



# Visiting experiences and behavioural types in cultural audiences: an analysis of two museums in Lisbon

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**Abstracts:** Audiences of cultural events are subject to diverse kinds of experiences in their exercise, which determine the structure of their consumption practices and cultural habits. Mapping and analysing visitors' experiences and their visiting styles is thus fundamental to enhance museums' offer appeal.

Drawing on a conceptual framework which identifies four main kinds of experiences in cultural practices - (i) intellectual experience (ii) emotional experience; (iii) social experience; and (iv) recreational experience, the audiences of two museums in the city of Lisbon (Fado Museum and Puppets Museum) are analysed in this paper.

Considering a typology of diverse audience categories (permanent collection, temporary exhibitions, other events), a detailed study of the assessment of different experiences is pursued, with the aim to confront and identify relevant discriminant categories such as socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. age, gender, qualifications, professional status, nationality, residence, previous artistic practices) and cultural habits (considering their visits to other cultural facilities and events). Considering the conclusions, some policy-oriented recommendations from this analysis are discussed.

**Key words:** Museums, Museum experience, Cultural audiences, Visiting experience, Culture.

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## **Introduction: Research problem and context**

Audiences of cultural events are subject to diverse kinds of experiences during their cultural practice. These experiences are determinant to determine the structure of work and understand structure their consumption practices and cultural habits, and thus fundamental to be understood and work on the management and programming of cultural venues. Several recent studies have been pointing out the importance of mapping and analysing visitors' experiences and their visiting styles in order to enhance museums appeal (e.g. Falk 2009). This literature has been highlighting the existence and importance of several visitor identities within the museum experience and therefore, stressing the importance of analysing and predicting visitors' different behavioural patterns.

This paper aims to analyse the audience of two particular museums in the city of Lisbon, Portugal (Fado Museum and Puppets Museum), crossing the assessments of the quality of the individual experiences declared by their visitors on a recent survey with some of the socio-demographic characteristics of those visitors, their motivations and cultural habits.

The paper was conceived within the scope of a wider study conducted by Dinâmia'CET-IUL (Centre for Socioeconomic Change and Territorial Studies, from University Institute of Lisbon) for EGEAC (Lisbon Municipality's Enterprise for Management of Facilities and Cultural Animation). This audience development study, conducted between July 2013 and July 2014, involved a thorough survey of nearly 6000 visitors to cultural venues and events under EGEAC's management. The main purpose of the research study was to better overview and understand visitors' profile for each event and venue, in order to ultimately plan more successful audience engagement strategies in the near future, addressed to both visitors (real) and non-visitors (potential). More specifically, the research focused on the following key topics: (i) Visit and cultural habits (ii) Frequency of visiting (iii) Nature of visit (iv) Reasons and motivations for visiting (v) Visit experience (vi) Communication (vii) Branding (viii) Socio-demographic profile.

As far as the present paper is concerned, it takes a more detailed and focused approach, whereby rather than addressing these eight topics within all the EGEAC venues and events, solely two museums (Fado Museum and Puppets Museum) were looked at, in order to specifically analyse visitors' profiles in the light of their museum experience.

Based on literature review, four main kinds of experiences were identified in museum visiting practices: (i) learning (intellectual experience); (ii) emotional (emotional experience), social (social experience) and fun (recreational experience). Drawing on this conceptual framework and considering three different programming settings - (i) permanent collection, (ii) temporary exhibitions; (iii) other events - the research seeks to identify, confront and assess which of the following relevant discriminant features - (i) visitors' socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. age, gender, education level, nationality, artistic practices and professional status) and (ii) cultural habits (social nature of visits, visits to other cultural venues and events) - will mostly influence visitors four main types of museum experience.

After this brief introductory framing of the problem and of the context of the empirical study, the next section will analyse the museum experience in the light of literature and propose an analytical framework based on these four kinds of experiences. Section three will sum up the methodological issues of the study, whilst section four will present the main results



achieved and analyse the data in regard to the conceptual framework. A final section will draw some conclusive remarks concerning policy-oriented principles.

