

PERCEIVING THE ART MUSEUM:

INVESTIGATING VISITATION AND NON-VISITATION IN CYPRUS AND ABROAD

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Leicester

by

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December 2007

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The purpose of this research is to understand people's perceptions regarding art museums and galleries and the way these perceptions influence their visitation decisions. This study explores the factors influencing museum perceptions, the way perceptions are formed, and their function in the contemporary environment of Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus. With the help of in-depth, semi-structured interviews, and by merging sociological and psychological approaches which appear in the existing literature, a conceptual model was created. According to this conceptual model, socio-cultural, individual, and environmental factors shape our *spectacles of perception* and therefore the way we make sense of the world around us. I explore the significance of power relations (engaging with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital) and the way in which individuals construct and maintain self-identity through the drawing of symbolic boundaries. One of the main outcomes of this study is the identification of different filters, named *museum perceptual filters*, which "colour" our spectacles of perception and force us to view and use art museums in different ways. The 8 museum perceptual filters identified in this study are the following: (a) professional, (b) art-loving, (c) self-exploration, (d) cultural tourism, (e) social visitation, (f) romantic, (g) rejection, and (h) indifference filter.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the A. G. Leventis Foundation for their generous financial support. I would also like to thank Dr. Richard Sandell, my supervisor, for being there for me at every stage of this thesis with always insightful advice. I am grateful to Dr. Katharine Edgar for her feedback on the final thesis and Kyproulla Papachristodoulou for translating the final report into Greek. In addition, I wish to express my appreciation to the interviewees as well as the personnel of the museums/ galleries who participated in this research. Finally, I would like to thank my husband Sheridan for his editing help and infinite patience.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In the last fifty years or so, a deceptively straightforward question has generated a plethora of diverse research in museum visitor studies. The question is simply: “Why do some people choose to visit museums and some do not?” Most researchers have searched for an answer in the sociological or psychological makeup of visitors and non-visitors by examining variables such as education, social class, motivations, expectations, lifestyles, previous knowledge, interests and attitudes (Davies, 1994; Merriman, 1989).

From a sociological point of view, the groundbreaking theory of Pierre Bourdieu (1968; 1991) helped explain why people from higher socio-economic classes are over-represented in museums’ visitor profiles. Although Bourdieu’s work has been recently criticised, researchers who followed his example in Europe, Canada and the US (e.g., DiMaggio & Useem, 1978; Hendon, Costa & Rosenberg, 1989; Kirchberg, 1996; Lopez-Sintas & Garcia-Alvarez, 2002; Peterson, 1992) have repeatedly confirmed the fact that education and socio-economic position are the best predictors of museum visitation. On the other hand, some claim that it all boils down to individual psychological attributes such as personal motivations and needs (Goulding, 1999; Jansen-Verbeke & van Rekom, 1996; Prentice, Davies & Beeho, 1997), choice of lifestyle (Todd & Lawson, 2001), previous knowledge, experience and interest (Falk & Adelman, 2003; Fienberg & Leinhardt, 2002; Schuster, 1991) or valued leisure attributes (Hood, 1983; 1996). Despite the theoretical division between sociological and psychological approaches, a few notable exceptions have adopted an intermediate position, thus providing a more integrated framework for examining museum visitation issues (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Goulding, 2000; Kelly, 1983; Merriman 1989; Sears, 1983; Worts, 1996). However, not much research has been conducted within the parameters of these frameworks.

Whatever approach different researchers might choose to adopt, there seems to be a general agreement, or at least no opposition to the idea, that people’s attitudes and beliefs regarding

museums influence their visitation decisions. However, research has shown that the attitudes and belief of visitors and non-visitors do not differ that greatly (Dixon, Courtney & Bailey, 1974; Susie Fisher Group, 1990). One interesting observation that fuelled this research is that visitors and non-visitors might have a common underlying image of the museum, but that the *individual value* placed upon this image might be different (Prince, 1990). This research sets out to understand how people make sense of art museums in relation to their daily lives and their conception of self.

1.2 Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand people's perceptions regarding art museums/ galleries and the way these perceptions influence visitation decisions. Furthermore, the study aims at examining the factors influencing museum perceptions, the way perceptions are formed, and their function in the contemporary environment of Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus. The final goal of this research is to develop a conceptual model that can help explain museum visitation not only in Cyprus but in other countries as well.

1.3 Research Questions

The main intellectual puzzle that drives this research is: "How do people's perceptions regarding art museums and galleries influence their visitation decisions?" In order to investigate people's perceptions and understand their function, three secondary questions have guided the research process:

1. How are perceptions formed? What are the key factors that contribute to the creation of museum perceptions (e.g., education, social class, lifestyles, values, motivations, previous experience, personal and cultural history, interests, expectations)?
2. Do different people perceive the art museum in different ways? If yes, in what ways and how are these related to people's visitation frequency?
3. What kind of perceptions operate in contemporary Cyprus concerning the art museum/ gallery?

The research questions guided the choice of methodology, as well as the data collection, and the analysis process.

1.4 Significance

The results of this study can be of value to two main audiences – other researchers who deal with similar issues and museum professionals in Cyprus and abroad.

This research attempts to address a knowledge gap and to challenge the intellectual and theoretical understanding of visitation issues. The findings helped me construct a new visitation theory in the form of a conceptual model that, I shall argue, has more explanatory power than previous models and which will hopefully inspire and guide future research.

Apart from addressing gaps in knowledge and extending the debate in visitor studies, this research also involves the specific environment of Nicosia (the city where I live and work). Nicosia has a variety of museums ranging from art and archaeological to folk and ethnographic. However, no visitor-related research that investigates this environment has been conducted to date. This study can serve as a milestone for further research and perhaps prove valuable to museum professionals in Cyprus who are involved in making audience development and promotional decisions.

1.5 Cyprus: Setting the Stage

Cyprus has a number of cultural sites, but most notably archaeological and Byzantine sites. In terms of institutions which exhibit art, in South Nicosia alone, which has a population of 250.000 residents, two art galleries/ museums, 28 commercial galleries, 17 cultural institutions, and a variety of exhibition spaces are in operation (Yellow Pages, 2006-07). Nevertheless, Cyprus does not have any fine arts museums that present Western art in a traditional chronological manner.

Seven museum professionals (museum directors, managing curators, and the director of cultural services at the Ministry of Education and Culture) were interviewed in order to help me explore the museum environment of Nicosia. The museum professionals were asked questions about their particular institutions as well as general questions about their thoughts and feelings regarding Cypriot museums and their visitors. Chapter 7 outlines some of their thoughts concerning the Cypriot public. The following paragraphs outline some of the main problems and opportunities the interviewees felt they face. It seems that uncertain legal

status, lack of financial and other incentives, as well as lack of co-operation between different art institutions, are the most serious stumbling blocks to the development of museums in Cyprus.

At this point in time (October 2007) the only institutions recognised by the government as “museums” are archaeological museums. Private or municipal institutions with permanent collections are not legally recognised and consequently are not entitled to any funding from the government. Their lack of legal status also means that their exhibits are vulnerable in the cases of war or natural disaster since there is no rescue plan. Nevertheless, some steps have already been taken for solving this crucial problem. The Ministry of Education and Culture, recognising the legal and financial problems of private museums, is currently in the process of passing relevant legislation that aims at conferring museum status on certain institutions. This step is very important for the future of museums in Cyprus since it can potentially provide incentives to art institutions to attract more visitors, offer more educational and other programs, and expand their collections and premises.

In the UK, pressure from professional groups and the government urge museums to recognise their social role and attract more visitors. This is especially true when it comes to attracting visitors who are traditionally excluded from museums, such as people in the lower socio-economic classes, younger or older people, minority ethnic communities and disabled people. Of course, museums that achieve these goals are usually rewarded financially. In the US, the situation is a bit different. The government is not the main funding body of museums. Usually, admissions and donations comprise the largest part of a museum’s operating budget (Lilla, 1985). For this reason, blockbuster shows and other crowd-pleasers are essential in supporting museums financially. Cypriot museums, however, do not receive any governmental guidance through financial incentives, or any moral pressure from museum associations and universities, that could identify crucial issues such as social exclusion and education. Furthermore, most art museums and galleries in Cyprus have free entrance or charge a very small amount of money, so the income from admissions is minimal to non-existent. As a result, the lack of financial or other incentives impels most museums in Cyprus to be indifferent to attracting more Cypriot visitors.

Unfortunately, museum professionals in Cyprus do not have a museum association that would allow them to meet and discuss their problems and concerns, or any career opportunities. Actually, when I mentioned the idea of a museum association to the

interviewees, it was received for the most part with scepticism. Apparently, in 2004 an attempt was initiated by the Pierides Foundation (Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre) that aimed at organising meetings with museum professionals in Cyprus. Evidently, it did not work. Some arts professionals still believe such attempts are doomed to failure due to the following problems: (a) there is no clear legislation in Cyprus about what constitutes a museum, (b) the government will not provide any financial support for the outcomes of such meetings, and (c) museum professionals are reluctant to get involved in initiatives originating from institutions other than their own.

The museums and galleries sponsored by the government, such as the State Gallery and the Cyprus Archaeological Museum, have additional problems. They lack sufficient personnel and the bureaucracy makes new ideas difficult to implement. For example, the State Gallery is part of the Ministry of Education and Culture and therefore has no independent legal status. As a result of this dependency, it cannot collect any revenue and does not have a spending budget. There are only three individuals working at the gallery site. Given the title of “gallery assistant”, they are required to perform multiple roles – that of a guide, secretary, archive organizer, and guard for the three-floor building. The Ministry of Education and Culture cannot afford to develop programs for the State Gallery and most of the artworks are in storage or on loan because of the lack of exhibition space.

One of the gallery assistants explained that in the past some attempts had been made to attract audiences, but that these efforts quickly died out. She mentioned that a lot of people have ideas, but in order to materialize them, they must be approved by their supervisors, then by their supervisors’ supervisors, etc. until they reach the Ministry of Education and Culture. Apparently, such bureaucratic procedures kill the enthusiasm for implementing new ideas and do not aid innovation, experimentation or change. A similar situation exists at the Byzantine Museum, where the Archbishop has to approve any new programs or ideas. Private arts organizations such as the Leventio Museum (a history museum) and the ARTos Foundation (shows contemporary art) are much more flexible and therefore more creative in their exhibition, as well as in their educational, programs.

Museum professionals do not only face problems, they also encounter opportunities. The future plans described by the museum professionals interviewed were very hopeful indeed. After the success of the educational program organised at the State Gallery by a group of museum educators (from the Ministry of Education and Culture), another educational

program will be launched by 2008 at the Byzantine Museum. Furthermore, several art institutions are expanding, or have plans to expand, their buildings. The archaeological museum is now in the process of announcing an architectural competition for a brand new building. The State Gallery has plans to become independent and split up its collections into two locations: one for modern and one for contemporary Cypriot art. A newly restored building will house the second collection (work will start in 2008). The Leventio Museum is also in the process of expanding its facilities and educational programs. Finally, ARTos has just expanded its site to include an apartment complex for visiting artists.

1.6 Research Methods & Design

Qualitative research was used in order to address the research questions. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 60 participants contributed to a coherent explanation of the intellectual puzzle. The belief that dialogue can best reveal people's perceptions guided the choice of interviews as the primary research method for this study. To complement the data gained from the interviews, two other research methods were used. First, the interviewees were asked to complete a short questionnaire at the beginning of each interview. This generated valuable demographic information as well as information about the leisure activities of each interviewee. Then, during the interview, I provided participants with a blank piece of paper with the words "art museum/ art exhibition" in the centre and asked them to take a few moments to create a *personal meaning map* (using words and/ or drawings) of whatever came to their mind when they thought of art museums. A discussion of the resulting map followed that. The main advantage of the mind mapping method is that it offers participants some time to reflect on their feelings and thoughts through free association, and thus elicit deeper responses. The interviews were audio recorded, fully transcribed and translated (including non-verbal communication, pauses, and overlaps). I kept a research diary that captured first thoughts after each interview and reflections on the significance, analysis, and interpretation of data. Then, I stored, coded, and organized the data with the help of the qualitative research software program N5 by QSR. As mentioned in the previous section, in addition to interviewing visitors and non-visitors, I approached and interviewed seven museum professionals in order to gain an insight into the museum environment of Nicosia. These interviews were not recorded in order to allow the museum professionals to express their opinions more freely.

The sample size of 60 helped me understand a process rather than represent a population. In order to understand visitation and non-visitation, it was necessary to interview individuals from all visitation levels, age groups and genders. In order to achieve this, I used multiple research sites and recruitment methods. Non-visitors, as well as visitors, were recruited from four different cafes in the centre of Nicosia, and through *snowballing* (a research technique where participants are recruited from the friendship network of existing participants). I approached individuals who were alone or in groups of two and asked them to fill out a short questionnaire. Most people accepted and spent two to five minutes doing so. After that, I explained the purpose of the research and asked if they had 10-15 minutes to answer some questions. 60 out of 75 individuals who filled in the questionnaire agreed to be interviewed (80% success rate).

In order to recruit museum visitors, three arts-related institutions were chosen. While a variety of museums operate in Nicosia, if we exclude archaeological, historical and folk museums, craft centres and commercial art galleries, only a few fine arts institutions are visibly active in Nicosia. Unfortunately, one of the most important ones, the *Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre*, was closed for renovations when the fieldwork took place in 2006. Three sites were chosen to recruit participants: (a) the *Byzantine Museum and Art Gallery*, (b) the *ARTos Cultural and Research Foundation*, and (c) the *State Gallery of Contemporary Art*. Figure 1.1 illustrates the location of the three institutions on a map of Nicosia.

Figure 1.1

Location of Museum Research Sites



Note: The research sites are the following: 1. Byzantine Museum and Art Gallery, 2. ARTos Cultural and Research Foundation, and 3. State Gallery of Contemporary Art.

The *Byzantine Museum and Art Galleries* is one of the main tourist attractions in Nicosia, especially for foreign visitors (see Figures 1.2 and 1.3). The site is divided into three spaces - the Byzantine Art Museum, the Greek Independence War Gallery, and the European Art Gallery. Founded in 1982, the Byzantine museum has the largest collection of icons on the island, covering the 9th to 18th centuries. The second floor (European Art Gallery) contains about 80 oil paintings by European artists.

Figure 1.2

Façade of the Byzantine Museum and Art Gallery



Note: Image courtesy of the Byzantine Museum and Art Gallery.

Figure 1.3

Interior of the Byzantine Museum and Art Gallery



Note: Image courtesy of the Byzantine Museum and Art Gallery.

The *ARTos Cultural and Research Foundation* is a progressive centre for the arts that hosts temporary art exhibitions as well as other cultural events such as dance, theatre, and lectures (see Figure 1.4). Founded in 2000, this private, non-profit initiative is dedicated to research and creativity.

Figure 1.4

Interior of the ARTos Cultural and Research Foundation



Note: Photo from the foundation's website
(www.artosfoundation.org)

Finally, the *State Gallery of Contemporary Art* highlights the best Cypriot painting and sculpture of the 20th century. Founded in 1990, the collection is housed in a neoclassical building in the centre of Nicosia (see Figures 1.5 and 1.6). Permission to recruit participants in all three sites was received but the State Gallery site had to be dropped because the site received very few visitors per week.

Figure 1.5

Façade of the State Gallery of Contemporary Art



Note: Photo by the author.

Figure 1.6

Interior of the State Gallery of Contemporary Art



Note: Photo by the author.

1.7 Definitions

The following paragraphs define important terms that are used throughout this thesis. Even though these definitions reappear in their relevant chapters, they are gathered here to introduce and clarify some key terms and concepts from the outset.

Museum perceptions: According to Schiffman & Kanuk (2004), “Perception is defined as the process by which an individual selects, organizes, and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. It can be described as ‘how we see the world around us’” (p. 158). This definition is slightly adjusted for the purposes of this study. Museum perceptions can be defined as the way individuals make sense of museums, inside and outside their walls, in relation to their daily lives and their conception of self-identity. Museum perceptions, through the process of selection, organization and interpretation, influence museum visitation choices and experiences.

Spectacles of perception: a term coined for the purposes of this research to fit the idea that each individual observes reality in a different way just as if one was wearing a set of imaginary glasses. Shaped by socio-cultural, individual, and environmental factors, our

spectacles of perception help us make sense of our world and ourselves by selectively filtering – selecting, organizing and interpreting – available information and stimuli.

Sociological approaches: Sociological approaches mainly use cultural sociology to show how people's social, cultural, economic, and political environments shape their identities, perceptions, and instruct actions. Researchers using this approach look into how *socio-cultural factors* such as education, social class, occupation and income might influence museum visitation. Merriman (1991) and Davies (1994) refer to this approach as the *cultural* approach. Due to the fact that most cultural approaches deal with how museum visitation relates to society, its organization and how it can function as a status symbol, I have renamed this approach the *sociological* approach.

Psychological approaches: Psychological approaches view individuals as the main force for constructing their identities, shaping their perceptions, and instructing their actions. As a result, researchers using this approach focus on *individual factors* such as motivations, interests, talents, lifestyles, values etc. (Davies, 1994; Merriman, 1991).

Museum perceptual filters (MPFs): a term coined for the purposes of this research to describe the eight specific ways of perceiving art museums that emerged from the data analysis. The eight MPFs are: the *professional, art-loving, self-exploration, cultural tourism, social visitation, romantic, rejection, and indifference* (see Figure 6.1). By “filtering” or “colouring” the way we see museums, these filters can ultimately influence our visitation decisions as well as how we use art museums inside (i.e., individual roles enacted, viewing patterns) and outside (i.e., connection with art and museums, sense of belonging and distinction) their walls.

Selective perception: According to Schiffman & Kanuk (2004) people select which aspects of their environment they perceive. One of the main functions of our spectacles of perception is to screen out irrelevant stimuli and select appropriate information for consideration. Selective perception, acting like a flashlight, selects parts of the whole, determines what we pay attention to and what we connect with. Selective perception can *aid* or *hinder* the reception of the museum's communication efforts.

Cognitive dissonance: occurs when an individual maintains conflicting thoughts about a belief (de Mooij, 2004; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). For the purposes of this research,

cognitive dissonance can occur when a person maintaining a specific attitude or belief is confronted with evidence against that attitude. Then, in order to reduce this dissonance, the person tries to find supporting evidence for his/ her pre-existing attitude. By doing so, there is the danger of ignoring or distorting messages that are against his/ her beliefs.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 examines the two main approaches researchers have adopted in order to explore museum visitation: the psychological and the sociological approach. This chapter focuses mainly on the influential sociological theory of Pierre Bourdieu and, more specifically, on his theory of *cultural capital*. We will see that Bourdieu's theory has been challenged and new research and theories (such as Peterson's omnivorous theory) suggest new ways of approaching museum visitation. We will also see that both sociological and psychological approaches are important to understanding museum visitation.

Chapter 3 deals with several key issues that are crucial to understanding the resulting conceptual model. It starts with an overview of how audiences have been conceptualised to date and elaborates on the latest paradigm - the *spectacle/ performance paradigm* - introduced by Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998). Then, it examines the crucial issue of identity construction and the concepts of power and distinction that are so prevalent in Bourdieu's theory. We will see that power issues are still relevant since unequal power relations still exist, but also that cultural messages become re-interpreted signs that can be used for the purposes of communicating and constructing identities. Finally, Chapter 3 explains how the conceptualisation of *museum* audiences has changed over time and identifies the main limitations of the existing literature.

Chapter 4 presents the methodology of this study. After an initial introduction to the methodology used in the previous literature, Chapter 4 analyses the research paradigm and explains why qualitative research methodology is the most appropriate one to use in order to answer the research questions. Finally, the research design is explained in detail and some ethical and practical considerations are discussed.

Chapter 5 is the first of three analysis chapters and it is divided into four parts. The first part examines how certain demographic characteristics, such as education, parental influences, occupation, age, gender, and marital status, influence art museum visitation. The second

part examines whether or not Peterson's omnivorous theory is valid within the framework of this research. The third part looks at how different visitation groups draw symbolic boundaries between themselves and others in order to create a sense of distinction and belonging, and thus, a sense of self-identity. Finally, the fourth part introduces the first part of the conceptual model, which attempts to explain museum visitation issues by merging sociological and psychological approaches while examining museum visitation as a building block of identity.

Chapter 6 expands the initial conceptual model by introducing the eight specific ways of perceiving museums that emerged from the data. These are called *museum perceptual filters* (MPFs) and are examined in detail. Then, after explaining how interviewees were categorised, we look at how their MPFs are connected to their art museum visitation frequency.

Chapter 7 is specifically concerned with Cyprus and the concept of cultural tourism. The first part of this chapter aims at synthesising three different perspectives in order to reveal Cypriot visitation patterns and museum perceptions. The three perspectives are: (a) findings from previous research, (b) interviews with museum professionals, and (c) interviews with research participants. The second part of this chapter examines the phenomenon of cultural tourism, which is specifically relevant in the case of Cyprus. It also explores the ways we can better understand cultural tourism with the help of the museum perceptual filters.

Chapter 8 brings the threads of the dissertation together by providing conclusions as well as further discussion on some findings. It is divided into four parts. The first part addresses the research questions by presenting the main findings and, where possible, connecting them to the previous literature. The second part provides an overview of the resulting conceptual model. The third part examines the research's contributions on two levels: on a theoretical level (for other researchers) and on a practical level (for museum professionals in Cyprus and abroad). Finally, the fourth part looks at the limitations of the research and provides directions for future investigation.

Chapter 2

Museum Visitation: Social or Individual Forces

“In capitalist society, cultural institutions are created as if by design to inflict the wounds of class.”

Wallach, 2002, p. 126

2.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the way museum visitation has been explored by researchers and museum practitioners over the past few decades. Merriman (1991) and Davies (1994) have identified two approaches that predominate in the literature. The *cultural* approach sees museum visiting as part of a broader cultural phenomenon (Davies, 1994) and uses cultural sociology to focus on larger social aggregates (Merriman, 1991). Research using this approach usually focuses on how socio-cultural factors, such as education, social class, occupation and upbringing, can influence museum visitation. Due to the fact that most cultural approaches deal with how museum visitation relates to society, its organization and how it can function as a status signal, I have re-named this approach the *sociological* approach. On the other hand, the *psychological* approach focuses on the motivational and behavioural characteristics of individuals (Davies, 1994) and uses cognitive psychology to investigate individual leisure choices (Merriman, 1991). Research using this approach focuses on how individual factors, such as motivations, interests, talents, and lifestyles, can influence museum visitation. Finally, other *environmental* factors such as availability of museums, transportation, health, and admission charges might also be understood to influence visitation.

Sociological approaches are predominantly built around the theory of Pierre Bourdieu which was developed in the 1960s. Bourdieu's complex theory allowed museum professionals and researchers alike to perceive museum audiences in a sociological way. On the other hand, we will see that Bourdieu's theory has been challenged by some researchers and new theories (such as Peterson's omnivorous theory) indicate new paths towards understanding museum visitation.

2.2 The Social Conception of Museum Audiences

Proven by large-scale national surveys and countless museum-specific studies, we now empirically know that people from the higher socioeconomic classes are overrepresented in art museum visitor profiles. The well-founded question arises then: Why do people from lower socioeconomic environments seem to avoid museums when most museums are free and apparently welcoming all visitors regardless of their background? Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist, has provided us with the most critical model for answering this question and for understanding how sociological elements shape people's tastes and influence high-culture participation. He was able to do this without turning to philosophical discourse regarding universal aesthetic properties or inherited aesthetic sensitivities. Bourdieu's purely sociological model leaves no space for ambiguous sensibilities, which is in effect one of the model's strengths, and at the same time, one of its main limitations.

This part of chapter two investigates Bourdieu's theory and its impact on museum-related studies, as well as its contemporary implications. First, I briefly discuss Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and point out some of the theory's main limitations. Second, I review some of the previous literature in museum studies inspired by Bourdieu's theory and discuss the main outcomes and the implications of these studies. A final part is dedicated to a general discussion and conclusions.

2.2.1 Bourdieu's Theory: *Cultural Capital, Habitus, and Dispositions*

Bourdieu's theory of *cultural capital* explains how people's social class shapes their tastes and everyday decisions, including decisions concerning museum visitation. To aid his model, Bourdieu used the terms *cultural capital*, *habitus*, and *dispositions*. Cultural capital, the capital that mainly influences museum visitation, exists as a combination of tastes, skills, knowledge and practices shaped by the habitus (Holt, 1998). The term habitus is understood:

[...] as a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions*. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82)

The dispositions, which shape the way we think and feel, are formed by social conditions such as education, family upbringing, and socialization with high culture and members of

the same social class. As an effect, cultural capital is transmitted mainly by the social constructs of family and schooling.

Dispositions guide our behaviour in specific situations, enabling us, or preventing us to see a possibility for action (Codd, 1990). According to Bourdieu (1977), a set of dispositions “inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, that is, to refuse what is anyway refused and to love the inevitable” (p. 77). As an effect, our habitus structures our “choices” in a way that seems natural and free (Fenster, 1991). For this reason, it appears as if lower socio-economic classes consider a “natural choice” to avoid art museums while higher socio-economic classes “freely choose” to frequent art museums. Bourdieu insightfully explained that actions that appear to be free choices are most probably highly structured by our habitus. Dispositions form our tastes and actions and, in their turn, have the power to socially unite us or separate us from other people. After all, distinction is achieved through the process of distancing one’s self from other social classes.

