue is becoming increasingly important. This approach leads to a visitor-oriented museum, a museum that is still developing.

1. Interactive forms and visitors participations in the museum space

Interactive forms of museum activity and their influence on the growth of the number of visitors were studied by V.V. Nadolska¹. Theoretical foundations of museum communication, analysis of modern approaches and innovative practices of the museum and interaction with the public, research on the nature of the museum audience were conducted by P.V. Verbytska and R.E. Pasichnyk². Various aspects of the sociological analysis of museum visitors and the role of museums in modeling human activities in the field of

¹ Надольська В. В. Інтерактивні музейні технології: «Ніч музеїв». *Волинський музейний вісник* : наук. зб. Вип. 7. Упр-ня культури Волин. ОДА ; Волин. краєзн. музей ; каф. документознавства і музейн. справи СНУ ім. Лесі Українки ; упоряд. А. Силюк. Луцьк, 2015. С. 227–230.

² Вербицька П. В. Пасічник Р. Е. Музей як комунікативний та освітній простір : навч. посібник. Видавництво Львівської політехніки. Львів, 2017. 232 с.

culture, ethical and aesthetic development of the individual were outlined by V.V. Karpov³.

Social phenomena influence our actions, thoughts and feelings when visiting a museum. This, according to researcher J. Falk, makes the visit deeply personal. After interviewing hundreds of people, J. Falk identified five types of museum visitors⁴. Each of these types represents a different personal goal, which becomes the motive for the visit.

The first of these types is “Impression Hunter”. Those who belong to this type prefer masterpieces and look for works that are considered must-see. The Impression Hunter also often mentions items on his to-do list.

The second type according to this classification is “Organizer”. This visitor of the museum visits through someone who is not indifferent, through a relative who came to visit, through a boy or a girl. In any case, he tries to make an effort so that the companion could have fun and get vivid impressions.

The next in this typology is the “Charger”. People who belong to this type come to the museum to relax – physically, intellectually and emotionally. For them, the museum is a place where you can regain strength and “escape from all this fuss.” Such visit can even be called spiritual.

The fourth type is “Professional”. It includes artists and other experts in the field of art. Such visitors will be able to cope with the museum.

The latter is “Researcher” – he comes to the museum not only to view a particular exhibition, but to satisfy his intellectual curiosity in general. Visitors of this type have their own opinion about everything and avoid crowded exhibition halls and organized tours because they will limit them. False “motivational types” provide effective clues as to which behavioral strategy is right for everyone.

Taking into account also that the audience of modern museums is still not accustomed to communicating with institutions of historical and cultural heritage via the Internet, according to statistical studies, it would be possible to outline other categories of visitors⁵. The first of these categories would be the category of “enthusiasts” – those who enthusiastically watch the development of museum websites and the growth of their presence on social networks. This category of visitors believes that museums should continue to

³ Соціологія музею: презентація на тлі простору і часу / за заг. ред. д.і.н., Карпова В. В. К. : Видавець Олег Філюк, 2016. 216 с.

⁴ Falk J. H., Storksdieck M. Using the contextual model of learning to understand visitor learning from a science center exhibition. 2007. *Science Education*. Vol. 89 (5). P. 747–748.

⁵ Cicerchia A., Solima L. The Show must go on...line. Museums and their audiences during the lockdown in Italy. *Scientific research and Information Technology*. 2021. Vol. 11, Issue 1, P. 36.

create new digital content in the future: to distribute short educational texts and lectures, to hold socially important events. Another category, according to this classification, are “insiders” – cultural workers who also very often visit the websites of museums and their pages on social networks. The next, third category is “regular visitors” – people who like to participate in cultural and artistic activities. This type of visitors are regularly interested in historical and cultural heritage and visit the pages of museums.

Another category of museum website visitors is “casual visitors” – those who do not visit the websites of museums and historical and cultural institutions frequently. However, the digital version of the presentation of cultural heritage will help to overcome certain barriers in this category.

In our opinion, the audience of the museum could be described according to the following generalized features:

- motivation of the visit;
- demographic indicators;
- group or individual visit.

