Tourism Research and Education Network (TRENd)
University of Tasmania

Motivations for consuming art and cultural experiences: Report to industry

Kim Lehman
University of Tasmania

Mark Wickham
University of Tasmania

Ian Fillis
Liverpool Business School

www.utas.edu.au/tourism/TRENd

INTRODUCTION

The cultural heritage sector (e.g., museums, art galleries, historic buildings, cultural community festivals and events, etc.) has emerged as an increasingly significant segment of national and regional economies. The sector is now considered an important driver of economic and social development, particularly through cultural tourism. As a result, regional cultural organisations are at a critical time in their history, where they need to adapt to changes in visitor use and community trends, e.g. with respect to changes in what we do with our leisure time. In addition, the income streams from local-council and state funded regional bodies has significantly decreased.

All of us in the research team have worked on projects that centre on the arts and cultural sectors, with research investigating marketing, development, management, and cultural tourism issues, and incorporating engagement with both private and public museums. We had previously worked with the Director of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG), Richard Mulvaney, on an application for funding for another project, currently being reworked for submission later in 2016. While we were conducting a debrief on that application the idea that the Tourism Research and Education Network (TRENd) might offer the chance for not for profit organisations to become In-kind Research Partners surfaced. The result was an agreement to continue our research partnership, under the auspices of TRENd, and focusing on one aspect of our original, larger project: an aspect that also had considerable practical implications for the sustainability of not for profit museums, that is, what motivates museum visitation?

Certainly there has been considerable work done on visitor studies, by both academics and museums themselves. While these studies are valid in an academic sense, and obviously of use to museums, they have tended to ignore what comes before the actual visit. However, even studies on why visitors visit have had a narrow focus. As Slater (2007) has noted:

> Whilst market research and academic studies by sociologists have identified the personal and socio-cultural factors that influence visits to galleries, there has been less attention to the area of motivational research. Understanding motivations is important as it reveals the underlying reasons why visitors choose to participate in specific leisure activities. (Slater, 2007, p. 149)

Our project seeks to shed some light on this issue with a detailed academic study on motivations for consuming art and cultural experiences. The results of which we feel will provide a research knowledge base that can be used to expand audiences and increase social and economic impacts, which is vital if regional museums and arts galleries are to have a sustainable future.

While it is our intention to publish our findings in academic journals and conference papers, and to seek to add to the body of knowledge around motivation, marketing and museum management research, we are also committed to disseminating our findings directly to the museum sector, as well as to the wider tourism, arts and cultural sectors. Our aim with this Report to Industry is to do just that. We offer practical insight, supported by robust academic research.

Dr Kim Lehman (University of Tasmania),
Dr Mark Wickham (University of Tasmania) &
Professor Ian Fillis (Liverpool Business School, Liverpool John Moores University)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to gratefully acknowledge the assistance, both financially and administratively, of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG), Launceston, Tasmania. In particular, the Director, Richard Mulvaney and the Public Programs Manager, Belinda Cotton. We also owe the staff and volunteers who enthusiastically administered the survey to QVMAG visitors a sincere vote of thanks—the success of the survey is in no small way is due to these people.

Thanks are also directed to research assistant Jimena Molina for her tireless data entry, as well as Maria Belen Yanotti and Ann Marsden for assistance with the summary statistics in this Report.

THE SAMPLE

With a view to obtaining a comprehensive sample of all QVMAG visitors the survey instrument was administered on both QVMAG's sites, the museum and the art gallery. Volunteers and staff administered the survey on both sites in two sessions, morning and afternoon, with the survey period taking place over 21 days in January 2016. Posters advertising the survey and its purpose, along with tables and chairs, were placed in entrance spaces. Those administering the survey were given training and provided with a manual to assist them in answering questions. In this way we sought to avoid bias in the sample ('interviewer bias'), where interviewers do not approach respondents randomly, but rather show a preference for a certain type of respondent. In addition, those completing the survey were 'rewarded' with a free cup of coffee at the on-site café.