The notion of the museum as an institution wide open to everyone is considered by Bourdieu as “false generosity” (1968, p. 611) since only those who have mastered the cultural codes of art, have the possibility, and therefore the privilege, to use it (Bourdieu, 1968; Bourdieu & Darbel, 1991). The difficulty of deciphering the cultural codes lies in the difficulty of gaining access to the devices for their decoding, which are mainly education and upbringing in a cultured family (Miller, 1987). The school system perpetuates and sanctions initial inequalities of cultural capital by acting as if these inequalities are inherited inequalities of talent. At the same time, inequalities of schooling are one aspect of inequalities of cultural capital since schools provide the means of satisfying cultural needs (Bourdieu, 1973). Not surprisingly, Bourdieu’s research confirms that education is one of the most important determinants of museum visitation (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1991), a result that, as we will see, has been repeatedly confirmed by other research as well. This prompted some researchers to ask whether or not schools can actually make a difference for students who come from homes where the arts are not highly valued (DiMaggio & Useem, 1980).

Briefly, taste and art appreciation is something that one consciously or unconsciously learns and is differentiated by social class. There is a prevalent idea that art appreciation is an innate predisposition or a gift. However, Bourdieu refuses this idea (Dobbins, 1991; Jenkins, 1992) and sets out to define the social conditions which make possible Kant’s phrase “the beautiful is that which pleases without concept” (Bourdieu, 1986a, p. 109).

At this point I have provided a schematic summary in order to establish the key points on which Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital rests. The next sections will build on these key points by providing more information about Bourdieu's cultural consumption theories while juxtaposing them with other theories and ideas.

2.2.2 Cultural Production and Consumption: Institutional Theory of Art and Cultural Capital

Bourdieu's sociological theory of cultural capital and the *Institutional Theory of Art* (Danto, 1992), a philosophical theory, seem to meet at one level. The institutional theory provides a way of describing the socio-cultural and economic conditions that make art possible. It recognizes the fact that a complex field of forces, that might not be visible, operates in order to label an object as Art. Bourdieu and the institutional theorists seem to complement each other since the former is emphasizing art consumption while the latter art production. As Bourdieu tries to find answers in the socio-cultural environment of audiences, and not in their supposedly inherited sensitivities, cultural theorists try to find answers in the socio-cultural and economic environment of art, and not in the work's supposedly inherited aesthetic attributes. Additionally, they both recognize that the viewer's knowledge of art history and theory is essential in understanding art.

The first institutional theory of art was outlined in an essay called "The Artworld" by Arthur Danto in 1964. The essay was extremely influential (and indeed was described as "the death knell for aesthetic definitions of art", Yanal, 1998, p. 1) since it elaborated on why aesthetic considerations might be irrelevant in defining something as Art. Art theory and art history seem to be more important in separating art from non-art objects (Danto, 1992). While Danto first philosophically defined the word *artworld*, George Dickie became the best-known institutional theorist. Dickie (1974) defined a work of art in the following way:

A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld). (p. 464)

According to Danto and Dickie, the *artworld* decides which works can be candidates for aesthetic appreciation. The artworld consists of artists, art critics, philosophers, gallery

owners, museum professionals, and whoever is engaged with art (Danto, 1964). Furthermore, Howard Becker, writing after Dickie, used a sociological approach to define what constitutes an artworld. He pointed out that art is defined by collective activities:

Art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art. Members of art worlds coordinate the activities by which work is produced by referring to a body of conventional understandings embodied in common practice and in frequently used artifacts. (Becker, 1982, p. 34)

All the above theoreticians succeed in acknowledging that the socio-cultural and economic environment of art and artists influence what is considered art. In order to produce art, artists have to be part of an artworld and in order to consume and understand art the viewer has to be knowledgeable in art history and theory.

For the purposes of clarifying the explanatory power of the artworld, Danto (1964) introduces to the reader Testadura, a naïve “plain speaker and noted philistine” (p. 577), who on the sight of an abstract painting complains that *all he sees is paint*. We can imagine Testadura visiting a modern gallery that features Warhol’s “Brillo Boxes”, and being utterly startled and dumbfounded. Both Danto and Bourdieu appear to agree that Testadura is not able to grasp the value and importance of the artwork because he does not possess the deciphering codes or, even better, the *spectacles of culture* (Bourdieu, 1968, p. 591) that will enable him to *see* in order to understand the artwork. Testadura is, from their perspective, culturally blind. The deciphering codes can be acquired through an early frequenting of museums, the appropriate schooling, and knowledge of art history and artistic theory. Unfortunately, Testadura is not one of the privileged few that had the chance to acquire these skills that would provide him the cultural capital to deal with artworks, especially modern and contemporary artworks. On the other hand, for a person with adequate cultural capital to perceive Warhol’s work, the shock treatment will evoke in him an artistic and even philosophical wonder (Bourdieu, 1987). This is not to deny that there are people from both camps that dislike Warhol’s work. However, there is an important difference in the effect this dislike has on the individual. An educated individual who dislikes Warhol’s work, but understands it never the less, feels superior and confident for his decision. On the other hand, an individual who doesn’t have the tools to understand the work, might feel inferior and perhaps even humiliated (Duncan, 1993; Wallach, 2002) and

therefore rightfully considers visiting museums not a worthwhile leisure activity. Bourdieu & Darbel (1991) articulated it best when they wrote:

It is probably not excessive to suggest that the profound feeling of unworthiness (and of incompetence) which haunts the least cultivated visitors as if they were overcome with respect when confronted with the sacred universe of legitimate culture, contributes in no small way towards keeping them away from museums. (p. 53)

Later on in Chapter 6 an interviewee will describe this feeling of unworthiness and how it indeed keeps him away from museums.

Even though the institutional theory sounds very sociological in nature, Bourdieu claims that the sociology of the artistic institution is only “half-baked” because it remains ahistorical and therefore does not consider the historical genesis of the artistic field. He accuses philosophers of being naïve in their approach of ignoring the social conditions of art production and consumption (Bourdieu, 1987). Bourdieu, unlike the institutional theorists, insists that art production and consumption is a powerful social game that aims at reproducing and sustaining the power of the higher classes. It seems that the institutional theory is currently in decline while historical and meaning theories seem to be in the ascendance. However, even if it was heavily criticized, the institutional theory has not yet been refuted (Yanal, 1998).

2.2.3 Limitations of Bourdieu's Theory

Art as a social game

Bourdieu's powerful notion of art as a *social game* helps explain why, generation after generation, higher classes monopolize the use of museums and why it is so difficult to break this circle of reproduction. However, it has certain limitations.

Museums appear to legitimize the existence of the art “game” and the actions of its players. People with the adequate cultural capital are welcome to play the game while people without it are denied participation. According to Bourdieu (1987):

Museums could bear the inscription: Entry for art lovers only. But there clearly is no need for such a sign, it all goes without saying. The game makes the *Illusio*, sustaining itself through the informed player's investment in the game. The player,

mindful of the game's meaning and having been created for the game because he was created by it, plays the game and by playing it assures its existence. (p. 203)

The game seems to sustain itself through a strong circle of reproduction: a spectator, possessing the deciphering codes to understand an artwork can endorse it with value and meaning. However, the spectator is a product of the long exposure to artworks himself. With the help of competent players, the game creates the deception (*Illusio*) of faith in the value of art.

In short, it appears as if artists, elite audiences, art institutions, academics and critics are all part of a complex, exclusive game that is designed to promote the interests of the elite classes. Even though the idea of art as a social game might blatantly reveal how the artworld functions, the reader cannot help but wonder: If art is an endlessly reproduced social game, what then is the value of art except from reinforcing existing social structures? Some might argue that a purely sociological theory of art perhaps devalues the importance of art by diminishing it to a game of power and offers an extremely pessimistic view of the artworld. Or it might just be that by revealing the strings of the game, the wonderful deception (*Illusio*) of the value of art, which the game perpetuates, also falls apart leaving us with an empty stage and a vague feeling of dissolution and emptiness.

Whatever the case might be, by arguing that the purpose of art is solely to perpetuate a game of power, while revealing the mechanisms of the illusion, the existence of the game is being threatened. It is very possible that art does not exist mainly for the purpose of social reproduction. Perhaps for this reason, Frow (1987) criticized Bourdieu for being "... unable to account for the possibility that 'legitimate' works of art might nevertheless be capable of exercising a critical function over and above their other functions" (p. 66). Some have reasonably suggested that we might need to return to some older questions like "Does art change society? When does it do so?" (Jacobs & Spillman, 2005, p. 8).

Cultural Production and Artistic Liberty

Bourdieu's theory provides us with strong detailed arguments regarding the field of *cultural consumption* but has serious limitations in the field of *cultural production*. In Bourdieu's theory, artists are presented as a part of the social system that produces and discovers them. He rejects the ideology of the artist as the unique "uncreated creator", which was developed during the 19th century, and supports the view that artists are the product of the socioeconomic conditions of their times (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 204). Based on the concept of

conformism, the pure sociological conception of artists leaves no room for innovation (Jerkins, 1992) and hence Bourdieu's work was criticized on the grounds that it does not explain how creative individuals (sometime called geniuses) are raised from their social backgrounds into a higher level of creativity (Danto, 1999).

Another argument that supports the suggestion that Bourdieu's theory is unable to account for art production, might be the fact that artists, the producers of highly socially coded artworks, come from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. In her research investigating the social environment of a particular museum in the US and its different audiences, Mariner (1970) found out that even though the museum's board of directors, the women's guild, and the general membership indeed come from higher socioeconomic classes, artists do not. Most of the artists who participated in the research were highly educated, but came from lower social classes than other museum audiences. Bourdieu separates two modes of acquisition of cultural capital: (a) the *scholastic mode* gained from education alone (and as an affect has something "bookish", "academic", or "studied" about it), and (b) the *charismatic mode*, gained by interaction with high art from a young age (Frow, 1987). He believes that artistic knowledge and specific competences can be developed through education, but the aesthetic disposition cannot be acquired through institutionalized learning alone because it presupposes a socioeconomic environment that encourages awareness and repeated contact with legitimate culture and cultured people (Codd, 1990). By refusing to acknowledge any individual characteristics that might be inherited and not socially acquired (like artistic talent), Bourdieu's theory provides no explanation for how it is that the artists, who happen to be the producers of complex social codes, might not be masters of these codes themselves.

Bourdieu (1985) also suggests that the autonomy and liberty that artists enjoy nowadays "is purely formal; it constitutes no more than the condition of their submission to the laws of the market of symbolic goods" (p. 16). Even though today individuality and freedom are the trademarks of our times and artists often become poster-people for these ideals, it seems that this is also a part of the illusion that the art game creates. Artists are not as free as they seem to be since they have to satisfy the requirements of the different *gatekeepers* of the artworld (namely art critics, museum curators, gallery owners etc), who have the power to act as "symbolic bankers" (Bourdieu, 1986b, p. 133). Only then artists can become visible and therefore their works eligible for the prestigious label of high art. Other authors have also supported Bourdieu's ideas by suggesting that the few artists that become visible are

those whose talent matches the structure of the art field (Albertsen & Diken, 2004) and the demands of the game at that specific time (Duncan, 1993). For example, Warhol's "Brillo Boxes" could not possibly be art 50 years before their creation. The artworld needed to be ready for them (Danto, 1964). Furthermore, some researchers suggested that the economic constraints within cultural institutions in the West (especially in the United States) are as significant in limiting artistic freedom as the political constraints of institutions in communist countries (Goldfarb, 1982). Meanwhile, the demands of the game are being dictated by the ruling classes. Carol Duncan (1993), echoing Bourdieu, believes that high art exists largely for the use of wealth and power and for perpetuating this power. So, how liberating and individualistic is art? In Duncan's (1993) words:

As for the liberating power of art, one can argue as easily that art, far from being liberating, tends to be oppressive, that it mystifies and distorts the world in the interests of the few or, like ritual, it objectifies socially dangerous impulses only to contain them in a harmless and symbolic form. (p. 183)

Duncan tried to make it clear that her views do not exclude creativity and gifted individuals. Nevertheless, her sociological construction of art production seems to be in agreement with Bourdieu's premise of art as a social game, a game that excludes the uninitiated, validates the privileged few and restricts artists to the rules of the game.

The above authors suggest that artists cannot possibly be free from socio-cultural and political constraints. However, we must also consider that absolute control of artistic expression might be impossible as well. For example, Alexander & Rueschemeyer (2005) compared the effect of state control and funding of the arts in the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway and Sweden, the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. They found that even in the totalitarian environment of the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic free artistic expression was possible. Their research results argue "against an idealist conception of art as internally shaped as well as against a view of socio-economic and political determinism" (2005, p. 183). This point of view is more balanced and probably more reflective of the reality of artistic freedom than the deterministic approach adopted by Bourdieu.

Cultural Consumption and Individuality

One of the most important limitations in Bourdieu's work seems to be that, as in the case of artistic creation, individual taste is shaped only through social constructions and individual

positions in those constructions. This leaves no room for genuine subjectivity and individuality (Rosengren, 1995). There is no reference to how individual psychology (Jenkins, 1992) or even rational thought based on information (Gartman, D, 1991; Turner & Edmunds, 2002; Verdaasdonk, 2003) can affect taste and cultural preference. A number of authors have commented on this limitation. For example, Rosengren (1995) argues that individual characteristics play an equal part in influencing patterns of action as the social structure and individual position in that structure. Arguing for a sociology at the level of the individual, Lahire (2003) feels that Bourdieu fails to provide indications of how individual dispositions can be reconstructed or activated. Additionally, he makes a distinction between dispositions to believe and dispositions to act. Barbu (1970) argues that even though most sociologists are reluctant to work with the concept of personality structure, it seems important to do so because art phenomena are intimately related to mental processes and structures.

Recent research has supported these opinions by showing that the explanatory power of social class decreases when variables measuring *attitudes*, *motivations*, or *ability* are added to the model. For example, in contrast to DiMaggio & Mohr's (1985) findings that cultural capital has a positive effect on educational attainment and college attendance, Katsillis & Robinson's (1990) study, investigating the relationship between social background inequalities and educational attainment in Greece, demonstrated that when the variables of ability and effort were added to the model, the student's cultural capital had no effect on educational achievement. It is, however, worth mentioning that students from different socioeconomic backgrounds demonstrated different abilities and effort. Likewise, Stokmans (2003) determined that reading attitude, motivation to read, and ability to read had an effect on the tendency to read complex fiction regardless of class effects. Furthermore, the results of his study indicate that social classes are not as homogeneous in terms of psychological variables as Bourdieu's theory of the habitus predicts. Members of the same social class with the same educational levels differ in terms of psychological variables. Perhaps this can explain the fact that even though museum visitors come mainly from higher social classes, not all people belonging to higher classes inevitably become museum visitors (Chapter 5 provides evidence from this research to support this). As a matter of fact, Halle (1992) showed that high culture penetrates only sections of the dominant classes thus threatening the importance of high culture as a criterion for membership into these classes. Similarly, psychological variables (such as talent, motivation, needs etc.) might explain the inadequacy of Bourdieu's theory to clarify why some people from lower educational and

socioeconomic environments become museum visitors after all. It is therefore reasonable to assume that research that combines psychological, in addition to sociological, characteristics of museum visitors might be more revealing than pure sociological research.

2.2.4 Research in the Social Conception of Museum Audiences

Bourdieu's theory and empirical research discussed in his books "The Love of Art" (1991) and "Distinction" (1986a) inspired a variety of research on taste, cultural consumption, and museum visitation. Bourdieu's readers around the world were eager to use his innovative ideas, which revolutionized the understanding of the social structural underpinning of culture, in their own fields and in their own countries.

Still, it is important to keep in mind that Bourdieu's work presents some serious difficulties for its readers, which often results in a partial exposure to Bourdieu's writings and eventually leads to systematic misunderstanding of his work. Some of the main difficulties with Bourdieu's work discussed by Wacquant (1993) are: (a) his theoretical connections created confusion. Curiously enough, he has been placed in almost all major theoretical traditions (e.g., Marxism, Weberian, Durkheimian, Structuralism, Post-structuralism); (b) his writing style has caused "bafflement, frustration, and dismay" (p. 237) among his American and British readers; (c) practical translation problems and the fact that Bourdieu was continuously revising his ideas, made it difficult for his followers to be exposed to his complete work and to fully grasp its overall meaning and structure. Not all of Bourdieu's work has been translated and sometimes his work appeared in reverse order for English speaking readers. For example, his book "Distinction" was published in French in 1979 and in English in 1986. "The Love of Art", an earlier book (French publication in 1969), was published in English five years after "Distinction" in 1991; and (d) his idea of the habitus has created confusion and therefore multiple readings of its meaning and function.

Observing the misinterpretation of his own work, Bourdieu (1999) commented on the social conditions of the international circulation of ideas and reminded readers that whenever a text is transferred from its domestic field to a foreign one it undergoes a series of social operations that might alter the original message. It also happens that ulterior motives might bend the meaning of the work in order to fit specific research or theoretical requirements.

According to Bourdieu (1999), "Very often with foreign authors it is not what they say that matters so much as what they can be made to say" (p. 224). In addition, Bourdieu's theory

of cultural consumption includes the whole spectrum of leisure activities. Often, researchers focus on arts participation alone, ignoring other leisure activities that people might participate in, and therefore risk missing the forest for the trees (Holt, 1997; Kane, 2003).

For these reasons, the literature dealing with Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and taste is varied, and sometimes contradictory. While some studies, especially by DiMaggio and his colleagues, offer support for Bourdieu's theory of taste, some influential articles and books have challenged the theory's relevance outside the social context of France (and more particularly the city of Paris) in the 60s (Lamont, 1992).

International Research: Who is the Art Museum Visitor?

Since 1990, empirical research inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's theory has increased in amount and sophistication (DiMaggio, 2004). From several case studies and empirical research, we can deduce that museum visitors are located in the upper educational, occupational and income groups as Bourdieu predicted (Clarke, 1956; DiMaggio, Useem & Brown, 1977; Hendon, Costa & Rosenberg, 1989; Kirchberg, 1996; Merriman, 1991; Peterson, 1992; Tomlinson, 2000). Therefore, the rate of consumption of high arts (e.g., museums, theatre, opera, symphony, ballet performances) varies with indicators of social class such as education, occupation, and income.

In most studies, *education* appears to be the strongest determinant of arts involvement (DiMaggio & Useem, 1978; Lopez-Sintas & Garcia-Alvarez, 2002; Zuzanek, 1978). Most art museum visitors seem to be highly educated. Analysing 250 audience studies executed in the United States, DiMaggio, Useem & Brown (1977) also found out that art museums attract a more highly educated public than other museums. *Occupation* seems to be the second predictor of arts participation with a high proportion of professionals (above all teachers) and a low proportion of blue-collar workers (DiMaggio, Useem & Brown, 1977). Students seem to also be overrepresented. Furthermore, art museums seem to attract a higher proportion of professionals than other museums (DiMaggio, Useem & Brown, 1977). *Income* or economic capital does not seem to be an important determinant force for art participation (Katz-Gerro & Shavit, 1998; Robbins & Robbins, 1981). Income might be associated with arts participation but it does not mean that it causes it. High income is usually connected with having received a higher education and holding professional or managerial positions (DiMaggio, Useem & Brown, 1977). Participation does not vary much by *age*. It seems that participation rises slightly through middle age and then drops

(Schuster, 1993). Mason & McCarthy (2006) believe that age culture is the key to understanding museum visitation. They found evidence that young people have perceptions regarding museums that do not correspond to their own culture. Furthermore, as age increases, people seem to prefer more traditional leisure activities (Lopez-Sintas & Garcia-Alvarez, 2002) and generational experiences possibly also influence tastes (Turner & Edmunds, 2002). In addition, *gender* seems to influence visitation. It was found that women consume more high culture than men (Kane, 2003; Katz-Gerro & Shavit, 1998; Lopez-Sintas & Garcia-Alvarez, 2002) and that gender differences are stable independently of the effect of education, occupation, class position, age, family status, urban status, and income (Bihagen & Katz-Gerro, 2000). However, this is truer for art museums than other museums. For example, DiMaggio, Useem & Brown (1977) found out that history museums attract equal representations of male and female visitors while in science museums men are slightly overrepresented. Most museum audience research conducted in different parts of the world supports the above findings. Perhaps it comes as no surprise that the results of my research in Cyprus are also in accordance with most of these findings. As we will see in Chapter 5, education, parental influences, occupation, and age were found to influence art museum visitation.

Most of the empirical research mentioned here was carried out in individual countries in America, UK, Sweden, Netherlands, Israel, Spain, Greece, Germany, and Canada. International comparative research is truly rare. Three notable exceptions are the research of Schuster (1993), Lamont (1992), and Kane (2003). Schuster (1993) examined statistical data from museum audience studies from the United States, Canada and several countries in Europe. He found out that despite the differences in research methodologies, surprisingly, the overall participation rates as well as audience composition were similar for all research examined. Education was once again found to be the best predictor for arts participation, participation rates were higher among the higher socio-economic groups (especially among professionals), women visit slightly more than men, and geographical location within a country can make a difference in participation. Lamont (1992) used in-depth interviews with 160 successful men in the United States and France in order to examine the values and attitudes they consider essential in separating themselves from others and thus the way they draw symbolic boundaries. She successfully identified certain cultural differences between the two countries. Furthermore, Kane (2003) examined what American and international students at an elite University in the US consider as high culture. His results show that American, European, and Asian people vary in the degree they consider something as

legitimate high culture. Nevertheless, European and American students appear very similar in the way they draw symbolic boundaries when compared with Asian students. While Schuster's (1993) research demonstrates that museum audiences are similar in many parts of the world, Lamont's (1992) and Kane's (2003) research indicates that the composition of cultural capital might be place-specific.

To sum up, in accordance with Bourdieu's theory, most research has shown that cultural choices are still affected by class. However, the class factors that are the most crucial in determining high culture participation are still unclear. The reason might be that it is impossible to clearly separate education from parents' cultural capital, occupation or income. In addition, some factors like age, gender, and race seem to be increasingly important in determining cultural choices. Still, since research has repeatedly proved it, we can presume that education is one of the most important, if not the most important, determinants of art participation.

2.2.5 The Omnivorous Theory

There is one consistent report demonstrated by a number of research results that seems to partially defy Bourdieu's theory and complicate the straightforward relationship between class and culture. According to Peterson (1992), high-class members are not restricted to high culture leisure activities, as Bourdieu's theory seems to suggest. Even though they do not have more leisure time than lower social classes, they engage in a wide range of non-elite leisure activities in addition to high culture ones. The lower classes, on the other hand, tend to restrict their participation to a few non-elite activities as predicted. According to Peterson (1992):

In effect, elite taste is no longer defined simply as the expressed appreciation of the high art forms and a corresponding moral disdain of, or patronizing tolerance for, all other aesthetic expressions. In so far as this view is correct, the aesthetics of elite status are being redefined as the appreciation of all distinctive leisure activities and creative forms along with the appreciation of the classic fine arts. Because status is gained by knowing about, and participating in (that is to say, by consuming) many if not all forms, the term 'omnivore' seems appropriate for those at the top of the emerging status hierarchy. (p. 252)

Peterson interprets this phenomenon to a shift in the way high status is being marked as a shift "from a snobbish exclusion to omnivorous appropriation" (Peterson & Kern, 1996, p.

900). Research repeatedly supported Peterson's *omnivorous theory* (DiMaggio & Useem, 1978; Erickson, 1996; Kane, 2003; Katz-Gerro & Shavit, 1998; Van Eijck, 1999) and there is an animated discussion in literature about the implications of this theory. As we will see in Chapter 5, the results of my research also provide evidence that support Peterson's omnivorous theory. Meanwhile, several interlinked explanations, which are presented in the following paragraphs, were offered for the shift of the higher social classes from snobbishness to omnivorousness.

High Vs Popular Culture

First, rising levels of education and quality of life, as well as the appearance of high culture in popular media made elite aesthetics more available to the masses and therefore reduced their power for social exclusion (Peterson & Kern, 1996). At the same time, the socially constructed boundaries of high and popular culture are becoming more and more fluid (Barker, 2000; Crane, 1992a) and in order for the power game to work, people must agree on what is high and what is low leisure (Lamont, 1992). Consequently, it is becoming increasingly difficult to employ high culture as a resource for class distinction and social power. And to make the high-popular distinction even more blurred, high culture is borrowing techniques from popular culture, while popular culture is appropriating high culture in search of new modes of representation. Museums are hosting exhibitions that include items commonly considered as popular/ low culture such as advertising posters, caricature, comics, graffiti, and even mass-produced commercial objects. For example, the Guggenheim museum in the US hosted, among others, an exhibition of motorcycles (1998) and an exhibition of clothing by the Italian fashion designer Giorgio Armani (2000). The materials of "proper Art" are also expanding to include installations of everyday items and familiar technology (like video and the internet). On the other hand advertising, graffiti, and mass produced objects (anything from furniture to kitchen appliances) are imitating high culture. As the artworld is changing, things that were once considered popular culture are now high culture (Peterson & Kern, 1996). For example, Jazz seems to have gone an institutional transformation from a lower class, young, network-oriented music into a form of high culture (DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004). Furthermore, Jazz culture has its own versions that cater to different aspects of the market; i.e., more intellectual Jazz played in concert halls and middle class Jazz played in bars (Crane, 1992b).

Geographic and Social Mobility

Geographic and social class mobility resulted in mixing people with different tastes (Peterson & Kern, 1996). Because people from higher social classes travel a lot, they have the opportunity to encounter and interact with different cultures more than the less mobile lower classes. In terms of social mobility, Van Eijck (1999) believes that since the educational expansion, the group of more highly educated people has become more heterogeneous. In particular, he believes that upwardly mobile individuals, not socialized as children to participate in high culture, are the cause of the overall effect of diminishing interest in high cultural activities and omnivorous behaviour in the upper social classes.

Snobbishness and Equality

Additionally, because equality is held in such esteem, especially in the United States, it is not considered proper to scorn the taste of others and thus we see a historic trend towards greater tolerance of different tastes (Holt, 1997; Peterson & Kern, 1996). Lamont explains (1992):

In keeping with the populist tradition, drawing boundaries using such signals can be seen by Americans as undemocratic, the way selecting on the basis of religion or ethnicity is perceived by many as illegitimately bigoted. (p. 186)

Furthermore, Turner & Edmunds (2002) found out that the Australian elite does not like to distinguish itself from other social groups. One explanation offered was that “Australians do not display upper-class tastes in public because that is not considered to be truly Australian” (p. 235).