### **Museums audiences and museum experience(s): a framework for analysis**

#### ***Evolving museums in evolving societies: challenging visitors' experiences***

In today's post-modern world, museums are constantly redefining themselves to respond to the demands of shifting and complex societies in which they exist. Because of social, economic and political imposing agendas, museums are permanently not only challenged to revise their missions, roles and activities, but are subject to question their own purpose of existence. Since the birth of museums, collections and people have always been at the centre of their identity making, i.e. they are at the core of why museums are and exist. Nevertheless, because of historical circumstances, museums have given dissimilar emphasis to either people or collections, depending on the perspective at the time (e.g. Benhamou, 2011; Towse, 2003). In fact, intense reasoning and debate about museums' *raison-d'être* and the path they should embrace has long since been held within the museum studies community.

In spite of the debate's ongoing? nature and complexity, in the last 30 years, 'museums have striven to become more democratic in their structure and more responsive at all levels to the interests of a broad-based public' (Hein 2000:2). In order to be less static and better mirror contemporary society, museums have been encouraged to change and become not only more open and communicative, but more appealing and socially responsible, in compliance with their inherent social nature. As a result, issues such as public access, accessibility and social inclusion could no longer be left unaddressed and key areas, such as education and audience/marketing one word, have thus far become crucial factors in museums' success and survival. In other words, visitors and their museum experience have become the prime concern for museums worldwide. By shifting from the presentation of collections to the production of experiences, the emphasis is now placed on what museums enable people to do and in what people want do in museums.

This new museum democratic approach in making collections more welcoming, accessible and comprehensible to as many people as possible, has been taking place due to a greater awareness of visitors' changing expectations and attitudes towards museums. In fact, visitors today are increasingly expecting a greater degree of involvement and participation in museums. As such, 'it is not enough for museums to present collections and information in a passive way. Museums have to engage interest through active involvement with their users and build on it to achieve their objectives' (Ambrose and Pain 1993:16). Furthermore, today visitors call for a greater variety of experiences within museums, be they intellectual, emotional, social, recreational or educational, for instance. In order to provide these different layers of experience, museums today are embracing a multitude of roles and constantly creating new interpretive frameworks, thus allowing visitors to have multiple readings and different personal meaningful experiences. By offering assorted perspectives on their collections, museums act as mediators, as they encourage visitors to freely interact with objects and pursue their own meanings. It is fundamentally this rich meaningful mediation between the object and the viewer that outlines the relevant and irreplaceable role of the museum in our society.



### ***Marketing Research and Audience Development***

One of the resources through which museums found helped grasp the different meaning and decision-making processes and strategies that each visitor employs in their interaction with the museum is marketing research. Aimed at better comprehending and recognizing these processes, the museum studies research community has increasingly been conducting numerous comprehensive audience development studies, which have confirmed that there are indeed differentiated responses to the museum experience. In addition, it was found, that regular consumers, not only do museum visitors have similar cultural habits and patterns of behaviour within museums, but they also have individual different needs and motivations for visiting these leisure institutions (McLean 1997). More importantly however, is that museums have learnt that it is those specific personal needs that will shape a person's visiting motivations, which together affect the overall enjoyment and quality of the museum experience (Falk 1992, 2009).

Marketing research is therefore a tool to 'provide information on people's preferences, attitudes, likes and needs to help companies understand what consumers want' (Hannagan 1992:49). As far as museums are concerned, 'understanding the public's interests and concerns, likes and dislikes, needs and wants, is of critical importance in providing successful museums and services' (Ambrose and Pain 1993:16). With such knowledge and insight, museums are then able to 'develop its products accordingly to facilitate the exchange process' (McLean 1997:89). In other words, by helping pinpoint and understand existing discrepancies between what is offered and visitors' wishes that need fulfilling, marketing research has allowed museums to provide improved tailored products and services and give 'maximum customer satisfaction through the most effective deployment of resources' (Hannagan 1992:54).

As already stated, museums have been striving to be more sensitive and aware to the specific interests of its visitors. The aim is not only to motivate and engage visitors but consequently, to build long-lasting mutually beneficial relationships with audiences. This new approach has allowed audiences to become empowered, as they now have a highly respected say contribution in what they expect to find, see, learn and experience in a museum. Marketing research is therefore a key tool to help gain new audiences and bridge the gap between museums and the public they serve. This tool is leading museums forward and reinforcing their purpose as institutions that exist for the benefit of society, i.e. the people.

### ***Museum Experience***

In order to understand how visitors' characteristics may shape the museum experience, one must also grasp how visitors produce meaning when interacting with objects and what other endogenous or exogenous factors interfere in that same interaction. As Falk and Dierking have pointed out, within a Museum, 'whatever the visitor does attend to is filtered through the personal context, mediated by the social context, and embedded within the physical context' (Falk and Dierking, 1992:4).