In total 2329 visitors completed the survey. This is a significant sample size, and compares very favourably to the sample size of other surveys. For example, Slater (2007) referred to in the Introduction had a sample size of 192. All the completed surveys were entered into a spreadsheet in preparation for analysis. At this point respondents that had not answered *every* question were removed from the dataset. A total of 2104 viable respondents remained.

The survey instrument itself was divided into three major sections. The first contained a combination of quantitative data questions and others where respondents could write comments relevant to their visit. The second section contained 15 questions which were measured on 5-point Likert scales ranging from *Not at all* to *Very much*. This section contained the motivation theory-based questions adapted from previous studies by Beard and Ragheb (1983) and Slater (2007). The third and final section obtained demographic data, and also sought comments from visitors about their overall experience (which will be used in later publications).

Demographic Information

In the final part of the survey respondents were asked questions about themselves as the visitor—basic demographic questions, as well as questions related to QVMAG marketing (not reported here).

23	Gender		Female	Male	Other			
			61.2%	37.9%	0.3%			
24	Age range	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 - 74	75 +
		8.7%	12.8%	16.8%	20.5%	19.1%	16.9%	4.7%
25	Gross household income per annum		Under $30,000	Under $30,000	$30,000 to $49,999	$50,000 to $69,999	$70,000 to $99,999	$100,00 & over
			12.8%	11.4%	12.3%	17.6%	28.1%	17.5%

Continued overleaf…

26	What is your education background?	Secondary	Senior Secondary	University degree	University postgraduate study	VET/Trade certificate	Other
		9.9%	15.4%	31.5%	28.4%	10.7%	3.2%
27	Where do you live?	Launceston area	Southern region	Northwestern and Western	Interstate	Overseas	
		36.4%	4.4%	3.7%	45.9%	9.9%	
Note: Blank responses are not reported here.							

We have commenced this Report with the demographic questions as these do provide an overview of the makeup of the sample, that is, QVMAG visitors.

Firstly, in many respects the data confirms a global 'problem' for museum and art galleries: that they tend to attract high income earning, university educated and somewhat older members of the community. Here 45.6% had a household income over $70,000, 59.9% had university level qualifications, and 56.4% were aged between 35 and 64. There are instances of specific exhibitions attracting a broader range of visitor, but the challenge is to attract them as regular visitors.

Interestingly, there was a significantly higher percentage of female respondents than male. However, a number of other Australian studies have found females to the majority of visitors to museums in all age cohorts (Museums & Galleries NSW, 2010; 2013). Again, the challenge is to attract male visitors: in a marketing sense, attracting such 'non-customers' is vital for securing a sustainable customer base.

As regards place of residence, 55.8% were from interstate and overseas, 36.4% local, with only 4.4% and 3.7% from the south and northwest respectively. It is our opinion that these figures reflect the local situation, and cannot be generalised to other contexts. Clearly, though, other regions of Tasmania represent a significant potential market for QVMAG.

FINDINGS SUMMARY

Section A

In this first section respondents were asked questions about how they felt about attending cultural attractions generally. In a marketing sense the aim was to determine the level of buyer involvement in the 'product', that is, the visitors' level of interest in cultural attendance and the level of engagement in matters cultural in general.

In addition, this section also canvassed opinion on how important respondents felt museums and art galleries were to the community generally, and more specifically, in what ways they might be important. The aim here was to flesh out visitor sentiment in relation to perceived the 'value' of cultural institutions.

		None	Less than once a year	1 or 2 times a year	3 to 5 times a year	6 or more times a year
1	In a typical year, approximately how many times do you visit a museum or art gallery?	7.0%	7.2%	32.5%	27.7%	25.4%

In this first question looking at the level of involvement in the museum 'product' regular museum visitors made up 53.1% of the respondents. This is not surprising, as another issue museums and art galleries have to contend with is encouraging the non-visitor, as was mentioned earlier. At 32.5% the respondents who attend only once or twice a year are also of note, as they represent a customer interested but not committed. Of course, for this to be of use to QVMAG itself, the data would need to be cross-referenced with the visitor location.