To sum up, all of the above-mentioned changes in advanced capitalistic societies are considered possible explanations for Peterson’s omnivorous theory. Considering these changes, it would appear that cultural objects and activities have become a weak determinant of social boundaries. It is ironic that Bourdieu criticized art philosophers for being ahistorical in their conception of the artworld because he appears to be ahistorical in his explanation of cultural capital. His theory seems to fail to grasp the historical changes in cultural consumption produced by capitalism (Gartman, 1991; Miller, 1987), changes that could eventually change the composition of cultural capital.

2.2.6 Cultural Capital and its Evolution

One of the strongest implications of the shift from snobbish elitist to omnivore is the suggestion that perhaps what is changing is not the relevance of cultural capital, as some researchers have suggested, but its composition. It appears that there is a need to re-examine what the high classes consider appropriate and useful as cultural capital.

Erickson (1996) believes that Bourdieu's theory is not complete since he ignores social networks and class relations at work, two aspects of social structure that are major suppliers of cultural resources. From her research in the security industry in Canada, Erickson found that even though people from higher socioeconomic positions (in this case, managers in the security system field) knew more about the arts and other cultural activities, they did not use this knowledge (cultural capital) at work because it was considered irrelevant. What they mostly used were two other forms of knowledge (capital) – knowledge of businesslike topics (*domination capital*) and knowledge of sports (*integration capital*). According to Erickson (1996):

Domination calls for genres that are both correlated with class and defined as relevant; in the security field, this means businesslike topics and not cultural capital, even though both are class correlated. Coordination calls for genres that are well-known in all classes, nearly equal or equal between them, and rich in content; in the security world, sports is the most likely candidate we have seen. (p. 233)

Therefore, sports conversations, a cross-class widespread interest, are useful in class relations between or within classes at work. In addition, Erickson (1996) argues that network variety, achieved by knowing more people from different classes, is more valuable than class as a source of cultural variety. Erickson's findings support the omnivorous theory since higher classes know more about high *and* popular culture, both for reasons of domination *and* integration. An interesting consequence of this theory is that instead of observing an exclusion of the lower classes from high culture, we observe an exclusion of a different kind. Namely, women and foreigners are usually excluded from sport-related conversations and therefore from successfully integrating themselves into the work environment (at least in the security system work environment). Even though this is a study of social reproduction and taste in the workplace and not in the fields of cultural consumption (Holt, 1997), Erickson confirmed that other forms of knowledge, apart from cultural capital, might be useful for social domination.

Kane (2003) also supports the suggestion that sports are becoming a legitimate cultural activity that is competing with the arts as the dominant culture on a global scale. His research of international students demonstrated that young elites from different countries consider some sports (e.g., golf) as key candidates for legitimate culture. Furthermore, American elites are more likely to define sports as a legitimate culture and more likely to have attended a sports event than other international elites. According to Kane (2003):

These patterns suggest that sports culture possesses all of the ingredients for an emerging form of a classic Bourdieuan system of cultural stratification: Sports activities are viewed by the young elites of an economic superpower as dominant culture and they have the highest rates of participation. (p. 418)

Although Erickson (1996) and Kane (2003) seem to agree on many points, there is a clear disagreement on the importance of cultural capital as a status marker. Erickson completely dismisses the relevance of cultural capital in the work environment, although Kane makes it clear that the sports culture he observed operates alongside cultural capital without any conflict. Kane emphasizes the fact that research should strive to understand the substance of boundary-making, which might be fluid and might vary from country to country. Following a similar line of thought, Bryson (1996), within a discussion of music dislikes in the United States, argues that:

[...] cultural breadth has become a high-status signal that excludes low-status cultural cues and is unevenly distributed by education in the United States. Therefore, I suggest that the phenomenon be understood as *multicultural capital*. (p. 895, emphasis in the original)

I tend to agree with Bryson's concept of *multicultural capital* since it re-enforces Peterson's omnivorous theory. People from higher socio-economic classes are becoming more omnivorous in their leisure habits but that does not necessarily mean that they do not draw symbolic boundaries in this way. Perhaps the currently emerging dominant class consists of well-educated, cosmopolitan individuals with a variety of cultural interests and experiences who use their multicultural capital, for both domination and integration reasons, and in order to draw symbolic boundaries from other individuals. We will observe in Chapter 5 that the interviewees of this research draw symbolic boundaries in a similar way.

In conclusion, it seems that Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital has been used more and more broadly, ranging from the cultural capital children bring with them to school to the knowledge people need for their jobs. The concept of cultural capital seems to be expanding and changing probably more than Bourdieu intended. What we might be witnessing is not the effect of cultural capital weakening or disappearing, but the introduction of other domination capitals such as sports- or business-related knowledge, or the expansion of what cultural capital consists of in order to include new forms of knowledge. Moreover, to add further complexity to the idea of the evolving cultural capital, the markers of social class (such as education, income, profession, parent's cultural capital, father's occupation) are also not stable over time and hence should not be taken for granted (Peterson, 1997a). Peterson's omnivorous theory might be suggesting that the elites are finding new ways of achieving distinction. Having more knowledge about high *and* popular culture than lower classes, as well as knowing when and where to use information, *is* social power. By expanding their knowledge to include popular subjects, the contemporary elites can interact with diverse audiences and dominate in a variety of social environments and situations.

2.2.7 Consumption Practices and Museum Uses

According to Holt (1997, 1998) in order to express distinction, contemporary cultural elites appear to emphasize consumption *practices* rather than consumption *choices*. For example, his research showed that participants with lower cultural capital preferred contemporary country music because the lyrics were more relevant to their lives while traditional country music (such as bluegrass, western swing, "hard" country music) seemed backwards and old-fashioned. People with higher cultural capital, on the other hand, distanced themselves from contemporary country and embraced traditional country music describing it as non-commercial and more authentic. Interestingly, Holt's findings confirm the hypothesis that sometimes the higher classes pick up choices of the poor after they drop them (Gans, 1999). In this example, the difference is not in the object of consumption (country music) but in the consumption practice itself. As a result, it might not be useful to ask people whether they listen to country music or not. More relevant questions might be *how* and *why* they listen to country music. As Holt (1997) very candidly puts it:

The social classificatory consequences of a 55 year-old Anglo-Saxon woman declaring her appreciation for rap and rattling off several favorite artists has entirely different semiotic value from Mexican- or African-American youth doing the same. (p. 118)

Similarly, Peterson (1997b) has argued that the mass production of culture (referring especially to music) does not necessarily mean the mass consumption of culture. Diverse groups of audiences might appropriate elements of mass-produced popular culture in order to use for the construction of their unique group identities (Peterson, 1997b). Even though Holt's research investigates how people with lower and higher cultural capital use the same *popular* cultural objects as resources for different lifestyles, the same might apply for high culture practices like museum visitation.

Research has shown that museum visitation has been steadily increasing over time (DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004) while art museums are increasingly trying to attract new and more diverse audiences. As a result, we more and more encounter museum visitors that use museums in different ways. A visitor with lower cultural capital who visits art museums with his family for an hour or so on a Sunday probably has different motivations and expectations for visiting than a visitor with higher cultural capital who visits alone for a couple of hours on weekdays. They probably perceive and use the art museum in different ways. Chapter 6 will explore eight different ways people perceive art museums, which emerged from the research data, and will discuss how these influence visitation decisions and museum uses.

Most of the research on taste, following Bourdieu's example, is large-scale quantitative research. This has had the considerable advantage of sophisticated statistical analysis of large databases and the accurate correlation between class status and museum attendance. However, according to Miller (1987), questionnaires can only provide insights into explicit responses rather than into actual practices and therefore: "The actual brilliance often displayed in the art of living in modern society by people of all classes, and the use of ambiguities, inconsistencies, resistance, framing and such devices in individual and social strategies are thereby lost" (p. 155).

In conclusion, now that we understand first, that there is a clear correlation between class and cultural participation, and second, that the objectified consumption of culture is not always a clear indicator of class, we need to turn to more in-depth qualitative research to expose the different ways people consume the same cultural activities. This is one of the main aims of this research.

2.3 The Psychological Conception of Museum Audiences

As we have seen, one of the main limitations of Bourdieu's theory is the fact that he underestimates individual variability by ignoring individual motivations, expectations, attitudes, interests, needs, and rational or emotional decisions that might not stem from a person's social or educational position. This, taken together with the theory's limitations, forces us to search for an enhanced theoretical model for understanding museum visitation and non-visitation. It seems that research should consider both the sociological macro outlook, but also the individual-specific psychological micro outlook of museum visitation (Merriman, 1989, 1991), while keeping in mind that cultural capital is constantly evolving. Furthermore, research should also consider the fact that museums are active and reflexive institutions that also play a role in shaping people's perceptions. Finally, research should consider the relation of museums to other competitive leisure activities and how this influences museum visitation.

Researchers have recognized that people bring to the museum their own "cultural baggage" (Baxandall, 1991). They also recognized the need to understand the content of this baggage. As a result, researchers started looking into people's motivations, goals, interests, expectations, attitudes, opinions, and lifestyles, in order to explain visitation issues. This kind of research approach, which focuses on the individual in order to explain visitation choices, is called the *psychological approach* (Davies, 1994; Merriman, 1991). An expansive body of research is available which uses this method of investigation. A detailed review of this literature is beyond the scope of this thesis. For a more detailed analysis of existing research the reader is directed to the work of Hooper-Greenhill (1994) and Falk & Dierking (1992, 2000). Nevertheless, it would be worthwhile to mention some key literature.

2.3.1 Research in the Psychological Conception of Museum Audiences

A few researchers have looked into how people's motivations influence museum visitation (see for example: Goulding, 1999; Jansen-Verbeke & van Rekom, 1996; Prentice, Davies & Beeho, 1997). Visitors' motivations are based on perceived needs such as the need to see and do things, to engage in social activities, to experience an aesthetic or nostalgic pleasure, to educate children, to be improved, or to be immersed in the past (RCMG & McIntyre, 2002). For example, Packer & Ballantyne (2002) identified five categories of visiting motivations: (a) learning and discovery, (b) passive enjoyment, (c) restoration, (d) social

interaction, and (e) self-fulfilment. Wiggins (2004) pointed out that motivations as well as ability, and opportunity should be important considerations when evaluating audience development opportunities. Furthermore, Fienberg & Leinhardt (2002) demonstrated that previous knowledge, experience or interest influence how people engage with an exhibition. Similarly, Falk & Adelman (2003) showed that prior knowledge and interest influence visitors' learning. Schuster (1991) also illustrated that people who took lessons in the visual arts or arts appreciation, or who were taken to museums by their parents, are more likely to visit museums. Furthermore, Todd & Lawson (2001), by separating individuals into groups of different lifestyles, found out that people might visit (or not visit) museums for different reasons depending on other aspects of the visitor's life. And finally, Hood (1983, 1996) observed that different categories of visitors (non-visitors, occasional and frequent visitors) value different leisure attributes.

One interesting outcome of individual-focused research is the realization that museum visiting might be a social event. The shared experience of art attendance can become evidence of the possession of social and intellectual credentials for belonging (Kelly, 1985) and a form of social "market" where members of specific cultures can be identified (Gainer, 1995). As we will see in the next chapter, museums can be places where individuals, like subcultures, construct their self-identity through a process of distinction and belonging.

2.3.2 Attitudes and the Museum Image

It is believed that if an individual holds negative attitudes towards museums then museum visiting will probably not be considered as a valid leisure alternative (Merriman, 1991). However, very little research has examined the public's attitudes towards art museums or towards the arts in general (Pettit, 2000). It is not clear if attitudes can be best explained using a sociological or psychological approach. Actually, as we will see later on, this ambivalence might not be a negative element since it has the potential power of combining the two approaches. Nevertheless, it seems that most literature views attitudes through a psychological model and the work of David Prince exemplifies this approach.

Prince (1985a) considers people's attitudes towards a particular activity as the most crucial determinant of participation. Interestingly, research shows that museums in general are considered to be educational, interesting and not boring by both visitors and non-visitors. On the whole, researchers were surprised, and sometimes even disappointed, to find out that

the differences between the attitudes of visitors and non-visitors were not that great (Dixon, Courtney & Bailey, 1974; Susie Fisher Group, 1990). Then again, non-visitors have slightly more negative attitudes towards museums than visitors (Dixon, Courtney & Bailey, 1974; East Midlands Museums Services, 1996; Prince, 1985a; Stylianou, 2002). For example non-visitors believe, in a greater degree than visitors, that museums are boring, for intellectuals only, old-fashioned and uninteresting (Prince, 1985a). Similarly, Trevelyan's (1991) report, which focused on non-visitors' attitudes of London museums, demonstrated that non-visitors perceive museums as boring, musty, gloomy and stuffy while the atmosphere was compared with that of a church or a library. However, since the attitudinal differences between visitors and non-visitors are not that dramatically different there is a need to examine what these attitudes *mean* to different audiences.

It is possible that certain museum attributes might be considered by some as positive and by others as negative. Or, to put it in another way, visitors and non-visitors might have a common underlying image of museums, but the value placed upon this image might be different (Prince, 1990). For example, Prince (1983, 1985b, 1990) showed that the educational role of museums, something taken for granted and widely considered as a positive attribute, might be considered as a negative leisure attribute by non-visitors since they usually do not consider education as a valid use of their leisure time. Hood's research (1983) confirms this idea by pointing out that non-visitors and occasional visitors do not value the opportunity to learn in their leisure time as much as frequent visitors do. It appears as if more in-depth qualitative research is needed to identify not only people's attitudes but also the *meaning* and *use* of these attitudes.

Trevelyan (1991) suggested that the mainly unjustified negative attitudes non-visitors hold (since most non-visitors have not been to a museum for a long time - if at all), might be the result of out of date impressions that were formed at an early age when museums were associated with duty visits. On the other hand, a person does not need to visit a museum to form an attitude. Most of us have not visited the moon but we have an impression of how it must feel like. Attitudes can be formed from a variety of cues people received through the media, the museum's building exterior, word of mouth, or from any form of communication effort (or more often the lack of communication) such as advertising. We should keep in mind that attitudes have a cognitive and an effective part (Prince, 1985b, 1990) and therefore they might not always be rational. Furthermore, it is possible that the word *museum* often carries negative connotations for non-visitors and therefore might be one of

the image problems museums face today (RCMG & McIntyre, 2002; Robertson Bell Associates, 1993).

2.4 Environmental Factors

Previous literature also identified a third set of factors that might influence museum visitation. *Structural constraints* can be factors such as availability and quality of museums, transportation, leisure time or disposable income, awareness of available museums or galleries, the age and health of the individual, and admission charges (Davies, 1994; Merriman, 1991; Prince, 1983).

It seems that there is a general agreement in literature that socio-cultural and individual factors are more crucial in determining museum visitation than structural factors (Bennett, 1996; Merriman, 1991; Prince, 1983). We can take as an example the structural barrier of admission charges. Since 2002 all national museums in the UK have lifted their admission charges (with the exception of special exhibitions) in an attempt to attract audiences that are traditionally underrepresented in museums. Research has shown that even though the number of people coming through the museums' doors has dramatically increased, the audience composition has not been significantly altered - people from higher socio-economic classes are still overrepresented in museums (Martin, 2002). Some have even gone as far as to declare that free entrance can actually be a visitation barrier itself for certain visitor groups. For instance, Bennett (1996) believes that the introduction of charges will remove visitation barriers by making museums appear more like commercial centres of entertainment.

Even though the importance of structural factors is being debated, it is still useful to think of them as a *background environment* for the operation of socio-cultural and individual factors. Furthermore, structural factors can become visitation barriers for those who are culturally ready to visit. For this reason we will consider them as an important third element, along with socio-cultural and individual elements, when examining museum visitation decisions.

2.5 Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter we have examined the two main approaches researchers have adopted in order to explore museum visitation: the psychological and the sociological approach. As we

have seen, psychological approaches focus on how individual factors such as motivations, interests, talents, and lifestyles can influence museum visitation. On the other hand, sociological approaches use cultural sociology to show how people's social environment shapes these decisions.

Within the sociological approach, Bourdieu's groundbreaking work in the 1960s showed how different groups engage in different consumption practices and convincingly explained why people from higher socio-cultural classes are overrepresented in art museums. Despite the theoretical difficulties in Bourdieu's work, his theory was revolutionary because it succeeded in laying the sound foundations of a sociological approach to museum visitation issues while achieving theoretical depth. Furthermore, Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and taste still offers the most advanced and influential model for comprehending art consumption. However, changes in our society have altered the straightforward relationship of social class and arts participation that Bourdieu suggested, and have instigated the evolution of cultural capital. In accordance with the omnivorous theory, the contemporary elites are expanding their knowledge to include popular subjects, in order to be able to interact with diverse audiences and move smoothly within a variety of social environments. Therefore, the concept of cultural capital is not rigid and inflexible. Rather it is continuously evolving. It seems to expand in order to include some popular culture as legitimate culture (e.g., Jazz) as well as to rearrange the position of the different arts within itself (DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004). In addition, we should keep in mind that the composition of cultural capital might be place-related as well as time-related. For example, this research deals with the socio-cultural environment of Cyprus, which might differ in some degree from that of other European countries (Chapter 7 investigates this assumption). Furthermore, the socio-cultural environment of any place is not stable through time.

We must also keep in mind that art museums are not passive treasure houses. Governmental control and funding (or lack of funding), profitability issues, increasing competition from other leisure activities, as well as increasing professionalism, encourages museum professionals to work hard to attract greater visitor numbers and more diverse audiences. To achieve this, most museums offer an array of products (such as popular exhibitions, family and social events, educational programs, cafes, shops, etc.) that aim at creating a visitor-friendly atmosphere and at attracting the much-desired public. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why museum visitors have been steadily increasing in the last few years. That said, museum audiences still come mainly from the higher educational and social levels of the

population, which demonstrates that the role of cultural capital in arts participation is not diminishing (DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004). However, visitor numbers are rising for both upper and lower social classes (DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004) indicating that people benefit in different ways from museum visits.

In reality, sociological and psychological approaches are not mutually exclusive or oppositional. Indeed, some researchers have attempted to provide integrated research frameworks that consider both (see for example: Falk & Dierking, 2000; Goulding, 2000; Kelly, 1983; Merriman, 1989; Sears, 1983; Worts, 1996). Still, research dealing with visitation issues seems to favour mainly one or the other approach (Davies, 1994; Kelly, 1983; Merriman, 1989, 1991). My research is concerned with people's perceptions regarding art museums. What is particularly interesting is that perceptions stem from both socio-cultural and individual factors and have the potential of bridging the epistemological gap between sociological and psychological research approaches (see Chapter 5 for theoretical model).

Depending on which approach researchers subscribe to, audiences are visualized in a different way. In their research into developing audiences and promoting social inclusion RCMG (Research Centre for Museums & Galleries) & Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2002) identified two main models for developing new audiences: the *motivational model* and the *barriers to access model* that bear striking similarities with the psychological and sociological approaches respectively. The motivational model envisions individuals making conscious *choices* to engage with a museum based on the perceived needs the museum can satisfy. Therefore, non-visitors are individuals that believe that the museum cannot possibly satisfy any of their needs. On the other hand, the barriers to access model visualizes multiple barriers that deny access to certain audiences. Individuals *are denied* the opportunity to make a choice and for this reason, the responsibility for non-engagement lies with the museum and not with the individual (RCMG & McIntyre, 2002). Obviously, each model implies different strategies for attracting new audiences. In Chapter 3, after discussing three different ways of conceptualizing audiences we will see that choices are the result of a negotiation between individuals and their environment. While the notion of free choice can be an illusion (as Bourdieu argues), we are not entirely prisoners of our environment. Therefore, both psychological and sociological approaches have to be combined in order to construct a more complete picture of visitation issues. As a matter of fact, in their report, RCMG & McIntyre (2002) recognize that neither model could entirely

explain the research data that emerged and thus a third model, the *social model*, was introduced to reconcile both visitors' motivations and external barriers.

Traditional museum research has mainly asked questions regarding *who*, *how often* and sometimes *why* people visit museums. Since previous research has provided us with the main demographic and motivational characteristics of our audiences, I argue that it is time for research to turn its focus on some more urgent questions such as *what museum visiting means* to people and *how do people use* museums. The answers to these questions will potentially reveal much more about how people's perceptions regarding museums influence their visitation decisions and museum uses. Justin Lewis (1991) was talking about television when he said the following:

[...] when analyzing the power of television, we cannot simply allocate power to the message or to the audience as if we were sharing out jelly beans. Television's power lies in the specificities of its encounter with the audience. (p. 61)

The same logic can be applied for museum audiences. We cannot simply allocate power to the social environment or the individual as if we were sharing out jelly beans. So where do we go from here? Chapter 3 aims at answering this question by exploring new theories in audience conceptualization taken from cultural studies and post-modern theories related to identity construction.

Chapter 3

Audience Conceptualisations

Culture is “no longer construed as something that simply floats ‘above’ the social, nor as something that is produced *through* organized social action, and consumed or used by social actors. Instead, the fabrication of meaning transpires all up and down the line, within organizations and beyond them.”

Battani & Hall, 2000, p.152

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section provides an overview of audience conceptualization in cultural studies and an explanation of the emerging paradigm of spectacle/ performance introduced by Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998). The second section discusses issues of identity construction and their relevance to the concepts of power and distinction. The third section attempts to explain how the conceptualization of *museum* audiences has changed over time. Finally, the fourth section identifies the main limitations of the previous literature. Throughout this chapter, we will encounter the interweaving conceptual threads of identity construction, freedom of choice, and museum visitation as part of everyday life.

3.2 Audience Conceptualisations

The way communicators (i.e., media, businesses, museums and so on) conceptualize their audiences has significantly evolved during the second half of the twentieth century. Initially, the communication process was viewed as a one-way transmission of a set message from a producer to a passive audience. Nowadays, following Hall's (2001) influential theory of encoding and decoding, this view has changed to include the communication of multiple signs, which are reconstructed as meaningful messages only by an active and diverse audience. This section provides an overview of the development of three audience conceptualization paradigms.

3.2.1 Audiences: The Third Paradigm

Abercrombie & Longhurst in their book “Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination” (1998) argue that in the past fifty years audience research has moved through three main paradigms: the *behavioural*, the *incorporation/ resistance*, and the *spectacle/ performance* paradigm. The authors offer the last paradigm, which deals more effectively with the limitations of the previous two, as the new emerging audience conceptualization model.

In the *behavioural* paradigm the individual receives a single media message and reacts to it directly. There are two approaches within this paradigm: the *effects* approach and the *uses and gratification* approach. The effects approach focuses on the way in which audiences are affected by the media and manifests itself mainly when researchers talk about the effects of the media on groups like children, the voters etc. One of the main limitations of this approach is that, in reality, messages are not always straightforward and therefore could be open to multiple interpretations. In addition, audiences are diverse and interact with messages in a variety of ways. Alternatively, the uses and gratification approach focuses on how an audience uses media messages. Audiences are viewed as goal-oriented and free to *use* the media in order to satisfy certain wants and needs, rather than being *affected* by them. This approach was criticized for being insufficiently sociological (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998; Lewis, 1991). By focusing on individual responses, it lacks a serious consideration of social life and power relations. Furthermore, the power of the media is underestimated. The media are creators of meaning by representing reality and reinforcing a dominant framework of values (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998).

The influential essay “Encoding/ Decoding” by Stuart Hall that appeared in 1980 developed an alternative approach to behavioural observations and set the foundation for the *incorporation/ resistance* paradigm. Hall, combining semiotics with Marxist notions of power, claimed that messages are encoded from within a dominant cultural order and decoded by audiences. Audiences can adopt an *oppositional*, a *negotiated* or a *dominant-hegemonic* position according to the way they decode the message. Therefore, the power of interpretation partly rests on the individual’s background and “map of meanings” and partly on the message. However, according to Hall (2001), a dominant cultural order is responsible for encoding *dominant or preferred readings* and these readings “...have the institutional/ political/ ideological order imprinted in them and have themselves become institutionalized” (p. 172). Members of the dominant culture will be able to decode the messages leaving the non-members to their own devices. As we can see, in contrast to the

Behaviourist paradigm, politics of power are very prominent in this model. An interesting observation is that the encoding/ decoding model offered by Hall, has striking similarities with Bourdieu's theory of taste. Both Hall and Bourdieu believe that audiences need to bring with them a set of codes (Bourdieu's cultural capital) in order to decode and therefore receive the message of the medium/ artwork. Furthermore, the ability to decode media/ artwork messages helps the perpetuation of social power. Thus, both theories seem to place an enormous emphasis on the audience's decoding processes and on the power relations between classes.

Hall's theory laid the foundation of the incorporation/ resistance paradigm, which is characterized by a debate over whether there is a preferred reading in a text and how active audiences really are. Some theorists emphasized the activity of the audience (*dominant audience*) and some the controlling power of the text (*dominant text*). However, according to Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998), over the last few years, the supporters of the dominant audience seem to win the battle. The audience is conceptualized as actively negotiating meanings and even playing with different readings of a text. Some researchers who operated within the incorporation/ resistance paradigm have emphasized the activity of the audience and succeeded in adding considerable complexity to the paradigm. For example, some insisted on the audience's complexity of meaning making by explaining that people might have different reasons for arriving to the same oppositional readings of the same text. Others explained that the text is fragmented and might contain more than one preferred meaning or that audiences are engaged in symbolic work and use the media as resources for identity construction (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998).