Each viewer or visitor is a singular distinct person who has its own personal context. This unique context 'incorporates a variety of experiences in and knowledge of the content and design of the museum. The personal context also includes visitor's interests, motivations, and concerns' (Falk and Dierking 1992:2) and therefore, help to mould what and how an individual appreciates, understands and interprets. In addition, these personal qualities are



extremely important because, as the cultural approach to communication has contended, in meaning construction process, shared by a viewer and an object, specific features of both elements interfere and are determinant in the negotiated production of meaning. The message is no longer defined only by the sender (object) but also by the receiver (viewer), who is now regarded as an active and essential element of communication, being at the core of the interpretative equation (See Hooper-Greenhill 1997, 2000). Moreover, this communication theory is supported by a new exciting way of understanding learning: constructivism. According to Hein, this educational theory argues that knowledge is constructed by the learner and therefore, 'both knowledge and the way it is obtained are on the mind of the learner' (Hein 1996:75).

The underlying argument that permeates these theories is that meaning and subsequent knowledge is something that is always personally constructed, which will thus affect the extent of the engagement and enjoyment of the experience. As knowledge is 'always built on, and consolidated with, previous knowledge' visitors tend to engage more when the experience is somewhat familiar, i.e. when it recalls 'directly to an interest or concern that existed before the museum visit' (Falk and Dierking 1992:119-120). This occurs because visitors 'assimilate events and observations in mental categories of personal significance and character, determined by events in their lives before and after the museum visit' (Falk and Dierking 1992:123). It is this personal significance within the visitor's personal context that will ultimately create and mould motivations for visiting or not visiting a museum. The challenge is then set for museums, as 'visitors come with such a broad range of interests and back-grounds that no single recipe for motivating them could possibly apply across the board.' (Csikszentmihályi and Hermanson 1995:37).

As far as the social context is concerned, it is known to also influence a visitor's experience and interpretation (e.g. DiMaggio and Hirsch, 1976, Becker, 1982; DiMaggio, 1987; Bourdieu, 1994; Caves, 2002; Benhamou 2011). The social and cultural background of the visitor, which is linked to his socio-demographic profile (e.g. social class, age, household and gender) plays a significant role in shaping and forging its character. This way, a visitor interprets both as an individual and as a member of a broader community that interprets socially, i.e., as a member of an interpretative community. Finally, the physical setting is also of importance, as the gallery space, 'which includes the architecture and feel of the building' (Falk and Dierking 1992:3), can also strongly influence a visitor's overall museum experience. In fact, the gallery space of a museum, which may be regarded in some instances to be non-neutral at all, can therefore act and become in itself a meaningful exhibition interpretative tool.

### ***An operational analytical framework***

As reasoned above, today visitors expect a great range of experiences within museums that they can relate to and enjoy. Each visitor is a person who not only carries individual and social features, but also has personal specific needs and motivations, one could only assume the countless variety of visitor experiences that may take shape and place within the same museum. However, although recognizing the complexity of this reality, when carrying out visitor surveys, researchers have to try and summarize the universe of possible museum experiences into simple Few categories for practical and methodological reasons.

As such, four main kinds of museum experiences that people may have within museums were chosen and considered: *learning* (intellectual experience); *emotional* (emotional



experience); *social* (social experience); *fun* (recreational experience). Drawing upon the literature review (and discussion with local stakeholders involved in the study), these four categories were created and regarded as unavoidable because it was felt that they comprised the majority of the reasons given in numerous national and foreign museum visitor surveys. Moreover, they are inspired by the present definition of museums by the British Museum Association: 'Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.' (<http://www.museumsassociation.org/faq>).

### **Methodological Issues**

As explained beforehand, the present paper focuses on visitors of two distinct Lisbon museums: Fado Museum and the Puppets Museum. Before addressing methodological and technical issues, it is of importance to outline each Museum's history and mission, as well as examine the nature of their collections and the activities they promote.