		No real interest	Some interest	Neutral	Serious interest	Very intense
2	How would you describe your interest in museums and other cultural institutions?	0.8%	3.2%	28.95	49.9%	16.8%

As noted above, the purpose of Section A was to provide a picture of the level of interest of the respondents in cultural attractions generally. The results for Question 2 reinforces the notion that visitors to museums are predominately made up of those already engaged with cultural matters—66.7%. This has ramifications for marketing communications, in that the messages used for this cohort can presume prior knowledge and understanding. The reverse could also be true—those not engaged will require a different approach.

		Yes	No	
3	Beforehand, do you do anything in order to prepare yourself for your visit and understand what to expect?	36%	63%	

The aim of this question was to further expand our understanding of the respondents to this particular survey, on the assumption that research before a visit would be an indicator of engagement. However, with only 36% of respondents preparing in advance for their visit it appears that a high of interest in cultural attractions and the worth of museums generally does not necessarily mean that visitors actively seek information on their chose 'product'.

The rest of Section A sought to discover how important respondents felt museums and art galleries were to the community generally.

		Yes	No	
5	Do you think that museums and art galleries are important for the community?	99%	1%	

Not surprisingly the results to Question 5 were overwhelmingly positive. Further clarification of the respondents' sentiments came from Questions 7a, 7b and 7c.

		Not important	Slightly important	Neutral	Important	Very important
7a	Museums and art galleries should add to a community's wellbeing	0.5%	1.2%	9.9%	33.1%	54.9%
7b	Museums and art galleries should be a place to see local history and culture	0.1%	0.8%	4.7%	28.6%	65.8%
7c	Museums and art galleries should be of educational value to the community	0.3%	0.5%	4.2%	27.3%	67.7%

On the whole, there was no significant disagreement with the role of the QVMAG being linked to community well-being, history and culture, or education. However, 'community well-being' is the least important role of the three listed roles. It may be that future marketing strategies may need to communicate the potential role museums can play in community well-being role to improve this level of perception.

Section B

This section contains the main focus of our research project. In it respondents were asked questions relating to their motivations for visiting QVMAG on that day, and were asked to circle on a scale how important each of the stated reasons were for them.

As was noted on page 3, we drew on the work of Beard and Ragheb (1983) and Slater (2007) to construct a theoretical framework for our survey, ultimately concentrating on three areas of motivation: wellbeing; learning; and social and family interaction. Each of these areas of motivation had five specific questions. We have separated each area here to provide a clearer picture of the data, though in the survey instrument questions 8 to 22 were presented to the respondents together.

Well being

		Not at all		Neutral		Very much
8	To escape the hustle and bustle of my daily activities	20.8%	16.7%	26.4%	22.6%	12.5%
9	To have a stimulating cultural experience	1.3%	2.5%	15.9%	41.5%	38.5%
10	To invigorate my own creativity	4.6%	13.1%	26.8%	30.3%	24.4%
11	To relax and relieve stress	7.5%	11.4%	27.7%	33.9%	19.1%
12	To spend quiet time in a pleasant environment	3.1%	7.5%	20.8%	39.8%	28.4%

The term ‘escapism’ has been used in the academic literature to encompass the motivation factors considered in these questions, as it was in Slater (2007). However, we consider that in the modern context ‘well being’ is a more encompassing term. Well being covers those aspects of the human experience that contributes to an overall feeling of happiness, emotional health and security (Evers et al., 2012). We also feel that it is useful to consider these motivations as relating to the individual, rather than the social aspects of choosing to visit a museum (covered in a later section).

Certainly, the data suggests that there is no significant value evident in helping visitors avoid hustle and bustle or stress relief, though there was some value evident in stimulating their creativity. A more interesting result was in relation to visitors wanting to spend ‘a quiet time in a pleasant environment’. With 68.2% of respondents considering this an important motivator to visit, it would seem wise for cultural institutions to include cues to this in their marketing strategies.