Even though the idea of an active audience is gaining ground in recent literature, it is significant to consider some of the criticism this idea has generated. Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) mention three theoretical points. First, texts usually have some preferred meaning and therefore some restraining power. Second, being active does not mean that an individual has the power to resist certain messages. And third, if audiences find it easy to be active with a particular medium/ message (e.g., popular music, particular television programs, and popular visual art), the activity itself does not necessarily guarantee the artistic or moral quality of the medium/ message.

We need to keep in mind that the main premise of the incorporation/ resistance paradigm is that there is an unequal distribution of power, which has an effect on what is said (by the media) and how it is read (by audiences). According to Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) an

autonomous and active audience does not comfortably fit back into the incorporation/ resistance paradigm where the theory of hegemony is central. Another main problem of this paradigm is that it cannot explain how the same individual might have different interpretations of the same message in different situations. According to Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998), “Audience readings in other words, do not constitute some kind of ideological kernel to be carried round and offered up unvaryingly in all situations” (p. 34). This suggests that identity issues play a central role in our readings.

In order to deal with the above theoretical problems, Abercrombie & Longhurst proposed a third paradigm. The *spectacle/ performance* paradigm is based, not on the notion of ideological incorporation and resistance, but on the notion of identity formation in everyday life. Audiences are “socially constructed and reconstructed (rather than being determined or structured)” (Longhurst, Bagnall & Savage, 2004, p. 106). According to Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998), in a world of spectacle and performance people assume different roles:

On the one hand, there is the construction of the world as spectacle and, on the other, the construction of individuals as narcissistic. People simultaneously feel members of an audience and that they are performers; they are simultaneously watchers and being watched [...] Since people are simultaneously performers and audience members, cultural consumers become cultural producers and vice versa. (p. 75)

The authors argue that the *narcissistic* self is involved in an imagined *performance* in front of others, and this performance is focused on the self. The importance of style links narcissism to performance. Our everyday world is becoming more aestheticized and soaked with images. As appearance and style are becoming increasingly important, people become more sensitive and at the same time, more capable of dealing with visual signs/ messages. People are able to use the symbolic power of these visual signs in order to perform their identities. In this way, people are simultaneously members of an audience (*cultural consumers*) and at the same time performers (*cultural producers*). At the same time, people’s “theatrical” interaction with others determines their definition of self. In a similar tone Kelly (1983) wrote:

Self-concepts, definitions of the self, or identities are developed in our essaying various roles and reading the feedback of others on our performances [...] Social interaction, then is a negotiated process employing a variety of symbols and signs rather than a mechanical occupation of predefined positions. (p. 21)

However, the others are not just any others. They are like-minded individuals who form communities. As we will see, communities are marked by symbolic boundaries and aid the construction of identities through a process of inclusion and exclusion.

In this world of multiple intersecting roles, Abercrombie & Longhurst identified three types of audience: the simple, mass, and diffused. A theatre or a football match audience can be described as *simple* audiences. There is usually a direct communication between audiences and performers thus with a high degree of distance between them, it involves a high level of ceremony, it is a local, public event, and it demands a high level of attention. The development of *mass* audiences reflects the growth in the media such as the radio and television. In this case, communication is mediated since there is no direct connection between a “live” performance and the audience, which also creates a high degree of distance. Communication takes place at a global level but in a private space, requires a medium level of ceremony, and a variable level of attention (see Table 3.1)

Table 3.1

Modes of Audience Experience

	Audiences		
	Simple	Mass	Diffused
Communication	Direct	Mediated	Fused
Local/ Global	Local	Global	Universal
Ceremony	High	Medium	Low
Public/ Private	Public	Private	Public and private
Distance	High	Very high	Low
Attention	High	Variable	Civil inattention

Note: Source: Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 44.

Most important in the development of the spectacle/ performance paradigm is the *diffused* audience. Abercrombie & Longhurst, in their proposed paradigm, do not treat audiences as being *addressed*. An endless media stream is continuously passing in front of people’s eyes and they make imaginative choices about what to accept, reject, distort, alter, or modify in order to fit their sense of identity. People are part of a diffused audience since everyone becomes an audience all the time. The notion of a diffused audience might be especially applicable in the world of art museums where audiences appear to be complex, diverse, and to use museums in a variety of ways. Visitors are increasingly focusing on gaining personal experiences rather than on receiving a strong predetermined narrative.

3.2.2 Critique of the Third Paradigm

The spectacle/ performance paradigm foregrounds the notion of identity construction, points towards new research in cultural consumption as part of everyday life while showing how post-modern thinking can help future research - all theoretical elements that provide strong support for a new, emerging way of thinking. Nevertheless, the paradigm has an important flaw. Even though the authors explain how audiences are socially constructed through the processes of spectacle and narcissism and do not reject the importance of social, economic, and cultural power, it is very difficult to understand the position of power in their paradigm (Ruddock, 1998). One of the main strengths of the incorporation/ resistance paradigm is the fact that it recognizes that audience readings are placed within an environment of unequal social relations. As we have seen in Chapter 2, people from higher socio-economic classes are overrepresented in museums thus indicating that issues of power are still very important. Even though Bourdieu may have overstated the structural power of class, his theory of cultural capital still has explanatory power. Atkinson & Dougherty (2006), realizing that the spectacle/ performance paradigm downplays not only the notion of power but also that of ideology, looked at how activists use alternative media in their engagement with social justice movements. The authors claim that the spectacle/ performance paradigm does not explain how certain audiences use alternative media in order to *resist* mainstream consumer-oriented spectacle and narcissism. Moreover, one can argue that neither Abercrombie & Longhurst nor Bourdieu pay attention to the institutions that form the cultural industries. Museums (or media) are not monolithic or passive institutions. On the contrary, they can be proactive and innovative institutions.

One last point is that changes in paradigms might not only reflect changes in the way we think but also changes in our society. This means that paradigms might be place-specific. As Friedman (1994) demonstrated, some societies might be more *hegemonic* or *homogenic*. In hegemonic societies individuality cannot be freely chosen and social mobility is almost impossible. On the other hand, more homogenic societies, such as western societies, demonstrate more social mobility and more individually constructed identities. According to Friedman (1994), "It is in periods of declining hegemony that cultural identities become increasingly accentuated" (p. 39). Therefore different paradigms might be more appropriate for different periods and different geographic or cultural locations. For example, the spectacle/ performance paradigm might be most appropriate in our post-modern western society, but perhaps not yet relevant, for example, in certain parts of India where a strong caste system often heavily determines identity construction and hinders social mobility. One related criticism that the spectacle/ performance paradigm received was for addressing

issues of everyday life only when it comes to audiences in a thriving economic system (Downing, 2003).

3.3 Identity Construction and the Power of Distinction

Issues of identity seem to be very prevalent in today's research world. In the following section we will see how the spectacle/ performance paradigm, despite its limitations, can help us understand the complex functions of audiences in their effort to define and reconstruct themselves. Furthermore, we will see how post-modern theories conceptualize the self, how goods and leisure participation can become symbols that allow individuals to perform and develop their sense of identity and finally, how power is still relevant in this process and therefore should not be underestimated.

3.3.1 Identity Construction

Recent theories have questioned the idea of the self as an independent, self-contained entity which functions as a self-directed agent (*atomism*) (Fay, 1996). Postmodernism sees the self as fragmented, decentred and constructed by language, discourse and social practices (Doy, 2005; McRobbie, 2001). Apparently, post-modern thinkers consider the unitary Cartesian/ Enlightenment self as fiction since the subject cannot pre-exist language and social practices that shape it (Doy, 2005). Consequently, even though we might think of ourselves as conscious agents acting in the world (being), in reality the self is continuously shaped (becoming). According to McRobbie (2001), "This might mean living with fragmentation, with the reality of inventing the self rather than endlessly searching for the self" (p. 608). In addition, we probably alter the way we present ourselves in *specific* situations. According to Langman (1992), "...we are *all* more likely to have clusters of often contradictory identities and biographies available for specific situations rather than an enduring sense of self" (p. 67). As a result, identity is now conceived as plural, something that can be performed and played with (Silverstone, 1999).

Another reason for questioning the Cartesian self is the realization that the being of the self and the being of the *Other* are interrelated. Silverstone (1999) offers a definition for the Other:

[The Other] refers to the recognition that there is something out there that is not me, not of my making, not under my control; distinct, different, beyond reach, yet occupying the same space, the same social landscape. The Other includes others:

people I know or have never heard of; my friends as well as my enemies. It includes my neighbours as well as those I have only seen in photographs and on screens. It includes those in the past as well as those in the future. In my society and in yours. But because I and the Other share a world, because I will be your Other as much you are mine, even if I know you not, then I have a relationship to you. (p. 134)

As a matter of fact, we are so closely interrelated that without the Other, self-awareness is not completely possible (Fay, 1996). The Other functions as a mirror where differences between ourselves and our Other “reflections” inform us about who we are (Fay, 1996; Silverstone, 1999). Therefore, without the Other, we can not really become aware of our self-identity, perform it, receive feedback or reconstruct ourselves. To sum up, identity is always constructed in relation to the Other (Langman, 1992).

However, by pushing the argument too far, we arrive in the other extreme where the self is seen solely as determined by social and cultural forces (*holism, structuralism*) (Fay, 1996). This is also problematic. As we have seen, audiences are actively involved in re-interpreting and creating new meanings. As Fay (1996) puts it: “In the processes of enculturation and socialization humans are not parrots. Or, to employ another metaphor, we are not just products of a process which stamps out people the way a cookie-cutter produces cookies” (p. 68). Audiences, as we have seen in the spectacle/ performance paradigm, are simultaneously cultural consumers as well as cultural producers. Unlike cookies, audiences are diverse and complex, and for this reason, unlike parrots, they actively reinterpret messages to produce their own meanings that fit their own sense of identity.

In conclusion, our self-identity should be considered more like a verb (becoming) than like a noun (a particular thing) (Fay, 1996). Furthermore, we need the Other in order to define ourselves, project/ perform our identities, receive re-assurance about who we are or to test new evolving identities. As we will see, the use of symbols is essential in this process.

3.3.2 The Symbolic Power of Goods and Leisure

Consumption of goods and decisions regarding leisure participation are active symbols powerful enough to communicate individual or group identities. At the same time, these symbols can help individuals feel a sense of belonging with certain groups and a sense of distinction with others.

In the world of spectacle and performance described by Abercrombie & Longhurst, people have become more sensitive to appearances, to visual stimuli, to images, and to the semiotic messages objects emit. Levy (1959) emphasized the fact that objects are loaded with symbols and explained that people buy products and services not only for what they can do but also for what they mean. According to Levy (1959), a symbol is: “a general term for all instances where experience is mediated rather than direct; where an object, action, word, picture, or complex behaviour is understood to mean not only itself but also some *other* ideas or feelings” (p. 119). Similarly, Tomlinson (1990) talks about the “auras” of products which, reinforced by packaging and advertising, can transform objects into symbols that signify who we are. Furthermore, Belk (1988) showed that possessions (including experiences, ideas, internal processes, and places) become a part of our extended self and therefore contribute to our sense of identity. Possessions not consistent with our image of self are easily disposable where objects that help create, enhance, and maintain our sense of identity are considered extremely valuable and extremely difficult to discard. However, a single item is not sufficient to inform others about us (Belk, 1988). It is the sum of all the signs we consciously or unconsciously send that informs others (and sometimes ourselves) about our person.

According to Tomlinson (1990), we are moving from an emphasis on consumption to an emphasis on creative consumption and therefore “...the ‘connoisseur consumer’ then, doesn’t so much as keep up with the Joneses as keep away from them” (p. 27). What Tomlinson suggests is that we skilfully use the semiotic power of products, services, and experiences to differentiate ourselves from others, constructing in this way our unique identity. And since the contemporary western society rewards individuality and innovation, we are mainly trying to distinguish ourselves from others and perhaps more so from those closer to us (such as the “Joneses”).

However, Warde (1997) explained that the outcomes of disembedding from traditional social networks and groups (especially classes) “...is not patternless individuation, but rather new, more intricate and more specialized, small group formations” (p. 16). The members of these small groups form communities or subcultures, which share a self-image. Peterson (1990) described how symbols could be essential in defining a culture:

In this perspective culture represents the symbols that people use to encode and convey various forms of information: knowledge, power, authority, affect, merit,

beauty, and virtue. Such symbolic elements also serve individuals and groups to identify those of like kind and to mark distinctions from others. (p. 498)

Communities, and especially subcultures, depend on this process of identification and differentiation in order to create a sense of belonging for members and a sense of distinction from non-members.

Cultural studies successfully demonstrated how subcultures use commodities to express personal and collective resistance to the predominant culture and commercialism (Gronow & Warde, 2001). For example a member of the punk community can recognize “genuine” from “false” members from what they wear and how, their hairstyle, what media they use, what bars they frequent, what kind of music they listen to, etc. (Fox, 1987). In this case, possessions, as well as leisure and cultural preferences, function as signs of distinction. According to Kelly (1983), “Styles of leisure are not just combinations of activities, but are stages on which we present our identities and receive feedback on our role identities” (p. 93). And since identity is always constructed in relation to the Other, the sense of self and belonging comes when other members of a subculture can “read” the style-codes one emits. The more difficult it is for someone to read the style-codes emitted from an individual, the fewer people can decode the lifestyle and therefore the more exclusive that style becomes (Tomlinson, 1990). That is why subcultures usually resist commercialization by communicating only through niche and micro-media (such as fan magazines, e-mail/ mail lists and specialized magazines). If the subculture eventually becomes popular, and therefore “inauthentic”, some members are willing to abandon it in order to differentiate themselves once more from the “inauthentic” collective (Muggleton, 2003).

Peterson (1983) believes that the word subculture cannot be appropriately used to discuss leisure participation mainly because the word often refers to a lifestyle of a specific group in which members interact with each other and identify themselves as a part of that group. Museum visitors usually do not form a tidily, interactive group, that we can call a subculture. However, frequent art museum visitors, much like members of a subculture, also use symbolic boundaries. We will see in Chapter 5 that the processes people from the higher visitation levels (very frequent and frequent visitors) use in order to identify “art-lovers” from “non-art-lovers” are to a degree similar to the ones subcultures use in order to identify members from non-members. Furthermore, frequent visitors might use symbolic objects (such as postcards, catalogues, objects bearing the museum’s logo), experiences (such as memories of art exhibitions they have seen) or information (for example, related to present

or future art exhibitions, artists, or art movements) in order to identify like-minded individuals and differentiate themselves from others. It is obvious that the incorporation/resistance paradigm is still relevant in this example since museum visitors need to be able to decode complex signs (e.g., recognize museum names and logos, names of past exhibitions, artists names etc.) in order to be accepted and feel like they belong in the museum-visiting public. However the emphasis is not on class distinction and power as Hall's and Bourdieu's theories would have suggested. The emphasis is shifted to the power invested in people to *construct identities through distinction*.

3.3.3 Power and Freedom of Choice

The change in audience conceptualization from an emphasis on a dominant hegemonic message to an emphasis on an active audience generates a troubling question: If individuals are actively using messages (as well as objects, experiences, ideas and places) for the selective construction of their identities, then what is the role of distinction and power so often discussed by Bourdieu and other sociologists? What is the role of our environment in determining our choices for constructing the self?

We have seen that the spectacle/ performance paradigm sees audiences as cultural producers in addition to cultural consumers, in one word as *diffused*. Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) draw on Foucault to argue that power is "contingent, local, fragmented, discontinuous and in a state of flux" (p. 35). Furthermore, we have seen that the post-modern notion of self is considered to be flexible, ever changing and developing, therefore giving us the opportunity to create complex and unconventional selves that can perhaps transcend our immediate environments. The problem is that it is difficult to see how the structures of power are threatened by the audience's activity. According to Stevenson (1997), "Structures of domination can just as likely to be maintained through social atomism as by ideological consensus" (p. 241). It is true that audiences might subvert the representations of the dominant institutions or classes by appropriating and re-using products (as well as leisure opportunities) and thus becoming cultural producers themselves (de Certeau, 1988). However, the fact remains that audiences operate in an environment of *unequal power relations*. Furthermore, since it is likely that our environment indirectly dictates our choices of identity "building materials", the concept of an active audience can potentially leave us with a false sense of absolute freedom. As Tomlinson (1990) excellently phrases it: "What is the status of our feelings of freedom, of our selected subjectivity, if it is so heavily constructed for us?" (p. 35). For the purposes of investigating museum audiences, we cannot ignore or escape asking the above question. A discussion of power relations is

essential since it was repeatedly shown that education and social class are the best predictors of museum visitation (see Chapter 2).

It appears as if pure sociological approaches leave no space for individuality and change since they are preoccupied with how our environment constructs our identities and dictates our choices. On the other hand, the notion of a completely active audience focuses on the selective choices people make without considering how these choices are constructed, what alternatives are present, and who provides these alternatives. Without these considerations, the notion of an active audience can create the false impression of complete freedom. I suggest that the answer lies somewhere in between. Audiences are actively reading signs, essaying roles, and constructing their identities through distinction. Yet, social, political, economic, and general environmental restrictions apply. In short, it seems that the self is negotiating power with its environment and therefore power becomes more diffused than pure sociological approaches want us to believe. The notions of distinction and power relations are still relevant but in a different way. *Distinction is used for the purposes of identity construction (and not social class domination) and power is diffused.*

3.4 Conceptualizing Museum Audiences

Following the developments in cultural studies, the notion of an active audience is becoming more and more prominent in visitor studies as well. In the past, museum professionals saw their audiences as a willing mass public that needed to be educated. Nowadays, they recognize that audiences arrive at the museum with diverse motivations, attitudes, needs, and expectations which shape their museum experience.

3.4.1 From a Mass Public to an Active Audience

For a long time museum professionals placed themselves in the position of the mass communicator involved in a one-way communication process of a preferred message. Research was focused on behavioural observation and experimentation within the exhibition maze in order to observe the behavioural changes of rat-like visitors (Lawrence, 1993). At the same time, evaluation efforts frequently took the form of quantitative research investigating what people have learned based on the preferred message. If the researcher could not detect that the visitors had received the predetermined exhibition message, then the assumption was that the exhibition was a failure. If the message was received by a small, educated percentage of the public then it was assumed that the rest gained nothing from their museum experience - apart from perhaps entertainment, an outcome that was

often frowned upon. This narrow view of education, as well as the *what* and *how* behavioural researchers were researching was increasingly called into question (Lawrence, 1993).

The 1950s were pregnant with new concepts introduced by different fields. Media studies proposed the idea of an active audience (Hooper-Greenhill, 1995b), cognitive psychologists pointed towards the unobservable construct that shapes behaviour, and interpretative sociologists saw meaning as the central challenge (Lawrence, 1993). Even though museum professionals were late in reflecting on these new concepts, soon marketing approaches, governmental and financial pressures, as well as self-reflective museum literature, forced museums to re-evaluate the way they approach their audiences. As a first step, the marketing concept of *target group* influenced the break down of the mass audience into different distinct groups with different needs and expectations (i.e., families, tourists, the elderly, and people with disabilities) (Hooper-Greenhill, 1995a). Additionally, museum professionals started directing their efforts towards understanding and attracting non-visitors – a group that was traditionally ignored.

Nowadays, it seems that there is an increasing awareness in literature of the fact that visitors use their personal biographies and a variety of cultural resources available to them to make sense of exhibitions. Visitors are perceived as active interpreters that selectively construct meaning based on their personal experiences, associations, biases, fantasies, and sense of identity (Bagnall, 2003; Heath & vom Lehn, 2004; Macdonald, 1992, 1993; McLean & Cooke, 2000; Silverstone, 1988; Worts, 1996). Bagnall (2003), within a discussion of Abercrombie & Longhurst's spectacle/ performance paradigm, envisions visitors as "skilful and reflexive performers" (p. 95) who use emotion and imagination as much as cognition to interact with historic sites. Meanwhile, some researchers showed that people's preconceptions might determine the reception, evasion or rejection of exhibition messages. Macdonald (1992, 2002), using as an example the "Food for Thought" exhibition at the Science Museum in London, showed that visitors demonstrated an aptitude to use the exhibition's messages in order to reinforce their own assumptions and knowledge. For example, visitors linked together particular exhibits (that were not physically or conceptually linked) and focused on a healthy eating theme even though this was contrary to the intentions of the exhibition designers. Apart from the fact that visitors were reading the exhibition from already decided positions, in certain cases, when the message did not match visitors' preconceptions, that message was totally ignored. Silverstone (1988) and Bagnall (2003) also observed that personal narratives were sometimes used in order to reject

a presented story. The notion of identity construction in museums did not go unnoticed either. Some theoretical articles deal with this issue and will hopefully inspire future research. For example, Rounds (2006) explored how visitors use museums for *identity work*, which was defined as “the processes through which we construct, mainly, and adapt our sense of personal identity, and persuade other people to believe in that identity” (p. 133).

In the meantime, learning theories were being revised. Hein (1996) insisted that learners construct knowledge and personal meanings for themselves, Cassels (1996) explored the idea of categorizing visitors into different learning types, and Gardner (1996) pointed out the different intelligences (gifts or talents) people utilize in museums. Furthermore, research revealed that education and entertainment are not mutually exclusive. People with high entertainment but low educational motivations still demonstrated considerable learning (Falk, Moussouri & Coulson, 1998). Responding to these new theories, museum theorists recognized the need for multi-sensory exhibition experiences that provide multiple entry points for the different learning styles and intelligences of the public (e.g., Falk & Dierking, 2000).

3.4.2 *The Museum as an Open Work*

Tied together with the idea of an active audience is the idea of the museum as an *open work*. According to Carr (2001), “To see the museum as an open work is to recognize that it is always discovered by its users in an unfinished state, not unlike seeing it as a laboratory, or a workshop for cognitive change” (p. 182). If we visualize the museum as an open work, then it becomes a place where audiences can actively engage in a process of meaning construction and self-identification. Visitors bring with them their own “cultural baggage of unsystematic ideas, values and, yet again, highly specific purposes” (Baxandall, 1991, p. 34) and with the help of this *cultural baggage* they complete, in their own unique ways, the open work that we call a museum. Therefore, once again, a visitor’s experience becomes not only that of a *visitor-as-reader* but also that of a *visitor-as-author* (Davallon, Gottesdiener, & Poli, 2000).

In sum, it seems that museum visitors are finally granted the status of *active interpreters* who utilize a variety of meaning-making techniques in order to construct meaning (Hooper-Greenhill, 2005b). This has as an effect the transformation of exhibitions into places of free choice (Gurian, 1991) and, needless to say, the collapsing of the old notion of a mass passive public. However, we have not yet seen much audience research in museums that

investigates how audiences use museums in their everyday life in order to define and re-construct their identities as the spectacle/ performance paradigm suggests.

3.4.3 Providing for an Active Audience

Museum professionals have rushed to introduce fun, interactive exhibits that feature a variety of media in order to give visitors more choices and perhaps also attract audiences that traditionally do not visit museums. Museums encourage a “pick’ n mix” approach where visitors can make their own choices about how they move around and what they choose to look at (Dicks, 2003). This *constructivist* approach is widely supported in museum studies at the moment. According to Sandell (2007):

Constructivist exhibitions avoid didactic approaches which offer narrow and fixed ways of approaching the topic in hand and which legitimate and sanction only a limited range of responses amongst the visitors. Instead, they provide a range of perspectives and viewpoints, facilitate open-ended learning outcomes and offer ways of validating the diverse conclusions that visitors reach, even when they do not correspond with those of the exhibition makers. (p. 78)

However, some literature points out that things are not as straightforward as they seem. We might not be able to simply guarantee the success of an exhibition by providing choices to an active audience and designing exhibitions with Carr’s open work museum in mind. For example, Macdonald (2002) points out that a museum designed to encourage imaginative play might guarantee a physically active audience but not necessarily an audience engaged in critical reflection. It might actually achieve the opposite – it might discourage critical reflection since it is easier for visitors to appropriate the exhibition according to their own assumptions and life experiences. Furthermore, with the use of technology we are in danger of the *media* becoming the message with detrimental effects on interpretation (Stevens, 1989). Similarly, Doering & Pekarik (1997) argue that skilful designs and impressive interactive media might draw more visitors to interact with the display and linger longer but this is not related to the intellectual and emotional impact of exhibits. We observe a cautious warning in Macdonald’s research: fun exhibitions that emphasize “choice” are considered by museum professionals to be straightforwardly a democratic expression. Then again, the celebration of choice ignores the fact that choices must be made from whatever is provided, as well as the importance of social, political, and economic factors that structure these choices (Macdonald, 2002).

Furthermore, constructivist exhibitions do not necessarily mean that museums are not implicated in the construction of powerful and specific cultural narratives. Any exhibition arrangement or text used can suggest narratives. Museums cannot be completely neutral. At the same time, most people consider museums, more than other media (such as television, magazines, and books), to be trustworthy, reliable, and simply providing unbiased information (Sandell, 2007). Ironically, Sandell (2007) showed that even in exhibitions especially designed to combat prejudice and promote understanding, many visitors were not aware of a particular message. This indicates how the audience's conception of museums as unbiased and trustworthy invests museums with the power to present certain points of view as natural, acceptable, and truthful. It is important to keep in mind that power equals responsibility. Constructivist exhibitions that provide the opportunity for multiple interpretations might give the message that all interpretations are correct and sanctioned by the museums. This also means that audiences can reinforce, instead of challenge, false conceptions they might have. According to Sandell (2007), this is especially problematic when museums aim to counter prejudice. He argues that:

[...] museums are inevitably implicated in the construction of cultural narratives which shape conceptions of difference...the question practitioners face is not, in fact, whether museums *should* be engaged in attempts to shape the ways in which difference is viewed but rather *how* they can most appropriately do so. (p. 195, emphasis in the original)

Therefore, museum professionals still have the responsibility of challenging visitors' presuppositions. Stevens (1989) declares: "Because interpretation is elective, it should not be eclectic" (p. 104).