#### ***The Fado Museum***

Although the Fado has been in existence for over 200 years of existence, Lisbon's Fado Museum only opened its doors to the public in 1998. According to the museum's official website, its mission is to research, gather, document, preserve, interpret, promote, exhibit and learn about Portugal's most traditional music genre. (<http://www.museudofado.pt>). The Museum aims to celebrate Fado's exceptional value not only as a symbol of Lisbon, but as an art that is deeply rooted in the cultural traditions and musical history of the country. Moreover, it aims to praise an art that shapes and promotes Portugal's cultural identity, both nationally and overseas. This goal was to some extent accomplished in 2011, when Fado was proudly added to UNESCO's list of World's Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Since its opening, the Museum's permanent collection has incorporated items belonging to hundreds of artists, musicians, composers, authors, poets, instrument manufacturers and researchers. These items not only include material objects e.g. music instruments, phonograms, records, clothes and documents (periodicals, pictures, photographs, posters, musical scores), but also immaterial (intangible) patrimony, such as the memories and testimonies of hundreds of personalities that witnessed, played and wrote the history of Fado. It is because music belongs to the realm of immaterial heritage that visitors' interaction and engagement with exhibition contents, via technology, has always been a huge priority and concern for the museum.

In addition to the permanent collection, the Museum has developed a vast programme of activities which include regular temporary exhibitions (held outside the Museum gallery space in different cultural venues, providing extra visibility and reaching non-regular visitors) and other events, which mainly consist of live performances, musical guided tours (available inside and outside the Museum), books and album launches, workshops, presentations and conferences.

#### ***The Puppets Museum***

Since 2001, the Puppets Museum is located at the Bernardas Convent, in Lisbon. However, the Museum was founded long before in 1987, by the Companhia de Marionetas de S. Lourenço, a travelling puppet theatre company which had successfully performed both in Portugal and abroad since 1973. Up until today, the Museum continues to be the sole Portuguese institution to feature the history of puppets and puppet theatres companies



across the world, in spite of focusing more on Portuguese puppetry traditions and objects.

As such, it dedicates itself to the collection, conservation, research, exhibition and interpretation of different puppet collections (<http://www.museudamarioneta.pt>). By means of exploring multiple collection approaches, the Museum aims to spread knowledge and provide insightful yet pleasurable fun experiences for its visitors. In addition, because it attracts a large number of young visitors, the Museum fosters numerous educational and children's edutainment activities, mostly concerning live puppet shows and museum guided tours.

The Puppet Museum has been progressively acquiring new items for its main permanent collection, which are a depiction of different puppetry practises that derive either from ancient traditions or from modern artistic expressions. These acquisitions have only been possible due to the admirable contribution, help and support of various individuals, authors, collectors and puppeteers, who have donated their collections or personal objects to the Museum. As a result, it now houses one of the most significant and complete collections of Portuguese traditional puppets. In addition, it also comprises an outstanding wide collection of over five hundred African and Southeast Asian puppets and masks bestowed by the famous Portuguese collector, Francisco Capelo.

Besides its permanent collection, the Puppet Museum also holds two to three temporary exhibitions per year, in a proper devoted gallery space within the Museum. These exhibitions naturally relate to the art forms of puppetry and theatre, which may often be expressed through painting and photography. In addition, the Museum holds several other events, which principally include serving as a host to two celebrated Lisbon festivals called: FIMFA - International Festival of Puppetry and Animated Forms (performing arts); and MONSTRA - Lisbon Animated Film Festival (cinema). Finally, several performances, conferences and theatre shows also take place occasionally within the Museum.

### ***Survey implementation***

The implementation of the survey was made through the application of a questionnaire, using direct interviews. Data collection was held at the Fado Museum and the Puppets Museum in a pre-defined one year period (July 2012 to June 2013), after a pre-test which was previously conducted in June 2012. All interviews were conducted face to face by a team of interviewers, following a proportional quota sampling, which is a non-probabilistic technique used to ensure equal representation of visitors in each group.

The questionnaire was held in several languages (Portuguese, English, Spanish and French, depending on the language spoken by the respondent) and situations (when entering the event, during, or when leaving), covering a variety of days and times of the week depending on the programme of activities and events being held at each venue.

A proportional quota sampling method was used to recruit museum visitors, with quotas based on the events' categories defined by the Fado Museum and the Puppets Museum. By applying a quota sampling method where the sample is not chosen using random selection, it becomes impossible to determine the possible sampling error. In addition, it is also not possible to make statistical inferences from the sample to the population. Therefore, as usual in this kind of studies, the results and conclusions for the total number of visitors of the two museums cannot be generalized.

**Sample Design**

The control variables underlying the definition of quotas are the events' categories defined by the Fado Museum and the Puppets Museum, which consist of permanent collection, temporary exhibitions and other events (Table 4.1 in Annex IV presents the events included in each of these categories).