The motivation factor with the most value evident for museums was where visitors were seeking a ‘stimulating cultural experience’. Here 80% of respondents considered this an important reason to visit. In some way this is not surprising, given the nature of the product. Nonetheless, it does indicate museums need to not lose sight of their core business, and hence not ignore the need for constant change/reinvigoration, and quality displays and exhibitions.

Learning

		Not at all		Neutral		Very much
13	To learn more about art, history or science	0.9%	2.3%	11.8%	36.4%	48.4%
14	To discover things I do not know	1.0%	2.5%	10.7%	36.0%	49.9%
15	To expand my interests in a particular area	2.6%	9.2%	24.9%	33.3%	29.6%
16	To seek personal fulfillment from learning	2.9%	8.2%	24.9%	33.9%	29.6%
17	To do something I have never done before	22.2%	15.8%	23.9%	21.4%	16.0%

Education has been a traditional role for museums and art galleries, and remains the case. Nonetheless, there is still some valuable insight to be gained from this group of questions. Again, we consider this group of motivating factors as relating to the individual, even when we may be talking of parents seeking an education experience for their children.

Firstly, in some ways Question 17 was redundant, as it was directed at those new to museums. As was seen above, the majority of respondents were regular consumers of cultural experiences—so, there was no significant value evident in helping visitors do something they have never done before. Interestingly, there was some value evident in helping visitors expand their interests and enjoyment from learning, with 62.9% of respondents noting this as a motivator.

By far the most significant motivators for respondents visiting were: 'To discover things I do not know', at 85.9%; and 'To learn more about art, history or science', at 84.8%. Clearly, while these visitors are predominately regular consumers of cultural experiences, they are still very interested in broadening their current knowledge base. The issue of 'discovery' of things not known is particularly significant. This aspect of the overall museum experience should play a major part in the marketing messages communicated to potential visitors.

Social & family interaction

		Not at all		Neutral		Very much
18	To spend quality time with my family or children	15.3%	11%	17.3%	25.1%	30.6%
19	To socialise with my friends and/or relatives	19.1%	16.1%	24%	23.3%	16.7%
20	To show QVMAG to visiting family and/or friends	34%	9.9%	16.9%	19.3%	18.1%
21	To share my interests with my friends and/or relatives	14.2%	12.7%	24.9%	28.3%	19%
22	To discuss the exhibitions with others	10.7%	14.8%	26.4%	29.7%	17.8%

The motivation factors incorporated in Questions 18 to 22 related to the social aspects of museum visitation. However, it should be noted that our survey did not specifically address the issue of 'group size', where respondents are asked if they visited alone, as a couple, or in a group. Such questions are regularly seen in visitor surveys, and can be a useful source of data. Our survey concentrated on the 'why' of visitation.

Perhaps the most interesting point to be raised by the data was the lack of a significant relationship between social and family interactions and motivations to visit. Socialising with friends and relatives, and 'showing' QVMAG to visiting friends and relatives was not seen as important. The factor 'To share my interests with my friends and/or relatives' was more important at 47.3%. We feel that this could relate to the 'learning' group of factors above, where the individual is seeking to share their education experience.

More significantly, the factor 'To spend quality time with my family or children' had 55.7% of respondents saying it was an important motivator for visitation. Again, there are potential links to the education role of the museums, as well as the concept of a 'cultural experience' being important. Certainly, the idea that a visit to a museum is considered as 'quality time' with family is an important consideration for museum management.

QVMAG's art gallery site (Image courtesy of QVMAG)

Discussion

Section A

Overall, the utility of Section A was to gauge the level of interest of the respondents in the arts and cultural sectors. As has been shown, this was high, as would be expected. It night be postulated that surveying non-visitors would be more useful for these questions.

However, our overall aim for this research is to shed some light on what motivates visitors to visit, and consequently our research, by design and necessity, focused on those persons on-site, already 'visiting'. Even so, this initial section raises some interesting issues, and subsequent questions:

- Visitors are still predominately those already engaged in cultural matters:
    - How can museums, and the wider cultural sector, attract those not engaged, the non-visitor?