As Macdonald's and Sandell's research illustrates, with the emergence of the concept of an active audience, issues of free choice and message interpretation also become crucial. As we have seen, the spectacle/ performance paradigm, which has at its heart the active audience, faces similar questions.

3.5 Main Limitations of Previous Research

After reviewing the previous literature I recognized five main limitations, which influenced my research. The following paragraphs identify these limitations.

3.5.1 Sociological vs. Psychological Approaches

As we have seen in Chapter 2, both sociological and psychological explanations can provide clues about the way visitors and non-visitors behave. Even though some researchers have tried to create integrated frameworks for research that include social, individual, and environmental factors (e.g., Goulding, 2000; Kelly, 1983; Merriman 1989; Sears, 1983; Worts, 1996) for one reason or another, researchers are very often reluctant to combine sociology with cognitive psychology. Perhaps the main reason is the considerable division between humanities and hard sciences on the subject of what is worth studying and how (Ruddock, 2001). In any case, one might claim that sociologists are looking at the forest (macro, sociological forces) without having a clear idea of what a tree is (micro, individual forces), while cognitive psychologists seem to be looking at the tree without considering the forest. Obviously, we need a worldview that respects and understands both the nature of the tree *and* the forest as well as their relationship to each other. Similarly, we need to construct a conceptual model that places equal importance on both sociological and psychological factors influencing museum visitation. Furthermore, forests and trees exist in relation to other things as well – the ocean, the meadow etc. In the same way, a museum is a part of a city or a town, one of the available leisure opportunities, a material for identity construction, and finally, a part of daily life. The conceptual model used in this research places equal importance on both sociological and individual factors influencing museum visitation and at the same time considers general environmental factors that envelop each individual case.

3.5.2 Identifying vs. Exploring Attitudes

Researchers like Bourdieu & Darbel (1991); Dixon, Courtney & Bailey (1974); the Getty researchers (1991); Merriman (1989); Prince (1990); Susie Fisher Group (1990) and Trevelyan (1991) have already conducted research that identified people's attitudes towards museums. However, most previous literature typically stops at the identification of attitudes and beliefs, even though that is only the tip of the iceberg and has little explanatory power. One of the main aims of this research is to take that extra step in order to investigate the *underlying meanings* and *uses* of attitudes and beliefs through more in-depth research. Furthermore, as we have seen in Chapter 2, attitudes are usually viewed through a psychological/ behavioural model, which has certain limitations. The aim of this research is to merge sociological and psychological approaches. Therefore, in order to avoid pure psychological connotations and distance this research from surface exploration, I have used the word *perceptions* instead of attitudes and beliefs.

3.5.3 Art Museum Visitors are Different from Other Museum Visitors

Most museum research fails to distinguish art museum/ gallery visitors from other museum visitors even though there is evidence that they are different (Bennett, 1994, 1996; Merriman, 1991). Kirchberg (1996) found out that art and history museum audiences are different from science and natural history museum audiences. He believes that even though there are considerable social and demographic contrasts between art museum visitors and non-visitors, these contrasts are blurred in the case of more popular types of museums. Bennett (1994) further pushed the claim by arguing that art gallery visitors differ from the general public to a greater degree than history museum visitors. Art museum visitors are more likely to come from high-income households, are more likely to have tertiary educational qualifications and more likely to be students or professionals than visitors to other kinds of museums (Bennett, 1994; Schuster, 1993). Furthermore, art museum visitors are more likely to visit on their own (Dixon, Courtney & Bailey, 1974; Linton & Young, 1992; Sears, 1983), are found to be more intellectual, spend more time reading, and tend to separate leisure activities from work less than visitors to other kinds of museums (Linton & Young, 1992).

Not only are art museum visitors different from other museum visitors, but also it should be quite obvious that different kinds of museums offer different kinds of experiences. According to Dicks (2003):

Recent trends such as the incorporation of themed and interactive elements into museums and the boom in heritage centres offering simulated experiences rather than displayed collections show how the blurring of boundaries makes the umbrella term ‘museum’ increasingly unhelpful. Certainly, the appeal of local, living-history, industrial museums and metropolitan art galleries might be expected to differ quite markedly. (p. 161)

Therefore, research might be more effective if it separates museums according to their subject matter. This is one of the reasons that this research focuses on art museums. An additional advantage of focusing on art, history or science museums is that this gives researchers an additional research focus. For example, Merriman’s research on history museums (1989, 1991) investigated people’s attitudes towards museums but also towards the past. Consequently, when researching people’s perceptions regarding art museum it is very appropriate to investigate how museums and art fit into people’s lives.

3.5.4 Museum Visitation and Daily Life

Most visitor studies have a tendency to abstract museum-related activities from daily life for research purposes. However, it seems that it makes no sense any more to separate the space of museums from everyday life. To start with, as research has shown, visitors do not leave their previous experiences, motivations, preconceptions, and attitudes behind, the same way they leave their coats in the cloakroom, upon entering a museum. Furthermore, the exhibition space cannot be sterilized against external meanings. Every part of the exhibition, including the wallpaper and carpets, are likely to be borrowed conventions and carry meanings as such (Lawrence, 1993). And finally, the effects of a museum visit are not limited to the museum itself. Visitors continue to connect information and construct meaning months or even years after their museum visit (Rennie, 1996).

The spectacle/ performance paradigm offers strong support for this viewpoint by suggesting that museum visiting is a part of daily life, another building material for our self-definition in relation to others, as well as one of the many resources available for making sense of the world around us. Some researchers have identified this problem and designed research that does not separate museums from people's daily life. For example, Fyfe & Ross (1996) experimented with a small number of in-depth household interviews by asking people to reflect on their life-styles, leisure patterns, and sense of place instead of directly asking them why they visit or do not visit museums. Such research can potentially reveal how museums are used as a part of everyday life. Likewise, Longhurst, Bagnall & Savage (2004) demonstrated that the museum experience is much more likely to be narrated through a consumer lens. For instance, it can define a good parent who cares about the education of his/ her children or it can be a part of the spectacle of the city (Longhurst, Bagnall & Savage, 2004). In order to explore museum visitation as a part of daily life, I used semi-structured, open-ended questions to address the participants' memories and sense of identity in connection to their museum perceptions.

3.5.5 Methodology: Isolating Factors

There is no doubt that the previous research has immensely aided our understanding of the different reasons that drive people to or away from museums. However, without an integrated theoretical model to guide investigations, research results remain fragmented and end up resembling puzzle pieces that sometimes happily fit together and often exasperatingly do not. The variety of previous studies adds up to show that people choose to visit or not visit museums for a multiplicity of reasons that stem from a variety of sociological and psychological factors. It seems that these factors continuously interact with

each other and it is almost impossible to know when the influence of one starts and when the effect of the other finishes. The value of artificially isolating for research purposes one aspect (e.g., motivation or education) out of the complex system of interacting factors becomes therefore questionable. Furthermore, even though research has identified so far a variety of factors that influence visitation, the list is not limited or exhaustive. Consequently, future research should adopt a flexible and accommodating form in order to allow the recognition of possible unidentified factors. Qualitative research techniques such as semi-structured interviews typically allow for this flexibility and therefore were used in this study.

3.6 Conclusions

How are audiences conceptualized in cultural and visitor studies? How do people use objects and leisure to construct their identities? How active are audiences and how free are their choices? These are the questions this chapter attempted to answer. We have seen that audiences are increasingly conceptualized as active interpreters (or, even better, re-interpreters) of selected messages in a world saturated with information. Consumption choices are revolving around defining and re-constructing a self-identity. This is possible through a process of drawing symbolic boundaries which help individuals distinguish themselves from others and feel that they belong to certain communities of like-minded individuals. We have also seen that unequal power relations still exist and therefore power issues are still relevant. However, the active audience diffuses power since its activity is not always contained within the acceptance (negotiated or not) or refusal of dominant messages. Cultural messages become re-interpreted signs that can be used for the purposes of communicating and constructing identities.

Nevertheless, we need to keep in mind that preferred messages do exist, they are sometimes very powerful, not all people have the power to resist or re-interpret messages, and identity construction is limited by what building materials are available for use in each individual's socio-cultural, political and economic environment. Since museum visitor studies are catching up with the newest audience conceptualization, other questions also arise such as: How can museums serve their active audiences? Can we afford to repress messages in order to facilitate audience activity? Unfortunately these are questions we do not have answers for but hopefully future research will focus on.

The last part of this chapter dealt with the limitations of previous literature, which guided the design of my research. Research should (a) acknowledge that social and individual factors can not be artificially separated and should be examined together; (b) focus more on exploring people's perceptions than merely identifying them; (c) focus on specific kinds of museums (such as art, history or science museums) since they provide different experiences and attract different audiences; (d) avoid separating museum visitation from daily life and memories; and finally, (e) adopt a more flexible and holistic approach to examine museum perceptions. We now turn to this last limitation in order to more fully examine the methodology of this research.

Chapter 4

Methodology and Research Design

4.1 Introduction

As we have seen in Chapter 2, some researchers have tried to understand museum visitation by examining visitors' and non-visitors' attitudes and beliefs regarding museums. Different methodologies and research designs were employed to do this. However, the findings from the limited research available are not always complementary. For example, *qualitative* research has shown that non-visitors consider museums boring, musty, and gloomy places (Trevelyan, 1991) while visitors have surprisingly similar negative perceptions (Fisher, 1990). In contrast, *quantitative* research (in the form of surveys) has shown that museums in general are considered to be educational, interesting, and not boring by the majority of visitors and non-visitors, even though non-visitors evince slightly more negative attitudes (Dixon, Courtney & Bailey, 1974; East Midlands Museums Services, 1996; Prince, 1985b). The research results from qualitative and quantitative research may seem quite contradictory, but it would be hasty to assume that people's perceptions have no effect on their behavior, or that we have not learned anything from previous research. It is reasonable to assume that the research questions, methodology, or probing, might have influenced the findings. Furthermore, it appears that there is a common finding after all – *the museum perceptions of visitors and non-visitors do not differ that greatly*.

One interesting observation that fueled this research is that visitors and non-visitors might have a common underlying museum image, but that the *value* placed upon this image might be different (Prince, 1990). For instance, the fact that we know that 96% of the population considers museums to be educational (East Midlands Museums Service, 1996), tells us nothing about “the meaning and subtle understanding that lay behind people's responses” (DiMaggio & Pettit, 1999, p. 32). Is education considered a positive or negative museum attribute (or both)? By whom and when? What exactly do people mean by “educational”? Does this attitude influence visitation decisions and how? We will see that qualitative research is more appropriate for answering these kinds of questions.

4.2 Research Paradigm

This section discusses the nature of qualitative research, the ontology and epistemology of this research, as well as the reasons behind employing a qualitative research methodology.

4.2.1 *The Nature of Qualitative Research*

Even though there have been many attempts to define qualitative research, these attempts have not resulted in a universal definition. Current definitions, more often than not, offer a set of values common to qualitative approaches while explaining how these values challenge quantitative approaches. This comes as no surprise since *positivism* - usually associated with quantitative research - has a long tradition in the natural and social sciences. As a result, qualitative researchers find themselves defending their decisions against centuries of positivist beliefs.

On the other hand, qualitative research is usually associated with *constructivism* (some authors use the terms “interpretivism” or “constructionism”) – an umbrella term for a variety of approaches that oppose some of the main premises of positivism (Denscombe, 2003b). Constructivists believe that social reality is subjective as well as “constructed and interpreted by people - rather than something that exists objectively ‘out there’” (Denscombe, 2003b, p. 18). Therefore, it is not possible to gain objective knowledge of social phenomena since the generation of meaning can only be social (Creswell, 2003). Constructivists also understand that social research is influenced by the expectations and values of the researcher as well as by the fact that people react to the knowledge that they are being studied (Denscombe, 2003b). According to Ruddock (2001), “Trying to study human behaviour without taking account of the subjective experiences of both researcher and researched is a little like playing football without a ball – it misses the vital ingredient that produces a meaningful result” (p. 118). Furthermore, constructivists are interested in understanding the way in which accounts “are part of the world they describe” (Silverman, 2001, p. 95), which has, as a result, a more holistic approach to understanding variables.

Even though the debate usually revolves around the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative methods, the distinction between the two approaches is becoming increasingly less clear-cut. Some researchers, recognizing that no single approach is perfect, employ a third approach – a mixed method, or else a *pragmatism* approach. In this case, the research paradigm and methodology depends on the aims and objectives of the

project. In other words, the researcher can combine different methods depending on what works best in each situation (Creswell, 2003; Denscombe, 2003b).

4.2.2 Ontology and Epistemology of the Proposed Research

The ontology and epistemology of this research comfortably conform to constructivist claims of knowledge. Individual perceptions are considered to be formed by a negotiation between the individual and his/ her environment and to exist in a fluid, yet persistent, state. Furthermore, people hold a variety of subjective, and sometimes contradictory, perceptions that often change according to the situation (*ontology*). For this reason, it is perhaps impossible to “objectively” know one’s perceptions through quantitative research. On the other hand, people’s experiences, beliefs, thoughts, knowledge, and interpretations can provide meaningful information about their perceptions, and, as a result, meaning can be constructed through dialogue (*epistemology*).

4.2.3 Why Qualitative Research

Since the epistemology of this research fits into constructivist knowledge claims, qualitative research methodology was considered the most appropriate for the research project. Moreover, qualitative research can best facilitate the exploration of people’s perceptions and the development of a visitation theory for three main reasons:

First, qualitative research is “emergent rather than tightly prefigured” (Creswell, 2003, p. 181). It allows more flexibility to explore the multidimensional factors that influence perceptions without the need to predetermine them at the start of the research. In addition, it allows the necessary flexibility during the data generation process to identify additional issues, emerging conceptual problems and alternative explanations. Second, qualitative research can provide a “deeper” understanding of social phenomena (Silverman, 2001) since it is more interpretive and explanatory in nature and, therefore, more appropriate for the generation of meaning. After all, the aim of this research is not to produce surface patterns, but to produce explanations and a visitation theory. And finally, qualitative research allows the generation of data that are inseparable from everyday life and, as a result, creates a more holistic interpretation of social phenomena (Creswell, 2003). As a result, only qualitative research can reveal the inherited depth and complexity of perceptions.

4.2.4 Limitations of Qualitative Research

Conversely, qualitative research has certain limitations that I acknowledged and attempted to minimize. To begin with, the interpretations are bound up with the beliefs, values and identity of the researcher (Denscombe, 2003a) and, therefore, the research results can be criticized for their subjectivity. Even though quantitative methodology has similar problems, considerations of this kind are more obvious in qualitative research and thus the validity of the results is threatened. Furthermore, because of the generation of rich material and the impossibility of presenting all the data, the researcher has to make decisions about what to include and what to discard. During this process, the danger exists of taking meaning out of context, or of oversimplifying explanations, or discarding cases that do not fit the theory (Denscombe, 2003a). In effect, this threatens the reliability of the research results. Finally, perhaps the most important limitation of qualitative methods is that the data might not be representative of the population, and, therefore, generalizations have to be made with extreme caution. The issues of data validity, reliability, and generalizability, as well as methods for dealing with the inherent limitations of qualitative research, will be addressed later on in this chapter.

4.3 Research Design

4.3.1 Research Methods

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 60 participants were used in order to contribute to a coherent explanation of the intellectual puzzle. The belief that dialogue can best reveal people's perceptions guided the choice of interviews as the primary research methods for this study. According to Arksey & Knight (1999), when discussing social contexts at a society-wide level, like voting decisions, meaning is even and predictable and thus structured interviews are a good way to collect data. However, when we move on to more personal questions, like attitudes towards love and beauty (e.g., Douglas, 1985), unstructured interview methods become essential in unraveling the diverse and complex meanings inherent in personal issues. People's perceptions regarding art museums function at both social and personal levels and, therefore, semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate for this project. Furthermore, with semi-structured interviews, researchers can control the discussion topics while maintaining enough flexibility to allow new issues to emerge.

To complement the data gained from the interviews, two other research methods were used. The interviewees were asked to complete a short questionnaire at the beginning of each interview and fill in a *personal meaning map* in the middle of the interview.

The use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews

I interviewed 60 individuals in two phases. The first phase (phase I) included interviews with 30 individuals. The interview protocols consisted of open questions that addressed the research questions. After interviewing the initial 30 participants, I proceeded with transcribing and partially analyzing the interviews. This resulted in adding some questions that further explored key issues that emerged from phase I. Using the revised interview protocols, the second phase (phase II) included interviews with 30 additional individuals. In addition, during phase II, participants were asked to play a postcard game that will be described later on in this section.

The division of the interview process into two phases helped me reflect on where the research was going, reevaluate the needs of the study and make the appropriate methodological decisions. Phase II was actually scheduled to include focus groups with frequent, occasional, and non-visitors instead of additional interviews. After the transcribing and initial analysis of the first 30 interviews, I identified certain attitudes and beliefs, which were called *museum perceptual filters*. In order to further explore this line of thought, as well as develop and test the initial theoretical assumptions, I needed to interview more people on a face-to-face basis. Focus groups, whilst having other significant advantages, could not help the identification of individual perceptions in the way individual in-depth interviews could. The decision to proceed with 30 additional interviews proved to be the most appropriate one for the purposes of this research since it provided me with additional data that tested the initial skeleton of the developing theory as well as richer data that enhanced and helped the expansion of the theoretical model.

The interview program was piloted before phase I started. The pilot stage included one interview with a non-visitor and one with a visitor of art museums in order to test the interview protocols and timing of the interviews. After some minor changes in the interview program, phase I began. Appendix 1 includes the interview protocol for museum visitors and non-visitors for phase I, as well as the additional questions, which were added during phase II. The interview protocols were used as a guide and included main questions and

probes. I did not use the precise wording or a strict order. This allowed the interview to unfold in a natural and fluid manner.

The use of questionnaires

The use of a questionnaire at the beginning of each interview generated valuable demographic information as well as information about the leisure activities of each interviewee. The data generated by the questionnaire (see Appendix 2 for questionnaire) was mainly used for comparative purposes. They made possible two kinds of comparisons: (a) comparisons between the various characteristics of the research participants, and (b) comparisons between the findings of this research and previous research.

The questionnaire was designed to test two theories from the previous literature: Bourdieu's visitation theory and Peterson's omnivorous theory. As we have seen in Chapter 2, previous research confirms Bourdieu's findings that social position and particularly education are the most important predictors of art museum participation. The educational and occupational questions helped test Bourdieu's visitation theory. Both categories were adopted from the 2001 Cyprus population census (Statistical Services of the Republic of Cyprus, 2001). The only change was that the "student" option was added in the occupational question. The responses to the leisure participation questions were used to address Peterson's omnivorous theory, which suggests people who engage with high leisure activities also participate in low/ popular leisure activities. Even though the distinction between low and high leisure is nowadays increasingly blurred, culturally specific, and open to dispute, some decisions had to be made regarding what is considered a low or a high leisure activity. In order to do this I have adopted existing categories from other authors and more particularly from the work of Bihagen & Katz-Gerro (2000); Clarke (1956); Hendon (1990); and Katz-Gerro & Shavit (1998). From the categories mentioned in the above literature, I have chosen the categories that I thought were more relevant to the case of Cyprus. The leisure activities were separated into *high* (five activities), *low* (six activities), and *additional activities* (three activities). Table 4.1 outlines the division of leisure activities. It is not clear in the previous literature whether or not doing active sport and going to the cinema are high or low leisure activities. For this reason these two activities were labeled additional leisure activities. The third additional leisure activity was concerned with the frequency of trips abroad and was used in order to investigate the issue of cultural tourism.

Table 4.1

High, Low, and Additional Leisure Activities

Leisure Activities		
High	Low	Additional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting art museums or galleries • Visiting historical or archeological museums/sites • Going to the theatre • Attending concerts of classical music • Reading professional literature (related to one's profession) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going to sport matches • Playing board, electrical (e.g., video games), or card games • Attending concerts of popular music (rock, pop or "laika"*) • Going to night clubs and bars • Driving or riding in car for pleasure • Reading magazines or newspapers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing active sport • Going to the cinema • Going on vacation abroad

Note: * "Laika" literally means "popular" and it is a form of urban folk Greek music.

The use of personal meaning maps (PMMs)

During the interview, I provided participants with a blank piece of paper with the words "art museum/ art exhibition" in the centre and asked them to take a few minutes to create a *personal meaning map* (using words and/ or drawings) of whatever comes to their mind when they think of art museums (see Appendix 3). Then, I discussed the resulting map with the interviewee. Even though various mind mapping techniques have been used to enhance creativity in business, personal and professional planning, or academic learning (Gross, 1993) they do not usually find their way into academic methodology or visitor studies. Having said that, they have been successfully used by some researchers to assess learning in museums (e.g., Adelman, Falk & James, 2000; Falk, Moussouri & Coulson, 1998; Moussouri, 1997; Renaissance et. al., 2004). For example, Falk, Moussouri & Coulson (1998) used the personal meaning mapping (PMM) technique in order to measure how educational experiences affect individual understanding and learning. They proceeded to analyze the maps using four parameters: the vocabulary used, the breadth of understanding (number of concepts mentioned), the depth of a person's understanding (quality of descriptors) and the quality of the individual's overall understanding. I have analyzed the interviewees' PMMs together with the rest of the interview data. As it is explained later on in this chapter, the PMMs were used for triangulation reasons, and more specifically, for the purposes of completing the data. As a result, we will encounter examples of PMMs in Chapter 6 where they are used in order to reinforce findings from the oral interviews.

The main advantage of the mind mapping method is that it offers participants some time to reflect on their feelings and thoughts through free association, and thus elicit deeper

responses. Nash (1997) reports that “the principal finding from asking people what comes to their minds when they think of art museums is that not much does” (p. 57). One possible explanation for this is that many people are not prepared for such a question and therefore might respond with something superficial like: “beautiful pictures”, “knowledge”, “education” etc. Even though these answers are valuable, the research was mostly concerned with deeper connotational meanings such as, what do “beautiful pictures” or “knowledge” or “education” *mean* to each interviewee. In addition, perceptions, like many of the phenomena we study, are so fundamental that they might exist outside consciousness and might be difficult to obtain through logical verbal communication (Dreher, 1994). Free association can help elicit narratives that are structured by unconscious logic and defined by emotional motivations (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Furthermore, according to Hollway & Jefferson (2000), “Free associations defy narrative conventions and enable the analyst to pick up incoherencies (for example, contradictions, elisions, avoidance) and accord them due significance” (p. 37). Therefore, the finished maps were valuable sources of data and were analyzed as such. Finally, mind maps served as a springboard for diving into more difficult issues, especially when the participant seemed to be less articulate or shy.

The use of a postcard game

Throughout phase II, a game was used. The interviewer presented the interviewees with 12 postcards of various artworks and asked them to choose their most and least favorite work. Subsequently, the interviewees were asked to comment on the reasons of their choice. What inspired the creation of this game was the fact that the participants during phase I responded to the question “What is art for you?” in a very vague and non-specific way. The 12 postcards represented a variety of 19th and 20th century art movements (see Appendix 4.1) for images). I strived for a balance between representational and non-representational work. During phase II, faced with actual examples, the participants instinctively chose their most and least favorite work and a discussion was generated about the reasons behind their choices. Therefore, the real purpose of the game was not to test individual tastes but to generate a more constructive discussion around art preferences. The results from this game were extremely interesting and could be useful in comparing art preferences in relationship with the interviewees’ perceptions or visitation category (for tables of results see Appendix 4.2). However, such issues fall outside the scope of this research and therefore we will not examine the results of this game or the question “What do you consider art?” Furthermore, only 30 interviewees participated in this game. It would be desirable to administer the game

to more people before arriving to any conclusions. For this reason, this issue remains an excellent subject for further research.

Interviews with museum professionals

Even before piloting the interviews, I approached and interviewed seven museum professionals in order to gain an insight into the museum environment of Nicosia. The directors or managing curators of five important museums/ art centers in Nicosia were approached and interviewed: Mr. Achileas Kentonis for the *ARTos Foundation* (director), Mrs. Loukia Hatsigavriel for the *Leventis Municipal Museum* (director), Mr. Ioannis Iliades for the *Byzantine Museum and Art Galleries* (managing curator), Mrs. Oursoula Savvidou for the *State Gallery* (gallery assistant), and Mr. Pavlos Florenzos for the *Cyprus Archaeological Museum* (director). In addition, two individuals were interviewed at the Ministry of Education and Culture: Mrs. Eleni Nikita, the director of cultural services (and also in charge of the *State Gallery*) and Mr. Nikos Nikolaou, in charge of a developing legislation that concerns governmental funding for museums. As we have seen in Chapter 1, these interviews were valuable in setting the “stage” on which the research participants were acting. The interviews were not recorded but notes were taken during the interviews. It was considered that in this way the museum professionals would feel freer to express their opinions, concerns, and problems. Each interview lasted about 45 minutes to an hour.

Table 4.3 illustrates the advantages and limitations of semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and PMMs.

Table 4.3

Advantages and Limitations of Semi-structured Interviews, Questionnaires, and PMMs

	Advantages	Limitations
Semi-structured Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researcher can control the flow of the interview and the themes discussed while being flexible enough to allow new issues to emerge (Creswell, 2003). • Dialogue can reveal the depth and complexity of perceptions. • Good method for producing data based on the participant's priorities (Denscombe, 2003a) by recording their language and words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some phenomena are so fundamental that they might exist outside consciousness and might be difficult to obtain through verbal communication (Dreher, 1994). • There is no absolute way of knowing if the participant is exaggerating or lying. • Some people are more articulate than others. • Some things that might be embarrassing or against convention might remain hidden. • Time-consuming (Denscombe, 2003a). • The responses may be biased by the researcher's presence (Creswell, 2003).
Questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can expose differences within visitation categories. • Can serve as a triangulation method. • People feel fairly anonymous and do not feel the pressure to answer in a specific way. • The interviewees were not aware of the purpose of the research at the time they were filling in the questionnaire so the tendency to impress the interviewer was diminished. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals might use the categories indicated as a way of making a decision about their participation. For example, the third category out of seven might mean "somewhere in the middle" for them. • Some might answer in the way they want themselves to behave. For example, a sports fan might overestimate his attendance in live sports events.
Personal Meaning Maps (PMMs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers participants time for reflection. • Deeper responses might be elicited through free association. • Facilitates dialogue. • Words as well as drawings can be used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The analysis of the PMMs has the danger of being subjective. • Some participants might have felt intimidated by this technique – especially if they believed that they know nothing about art museums.