According to this distribution, demographic characteristics include gender, age, education, place of residence. Most researchers (K. Mazda, F. Shouten, E. Conti, T. Pincarelli, M. Vesti)^{6,7,8} include spiritual, emotional, intellectual, social motivation, visits for leisure, for scientific interest or special interest. One of the most common signs of museum visitors studies is a group and / or individual visit. It is on this characteristic that the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Solomiya Krushelnytska Museum in Lviv focus their research⁹.

And while the demographics of visitors have been the basis of most museum audience research, they do not explain why people visit museums or not. Such characteristics do not allow us to fully explore the motivational factors.

To find out why people visit a museum, we need to pay attention to people’s interests, values, opinions, attitudes, participation in communities,

⁶ Норріс Л., Тісдейл Р. Креативність у музейній практиці / Лінда Норріс, Рейні Тісдейл. / пер. з англійської А. Коструби, Г. Кузьо, О. Омельчук, Є. Червоного. Київ : Видавць Чередниченко А. М., 2017. С. 137.

⁷ Conti E., Vesci M., Pencarelli T. Museum Visitors’ Profiling in the Experiential Perspective, Value Co-creation and Implications for Museums and Destinations: an Exploratory Study from Italy / Conti Emanuela, Vesci Massimiliano, Tonino Pencarelli. Proceedings of the Heritage, Tourism and Hospitality International Conference (HTHIC). University of Turku. 2017. P. 21–34.

⁸ Shouten F. Improving visitor care in heritage attractions / Shouten Frans. *Tourism management*. Vol. 16. № 4. 1995. P. 259.

⁹ Вербицька П. В. Пасічник Р. Е. Музей як комунікативний та освітній простір : навч. посібник / Вербицька Поліна, Пасічник Роксоляна. Львів : видавництво Львівської політехніки, 2017. С. 129–131.

consumer behavior, and so on. Demographics provide the basis, but they should not be the focus of any serious museum audience research.

Another important aspect of the study of visitor motivation is the analysis of ways to attract “visitors” to the museum.

Thus, the focus of research of museum visitors are often two aspects: 1) the study of psychographic dimensions of current and potential audiences; 2) analysis of why people go to the museum.

There is always an expectation that the results will be used to solve practical cases on which the museum’s activities are directed in the research of the museum audience. That is why the questions answered by the visitor during the survey should contain answers about the possibilities of solving real problems. The research of the American museologist M. Hood points to the following main questions that are posed to potential audiences around the world: “What does visiting a museum mean to me?”, “Is it worth spending my time, money and effort?”, “Does the museum show that it worries him?”, “Will the museum help me understand the information it conveys to the audience? If not, why do I want to be part of his audience?”¹⁰. Finally, by answering these questions, we will be able to find out what changes we need to make the museum better, so that the museum gets in touch with a wider audience.

Simple demographic analysis, indicators and patterns of participation will not show what worries people during leisure time. In addition to researching these indicators, we had to focus on how people plan to spend their leisure time, use their time and money. Finally, an analysis of the differences between regular and casual visitors, as well as those who do not visit the museum at all, will allow us to find out whether the museum offers the kinds of values that non-visitors want to get. The next step will be to develop a strategy within our mission and opportunities to reach this audience.

In their work “Museum Experience” J. Falk and I. Dirking suggest that museum experience can be built on the junction of three contexts: 1) personal (past experience, current state and expectations, etc.); 2) physical (the museum building itself); and 3) social. The social context of the visit consists of all people who are present during the visit, possible companions of the visitor (constituting an intimate social context), as well as all people who are strangers to him (other visitors, guides, leaders who are broad social context)¹¹.

¹⁰ Hood M. Staying away: Why people choose not to visit museums. *Museum News*. 1983. № 61(4). P. 54.

¹¹ Falk J. H., Dierking L. D. The museum experience revisited. Walnut Creek, CA. Left Coast Press. 2013. 416 p.