In order to calculate the sample size, it was assumed a dispersion of 0.16 for the characteristics of the universe being studied, a 95% confidence level and a sampling error of 3.8%. Considering the Fado Museum population of 49385 visitors, a sample of 423 visitors was obtained. The sample distribution is proportional to the weight of each category previously mentioned within the universe of the Fado Museum public. After collecting the information, a sample of 545 subjects was accomplished and therefore the sampling error decreased to 3.34%. Considering the Puppets Museum population of 12308 visitors, a sample of 411 visitors was obtained. The sample distribution is proportional to the weight of each category previously mentioned within the universe of the Puppets Museum public. After collecting the information, a sample of 404 subjects was accomplished and therefore the sampling error increased to 3.83%.

**Table 1. Distribution of sample by quotas by event category**

Distribution of the sample by quotas by event category	FADO MUSEUM				PUPPETS MUSEUM			
	Permanent Collection	Temporary Exhibitions	Other Events	TOTAL	Permanent Collection	Temporary Exhibitions	Other Events	TOTAL
<b>VISITORS -POPULATION</b>	34 117	4 144	11 124	49 385	7 712	2 580	2 016	12 308
<b>Weight of each stratum (%)</b>	69,1	8,4	22,5	100,0	62,7	21,0	16,4	100,0
<b>Sample Design</b>	292	35	96	423	258	86	67	411
<b>Validated</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>404</b>
<b>Fill Quotes (%)</b>	<b>115,3</b>	<b>231,6</b>	<b>132,3</b>	<b>129,1</b>	<b>83,8</b>	<b>110,2</b>	<b>138,0</b>	<b>98,2</b>

**Statistical Reliability**

The purpose of this research is to understand whether there is a difference in average terms between the four main kinds of experiences in museum visiting practices, considering three different programming settings - permanent collection, temporary exhibitions and other events. Moreover, it seeks to identify and assess which of the visitors' socio-demographic characteristics and cultural habits mostly influence the four main types of museum experience identified. Each experience was considered the dependent variable, whilst each museum and each socio-demographic characteristic and cultural habit were the independent variables.

Although we are dealing with samples that were not chosen using random selection, which would not allow us to extrapolate the results to the universe, the data were treated by a two-way ANOVA. The dependents variables are metric and the independent variables are categorical. However, real issues occurred when considering the asymmetric distribution of the variables, the absence of homoscedasticity between groups with unequal sample





sizes and the absence of residuals normality. Therefore, the two-way ANOVA model was not suitable.

Thus, the following methods were applied: descriptive statistics, tables with means and standard deviations of the dependent variables, bar graphics (dependent variables standardized with the Museum mean and standard-deviation) and boxplot.

### **Main Results**

The main results that were achieved by carrying out a thorough analysis are systematized in this section. As stated before, our aim was to confront the 4 types of experience considered (intellectual experience; emotional experience; social experience; recreational experience) at the light of the following hypothetic relevant discriminant features: on the one hand some visitors' socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. age, gender, education level, nationality, artistic practices and professional status); and on the other hand, some indicators on cultural habits of visitors (social nature of visits, visits to other cultural venues and events).

For both museums, our operative framework for the analysis compared 3 categories of "cultural offers": (i) permanent collection, (ii) temporary exhibitions; (iii) other events. The basis of this analysis is the rating of the 4 kinds of experiences each targeted visitor had. By considering the answers to a specific museum experience question of the questionnaire (see operationalization of the experiment, on the figure presented at annex 1), this data was then crossed with all the potential discriminant features, which were in turn provided by answers given in accordance to several other questions of the same questionnaire.

### **Global general results**

Global comparative analysis, without the consideration of discriminant variables can be consulted on figure 2. Some of the main features of the analysis can be outlined as follows.

All 4 kinds of experiences picked up high marks in all the cases considered (3 types of events in each museum). As such, they show small distinctions among them, with scores mostly concentrated at the top of scale (4-5), and with means between 3.2 and 4.3. The overall results show just one outlier: the social experience on temporary exhibitions in the Fado Museum, which was rated 2.76. Despite differences not being too relevant in general, it is still worth performing a more in-depth analysis in the next section.

Fado Museum has more variability of results than the Puppets Museum. It is particularly noticeable when considering the Temporary Exhibitions in Fado Museum, which recurrently reports lower scores. This can be explained by the fact that these exhibitions are held outside the premises of the museum, in central touristic places, thus attracting less frequent audiences.