*4.3.2 Sampling, Visitation Categories, and Research Sites**Sampling*

Sampling methods and considerations are equally important for qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. For quantitative research, the emphasis is on achieving a

representative sample of the population examined through statistical analysis. Qualitative research is often not concerned with making any substantial claims regarding the representation of the examined sample. Similarly, this research is not concerned with the representation of the Cypriot public or even the Nicosia public. What is proposed here is a *theoretical sampling* (Mason, 2001) or a *purposive sampling* (Stake, 2003). A theoretical sampling allows the researcher to select participants on the basis of their relevance to the research questions and the development of a theory (Mason, 2001). In our case, visitation frequency served as the classification unit for selection. Even though visitation frequency is not an absolute classification unit (like education or age), it is the most appropriate one for answering the research questions. A conscious attempt was made to achieve a balance in terms of age groups and gender.

Visitation categories

The visitation groups examined are adopted from Merriman's museum visitation research (1991) and are as follows:

- *Very frequent visitors*: visit at least once a month
- *Frequent visitors*: visit 3 or more times a year
- *Regular visitors*: visit once or twice a year
- *Occasional visitors*: last visited between 1-4 years ago
- *Rare visitors*: last visited 5 or more years ago
- *Non-visitors*: have never visited an art museum/ gallery

The category of *very frequent visitors* was added to Merriman's five visitation categories.

The questionnaire included a question about art museum visitation frequency (see question 1d in Appendix 2). The answer to that question is called the *reported visitation frequency*. During the interview, it became apparent that the reported visitation frequency was not always the actual one. Often interviewees would overstate their participation in art museums and exhibitions because their definition of art museums was too broad – they included in their definition other kinds of museums such as history, archeological and folk museums. If during the interview it became apparent that this was the case, or that the interviewee exaggerated or understated his/ her visitation frequency for other reasons, I asked the interviewee again the same question (“How often to you visit art museums or art exhibitions?”) towards the end of the interview. Often, the interviewee would then offer a more realistic answer. Surprisingly, 28 interviewees (47%) were assigned a different visitation category than the one they originally reported in the questionnaire. 26

interviewees (43%) overstated and 2 interviewees (4%) understated their art museum participation. The data were analyzed with the revised visitation frequency, which is called the *actual visitation frequency*.

As mentioned, the sample size of 60 helped me understand a process rather than represent a population. For this reason it was necessary to interview individuals from all visitation levels, age groups, and genders. In order to achieve this, I used multiple research sites and recruitment methods.

Research Sites and Recruitment

One art museum (*The Byzantine Museum and Art Galleries*) and one art gallery (*The ARTos Foundation*) served as recruitment sites for visitors. Non-visitors, as well as visitors, were recruited from four different cafes in the centre of Nicosia and through *snowballing*.

The term snowball sampling was first introduced in 1958 and is a research technique where research participants are recruited from the friendship network of existing participants (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). Thus, the sample group looks as if it is growing like a rolling snowball. The snowballing technique is ideal for recruiting *hidden populations*, that is, populations which are difficult to recruit through more traditional methods (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). In this case, some participants were asked to recommend friends, relatives or neighbors who would be willing to be interviewed. Hidden populations include individuals who were not possible to recruit through museums or cafes, such as older non-visitors or busy parents with children. Furthermore, during phase II, art professionals, such as art educators, artists, gallery directors and museum professionals were specifically targeted. The reason was to explore the *professional museum filter* identified in phase I (more in Chapter 6). Most interviews arranged using the snowballing technique took place at the interviewee's home or work-place.

I approached individuals in museums or cafes, who were alone or in twos, and I asked them to fill out a short questionnaire. An effort was made to diversify by approaching participants in different kinds of cafes, at different days of the week, and at different times. Most people accepted and spent two to five minutes completing the questionnaire. After that, I explained the purpose of the research and asked if they had 10-15 minutes to answer some questions. 60 out of 75 individuals that filled in the questionnaire agreed to be interviewed (80% success rate). The people that declined usually said that they were in a hurry and did not

have time for the interview. The 15 individuals that declined the interview were three non-visitors, two occasional, three regular, six frequent and one very frequent visitor (self-reported visitation from questionnaires).

The mean recorded interview time was 24 minutes long for phase I and 28 minutes long for phase II. The time for introductions, the filling of the questionnaire and ending comments was not counted. A total of 44 interviews were recorded and a total of 60 interviewees participated. 29 were alone, 14 in twos and one interview had three participants. Table 4.2 provides an overview of the number of participants in each visitation, age, marital status and gender categories.

Table 4.2

Visitation Frequency, Age, Marital Status, and Gender of the 60 Interviewees

Visitation Frequency	no.	Age	no.	Marital Status	no.	Sex	no.
Very Frequent	12	18-24	10	Single	30	Male	29
Frequent	6	25-34	24	Married	28	Female	31
Regular	11	35-44	9	Divorced/Separated	2		
Occasional	14	45-54	11	Widowed	0		
Rare	7	55-64	5				
Non-visitor	10	65+	1				

4.3.3 Triangulation

The term *triangulation*, which derives from navigation literature, came to mean the comparison between different kinds of data or methods to see whether or not they corroborate with each other (Silverman, 2001). According to Arksey & Knight (1999) the two main purposes of triangulation are confirmation and completeness. For the purposes of this study, the main concern of triangulation is *completeness* for two main reasons. First, the usefulness of triangulation for confirming the validity of results has been recently criticized on the grounds that it either ignores the complex character of social interaction (Silverman, 2001) or that it assumes that research methods are readily substitutable (Bloor, et. al., 2001). One-to-one interviews, questionnaires, and personal meaning maps (PMMs) are three quite different research methods and it is reasonable to assume that some of the findings might differ. Second, questionnaires and PMMs were especially designed to complement the interviews. The main aim of the questionnaire was to help gather basic demographic and other information. On the other hand, the PMM was used in order to extract more unconscious responses and generate dialogue. In conclusion, since completeness is the first preoccupation of triangulation, variation across methods is less of an issue. Data variation

can actually provide a fertile area for theory building by shedding light on processes that otherwise might not have been recognized (Arksey & Knight, 1999). For example, we have seen that the *reported* and *actual* museum visitation was different. This finding was only possible with the use of different methodologies. The reported visitation frequency was measured with the help of the questionnaire while the actual visitation frequency resulted after interviewees had the chance to reflect and talk about their museum experiences. This finding is significant in itself because it highlighted the fact that the concept of an “art museum/ exhibition” can be broader or narrower depending on each individual.

4.3.4 *Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability*

Validity refers to whether or not the researcher is actually investigating what he/ she claimed to be investigating (Arksey & Knight, 1999) and mainly relates to the data and the analysis process (Denscombe, 2003b). *Reliability*, on the other hand, relates to the consistency of data collection methods. Methods can be called reliable if they produce very similar results when used in different settings, by different researchers, or at different times with the same people (Denscombe, 2003b). Some researchers argue that qualitative interviewing is not really concerned with issues of reliability since knowledge is situational and conditional (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Yet, both validity and reliability are issues that need to be addressed to some degree in every research. Every research should also provide findings from which some generalizations can be made. *Generalizability* is the application of findings from one set of data to other instances (Denscombe, 2003b). Qualitative research cannot usually claim to represent a wider population in a strict statistical sense (Sim, 1998). Nevertheless, it can claim *theoretical generalizations* (Sim, 1998), or *naturalistic generalizations* (Stake, 1995), or even *transferability* to other instances (Denscombe, 2003b). All of these terms are used to suggest that the reader of qualitative research will be able to make some logical inferences from the findings (or resulting theory) and thus “transfer” the findings to other situations. Consequently, the more information researchers provide, the easier it will be for the reader to make imaginative applications of the findings.

The methodological literature provides several suggestions about the ways qualitative research can deal with issues of validity, reliability, and generalizability. Table 4.4 outlines the main strategies that were used during the selection, data collection, analysis, and presentation process of the research in order to deal with these issues. In parenthesis are the names of the authors who suggested these strategies. To avoid positivist connotations, some

researchers prefer to refer to credibility, dependability, and transferability, instead of validity, reliability, and generalizability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Riley, 1996). For the purposes of this study, however, we will refer to the latter terms since they are more widely used.

Table 4.4

Strategies for Improving Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability

	Validity (Credibility)	Reliability (Dependability)	Generalizability (Transferability)
Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searched for representative <i>and</i> deviant cases (Silverman, 2001). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used at least three different research sites. • Used theoretical sampling (Silverman, 2001).
Data collection process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used respondent validation <i>during</i> the interview. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used at least two research methods (questionnaires and PMMs) for triangulation purposes (Creswell, 2003; Silverman, 2001). • Recorded and fully transcribed interviews (including pauses, overlaps, and non-verbal communication) (Silverman, 2001). • Left an audit trail. 	
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered rival explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asked an experienced researcher to audit the analysis process. • Checked coding for consistency (Miles & Huberman, 1994). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examined possible threats to generalizability (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
Reporting of Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare findings with external benchmarks like other established research (Denscombe, 2003b). • Identified areas of uncertainty (Miles & Huberman, 1994). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly specified basic paradigms and analytic constructs (Miles & Huberman, 1994). • Used rich description to convey the findings. • Offered an explicit account of how the data were collected and justified key decisions (Denscombe, 2003b). • Presented long extracts of data in thesis including context of answer (Silverman, 2001). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made no attempts for grand generalizations. However, the resulting theory suggests transferability. • Connected findings with prior theories and research (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

4.4 Ethical Issues and Data Analysis

4.4.1 Ethical Issues

The research was designed in a way as to generate and report research results as faithfully as possible and to protect the interests of the participants and the research sites. This research was conducted in accordance with the “Research code of conduct” of the University of Leicester (2002) and the “Statement of ethical practice for the British Sociological Association” (2002).

Causing stress and discomfort during the interview, as well as undue intrusion was avoided as much as possible. People who did not want to participate were respected and were not pressed for information. After filling in the questionnaire but before each interview, the potential participants were fully briefed about the purpose of the research and were asked if they were willing to be interviewed. If the answer was yes, I asked if I could record the conversation and explained that the recording was for my own use. In three cases, participants refused to be recorded and for this reason I was taking handwritten notes during the interviews. At the end of the interviews, the participants received an information leaflet that included an one page sheet with simple explanations about who I am, what the research is about, who is being interviewed and why. It also included my contact information in case participants had any questions at a later point. In addition, they were asked if they wanted to receive a report of the research results. If the answer was yes (8 interviewees requested a report), I noted the interviewee’s contact information and a three-page summary report in Greek, along with a thank you letter, was sent to him/ her in December 2007. Finally, during the analysis and interpretation part of the research, I made sure that the anonymity of the participants was maintained by using pseudonyms.

In the case of the museum research sites, I contacted the directors of the three pre-selected institutions and arranged a meeting in order to discuss the possibility of using their space for recruiting participants. The directors received an introductory letter, a brief statement that outlined the nature and purpose of the study and the amount of commitment required, along with my CV. During the first meeting, the directors were assured that the research site would be respected, that I would minimize disruption as much as possible, and that they would receive a report of the research results. A thank you letter, the summary report, and an article with the main findings of the research (see Stylianou-Lambert, 2007) were sent in December 2007.

4.4.3 Data Analysis

The questionnaires and interview questions were translated from English into Greek and were piloted in both languages in order to make sure that the meaning was the same. Two interviewees were native English speakers and were interviewed in English. The interviews were audio recorded and fully translated and transcribed (including non-verbal communication, pauses, and overlaps). The translation phase took place simultaneously with the transcription phase. During the translation from Greek to English it was ensured that the meaning and emotion of the interviewees' words was captured. Cross cultural researchers understand that words do not match neatly across cultures and that the goal of a good translation must be to provide the closest reading to the one in the source language (Willgerodt, Kataoka-Yahiro, Kim & Ceria, 2005). Words might have different connotations in different countries and some idiomatic phrases might not translate from one language to another. Sometimes, a slightly different phrasing could capture the true intent in the source language. As a bilingual researcher (first language: Greek), I was in a position to understand the cultural nuances of the Greek language, and more specifically of the Cypriot dialect. The initial translation/ transcription was a literal, word-by-word one and retained most of the grammatical form of the source language. For this reason, it was grammatically awkward in the English language. To minimize this problem (especially for the quotation that appears in the final thesis) I had the challenging task of identifying words and expressions that conveyed the same meaning without sounding too awkward. In some instances, the reader might notice the use of brackets in some quotation. This was done to clarify some terms or phrases without sacrificing the precision of the translation. Discrepancies were discussed and negotiated with a native English speaker.

After the translation, the data were stored, coded, and organized with the help of the qualitative research software program N5 (NUD*IST 5). This software program was chosen because of its ability to work with complex qualitative data and to assist deep levels of analysis (QSR international official webpage, 2005). All interviews were analyzed together since the only change between phase I and II was the addition of some questions. The issues explored by the additional questions in phase II were also analyzed together with the interviews in phase I. The reason is that some of these issues also appeared in phase I even without probing. Data collection and data analysis was a simultaneous process. We will see later on in Chapter 6 that eight *museum perceptual filters* (MPFs) emerged from the data - that is, eight different ways of perceiving and using art museums. Each interviewee was assigned a primary and a secondary MPF. The meaning of the concept will be fully

explained in Chapter 6. However it is important to explain here the process of assigning MPFs to each participant. The following sections discuss the data organization and analysis, coding, as well as the thematic and statistical analysis.

Data organization and analysis

I indexed the data both in a *cross-sectional* and *non-cross-sectional* way. Cross-sectional analysis, which is used by most researchers, involves devising a coding system for indexing the data (Mason, 2001). The data were analysed cross-sectionally with the help of the qualitative computer program N5, which helped me in locating, retrieving, and analysing topics in an accessible and easy manner. N5 made it easier to see how the data answered the research questions by making coding easy. The data units resulting from the cross-sectional analysis were not treated as complete, fixed, and static. The context of each quote was taken into account.

Apart from the computer-aided analysis, the data were also interpreted on a case-by-case basis by assigning *visitation categories* as well as *museum perceptual filters* for each interviewee. Looking at data in a holistic manner is called *non-cross-sectional analysis* (Mason, 2001). A *research diary* was used for this purpose. The research diary included field notes made immediately after each interview. The notes contained the essentials of the interviewee's answers and information about the proceedings of the interview. It also contained first impressions, ideas, feelings, surprising, noteworthy, or unexpected data, assumptions, and comparative thoughts. The research diary also contained notes on how to best analyse the data, index rules, observations, problems, breakthroughs, and research goals. The computer software and the researcher's diary were used together in order to identify patterns and themes, explore museum perceptions, conceptually categorize data, and ultimately develop a visitation theory.

Coding

After completing and transcribing all the interviews, transcripts were searched, compared, and partially analysed in order to establish a list of major ideas that would become codes. After that, a few questionnaires were coded in N5 in order to crystallize the codes that will be used during the data analysis. Then, a *coding structure and definition* sheet was created in order to guide coding. This included a clear set of definitions of what each coding category constituted and instructions on how to apply them. The codes address the research questions, are mindful of the previous literature, and try not to be too broad or too

restrictive. As I was coding I remained alert to ideas that I might have missed and added them to the coding structure. These unexpected codes were called *free codes* and were used along with the other codes in the data analysis.

During coding, the data were sometimes read in a *literal* and sometimes in an *interpretive* way. Most codes were easy to identify and could be read in a literal way. For example, I read the data in a literal way when coding for whether or not the interviewee preferred visiting museums alone or with company (since there was an explicit question during the interview about this subject). On the other hand, interpretive reading involves “reading through or beyond the data in some way, be they literal texts or visual images or whatever” (Mason, 2001, p. 109). For example, the museum perceptual filters (MPFs) unexpectedly emerged from the data and for this reason their definition, analysis, and assignment to each interviewee was a complicated process. I had to read beyond the data and therefore some form of interpretation took place while coding. This process included both non-cross-sectional and cross-sectional analysis and was composed of seven steps. The first step took place after phase I and included the initial conception of seven MPFs and the formulation of some tentative definitions. The second step took place during phase II in which more interviews were conducted in order to test, verify and adjust the MPFs. One more filter was added to the list. The third step included the final definition of the eight MPFs. During step four, participants were tentatively and more intuitively assigned a primary MPF with the help of the research diary and the transcriptions (non-cross-sectional analysis). In step five, the transcripts were coded according to the final definition of the eight MPFs with the help of N5. In step six, I examined the amount of times each MPF appears as a code for each interviewee and assigned for the second time MPFs for each participant (cross-sectional analysis). The final step included the comparison between the non-cross-sectional assignment and the cross-sectional assignment of MPFs. This comparison also served as a data analysis triangulation. Where there were discrepancies, the individual cases were re-examined and adjusted. Appendix 5 offers information about each interviewee including his/ her assigned MPFs and visitation category.

Thematic and statistical analysis

After coding and the assignment of visitation categories and MPFs used, I employed *conceptually clustered matrices* (see for example Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 130) to aid further comparisons between interviewees. Conceptually clustered matrixes helped me represent important data and information in a table format, which proved to be easier to read

and thus helped me compare groups with the same visitation level or same primary MPF used. This method is ideal for theory building (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Some quantitative data (mainly resulting from the questionnaires) were analysed on the statistical program EXCEL. Some of the data were *nominal* (e.g., answers like yes or no) and some are *interval* (e.g., frequency of leisure participation). The statistical analysis was used to give directions to the theoretical model but percentages were not used when drawing up analytical tables (Arksey & Knight, 1999).

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated why qualitative research methodology is the most appropriate one to answer the research questions of this study. Qualitative research facilitates in-depth investigation, flexibility to recognize and explore new issues, use of multiple sources of data, and allows theory building. The next three chapters present the research results.

Chapter 5

Symbolic Boundaries, Identity, and Spectacles of Perception

“As a result, leisure may be that life space in which identity is most fully expressed and developed.”

Kelly, 1983, p. 116

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part examines how education, parental influences, occupation, age, gender, and marital status, influence art museum visitation. The second part examines whether or not Peterson’s omnivorous theory is valid within the framework of this research. The third part looks at how different visitation groups draw symbolic boundaries between themselves and others in order to create a sense of distinction and belonging, and thus, a sense of self-identity. Finally, the fourth part introduces the conceptual model generated out of this research.

5.2 Education, Parental Influences, Occupation, Age, Gender, and Marital Status

The questionnaire and interviews were designed to test some of the key findings of the previous literature. Namely, I wanted to see if factors such as education, family influences, occupation, age, gender, and marital status influence visitation decisions, and thus test Bourdieu’s visitation theory in Cyprus. The following paragraphs offer a detailed review of the research results.

5.2.1 Education, Upbringing, and Occupation

According to Bourdieu & Darbel (1991) as well as other researchers who followed their example (see Chapter 2), education, an individual’s upbringing, and his/ her occupation are predictors of art museum visitation. Education is proven to be the best predictor. I found evidence that these three factors indeed influence museum visitation but they do not completely explain it.

Table 5.1 demonstrates the relationship between *education* and museum visitation. The most striking finding is that most interviewees (14 out of 15) who do not have any higher education (more than a high school diploma) are occasional, rare or non-visitors of art museums. Only one interviewee who does not have a high school diploma is a very frequent visitor, but this individual happens to be an artist. All other very frequent, frequent, and regular visitors have at least a non-tertiary university degree. These findings support Bourdieu's visitation theory. However, what Bourdieu's theory cannot explain is the fact that there are individuals with higher education who are occasional, rare, and non-visitors. 10 interviewees (out of 45) with higher education are only occasional visitors while an additional 8 (out of the same 45) are rare or non-visitors.

Table 5.1

Education and Visitation Frequency

Visitation Frequency	Lower Education					Higher Education			Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Very Frequent				1		1	9	1	12
Frequent						1	6		7
Regular						2	7		9
Occasional				1	4		9	1	15
Rare				1	2	3	1		7
Non-visitor			2		4	2	2		10
			2	3	10	9	34	2	60

Note. 1 = never attended school; 2 = not completed primary; 3 = primary; 4 = gymnasium; 5 = lyceum; 6 = tertiary non-university; 7 = tertiary university; 8 = doctorate.

Note. 2 = the above categories were borrowed from the *Cyprus Population Census 2001* (Vol.1, 2001).

A similar situation is encountered when investigating the interviewees' *influences* (see Table 5.2). Influences might include parental influences or influences from others. Examples of parental influences are when an interviewee remembers visiting museums with his parents, taking art classes because his parents wanted him/ her to do so, or engaging with artworks in his/ her parents' house. Influences from others might include guidance by teachers, relatives, friends or partners.

Table 5.2

Parental Influences, Influences from Others, and Visitation Frequency

Visitation Frequency	Influences			Total
	Parental	From others*	None	
Very Frequent	6	3	3	12
Frequent	3	3	1	7
Regular	1	2	6	9
Occasional	3	6	6	15
Rare	1	2	4	7
Non-visitor	1	1	8	10
	15	17	28	60

Note. *Influences from others= influenced by a partner, relative, teacher or friend.

At first glance it seems that family influences have a direct impact on museum visitation. 10 out of 15 individuals who were influenced by their parents when they were children (answered positively to the question “Did your parents take you to art museums when you were a child?”) are now regular to very frequent visitors. For example, Dimitra, a very frequent visitor and arts writer, remembers her parents “dragging” her to art museums when she was a child [very frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I19]. Similarly, Arthur described his experience growing up with artworks:

Arthur: Having an aesthetic appreciation of art comes from what you have in your home when you are growing up. I grew up in a house where there were paintings all around me because my great-grandfather was a painter – was an artist. And I remember looking at those paintings and at some age, probably around nine or ten, I looked and looked and looked at one of these paintings and it just amazed me. I just – because, it was like, from close up, you couldn’t see very much. But then you stand back, you suddenly saw this impressionistic picture of a hill and trees. [It was a] very simple painting but it made a big impression on me – the impressionistic painting.

Researcher: Yes, but it was in your house?

Arthur: It was in my house and for years and years and years I didn’t notice it but then suddenly I noticed it and thought about what I’ve seen, I think. And then I started looking at other paintings as well. [regular visitor, male, 45-54 years old, I5]

It is obvious that parental influences can be very significant since they can shape the way children feel about museums and artworks. The fact that 18 out of 28 interviewees, whose accounts did not include references to influence from their parents or other individuals, are occasional to non-visitors also supports the connection between influences and visitation.

We do not observe any significant connection between the visitation frequency of interviewees and their perceived influences from others (partners, relatives, teachers or friends). The fact that influences range in intensity and time duration might explain this outcome. For example, Brian is married to an art educator and admitted: “my wife introduced me to the world of art” [occasional visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I34]. On the other hand, Lydia has a colleague who is a painter and had an exhibition once, which she attended [rare visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I11]. Obviously, the influence exercised by Brian’s wife and Lydia’s colleague, are quite different in nature, intensity, and time duration.

Even though parental influences seem to have a significant impact on the interviewees’ visitation frequency, 5 interviewees out of 15 who had parental influences are occasional to non-visitors. Furthermore, 10 out of 28 who did not claim to receive any guidance at all (from responses to direct questions and spontaneous mentions) are regular to very frequent visitors. For example Maria [very frequent visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I33] is a very frequent visitor and an art student. Not only did her parents not take her to art museums when she was a child, but she also complained that her parents discouraged her from studying art. Similarly, Kassandra feels that the fact that her parents did not take her to places like museums, theatres etc., was a disadvantage for her. However, she explained that this did not stop her from becoming who she is, that is, a frequent art museum visitor:

They [my parents] never took me to art museums, theatres, movie theatres etc. and I complain about the fact that they didn’t take us to places like these. In the end, I would have ended up in the same place; it just took me longer. [...] I would have liked to have those kinds of memories from my childhood. It’s something very important for me and I want my children, if I ever have any, to take them to such places. [frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I1]

It seems that parental and other influences have an impact on but do not strictly determine museum visitation.

Occupation is an indirect indicator of income and social class. Table 5.3 summarises the relationship between occupation and visitation frequency for the 60 interviewees. Participants with higher-income occupations such as managers, professionals, and teachers seem to frequent museums the most. 9 out of 14 managers, 10 out of 17 professionals and 4 out of 5 teachers are regular to very frequent visitors. On the other hand, people engaged in

lower-income occupations such as clerks, workers, and housewives do not usually frequent museums. 11 out of 13 interviewees from these occupations are occasional to non-visitors. Students do not seem to be particularly interested in visiting art museums. 4 out of 6 students are occasional, rare or non-visitors. Unfortunately, because of the lack of sufficient data, technicians, agricultural/ craft workers, the retired, and unemployed are not mentioned here. In conclusion, we can say that interviewees with higher-paid occupations are more likely to visit art museums than interviewees with lower-paid occupations. However, this research includes a significant number of managers and professionals (12 out of 31) who do not usually visit art museums.

