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Authentic Pride and Museum Appeal: A Potent Mix for Boosting Suggestions

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Extended abstract

Introduction

The journey of a visitor is a fluid process that encompasses experiences before, during, and after the visit (Falk and Dierking, 1992; Sheng and Chen, 2012). A museum is also a journey for a visitor and can confer a kind of cool factor. Warren and Campbell (2014) identified key characteristics of ‘cool’ things or ideas that are widely agreed upon in literature. Firstly, coolness is a social construct, as objects and individuals are only deemed cool if perceived as such by others. Secondly, coolness is subjective and dynamic. The perception of what is cool can evolve and vary from one consumer to another, although those with similar interests often concur on what they find cool (Leland, 2004). The third characteristic, which is quite intuitive, is that cool is seen as a positive attribute. Warren et al. (2019) associated the concept of coolness with brands. They suggested that certain brands (a museum can be viewed as a brand) gain advantages from being cool, but the traits that differentiate cool brands from uncool ones have not been pinpointed by previous research. As a result, Warren et al. (2019) created a metric for brand coolness to distinguish between cool and uncool brands, revealing ten themes related to cool brands, including

usefulness/extraordinariness; aesthetic appeal; energy; high status; originality; authenticity; rebelliousness; subcultural; iconic, and popularity. Loureiro (2019) contributed to the comprehensive understanding of the concept of perceived authenticity and its connection to notions like authentic pride. Loureiro (2019) proposed that visitors who perceive a museum exhibition as authentic are more likely to feel a sense of pride during their visit. After conducting a survey at the National Museum of Ancient Art in Lisbon, Portugal, Loureiro (2019) asserted that authentic pride is more closely linked to perceived authenticity than to self-expression via word-of-mouth. Visitors experience a sense of self-value when they perceive a museum as authentic. In the context of museums, one of the strategies a brand can employ to convey its authenticity is through corporate museums. These museums are recognized for aiding organizations in preserving their brand identity and image, typically focusing on the company's history, historical photos, documents, and products (Carù et al., 2017). When effectively managed, corporate museums can amplify the brand's heritage and tradition, thereby enhancing the brand's overall value. Carù et al. (2017) thus claimed that a corporate museum can play a pivotal role in fostering a strong bond between the brand and the visitor. As per Holbrook and Gardner (1993) and Antón et al. (2018), recommending a museum following a visit can be equated to content generation, which involves visitors sharing their experiences with others in the digital realm. To this end, they can post reviews and comments on social media and travel websites, which are deemed trustworthy by others (Presi, et al., 2013; Antón et al., 2018).

Regarding recommendation, another dominant concept is word-of-mouth (WOM), which is the information shared by past consumers with potential consumers, based on their past experiences (Wang *et al.*, 2016). WOM is a powerful tool for purchase decisions because it consists of information communicated by people who are considered trustworthy (Wang *et al.*, 2016; Day, 1971) rather than being communicated from the brand itself. Nowadays traditional WOM has gained the electronic element which can constitute an influential social interaction and can have very wide dissemination (King *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, we suggest that both museum coolness (H1) and authentic pride (H2) enhance the recommendation of the museum.

Methodology

A survey was prepared to get data to test the hypotheses. Before launching the questionnaire, a pretest was performed with the help of 10 past visitors to analyze the content validity and guarantee that the questions were understood by the respondents. Only a few adjustments were made.

We spread the survey to four selected museums. The National Coach Museum and the MAAT are located in the same area in Lisbon, Belém. The Orient Museum is also located in the city center, in Avenida Brasília, Alcântara. The farthest museum is the National Tile Museum, located in Xabregas.

Before starting, participants were informed that the questionnaire was completely anonymous, and it would only be used for academic purposes. Participants were asked to specify their level of agreement with each item on a 7-point Likert scale (1 [strongly disagree] to 7 [strongly agree]).

A final sample of 308 participants remained for the final analysis, representing a usable response rate of 90%. The sample was well-balanced in terms of gender. Regarding age, most of the respondents belong to the 18-24 age group (35.7%), 57.5% of the respondents are between 18 and 34 years old, which represents more than half of the total respondents. The age group with less weight is composed of participants with more than 65 years old (2.9%). Bachelor's Degree (46.4%), whereas few respondents have a Professional Course (1.3%) or a Doctorate Degree (2.9%).

Results and Implications

Considering the multivariate analysis, the results support H1 and H2.

$$\text{Intention to Recommend} = 1.055 + 0.435 * \text{Museum Coolness} + 0.304 * \text{Authentic Pride} + \Sigma$$

(t=3.316) (t=5.064) (t=4.783)

$R^2 = 33.4\%$, $VIF < 3.33$, so there is no multicollinearity.

Data allow us to claim that when visitors consider a museum as being useful, valuable, and helpful for visitors, they are more prone to recommend the museum to others. From the diverse characteristics of coolness, useful is the one that influences more deeply they recommend. This implies that when museum visitors consider the museum valuable, extraordinary, and helpful, they are more willing to revisit it.

Achievement and meaningfulness, two facets of authentic pride, affect positively the recommendation. Thus, when museum visitors feel successful, accomplished, as well as confident, and useful, the likelihood they will recommend the visit to that museum is higher. This is aligned with Loureiro's (2019) claim that the feeling of authentic pride is a predictor of word-of-mouth and, thus, of recommendation intention.

Managers should develop interactive quizzes and games throughout the exhibitions so that visitors augment their feeling of success and self-worth by responding to challenging questions. The

second suggestion relates also to technological implementations. It would be beneficial for the managers to develop an online app where the games could be continued, with different levels, and containing curiosities about the exhibitions displayed in the museum. Thus, the proposed activities would allow practitioners to stimulate visitors into being more engaged with the museum, its progress, and its exhibitions.

Further research can claim: Will Portuguese museums survive the economic crisis caused by the pandemic? Will people be more prone to visit museums and more enthusiastic regarding cultural attractions? Future research could answer some of the questions that, for now, are unanswered.

Keywords: *authentic pride, Museum, virtual reality*

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