The *emotional experience* is generally the most valued kind of experience, with the exception of the Puppets Museum's Permanent Collection and the Temporary Exhibitions at the Fado Museum, where the fun experience exceeds it. Fun and intellectual experiences (with diverse patterns) are usually the 2nd and 3rd most rated kinds of experiences, within the different kinds of events, on both museums. The social experience is regularly the one that is considered the least important, with lower mean scores.

As far as the *intellectual experience* is concerned, the results reveal a dichotomy: although it scored higher marks in the Fado Museum's permanent collection and other events, in the Puppets Museum, the high scores were registered on the Temporary Exhibitions, which can be explained perhaps by the exceptional quality of their contents.



The *emotional experience* is consistently more focused on the Puppets Museum than in the Fado Museum, which can be eventually seen as relatively natural due to the nature of the collection and exhibitory devices of each museum (although this can be arguable).

Although the social experience is, as mentioned, the less valued experience in both museums, its importance differs considerably when it comes to the Temporary Exhibitions: it rates as the worst experience in the Fado Museum (2.79), but improves to a much better (3.4) average on the Puppets Museum.

Lastly, the *fun experience* seems consistently more cherished on the Puppets Museum too.

The next sub-sections will examine the results of our specific analysis, in order to try and find significant differences considering the several discriminant variables. It should be noted that many other variables dealt with in the survey could be used in a similar analysis (e.g. professional status, expressed motivations for the visit, recurrence of the visit), but they are not to be taken into account in the specific scope of this paper, bearing in mind its particular conceptual framework. However, some of them were yet tested, without convincing results. A full analysis of these crossings can be developed in future research.



**Table 2: Degree of importance of each kind of experience assigned to the event, by event category (Global Results)**  
(from min=1 to max=5)

Degree of importance assigned to the event	FADO AND PUPPETS MUSEUMS						FADO MUSEUM						PUPPETS MUSEUM								
	FADO AND PUPPETS MUSEUMS		Permanent Collection		Temporary Exhibitions		Other Events		Permanent Collection		Temporary Exhibitions		Other Events		Permanent Collection		Temporary Exhibitions		Other Events		
	Nº	Mean	Standard-deviation	Nº	Mean	Standard-deviation	Nº	Mean	Standard-deviation	Nº	Mean	Standard-deviation	Nº	Mean	Standard-deviation	Nº	Mean	Standard-deviation	Nº	Mean	Standard-deviation
Learning (intellectual experience)	921	3,90	0,85	327	3,98	0,79	79	3,39	0,97	120	3,97	0,93	214	3,88	0,86	93	4,09	0,75	88	3,85	0,78
Emotional (emotional experience)	923	4,07	0,89	325	4,01	0,95	79	3,57	1,01	122	4,24	0,81	215	4,08	0,84	93	4,20	0,82	89	4,34	0,67
Social (social experience)	894	3,26	1,20	312	3,17	1,20	75	2,76	1,22	121	3,60	1,12	212	3,32	1,23	86	3,40	1,33	88	3,26	0,93
Fun (recreative experience)	919	3,93	0,96	323	3,75	1,02	78	3,6	1,05	120	3,96	0,95	215	4,18	0,81	92	4,11	0,97	91	4,09	0,83

Grey shading - there are no differences in the average importance given to events, by age groups

Orange shading - the average importance given to the events in this age group is different from others

Grey shading - there are no differences in the average importance given to events, by event category

Yellow shading - the average importance given to the events in this group is different from others



### ***Crossings with socio-demographic variables***

#### **- Gender**

Crossing results between the importance assigned by visitors to each kind of experience (by event category, in both museums) and gender can be observed on the tables and figures presented on section II.1, on Annex II. The differences registered between male and female genders are not very relevant. Some slight differences do exist in particular cases (e.g. women rate learning, emotional and fun experiences higher than males on other events in the Fado Museum), which could be more related to programming and sampling issues than to specific gender traits. Social experience data shows slightly greater differences (particular in temporary exhibitions), as male results are more expressive in several types of events. Overall, the Puppets Museum displays less consistent gender differences than the Fado Museum, as far as the assessment of the experiences are concerned.