Table 5.3

Occupation and Visitation Frequency

Museum Visitation	Occupation										Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Very Frequent	5	4		1	1		1				12
Frequent	2	2		1	1					1	7
Regular	2	4		2			1				9
Occasional	3	3		1	5		1	1		1	15
Rare	1	1	1		2		2				7
Non-visitor	1	3			1	1	1	2	1		10
	14	17	1	5	10	1	6	3	1	2	60

Note. 1 = legislator, manager; 2 = professional; 3 = technician; 4 = teacher; 5 = service workers/ clerks; 6 = agricultural/ craft/ machine worker; 7 = student; 8 = housewife; 9 = retired; 10 = currently not working.

Note. 2 = The above categories were borrowed from the *Cyprus Population Census 2001* (Vol.1, 2001). The only alternation in the categories was that the category of “student” was added in the options.

5.2.2 Age, Gender, and Marital Status

Gender and marital status do not seem to influence museum visitation significantly while age seems to play a role. Table 5.4 shows the relationship between *age* and visitation frequency. As we can see, interviewees under the age of 24 and over the age of 55 do not seem to frequent museums, while interviewees between the ages of 25 and 54 are the most active visitors.

Table 5.4

Age and Visitation Frequency

Visitation Frequency	Age						Total
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	>65	
Very Frequent	1	4	4	3			12
Frequent		5	2				7
Regular	1	5	1	2			9
Occasional	2	5	2	5	1		15
Rare	2	4			1		7
Non-visitor	4	1		1	3	1	10
	10	24	9	11	5	1	60

8 out of 10 interviewees between the ages of 18 and 24 are occasional, rare or non-visitors. This is consistent with the finding that most students, usually in this age group, do not frequent museums. The only very frequent visitor who is under 24 and a student is actually an art student. All six interviewees who are above 55 are also occasional, rare or non-visitors. This might be due to the fact that older people did not have as many opportunities in the past, as younger people do now, to visit art museums. Forty years ago Cyprus had very few museums and people rarely travelled. Unfortunately it is not possible to know from these data if the differences in visitation frequency are due to people's life cycles, generational differences in Cyprus, or external elements such as the availability of museums. Nevertheless, the findings are in accordance with other international research which wants participation rates to rise slightly through middle age and then drop again (Schuster, 1993).

Table 5.5 shows the relationship between *gender* and museum visitation. No significant differences are apparent between the two sexes.

Table 5.5

Gender and Visitation Frequency

Visitation Frequency	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Very Frequent	5	7	12
Frequent	3	4	7
Regular	6	3	9
Occasional	8	7	15
Rare	4	3	7
Non-visitor	3	7	10
	29	31	60

Finally, Table 5.6 shows the relationship between *marital status* and visitation frequency as well as the relationship between visitation and whether or not the interviewees have any

children. The only important finding seems to be that single people frequent art museums more often than married people. From the 28 very frequent, frequent, and regular visitors, 9 are married, 17 are single, and 2 are divorced.

Table 5.6

Marital Status, Children, and Visitation Frequency

Visitation frequency	Marital Status			Children	
	Single	Married	Divorced	Yes	No
Very Frequent	6	5	1	6	6
Frequent	5	2		2	5
Regular	6	2	1	3	6
Occasional	5	10		10	5
Rare	3	4		2	5
Non-visitor	5	5		5	5
	30	28	2	28	32

The existence or absence of children in families does not seem to affect visitation frequency apart from the fact that most people with children visit art museums occasionally.

As we have seen, the data confirmed the fact that education, parental influences, and occupation have an impact on museum visitation. However, these factors cannot adequately explain all visitation decisions. Furthermore, gender and marital status do not seem to influence visitation frequency. Finally, people under the age of 25 and over the age of 55 are underrepresented in art museums.

5.3 The Omnivorous Museum Visitor

According to Peterson (1996), people who engage in high leisure activities usually engage in low leisure activities as well, and thus can be labelled *omnivorous*. On the other hand, people from lower socio-economic classes typically engage exclusively in low leisure activities, hence, the *univorous* label (see Chapter 2). One of the aims of this research was to test this assumption. For the purposes of this study 14 low and high leisure activities (apart from visiting art museums) were identified from the previous literature (for a list of these activities see Table 4.1 in Chapter 4). The questionnaire (see Appendix 2) gauged the frequency with which interviewees participated in these activities in order to test Peterson's omnivorous theory. With the help of Table 5.7 we can see the *average* low, high, and total leisure activities for each visitation category. Figure 5.1 visually demonstrates this relationship.

Table 5.7

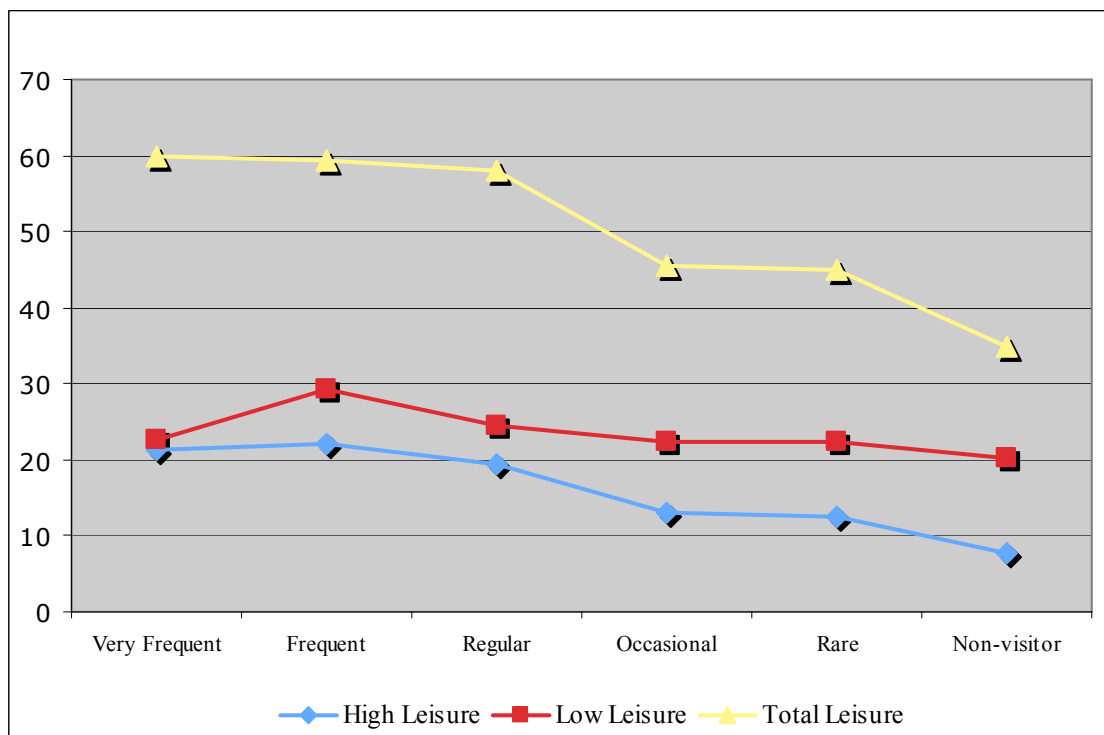
Average High, Low, Total Leisure, and Visitation Frequency

Visitation Frequency	Leisure		
	High Leisure	Low Leisure	Total Leisure
Very Frequent	21.4	22.5	59.8
Frequent	22.0	29.3	59.3
Regular	19.4	24.6	58.0
Occasional	13.0	22.5	45.6
Rare	12.6	22.4	44.9
Non-visitor	7.6	20.2	34.8

Note 1. The numbers in this table are the result of adding up the frequency [never=0, every week=7] of each activity in each leisure category [high, low, and total] for all interviewees in the same visitation group. Then, the numbers were divided by the number of people in each visitation group. Thus, the resulting numbers represent the averages of high, low, and total leisure for each visitation group.

Note 2. Total leisure includes 3 additional leisure activities.

Figure 5.1

Average High, Low, Total Leisure, and Visitation Frequency

From Figure 5.1 we can see clearly that the more someone visits art museums the more he/she participates in other leisure activities of either the high or low variety. They seem omnivorous in their leisure choices as Peterson predicted. Conversely, people who do not visit art museums are more univorous in their leisure choices since they restrict themselves to a few, usually low, leisure activities. In general, it seems that most interviewees, apart from the very frequent visitor group, which participates almost equally in both high and low leisure activities, participate more often in low leisure activities.

According to Bourdieu (1968), the higher social classes distinguish themselves from the lower classes by their leisure participation choices. They choose to participate in high leisure activities which require the use of cultural capital. Cultural capital is only acquired through a certain habitus. Lower social classes who do not have the cultural capital to participate in these activities are excluded. However, as we have seen in Chapter 2, Peterson successfully breaks down the dichotomy of high and low leisure activities by showing that the upper classes also participate in lower leisure activities and therefore do not snobbishly distinguish themselves by participating exclusively in high leisure activities. It is true that the data of this study suggest that the more one visits art museums the more omnivorous he/she is. However, we cannot say that omnivorous people are indifferent to distinction. According to Battani & Hall (2000), “In a direct and subtle engagement with Bourdieu’s work on cultural capital, Peterson emphasizes that the omnivore is concerned less with what one appreciates than with how one appreciates it” (p. 144). As we will see, omnivores and univores alike exercise a sense of distinction and belonging through what they consume, as well as *how* they consume it. In other words, the ways leisure activities are used is just as essential to creating, re-constructing or maintaining self-identity as the choice of those activities.

5.4 Symbolic Boundaries and the Definition of Self

It is too simplistic to divide museum audiences into two categories – those who visit and those who do not. Not all museum visitors are the same since they use museums in a variety of ways. Likewise, not all non-visitors are similar since they choose not to visit art museums for a variety of reasons. Whether or not people choose to visit or how they use museums (inside and outside their walls) are tools they use to distinguish themselves from others or to feel a sense of belonging vis-à-vis certain groups. This process presupposes the drawing of symbolic boundaries in relation to the *Other* (see also Chapter 3). Lamont, in her book “Money, Morals & Manners” (1992), defines symbolic boundaries as “conceptual distinctions that we make to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space. Here I am concerned exclusively with the subjective boundaries that we draw between ourselves and others” (p. 9). She identifies three types of symbolic boundaries: moral, socio-economic and cultural boundaries. According to Lamont (1992):

Moral boundaries are drawn on the basis of moral character; they are centered around such qualities as honesty, work ethic, personal integrity, and consideration

for others [...] *Socioeconomic boundaries* are drawn on the basis of judgment concerning people's social position as indicated by their wealth, power, or professional success [...] *Cultural boundaries* are drawn on the basis of education, intelligence, manners, tastes, and command of high culture. (p. 4)

Lamont argues that cultural consumption is only one available type of high status signal and that Bourdieu underestimated the importance of moral signals and thus created a blind spot in his theory. One of the central concepts in Lamont's work is that symbolic boundaries presuppose:

1. the *exclusion* of the repulsive or impure, which results in a sense of *distinction*,
2. the *inclusion* of the desirable, which results in a sense of *belonging*, and
3. a grey area of elements that leave us indifferent.

This positioning in relation to the Other is simultaneously a way to define, re-construct and reinforce our identities. Lamont (1992) answers the question "But why do we draw boundaries?":

Boundary work is an intrinsic part of the process of constructing the self; they emerge when we try to define who we are: we constantly draw inferences concerning our similarities to, and differences from, others, indirectly producing typification systems. Thereby we define our own inwardness and the character of others, identity being defined relationally. By generating distinctions, we also signal our identity and develop a sense of security, dignity, and honor. (p. 11)

The following sections provide evidence of how different visitation groups draw symbolic boundaries to distinguish themselves from others and develop a sense of group membership. We will also see how this process defines the interviewees' self-identity and influences their visitation decisions. Even though this study focuses on cultural boundaries, evidence of moral and socio-economic boundaries is also apparent. For the purposes of this analysis, the six visitation groups are collapsed into three visitation levels: (a) high visitation level (very frequent and frequent visitors), (b) middle visitation level (regular and occasional visitors), and (c) low visitation level (rare and non-visitors). We will also examine the use of the word *koultouriaris*, which is a Greek word meaning "highbrow" or "pseudo-intellectual".

5.4.1 High Visitation Level (Very Frequent and Frequent Visitors)

Very frequent visitors have a special connection with art and, as an extension, with art museums. Art plays an important role in their lives and in defining their sense of self. Most

art professionals interviewed fall into this category. For example, Ruth, an art teacher mentioned that “There are always people that love art but it’s not the same. I’m involved with art and it’s my job. That’s why I’m more connected with what I see” [very frequent visitor, female, 35-44 years old, I32].

Very frequent visitors are aware that they have a special connection with art museums, and for this reason they do not believe that other museum visitors could possibly appreciate what they see as much as they do. Pambos, an icon painter, mentioned:

And I have the following fear: when I start going to museums ... I’m not going to go back home. Yes, yes. I say this and people laugh, some friends of mine. You know, I see people going for excursions in Prague, in Italy, and they say ‘we had a good time, we saw this’. I understand that they just passed by, saw some things for half an hour ... they didn’t understand anything, and I definitely do not want to join them in these excursions. You cannot see the whole museum in a day, in a week. They all pass from the Louvre, stop to see Gioconda. [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I12]

Pambos drew symbolic boundaries between two groups of people – his friends and other museum visitors. First, he differentiated himself from others and, more particularly, from his friends. He mentioned that he loves art museums so much that there is the danger of getting emotionally lost in them. His friends, not only they do not understand this, but they also think it is funny. Second, he distinguishes himself from other museum visitors who he believes use art museums in a superficial way. Another interviewee, Andrew, described something similar when I asked him if he thought that other museum visitors behave like he does in art museums: “No. Not all of them. I try to give time. The same way the artist dedicated time to make something, I try to give time in order to understand what he tries to say” [frequent visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I41]. Andrew does not believe that the majority of visitors dedicate as much time as he does in museums. When he was talking about his friends he said:

And the museum [National Gallery, Athens] will have exhibitions on different subjects. No one would visit with me. You almost heard them say: ‘Do you want us to go to an exhibition? Are you crazy?’ [frequent visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I41]

Andrew also explained that he does not see young people of his age visiting art museums. By highlighting the fact that most people do not spend much time inside museums, that his friends do not find visiting art museums worthwhile, and that he is one of the only young people who visit, he successfully distinguished himself from others and at the same time presented himself as belonging to the group of frequent museum visitors who love and appreciate art and artists.

What was surprising in the case of very frequent and frequent visitors is that they did not try to distinguish themselves from non-visitors as much as from *other visitors*. Almost all of them referred to certain categories of museum visitors they do not identify with and at the same time specified the category of visitors they feel they belong to. Elias, a museum curator mentioned:

The 1% [the percentage of people who visit art museums] in Cyprus are people that have some higher culture, that is, some higher educational level. They have experiences abroad as well. They know, they have experiences with individuals who love museums, they learned to love museums through others. There is also a small group that wants to be elevated through art [...]. You often see in exhibitions people that do not understand [what they see] and they just wander around. Not because they love it. [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I43]

Elias included himself in the 1% of Cypriots who, he believes, have a “higher culture” level, higher education, experiences abroad, and a passion for museums. Furthermore, he made it clear that he does not belong to that small group of people who do not truly love art but want to be socially elevated by attending gallery openings and owning paintings. This dichotomy was apparent in other interviews as well. For example, Kostas, the director of a non-profit cultural organization, explained that he divides people into two categories – those who mythologize art and those who do not. He placed himself in the second category and clarified what he meant by mythologizing art:

Kostas: Those who mythologize art, the ones that go there and they try to discover the da Vinci code for example.

Researcher: But what do you mean?

Kostas: That is, suddenly, they visit to see that work because it is very famous. They go to see Guernica, for example. [...] Guernica is a very digestible work for me. It doesn't mean that I don't consider it important, but it's a very digestible work. It's the easy solution. It's like tourists who go to the Eiffel tower in order to

take a picture. The Japanese, American tourists they go in order to appear at the Parthenon and various, various places so they can be photographed there. It's a point-to-point analysis of art. At the same time, they mythologize art and they go in order to make contact with this thing and to be able to say that 'I've been there as well'. [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I44]

Margarita, a commercial gallery owner, also separated people into those who truly love art and those who visit for other reasons. Furthermore, she insisted that she could recognize someone who loves art during the first two or three sentences of a conversation. After pressuring her to elaborate on how this is possible, she said:

Margarita: I don't know if it's what he says, what he says more ... the conversation - not the way he talks, not the way he ... - what he says has content. He uses the right words, nice words, has a nice vocabulary.

Researcher: Apart from what he says? Anything else?

Margarita: [...] I believe that the person who deals with this field has a rich internal world. He has very rich emotions, he appreciates, he loves, he is interested, he moves forward. This is what I mean. Because, as I told you before, it's possible for someone to have an amazing collection and to be a very stupid person and not understand anything. [very frequent visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I37]

It was difficult for Margarita to explain how she can instantly recognize someone who loves art even though she was certain she can do so. It seems that people might use certain language in order to define themselves as "art-lovers". Margarita went on to admit that she also judges people from what kind of art they have around them:

Even if I visit a house, the first thing I will notice is the artworks. If I visit a store, the first thing I'll turn to look is the walls. And if something is nice, I'll judge the owners from that. Again, something changes inside me. Even in a boutique, if I turn and see something beautiful I will say that this person is cultured. Even in a supermarket or a grocery store I might see something small that will reveal the character of the owner and show me that he loves [art]. It happens all the time - without me wanting to. [very frequent visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I37]

Elias', Kosta's and Margarita's comments remind us of the way members in a subculture can recognize each other. It seems that some visitors in the high visitation levels can recognize not only other people who are interested in art, but also *genuine* from *fake* art-lovers. There are certain signals such as what museums people choose to visit and what artworks they choose to pay attention to, the way people look at artworks, the way they talk,

dress and decorate their spaces, which a genuine art-lover can recognize. Even though most interviewees find it difficult to express themselves when it comes to explaining why they feel the way they do, some are very aware of the symbolic power of art. For example Kostas, with sarcasm in his tone of voice, said:

You feel it, you have the need to be distinguished, but above all you have to be cultivated. And cultivation does not come out of how many books you read or what things you say in a conversation, but it comes out through symbols. And art has a purely symbolic character. That is, if you come to my house and you see a huge artwork behind me, you put me in a model. Someone might have inherited a work and in the will there was a condition that if he removes it they will take away the house. You do understand. Or I put it there in order to sell an image, or I'll put it there because ... why not, since I'll also show the completeness of my personality. Or some of them don't even think about the fact that there is an association. So, I express intellectualism in this way. Yes, it takes a symbolic character from which you benefit socially. So there is an indirect analysis of the information we have in front of us and we make a comparison that will result in the person I want to show that I am. [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I44]

Overall, it seems that symbolic boundaries are very strong for very frequent and frequent visitors. They use symbolic boundaries not so much to distinguish themselves from non-visitors as to distinguish themselves from other visitors. They also use symbolic boundaries to show that they belong to a small group of people who truly love and care about art and have the education and previous experiences to be able to appreciate what they see in art museums. Furthermore, interviewees from the higher visitation levels seem to be able to identify each other through decoding certain symbols and thus can function like a subculture whose participants can identify genuine from fake members. This is not the case in the middle visitation level.

5.4.2 Middle Visitation Level (Regular and Occasional Visitors)

The middle visitation level is the “grey area” of distinction and belonging since a multitude of attitudes is evident in this visitation level. A number of interviewees place themselves in an intermediate position, somewhere between the people who are very interested in art and those who are not. Interviewees from the middle visitation levels often admit that they sometimes cannot comprehend what they see in museums. Finally, they sometimes distinguish themselves from other visitors, but more commonly from non-visitors.

Interviewees in the middle visitation levels understand that some people are more interested in art and museums than they are. They occasionally distinguish themselves from frequent museum visitors by saying that they are not really interested in art, they are not artists themselves or they do not consider themselves creative individuals. For example, Lucy explained:

Lucy: And then some people are naturally more artistic, more creative, more imaginative, more ... I mean you see that from a very young age.

Researcher: Yes. Do you feel that you are one of these people?

Lucy: No. I don't feel that I'm ... like, I never felt, even when I was at school, I was never like imaginative, creative ... you know, come up with something. I was always very very structured. I did art O' level, but you could always tell that I just copied everything, you know? It wasn't like something inspired me. [occasional visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I36]

Lucy went on to position herself somewhere in the middle of people who “really care” about art and those who do not.

Researcher: Do you think other people behave in the same way as you do in a museum?

Lucy: Yes, of course. But I think there is great variation in how people behave in museums. Like, some people are there because they have to be there so they don't take an interest. Other people are there because they are like great fans of the artist or something, so they take a lot more time, a lot more. Yes. So, I wouldn't say that people go to museums with the same attitude or the same ...

Researcher: Where do you place yourself?

Lucy: In the middle (laughs).

Researcher: In the middle. OK.

Lucy: Definitely. [occasional visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I36]

This positioning is actually quite usual with interviewees who are occasional visitors. It is also evident in the following conversation with Michalis, another occasional visitor:

Researcher: Who do you think visits museums?

Michalis: First of all, people who have a direct interest, those who deal with museums and culture either professionally or at an amateur level. They visit, I think. Some who do not deal with it will have no interest in visiting.

Researcher: OK. What about you? In what category do you place yourself?

Michalis: About in the middle.

Researcher: About in the middle?

Michalis: About in the middle, yes. I don't particularly deal with museums, but I like going to a place and visiting its museum. [occasional visitor, male, 55-64 years old, I48]

Placing themselves in the middle means that the middle visitation group draws symbolic boundaries between museum visitors *and* non-visitors. The following quotes highlight two distinct ways occasional and regular visitors distinguish themselves from other art museum visitors. According to Nicholas, people who visit art museums are "Very different. They like it. It's something . . . I prefer to go to clubs, to movie theatres, to football matches ... it's exactly the opposite" [occasional visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I23]. Nicholas does not identify with museum visitors in general because he sees his own leisure priorities as different. On the other hand, David tried to separate himself from a *certain* category of museum visitors – those who visit in order to show off.

Many types [of people] visit because it's a must, it's glamorous. They sit in front of a painting, which they don't understand for example ... Really they might not understand what it is. I really believe that most of them do not understand. [regular visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I22]

David believes that most museum visitors pretend that they understand what they see but they truly do not. According to David, the difference between those museum visitors and himself is that he refuses to *pretend* that he understands. This is a moral stand for David. This might be a point where cultural boundaries and moral boundaries merge as Lamont (1992) predicted.

As a matter of fact, regular and occasional visitors are more willing than other visitors to admit that they might not understand what some artworks or artists have to say. For example, Danos has similar attitudes to David:

Researcher: Who do you think usually visits galleries in Cyprus?

Danos: ... 80% [of those who visit]? People who want to show off or people who want to show that they understand.

Researcher: You know, many people mentioned this. But how do you understand this? How do you know?

Danos: It's because I don't understand it myself. I can't explain it otherwise. You know, for example this painting - not this painting [chooses one of the three paintings in his office. It is an abstract painting] OK, my daughter can also do this. Some people come in and say, 'Wow, how wonderful and beautiful and this ... '. Because I don't understand it, I attribute it to something else.

Researcher: Yes, yes.

Danos: In order to prove that he is clever, for example, to tell us that he understands art. I'm not saying that I'm not wrong. [occasional visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I51]

Danos, like David, admits that he might not understand everything he sees and believes that most museum visitors visit in order to show off. Some interviewees from the middle visitation level feel frustrated because they do not understand art. In the following quote, Marinos describes his frustration with artists:

Let me tell you about my last experience that I had two months ago. On New Year's Eve, a friend of ours invited us to a gallery where she was having her exhibition. When I asked her what her subject was, in any case, to tell me the title [of the exhibition], she talked for a quarter of an hour about the title, two quarters, and I couldn't understand anything. Nothing at all! Really, I couldn't understand anything! Also, when I visited the exhibition and I saw 100 or so paintings that she had there, again I didn't understand anything. I couldn't understand what it was that she wanted to say through her efforts. It might have been a failed attempt or maybe I just didn't understand. But ... this was the feeling. [regular visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I17]

As we have seen, interviewees from the middle visitation levels distinguish themselves from other visitors. However, they mostly draw symbolic boundaries between non-visitors. For example, Stavros and Stavroula visit museums whenever they are abroad on vacation. They said about non-visitors:

Stavros: There are a lot of people who you might take to a museum to see things, [and they might say] 'What are these stupid things? I won't sit and look at these.'

Stavroula: Yes, yes.

Stavros: Do you understand? I want to say, he is totally ignorant.

Stavroula: 'The old rock', for example (laughs).

Stavros: Yes. For example, he sees pottery and he says ‘I won’t look at the old rocks now!’ That’s the way he sees it. This is what we’re talking about. It depends on the individual. [occasional visitor, male, 45-54 years old, I46]

Stavroula: Yes. [occasional visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I45]

Stavros and Stavroula separated themselves from people who would refer to antiquities as “old rocks” and who cannot possibly appreciate art. Catherine, in a similar way, distinguished herself from non-visitors by offering an example of a particular non-visitor, her sister-in-law:

For example, in London, when we went to my sister-in-law’s house and we were talking about the museums we visited, she said that she never visited those places. They live there and she has so much free time. She doesn’t even work. Her husband comes back home at five, her children are grown-ups and they study, and she plays tennis, cards, meets her friends, things like these. They don’t visit such places. Also other people that I hear about behave like this. They like to go to ‘bouzoukia’ [night clubs], to places of entertainment here and there. I don’t say that the one excludes the other but ... this kind of people who like to entertain themselves and have fun are not interested in these things [visiting museums]. [occasional visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I47]

Catherine, by distinguishing herself from those people who are only interested in entertaining themselves, placed herself in the category of those who are interested in learning and visiting art museums. Andria distinguished herself from non-visitors in another way. She considers non-visitors as individuals who did not have the “right influences”:

It’s a heavy word to say that they are ‘crude’ or uneducated. I believe that you have to have the right influences in order to understand, to appreciate or to like ... I don’t know. I know many people that I feel that if I travelled with them they would find passing their time in this way [visiting art museums] boring - you understand? [regular visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I31]

Similarly, Natalie, a clothing shop owner, stressed the fact that education plays a role in arts appreciation:

There are many people who believe that artworks are useless or that they are a useless expense. But I also believe these are the people whose educational status is

a bit low. I don't know if I see it in the wrong way but I believe this plays a big role. [occasional visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I27]

She went on to say that an uneducated person cannot understand why she has paintings in her house. It seems that Catherine, Andrie, and Natalie want to distance themselves from what they consider as negative attributes such as lack of interest in learning, lack of art appreciation or lack of education.