- A high level of interest in the worth of museums and culture generally does not mean that visitors actively seek information:
    - Would it be more effective if museums placed their messages 'in the face' of potential visitors rather than passively offering it for consumption?

- The potential role museums can play in community well-being is undervalued by visitors:
    - How can museums (and government) more actively communicate the potential well being role of museums and other cultural attractions?

Section B

The concept of 'motivation' is core to the study of consumer behaviour. As has been noted by Quester et al (2014), "Consumers do not buy products. Instead, they buy motive satisfaction or problem solutions" (p. 307). With this in mind it is clear how an understanding of *why* visitors come to museums can inform a museum's marketing and management strategies. Motivations drive behaviour, and knowing what the triggers are can help museums design an offering that meets the needs of different consumer segments. However, it is as well to remember that museums cannot easily provide a customer driven experience, when for the most part they possess a given set of attributes—i.e., their collection, facilities and buildings—that they then essentially need to find an audience for (Lehman, Wickham and Fillis, 2014).

Importantly though, understanding motivation will assist museums to 'design' the messages they use to communicate to consumers about their collections, facilities and other aspects of their product offering. This means that when it is apparent that museum visitors consider spending 'a quiet time in a pleasant environment' an important motivator to visit, as it has with this study, those aspects of the overall museum atmosphere that might make up a 'pleasant environment' should be a part of marketing messages. Similarly, knowing that 80% of respondents considered a 'stimulating cultural experience' as an important reason to visit indicates that the 'core business' of the museum—e.g., preserving and conserving cultural and natural artifacts— is still viewed as significant by the general public.

Indeed, another traditional role for museums and art galleries, education and learning, was also seen by the respondents to this survey as valuable. Nearly 85% stated that learning more about art, history or science was an important motivator for visiting museums. Visitors appear, then, to be aware of the 'product offering' in advance of their visit, and without a specific motivation to be satisfied or 'problem' to be solved. However, it does appear that the broader need of 'discovering something new' may explain the lack of specificity: the most significant motivator for respondents visiting at (87%) was discovering things they do not know. This implies that these 'engaged' visitors do not necessarily know, or need to know, exactly what the museum or art gallery contains. Rather, they perceive that there will be 'things to discover', perhaps due to inherent societal mores related to the concept of 'museum'. Interestingly, the social aspects of visiting were considered less important in this survey. Under 50% felt that sharing their interests with my friends and/or relatives' was more important. Spending 'quality time' with family or children was slightly more important motivator for visitation at just over 55%.

Such insights into why visitors visit can be used to better formulate museum marketing and strategies. Certainly, the data here confirms some anecdotal information about museum visitors, and provides a picture of those that responded to this survey. Overall, though, our survey provides significant insight into current visitors, and into market segments that might not be engaged by the current marketing strategies.

Firstly, two key points, and consequent questions are apparent:

- The traditional role of conserving and preserving cultural and natural artifacts is still important:
    - How can museums and art galleries retain, and satisfy, their core culturally-engaged visitor while seeking to attract non-visiting market segments?

- The traditional role of education and learning is still important:
    - How can museums and art galleries broaden the scope of their education offering within budget constraints, and without devaluing the point above?

In addition, there are also a number of points that can be made regarding both the design of marketing messages and the product offering on the basis of our study's results. Given this data is drawn from a specific regional museum these points are not necessarily generalisable. Nonetheless, there is a case to be made that the sample is not unrepresentative of the wider population, and therefore the points could have utility in other situations.

- The notion of 'discovery' needs to figure largely in philosophy of the museum:
    - Certainly this idea is not unknown in the museum sector, with some even using the word 'discover' in their tagline. The point here is that we consider that there the notion of discovery should be weaved in to the narrative of the museum's communication with all its stakeholders, stressing that each visit will bring something 'new'. The obvious place for such messages is in marketing collateral, but it can also find its way into the way exhibitions are conceived and planned.