#### **- Age**

Crossing results between the importance assigned by visitors to each kind of experience (by event category, in both museums) and age can be observed on the tables and figures presented in section II.2, in Annex II. Again, the results are quite similar and not very striking. The pattern of results between age groups seems to be not very diverse, and when differentiated, they seem to be related to each specific type of event, which in turn, influences in a consistent way the different kinds of experiences. In effect, just three things can be outlined: (i) the temporary exhibitions in Fado Museum represent (again) an exception (with progressive relative valuations with age); (ii) extreme age groups (younger and older) show higher evaluation standards across the board concerning the Puppets Museum; (iii) the social experience, at large, once again, registers more fluid and diversified results (by age) for the different kinds of experiences.

#### **- Education level**

Crossing results between the importance assigned by visitors to each kind of experience (by event category, in both museums) and educational level can be observed on the tables and figures presented in section II.3, in Annex II. Once more, the results are not significantly diverse amongst the different educational level groups. Although we could expect, based on the literature review, that educated groups (with higher cultural capital, by proxy) would highly value the learning experience, these differences were not consistently found, as this type of experience seems to be homogeneously acknowledged across educational levels. On the other hand, as expected, emotional and fun experiences assessments seem to consistently decrease as the level of education rises. Lower levels of qualifications declare consistently higher levels of assessments for these kinds of experiences, particularly on the Puppets Museum. The social experience (across the board) and temporary exhibitions (especially the Fado Museum's ones), once more, revealed more inconsistent and diverse results.

#### **- Nationality**

Crossing results between the importance assigned by visitors to each kind of experience (by event category, in both museums) and nationality can be observed on the tables and figures presented in section II.4, in Annex II. This could be an interesting distinctive indicator, as tourist audiences are considerably large in both museums and are one of the most discriminant variables in many of the other survey questions. However, the results are not conclusive at all, with very similar patterns amongst Portuguese and foreign



visitants, concerning their valuation of experiences. With the exception of some sporadic cases (probably related to sampling issues), such as the higher assessment of fun on the Puppets Museum's other events, there are no consistent differences. Once more, only on the Fado Museum's temporary exhibitions is the average importance given to the events by the two groups more different.

#### **- Place of Permanent Residency**

Crossing results between the importance assigned by visitors to each kind of experience (by event category, in both museums) and place of permanent residency can be observed on the tables and figures presented in section II.5, in Annex II. This indicator complemented the previous one by distinguishing tourist audiences from the people residing in the city of Lisbon and its suburban areas. Once again, the results are not distinctive at all, showing very similar patterns amongst the 3 groups of visitants, concerning their valuation of experiences. Only the Fado Museum's temporary exhibitions seem to, more than often enough, present more distinctive patterns. This fact may be related to the specific features of these audiences, since they were surveyed outside the conventional museum space, and are therefore, presumably, less likely to be the usual Fado Museum public.

#### **- Artistic practices**

Crossing results between the importance assigned by visitors to each kind of experience (by event category, in both museums) and previous contact with artistic practices can be observed on the tables and figures presented in section II.6, in Annex II. It could be assumed that people with previous regular personal contact with artistic practices (people who have studied, practiced or have been engaged in any form of artistic activity during their lives) would have more distinct assessments regarding their experiences, than other subjects questioned. However, again, differences are not quite substantial at all. On the Fado Museum, "non-artistic" subjects have slightly greater fun, social and emotional experiences, particularly on other events, whilst they rate worse the learning experience in temporary exhibitions. On the Puppets Museum, people with artistic backgrounds seem to slightly overrate learning and emotional experiences, whilst "non-experts" slightly overrate social and fun experiences, comparatively.

#### ***Crossing with cultural habits of visitors***

##### **- Social nature of visits (accompanied or not)**

Crossing results between the importance assigned by visitors to each kind of experience (by event category, in both museums) and the fact of being accompanied or not during the visit can be observed in the tables and figures presented in section III.1, in Annex III. These results are a little more enlightening than most of the previous ones, although once more, they display differences that cannot be considered very relevant. In effect, naturally, visitors tend to highly value the social experience when people are accompanied, in all types of events. A similar increase occurs regarding the fun experience, but solely in the case of other events in the Fado Museum. In contrast, fun experiences decrease in the Puppets Museum's temporary exhibitions, when accompanied. Results on the emotional experience are not too consistent either: whilst in the Puppets Museum there are no significant differences, in the case of the Fado Museum, results seem to improve when people are alone, in both kind of exhibitions, but worsen, when alone in the other events. Finally, the intellectual experience tends to be, in most cases, a little bit more valued if people visit alone.