When the visitor is not accompanied by companions or “co-visitors”¹², it can be called “lonely” or “anonymous” visitor¹³, that means that this type of visitor can evolve among other people without being the object of their attention.

Current research shows that visiting a museum is correlated with the need to feel independent and belong to a certain group. Given the satisfaction of leisure and needs, affiliation or even mutual understanding with others, the motivation of affiliation helps to maintain social ties. Visiting a museum with family and friends can also be a process in which “selfish” pleasure can be completely offset by the altruistic goal of promoting the well-being of the community to which the visitor belongs. L. Norris and R. Tisdale¹⁴ suggest that the opportunity to share experiences may be more important for some visitors (“Professionals” and “Researchers” or experts and scientists) than the visit itself. We can also say that in this case, the prospects of social interaction are conducive to visiting the museum.

The need for a sense of independence, individualism or autonomy obviously most often stems from a specific reason for visiting, related to the search for a moment of private renewal, protected from social obligations or the lack of companions (“co-visitors”)¹⁵.

Based on a number of studies^{16, 17}, we can say that the “lone” visitor is often more interested and expert than the visitor who is accompanied. He will seek less entertainment and will prefer cultural enrichment, intellectual challenge, personal thoughts and reflections. This category includes precisely those scientists and experts in the categories outlined by J. Falk as “Professional” and “Researcher”.

¹² Debenedetti S., Caro F., Krebs A. “I’d rather play than look at statues”: The Experiences of Children with Art Works and Interactive Devices at an Art Exhibition. *International Journal of Arts Management*. 2009. № 11/3. P. 57.

¹³ McManus P.M. It’s the company you keep... The social determination of learning-related behaviour in a science museum. *The International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship*. 1987. № 6. P. 263–270.

¹⁴ Норріс Л., Тісдейл Р. Креативність у музейній практиці / пер. з англійської А. Коструби, Г. Кузьо, О. Омельчук, Є. Червоного. Київ: Видавець Чередниченко А. М., 2017. 192 с.

¹⁵ Debenedetti S., Caro F., Krebs A. “I’d rather play than look at statues”: The Experiences of Children with Art Works and Interactive Devices at an Art Exhibition. *International Journal of Arts Management*. 2009. № 11/3. P. 57.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* P. 46–58.

¹⁷ Норріс Л., Тісдейл Р. Креативність у музейній практиці. / Пер. з англійської А. Коструби, Г. Кузьо, О. Омельчук, Є. Червоного. Київ: Видавець Чередниченко А. М., 2017. 192 с.

At the same time, visitors who come with friends and / or relatives, according to research, will have more companions if they declare themselves less as a specialist, expert or researcher in the field.

After all, the image of a museum visitor depends on a complex set of characteristics of different species. It turns out that the “social context” of visiting is definitely not a contextual variable, as it is influenced (also) by the characteristics of the visitor, his objective living conditions, as well as his expectations, leisure motivation, his intimate relationship with museums and culture. Faced with a network of these influences, it can be assumed that visiting a museum is the result of a two-step process in which the visitor (1) chooses affiliation or anonymity and then (2) possibly joins certain companions.

2. The analysis of audience: individual and common visits to the museum

Studies of museum visits have shown that an accompanying visit or “joint visit” is a shared experience in which visitors spend part of their attention on the “companion”. According to the conclusions of M. Galarts and I. Saur¹⁸, each co-visitor uses a set of visual and verbal resources (words, gestures, looks, postures, etc.) in order to form a common museum experience. At the same time, individual, lone visitors spend more time in the museum than those who visit the museum in the company of friends, relatives or acquaintances. It can also be assumed that visitors would spend less time interacting with the exhibits through the use of computer devices. J. Packer and R. Ballantyne¹⁹ suggest that the presence of one or more satellites will have a deterrent effect on the visitor. Accordingly, the motivation during the individual and group visit will be different. The presence or absence of satellites during the visit also affects the museum experience in different ways.