- Emphasis should be placed on the museum as providing a 'pleasant environment' and demonstrably contributing to an individual's well being:
    - Drawing on ideas of the servicescape from services marketing, explored in the Australian museum context by Alcaraz, Hume and Mort (2009), the museum and art gallery should be promoted as a place where time can be spent in an environment that fosters thought, contemplation, study, and simply a nice place to be: all contributing to the notion of 'well being'. Again, this can be a story woven into the narrative of the museum, supported by quiet areas where visitors can sit and read,

for example. The café is also important, in that it has the potential to further enhance the overall ‘feel’ of the environment.

- The social value of a visit – ‘quality time’ with family—should not be forgotten:
    - While it is difficult to communicate multiple message to potential visitors, the social value of visiting a museum can be reinforced with the use of appropriate images in museum publications, for example. In addition, the point above links closely to social value, with the overall environment needing to be conducive to ‘quality time’. Though most obviously linked to learning, particularly for young parents, the idea of the museum and art gallery as a simply a great place to be in is important here, as is its role in community well being.

QVMAG’s museum site (Image courtesy of QVMAG)

CONCLUSIONS

It is our hope that with a better understanding of what motivates museum visitation, along with visitor needs, values and expectations, museums and art galleries can better position themselves to meet the challenges that they now face. They will be better able to design appropriate exhibition programmes, increase visitor satisfaction, and create marketing messages that more effectively communicate the range of their offering.

Clearly, museums are well aware that their visitors are not homogenous, and have consequently been customising their marketing strategies with a view to offering a value museum experience to each of their different market segments (Lehman, 2009). However, much of the research has looked at the visit itself, concentrating on consumer feelings towards various aspects of the museum 'product'; we have sought to rectify this shortcoming.

While our survey concentrated on one aspect of cultural consumer behaviour, our findings do bode well for the future of the sector. It is clear that the respondents to this survey valued museums and art galleries as providers of cultural and educational experiences. If anything, though, the sector in this regional context at least, is understating some aspects of the overall experience provided. In major cities the idea that there is 'value' in the very existence of cultural attractions is perhaps better recognised. On the smaller scale of regional museums such as QVMAG, limited budgets mean only a percentage of the potential benefits consumers might derive from a visit can be communicated.

We have not sought to provide a plan of action based on our findings, rather we suggest points for discussion and consideration. In some ways this is a necessary first step in a better understanding of what motivates museum visitation, and more broadly, a better understanding of the true value of cultural institutions to regional and local communities.

REFERENCES

Alcaraz, C., Hume, M. and Mort, G. 2009, Creating sustainable practice in a museum context: Adopting service-centricity in non-profit museums, *Australasian Marketing Journal,*17(4): 119–225.

Beard J. and Ragheb M. 1983, Measuring leisure motivation, *Journal of Leisure Research*, 15(3): 219-228.

Evers, K.E., et al. 2012, Development of an individual well-being scores assessment, *Psychology of Well-Being,* vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 1-9.

Lehman, K. 2009. Museums and the modern public: A marketing context. *Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 39(2): 87–100.

Lehman, K., Wickham, M.D., & Fillis, I. 2014, A cultural tourism research agenda, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 49, 156–158.

Museums & Galleries NSW 2010, *Guess Who's Going to the Gallery? A Strategic Audience Evaluation and Development Study: NSW State Report*, Museums & Galleries NSW, Sydney.

Museums & Galleries NSW 2013, *Guess Who's Going to the Gallery? A Strategic Audience Evaluation and Development Study: Queensland Report 2013*, Museums & Galleries NSW, Sydney.

Quester, P., et al. 2014, *Consumer behaviour: Implications for marketing strategy* (7th edn), McGraw-Hill, Sydney.

Slater, A. 2007, 'Escaping to the gallery': Understanding the motivations of visitors to galleries, *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing,* 12(2): 149-162.

Tourism Research and Education Network (TRENd)
University of Tasmania
Private Bag 87
Hobart
Tasmania 7000
Australia

Published June 2016

ISBN Printed: 978-1-86295-860-9
ISBN PDF: 978-1-86295-861-6