#### **- Visits to other cultural venues and events.**

Crossing results between the importance assigned by visitors to each kind of experience (by event category, in both museums) and the cultural place(s) most frequently cited as the most important in Lisbon (used as proxy of visiting other venues) can be observed on the tables and figures presented in section III.2, in Annex III. These results are not very easy to assess, as it concerns an open multiple answer question (here only the most popular ones in each case were reproduced) and the variable seems not to have a considerable discriminant capacity. There are no clear patterns that can be easily defined by these results. However, an interesting result worth mentioning is that two most universally cited cultural places (Centro Cultural de Belem and Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian) seem to present more distinct evaluations from the rest, as far as the intellectual experience is concerned. The difference between people that rated other (less cited) cultural places and the two above mentioned venues, seems to be bigger in the intellectual experience, which may indicate the existence of specialized audiences with more discriminant capacity.

#### **Conclusions**

This paper intended to examine and analyse the audiences of two particular museums in the city of Lisbon, Portugal (Fado Museum and Puppets Museum), by correlating the assessment of the quality of each visitor's individual experience, with some of its socio-demographic characteristics, motivations and cultural habits. Four types of visiting experiences were considered in this study: (i) learning (intellectual experience); (ii) emotional (emotional experience), (iii) social (social experience) and (iv) fun (recreational experience).

The purpose was to empirically test some of the most spread conceptual developments on museum audiences, which made expectable that the various types of experiences considered would vary significantly in response to the different kinds of events that took place in each different museum. To see which features would mostly influence visitors' experience and why, not only the socio-demographic characteristics of those visitors (gender, age, educational level, nationality, local of residency, and previous artistic practice) were taken into account, but also their motivations and cultural habits (social nature of visits - accompanied or not; and visits to other cultural venues and events).

However, the differences that were found are much less visible than expected, considering the literature. In fact, all museum experiences are generally very well rated and so the differences in numbers are quite narrow. In addition, it is especially striking that the average grades are not even transversally consistent amongst the categories analyzed. As such, the discriminant variables were not so discriminant as anticipated.

Some of the outcome results may even represent significant challenges towards some conceptual approaches on museum audiences. For instance, the low variability of the intellectual experience's rating in regard to cultural capital (measured by the educational level) contradicts a somewhat commonplace expectation that higher educated visitors expect foremost an intellectual experience within museums. Many assumptions could be made as to why this is so, either because people, regardless of their cultural capital, feel compelled to say what they think might be the most correct and socially approving answer and/or because museums are in fact changing and being less elitist in their nature and approach towards the public.



On the other hand, however, as expected, visitors with lower educational levels seem to value more fun and social linked experiences. As reasoned, even these examples, shaped by the particularities of specific events and settings, express very slight differences, and so investigations have yet to be made in order to further explore many other links and meanings and try to shed some more light on to the matter in future museum experience research work.

As far as the differences between the 3 types of events or programming settings are concerned, they are more expressive and relevant in the Fado Museum than in the Puppets Museum, which proved to be more homogeneous. Fado Museum shows more distinct results not only because events are more diverse in nature (including concerts, openings, guided visits, inside and outside the museum facilities), but also especially because temporary exhibitions were held outside the museum in other Lisbon's cultural locations and thus more keen to attract tourists or occasional visitors. These factors are likely to have been the main reason why visitors rated their experience slightly more unevenly, rather than because of the contents of the events themselves.

In terms of policy and action-oriented principles, these results strengthen our awareness of the need to deepen museums' audience analysis, thus making it clear that disentangling the functioning of these "black boxes" is a key-factor, in addition to being a little more doubtful on some apparent long-term consensus regarding these audiences' mechanisms. However, mapping and analysing visitors' experiences and visiting styles, in their specific contexts, is only the first fundamental step in museums' attempts to improve the quality and meaningfulness of their offers. The second step is to acknowledge audiences' complex reality, as empirical and theoretical research shed new and insightful light on the importance of visitor's individual different needs and motivations for visiting these leisure institutions. The third and final crucial step for museums is to decide what to do with such vital information as far as their management and programing policy is concerned. This issue presents itself as more complex than what meets the eye. Not only is enhancing and improving museums' offer already a subjective matter, the main question raised is whether to attract more visitors across the board or reach out for specific identified visitor profiles. There being no right or wrong answer, the challenge is then set for museums to decide between strategically addressing the "many or the few", i.e., between providing different kinds and layers of experience to a variety of regular, occasional and rare visitors, or providing tailored meaningful experiences to a specific sample of visitors.

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