For accompanying visitors, the museum experience is a shared experience from the very beginning, so individual interpretations of visits are irrelevant. Visiting a museum is not just a shared experience. Some visitors come to the museum alone and have their own experience, which allows them to get rid of the social restrictions associated with the accompanying visit. Self-visit also has a number of benefits and behaviors that clearly distinguish such an experience from a group visit. Only three independent visitors out of forty

¹⁸ Gallarza M. G., Saura I. G. Value dimensions, perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty: An investigation of university students' travel behavior. *Tourism Management*. 2006. № 27(3). P. 451.

¹⁹ Ballantyne R. & Packer J. Solitary vs. Shared Learning: Exploring the Social Dimension of Museum Learning. *The Museum Journal*. 2005. № 48/2. P. 177–192.

interviewed by J. Packer and R. Ballantyne²⁰ did not find benefits in solitary visits. Such visits turn into a sense of independence, control and freedom of choice and pace of visit. The lack of social constraints (discussion, expectations, a sense of “obligation” to view all exhibits, etc.) related to autonomy leads, in particular, to shorter attendance times. In addition to the autonomy of the way of visiting, the anonymity of a lone visitor brings another concrete benefit: his social status really promotes introspection or immersion, which allows him to create a privileged, closer relationship with exhibitions^{21, 22}. Compared to affiliation, anonymity will thus promote deeper personal reflection, protected from social constraints, and limit “parasitic” intrusion, allowing the intimacy of the individual to be maintained before the exhibition.

Researchers J. Packer and R. Ballantyne²³ showed that visitors, both accompanied and unaccompanied, overwhelmingly believe that the social context of their visit significantly contributed to their satisfaction with the museum. In fact, many studies since the 1990s have questioned how museum visits are affected by the presence (or absence) of like-minded people. This social experience of the museum partly determines the tangible value of the visit and provides the previously mentioned motives for belonging or independence to a social group.

On the examples of researches, we can see that the museum was not the only driver in changing the experience of visitors. Furthermore, museum practices have undergone transformations due to audience activity and cultural criticism. Conversion would not be possible without the participation of the visitor. The changes were also due to criticism of the museum institution, which developed in the 1990s through the development of museum studies programs. Objects included in museum expositions and collections have now appeared in a new light. The interpretation of objects by visitors has become more important^{24, 25}. The increase number of museum studies programs in universities and rethinking the mission of museums has taken place in such a

²⁰ Ballantyne R. & Packer J. Solitary vs. Shared Learning: Exploring the Social Dimension of Museum Learning. *The Museum Journal*. 2005. № 48/2. P. 177–178.

²¹ Debenedetti S., Caro F., Krebs A. “I’d rather play than look at statues”: The Experiences of Children with Art Works and Interactive Devices at an Art Exhibition. *International Journal of Arts Management*. 2009. № 11/3. P. 46–58.

²² Ballantyne R. & Packer J. Solitary vs. Shared Learning: Exploring the Social Dimension of Museum Learning. *The Museum Journal*. 2005. № 48/2. P. 178.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Duncan C. *Civilizing rituals: Inside public art museums*. New York : Routledge. 1995. 192 p.

²⁵ Karp I., Kratz C. A. Collecting, exhibiting, and interpreting: Museums as mediators and midwives of meaning. *Museum Anthropology*. 2014. Vol. 37(1). P. 51–65.

way as to build a policy of museums around the visitor, rather than the museum object^{26, 27}. This wave of museum studies in the 1990s raised the idea of visitor participation in the museum, and provoked a wave of institutional criticism for how museum collections and their program activities misrepresented communities or simply ignored their needs. Instead of developing exhibitions based solely on the transfer of information, museums began to focus on the participation of visitors and opportunities for active construction of knowledge through accessible and personal learning experiences²⁸. We can say that today, the museums with more visitor-oriented activities are more popular than the museum itself. However, visitor-oriented exhibitions are not yet fully implemented in most museums.

Modern museologists R. Ballantyne and D. Uzell²⁹ argue that museums are becoming more visitor-oriented due to significant reductions in public funding for such traditional institutions. This lack of funding forced museums to look for new sources of income and thus forced museums to monitor and respond to the wishes of their audiences. Due to the need to create new revenue streams through admissions and special programs, the museum visitor and his needs have now become the basis of strategic planning in visitor-oriented museums. Competition between other types of non-formal learning has spurred the growth of visitor-oriented museums as institutions seek to engage an audience that seeks more leisure and entertainment.

Obviously, museums need to develop strategies to work with a growing audience. P. Ballantyne and D. Uzell³⁰ presented three strategies used to combat the unexpected growth of the audience: 1) increasing the available space, 2) limiting the number of visitors and 3) significantly increasing the cost of visiting.

CONCLUSIONS

New galleries and platforms will ultimately provide more opportunities to demonstrate a visitor-centered approach, but other strategies are oriented to limit visitor and increase entry costs are used to preserve facilities and generate revenue. These strategies, which limit attendance and increase entry

²⁶ Музей і відвідувач: методичні розробки, сценарії, концепції / Дніпропетровський історичний музей ім. Л. І. Яворницького / упоряд. Н. І. Капустіна, Л. О. Гайда. – Дніпропетровськ, 2005. 148 с.

²⁷ Weil S. From being about something to being for somebody: The ongoing transformation of the American Museum. *Daedalus*. 1999. № 128(3). P. 229–258.

²⁸ Falk J. H., Dierking L. D. The museum experience revisited. Walnut Creek, CA. Left Coast Press. 2013. 416 p.

²⁹ Ballantyne, R., Uzell, D. Looking back and looking forward: The rise of the visitor-centered museum. *Curator*. 2011. Vol. 54(1). P. 89.

³⁰ Ibid. P. 91.

costs, may be a step in the wrong direction, as they are indicators of financially successful practices rather than a visitor-centered approach. Visitor-oriented museums should be created and maintained to meet the museum's audience, not just to increase revenue. Focusing on visitors is an ideal option. It is written as part of the museum's mission, not financial documents, and requires collaboration with all museum departments and their staff.

Although these examples emphasize the differences between independent and accompanied visitors, yet the behavior of the visitor in the museum is possible by analyzing the impact of the characteristics of the group to which the visitor belongs. In terms of the number of visitors, some studies of the group's influence on individual behavior give opposite results³¹. The same situation can be observed with regard to the influence of group origin (couple, friendly group, family with or without children, etc.): several studies emphasize the existence of significant behavioral differences^{32, 33}, but these works still lack a theoretical basis, and their conclusions, which are very contextual, are incomparable.

Being a visitor-oriented museum involves focusing on the visitor and his connection to the object, the cooperation of all staff, a certain level of risk and constant evaluation. At the same time, museums must constantly review their programs and exhibitions through an ongoing process of formative and final evaluation. Although museum staff do not have the opportunity to get to know their visitors on a personal level, they can model visitor-centered approaches that give room for originality and tolerance for differences in the different interpretations that visitors come to. The museum must continue to strive to move from being about something to being for someone that can be achieved through a visitor-focused approach.

SUMMARY

The article analyzes the main theoretical approaches to the analysis of museum audiences. The typology of categories and types of visitors is considered. Generalized features of museum visitors allow to distribute the audience of the museum according to: demographic indicators, goals and objectives of the visit, group or individual participation. The change in the number of visitors depends of belonging to a social group, previous experience, motivation and activities of museum staff affect. The emphasis on visitors requires cooperation with all departments of the museum and their staff.

³¹ Debenedetti S., Caro F., Krebs A. "I'd rather play than look at statues": The Experiences of Children with Art Works and Interactive Devices at an Art Exhibition. *International Journal of Arts Management*. 2009. № 11/3. P. 46-58.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ballantyne, R., Uzzell, D. Looking back and looking forward: The rise of the visitor-centered museum. *Curator*. 2011. Vol. 54(1). P. 85-92.

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Information about the author:

Koniukhov Serhii Vadymovych,

Candidate of Historical Sciences,

Senior Lecturer at the Department of History,

Museum Studies and Cultural Heritage

Lviv Polytechnic National University

12, Stepana Bandery str., Lviv, 79000, Ukraine