Overall, interviewees who belong in the middle visitation level seem to be placing themselves somewhere in the middle of those who really care about art and those who do not. They distinguish themselves from other visitors as well as from non-visitors in a variety of ways. We have seen interviewees distinguishing themselves from other visitors because their leisure priorities are different or because they believe that frequent museum visitors visit mainly in order to show off. Some of them admit that they do not understand some things they see in museums and they do not hide their frustration about this. Finally, we have seen how interviewees in the middle visitation level distinguish themselves from non-visitors either because they see them as not cultured enough, not interested in learning or simply as uneducated.

5.4.3 Low Visitation Level (Rare Visitors and Non-visitors)

Rare and non-visitors draw symbolic boundaries between themselves and art museum visitors by assigning art museum visitors roles they themselves do not take or attributes they do not have. People in the low visitation level usually define themselves in opposition to museum visitors. Art museum visitors are described in four main ways:

1. Art professionals and their friends. When I asked Vaso to tell me who she thinks visits art museums she asked back: "Presumably some artists, actors, these kinds of people visit, right?" [non-visitor, female, 55-64 years old, I24]. Similarly Miriam answered: "Those that are directly interested, those who create them, their friends, their acquaintances, like that" [non-visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I30]. Some people in the low visitation level see museum and gallery visiting as something done by art professionals and their friends. Therefore, they believe that they would feel quite awkward participating in this subculture since they do not belong to it, do not know anything about it or they do not care about it.

2. Tourists and students. A lot of interviewees mentioned that art museums are frequented by tourists and students. For example, Lazaros said: "I don't know who visits but tourists

want to come and see. They are very interested in it and that's why they are in Greece" [non-visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I13]. This is a common perception in Cyprus. Most people believe that only tourists and school children visit Cypriot museums. As we will see in Chapter 7, this is not far from the truth for some museums. When I asked Monica who she thinks visits art museums, she immediately said:

Monica: Tourists.

Researcher: Tourists? ... In Cyprus?

Monica: Yes.

Researcher: Abroad?

Monica: ... I wouldn't know. I believe the ones that do research, some kind of research or ... schools, students.

Researcher: Yes. What about art galleries? Who do you think visits art galleries?

Monica: Those who have money to buy something? (laughs). [non-visitor, female, 18-24 years old]

Monica's first thought was tourists and then she went on to mention students. Students are usually "incidental" visitors because most of the time their visits are obligatory.

3. *Rich people who can afford to buy artworks.* Monica also mentioned that art gallery visitors are people who have the economic power to buy artworks. Similarly, Tommy said that art museum visitors are: "usually rich people who have nothing else to do and have a lot of time" [rare visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I10]. In this case, rare and non-visitors not only use cultural boundaries to distinguish themselves from museum visitors but also use socio-economic boundaries as Lamont suggested.

4. *People who want to show off.* As many interviewees from different visitation levels did, interviewees in the low visitation level also distinguish themselves from people who frequent galleries and museums in order to show off, to pretend that they are something they are not. For example, Dinos mentioned: "It's a caste, a social group that shows off that they have a certain level, in general. Except for some exceptions, most of them are the same" [non-visitor, male, 55-64 years old, I29].

Another interviewee, Tommy, imagined the museum as a place with:

Low lighting ... people looking at some paintings and trying to see something that they think that they see. They see for example a picture and they ... I believe, they

point at a tree and they say [in ironic tone] ‘this is that and the leaves are this’. Things that I believe do not exist, they are just in our minds. Anyway, things like these. [rare visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I10]

Tommy imagined people describing things that do not really exist in a dimly lit building. The whole museum atmosphere is for him a “fake” one.

Overall, most interviewees in the low visitation level distinguished themselves from museums visitors and felt that they belonged to the majority of people who happen to be non-visitors. For example, Emily identifies with the “simple people”, or most Cypriots:

I don’t think that simple people visit such places often - I don’t know, that’s what I believe. Except if you are directly interested, if you like it that much. [...] It’s a fact, us Cypriots, the last thing that occupies us is to visit an art museum. This is honestly. Whoever you ask most people will say that they have visited only with school. [rare visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I16]

Lazaros is a non-visitor of art museums but a frequent visitor of archaeological museums. He was talking about archaeological museums when he identified with the “9 out of 10 museum visitors who do not understand what they see” [non-visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I13]. This feeling of belonging is a safe feeling since rare and non-visitors feel that the majority of people behave and think the same way as they do. This gives them the sense that museum visitors are the different ones, the “strange” ones, the minority, and therefore their decision not to visit cannot be seriously wrong.

We have seen that all interviewees who are rare or non-visitors do not identify with museum visitors. However, we will see in Chapter 6 that they do so for different reasons. They either (a) reject art and art museums and thus form their identity in opposition to them, (b) are apologetic and blame themselves for not visiting, or (c) are completely indifferent to art and art museums.

5.4.4 “*Koultouriarides*”/ *Highbrows*

One of the most interesting findings of this research is the use of the word *koultouriaris* [plural: “*koultouriarides*”, in Greek: *κουλτουριάρης/ -ηδες*] which means “pseudo-intellectual, highbrow” (Lambea, 2005). The word “*koultouriaris*” has a double meaning. It can refer to someone who is interested in the arts or to someone who pretends to be

cultured, a pseudo-intellectual. Two students, Panayiota and Mary, mentioned the word *koultouriaris*, and I asked them to elaborate on what exactly they mean by it:

Mary: I know that it means someone who pretends to know about culture. But ‘*koultouriaris*’ might also be a person who *knows* about culture (laughs). [rare visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I40]

Researcher: It’s a bit confusing then?

Panayiota: I think it’s the person who pretends to know about art. [non-visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I39]

Similarly Eleni and Nicos said:

Eleni: There are some people that they say ‘*koultouriarides*’ and they mean some people ...

Nicos: [interrupts Eleni]. Eggheads! The egghead. [regular visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I56]

Eleni: ... who they are a bit weird. But the positive definition is that they are people who deal with the arts, with different cultural things. [regular visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I55]

Eleni and Nicos see *koultouriarides* as people who are a bit weird, bookish, and in general, different from them. However, they are also aware that there is an alternative, more positive definition of the word.

The term *koultouriaris* is loaded with subtle nuances that vary according to the speaker. Someone who believes that he is a cultured intellectual will probably use it in a different way than someone who is not interested in culture at all. For example, Fanos defined himself in opposition to this term. When I asked Fanos about the subjects he and his friends usually talk about he said: “[We talk] about football, about cards etc. About art? Honestly, I’m not a ‘*koultouriaris*’ in this sense” [rare visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I58].

Even if Fanos did not specify what he meant by the word *koultouriaris*, we know that he probably does not have a positive opinion about *koultouriarides*. All the interviewees who used this word did so to distance themselves from the highbrow world of (pseudo-) intellectuals and mainly belonged to the middle and low visitation levels.

What is interesting is that only one interviewee in the high visitation level mentioned the word *koultouriaris*. The reason might be that very frequent and frequent visitors can identify with the positive definition of the word but are aware of the negative connotations embedded in it. Therefore, they avoid using it fearing that they might sound snobbish. The only interviewee in the high visitation level who used the word, he did so in conjunction with the word “pseudo”. Elias said:

There is also a small group that wants to be elevated through art. That is, what we call the ‘pseudo-koultouriarides’. Because it’s chic to go to a gallery, because it’s chic to have a painting in your house by that artist, they pretend they know. [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I43]

Elias tried to distance himself from the negative associations of the *koultouriaris* label by creating another word - *pseudo-koultouriaris* - which means a fake highbrow. This way he distinguished himself from this group of fake intellectuals and protected his own status as a genuine *koultouriaris*, which is now stripped of its negative connotations.

5.4.5 Spectacle/ Performance Paradigm, Symbolic Boundaries, and Research Findings

As we have seen in Chapter 3, Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) offered a third paradigm as the solution to the debate between the dominant text and the dominant audience - the spectacle/ performance paradigm which highlights the notion of identity. According to Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998), “People, objects, events, *perform* for the diffused audience through their involvement in a richly symbolic world of spectacle” (p. 88). In this richly symbolic world of spectacle, people are acting in a way that reinforces their sense of distinction and belonging (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998; Lamont, 1992). For example, we have seen that interviewees in the higher visitation levels distinguish themselves by drawing symbolic boundaries between themselves and non-visitors, but especially between themselves and other visitors. Distinguishing themselves from *Others* also gives them the sense of belonging to certain groups or communities of like-minded individuals. According to Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998), being a member of a group is bound up with the construction of a person’s identity. They mention: “These processes allow the development of new and changing identities, and patterns of inclusion and exclusion based on knowledge and performance connected to the activity” (p. 178). It is worth noting that people from all visitation levels seem to continuously use symbolic boundaries in order to define and re-construct their identities. The sense of distinction and belonging is not an advantage of the higher classes or of the people who frequent art museums the most.

As audiences and performers in everyday life, we continuously make decisions that appear to be free choices. However, our decisions are restricted by how we perceive ourselves and the world around us. Our sense of identity, the communities we see ourselves belonging to, and therefore performing for, as well as the communities we try to distinguish ourselves from, inform *us*, and *others*, about who we are. Acting out in a restricted socio-cultural environment is not always a manifestation of free will. In conclusion, it all seems to be a matter of perception - how we perceive ourselves and the world around us. The following section will establish the foundations for the conceptual model of this study. It will analyse how our museum perceptions are formed, how they function, and finally, how we select, organize and make sense of the stimuli we receive.

5.5 Spectacles of Perception: a Conceptual Model

Our perceptions help us make sense of the plethora of stimuli received through the five senses that bombard us every second of our lives. According to Schiffman & Kanuk (2004), “Perception is defined as the process by which an individual selects, organizes, and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. It can be described as ‘how we see the world around us’” (p. 158). This definition is slightly adjusted here for the purposes of this study. *Museum perceptions* can be defined as the way individuals make sense of museums, inside and outside their walls, in relation to their daily lives and their conception of self-identity. Museum perceptions, through the process of selection, organization and interpretation, influence museum visitation choices and experiences. This process is only possible with the help of individual *spectacles of perception*, a term that will be explained later on in this section. The distorting lenses of these spectacles, which are shaped by socio-cultural and individual factors, determine our unique conception of reality and of museums in particular.

5.5.1 How Perceptions are Formed

In order to understand how perceptions function, we need to first understand how they are formed. I propose the following three intersecting sets of factors, identified by the previous literature and supported by the findings of this research, as the main structuring elements of our museum perceptions:

1. Socio-cultural factors such as social class, education, income, and upbringing;
2. Individual factors such as motivations, previous experiences, intelligences, talents, interests, lifestyles, and life stages; and finally

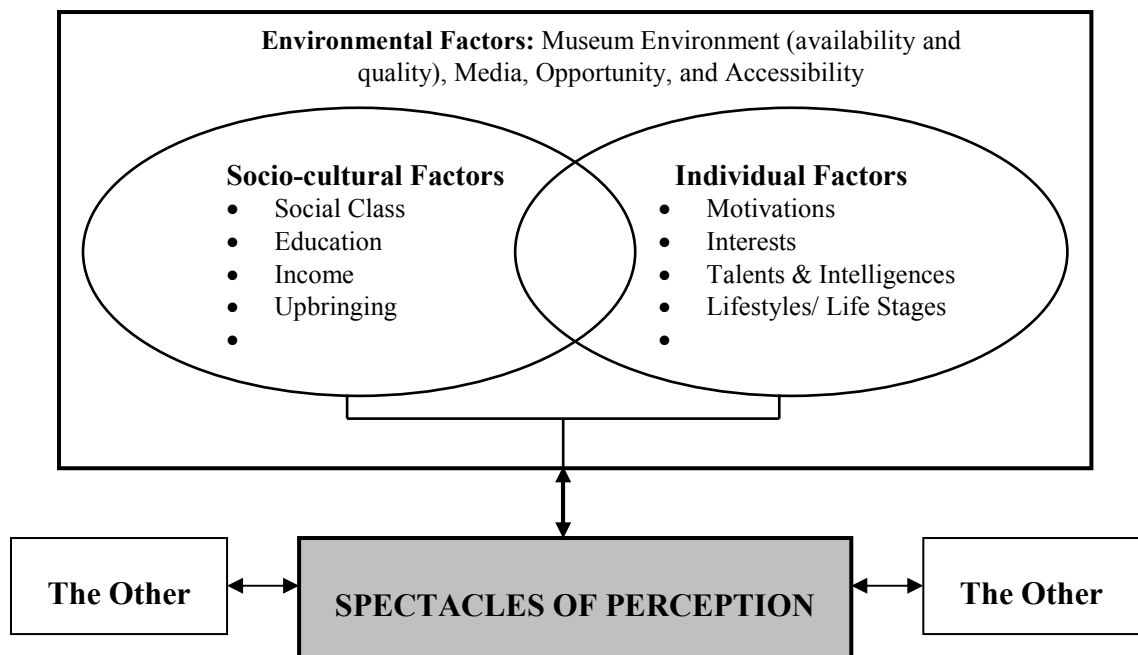
3. Environmental factors, such as museum availability, accessibility, location, and media, frame the operation of socio-cultural and individual factors.

This model refers to both sociological and psychological approaches in order to arrive at a fuller understanding of museum visitation, and recognizes the negotiation process that takes place between socio-cultural and individual factors.

Our perceptions are adjusted when new stimuli, information, and experiences become available, or when any of the above factors changes. Figure 5.2 illustrates the relationship between these factors. However, it is almost impossible to represent the complexity of people's decision-making processes in a simple diagram. Therefore, the reader should consider this diagram as a simple visual aid demonstrating how the previous literature fits into the proposed theoretical model. In reality, the three main sets of factors are not as clearly defined as the figure suggests. In fact, they are continuously intersecting and the lists of factors are not exhaustive.

Figure 5.2

How Perceptions are Being Formed



5.5.2 How Perceptions Function: Spectacles of Perception

Perceptions influence the way *we observe reality* by acting as filters, or even better, as a set of imaginary glasses. These virtually invisible glasses are so comfortable that it is easy to deny their existence. They are placed on the nose of the observer but are not fashioned by

him. They are constructed from the factory of his time - his social, cultural, economic, and political environment – but are also made to fit his individual sight, his specific personality characteristics. We will call these particular glasses the *spectacles of perception* (after Bourdieu’s “spectacles of culture”). Obviously, no two spectacles of perception are the same since each individual is shaped by different socio-cultural, individual, and environmental factors. In order to help us make sense of our world and ourselves our spectacles of perception seem to selectively filter – select, organize, and interpret – available information and stimuli. Therefore, the glasses might be imaginary but the danger of distorting reality is more than real. Reality becomes a subjective observation. Unfortunately, taking off our perceptual spectacles will not allow us to see the naked truth/reality. It would only leave us blind since without them we cannot make sense of what we see (or touch, smell, taste, and hear). Therefore, the concept of an “innocent eye” cannot possibly exist.

The spectacles of perception effect can perhaps explain the fact that no two people looking at a painting see exactly the same thing - even if (or especially if) the painting is a black line on a white canvas. Depending on the individual’s past experiences, education, interests, lifestyle, social class etc., he/ she will notice different things and have a different experience with the painting. It is perhaps no coincidence that it is said that the more things people have in common, the more they “see” the same way. The spectacles of perception also filter our experiences with museums and inform us about their images. Depending upon who you ask, museums can be described as:

[...] wonderful, frustrating, stimulating, irritating, hideous things, patronizing, serendipitous, dull as ditchwater and curiously exciting, tunnel-visioned yet potentially visionary [...] The real magic is that any one of them can be all those simultaneously. (Boniface & Fowler quoted by Prior, 2003, p. 64)

The concept of the spectacles of perception explains how this is possible. In addition, our spectacles of perception are closely related with our sense of identity, with who we think we are. In Chapter 3, as well as in this chapter, we have seen that people draw symbolic boundaries with the Other in order to define their identities. As a result, identities are always relational to the Other. This is also indicated in Figure 5.2.

5.5.3 Selective Perception and Cognitive Dissonance

Since we are continuously bombarded with information, it is virtually impossible to attend to all of it. According to Schiffman & Kanuk (2004), “Consumers subconsciously exercise a great deal of selectivity as to which aspects of the environment (which stimuli) they perceive. An individual may look at some things, ignore others, and turn away from still others. In actuality, people receive (i.e., perceive) only a small fraction of the stimuli to which they are exposed” (p. 168). One of the main functions of our spectacles of perception is to screen out irrelevant stimuli and select appropriate information for consideration. *Selective perception*, acting like a flashlight, selects parts of the whole, determines what we pay attention to, what we connect with, and eventually if we decide to visit museums or not. Selective perception can *aid* or *hinder* the reception of the museum’s communication efforts. For example, an individual might notice museum advertising because he/ she is specifically interested in art museums, because he/ she considers them a good place to take an out-of-town visitor, or because the advertising is a huge billboard screaming for attention. Not surprisingly, one of the most frequent complaints made by non-visitors is that they are not aware of museums because they do not advertise enough (Getty, 1991). However, even if advertising increases, non-visitors will keep filtering out museum messages if they still regard museums as irrelevant to their lives, boring, or uninspiring. The messages will be ignored or considered irrelevant in the same way a young person ignores persistent advertising for arthritis pills.

Selective perception functions not only outside but also inside the walls of museums. Inside the museum, our perceptions can determine what we will notice, interact with, have an aesthetic experience with, and remember after our visit. An exhibition offers a free-choice environment and as such visitors are free to notice and attend to whatever they like. It appears that visitors behave as if museums were mass media – they selectively linger in front of particular objects, fleetingly look at some, while completely ignoring others. This behaviour has been described as “active dozing” or “cultural window shopping” (Treinen, 1993). Plenty of researchers have experimented with different exhibition designs and the effect they have on visitors’ learning. However, research regarding what exactly attracts and sustains the *attention* of individual visitors is scarce. One of the things we know is that people are attracted to artefacts relevant to their previous knowledge and experience (Falk & Dierking, 2000). In addition, Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson (1990) showed that focused attention can determine if and with what we will have an aesthetic experience. Even though they believe that the viewers’ skills have to be matched to the challenges of the artwork in

order for attention to become focused, they recognize that different people respond to different stimuli regardless of their skills. It seems that the concept of selective perception can be useful in decoding the visitor's gaze. In the next chapter we will see that people engage with a smaller or larger number of artworks for shorter or longer periods of time depending on individual museum perceptions.

Perceptions are multifaceted and supple structures but can also be quite stubborn. As we have seen, research shows that often, when visual or written messages contradict visitors' preconceptions, they either completely ignore or alter messages to match their pre-existing perceptions (Bagnall 2003; Macdonald, 1992; Silverstone, 1988). This effect demonstrates that it is easier for people to reinforce their pre-existing attitudes than change them. The concept of *cognitive dissonance*, derived mainly from consumer behavior literature, describes this phenomenon. According to Mooij (2004), "The theory of cognitive dissonance is based on the premise that people have a need for order and consistency in their lives and that tension is created when beliefs or behaviors conflict with one another" (p. 187). Cognitive dissonance occurs when an individual maintains conflicting thoughts about a belief (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). For the purpose of this research, cognitive dissonance can occur when a person maintaining a specific attitude or belief, is confronted with evidence against that attitude. The person then, in order to reduce this dissonance, tries to find supporting evidence for his/ her pre-existing attitude. By doing so, there is the danger of ignoring or distorting messages that are against his/ her beliefs. The concept of cognitive dissonance can perhaps also explain why people are attracted to things they are familiar with. For example, a number of interviewees mentioned that in art museums they look for the artworks they already know. When familiar messages are confronted, a comfortable feeling of order and consistency emerges since pre-existing perceptions are being reinforced. The concept of *selective reading*, derived this time from mass communication theories, offers a similar explanation. The concept, closely associated with the work of John Fiske, is defined as "an interpretation of a text which changes its encoded meaning at the point of reception" (Ruddock, 2001).

Nevertheless, it does not mean that messages that cause cognitive dissonance are always ignored or distorted. In that case, there would be no point in trying to communicate anything that might challenge people's preconceived notions. The perceived importance and urgency of the message, the reliability and authority of the source, as well as the environment where the communication takes place, determines if people pay attention to

and accept a message as truthful. When a message is accepted, individuals have to readjust their perceptions to accommodate the new information.

The phrases “selective perception” and “cognitive dissonance” have been used in psychology and consumer behaviour studies in a way that emphasises the rational cognitive individual structures. Such literature focuses on individual needs, previous experiences, motivations and expectations as the main elements that shape perceptions, seemingly ignoring the social forces that partially mold these factors. For example, it is not clear at all whether selective perception is a self-generated process or an imposed one (Tomlinson, 1990). In the proposed conceptual model we have tried to exorcise the words perceptions, selective perception and cognitive dissonance from these purely cognitive and individualistic connotations by explaining that an individual’s perceptions stem from both his socio-cultural and individual factors. There is also the need to add that responses to stimuli are not always rational. Perceptions include both cognitive (knowledge, meanings, and beliefs) as well as effective (emotions, feelings, and moods) responses (Mooij, 2004). And finally, even though the proposed conceptual model described here emphasises stimuli and information received visually (*spectacles* of perception), we need to keep in mind that we receive information through all five senses.

5.5.4 Personal, Social, and Physical Context

The spectacles of perceptions are highly flexible in the sense that they can highlight and make sense of different stimuli, information, and experiences in different situations and environments. As indicated by Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998), “it is a reasonable hypothesis that audience members will offer different interpretations of the same text depending on who they are with and what purpose is served by the interpretation” (p. 34).

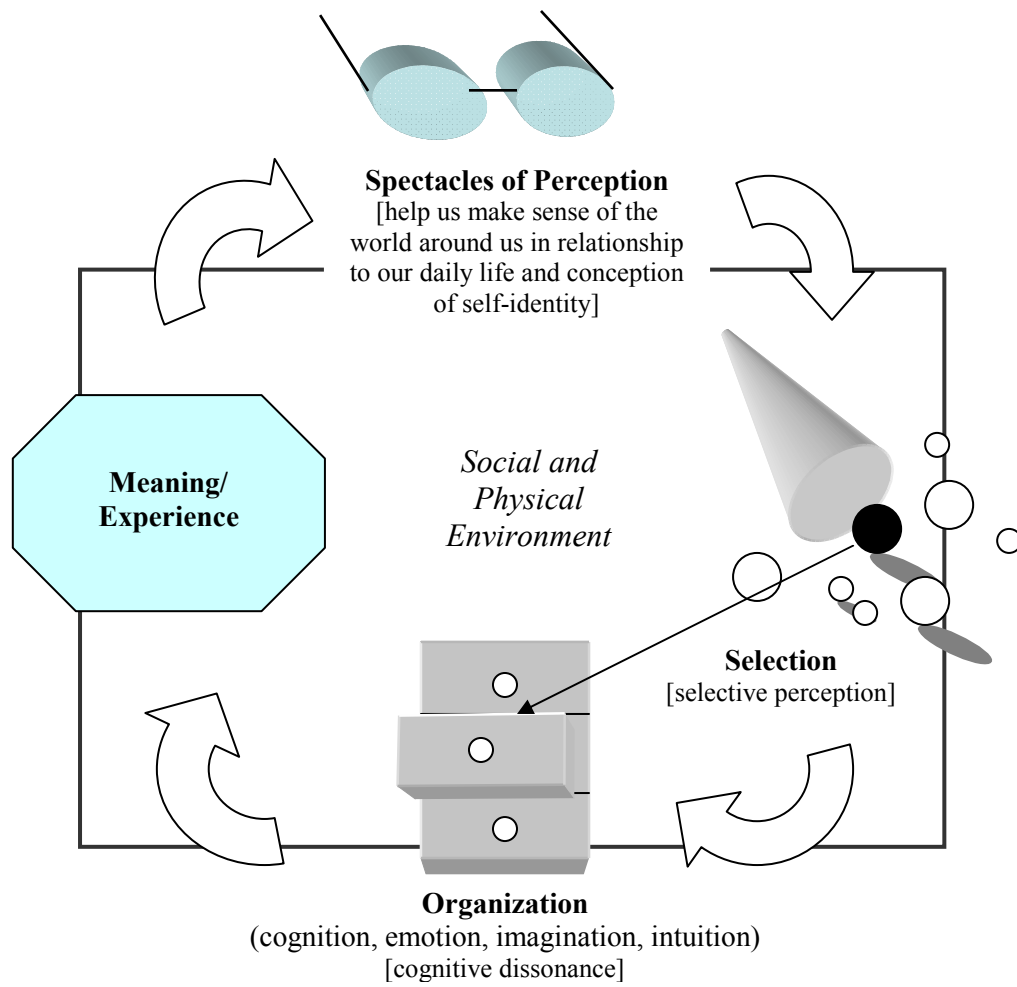
Therefore, different reception settings, social situations, and motivations, generally activate different perceptions. The art museum environment is one of these distinct reception settings. With its tendency to transform objects into art and offer them for attentive looking, the art museum offers another “way of looking” (Alpers, 1991). Furthermore, perceptions activated in the exhibition space are different from those activated, for example, in the museum store. The most obvious difference is that the objects in the exhibition space, usually bathed in “boutique lighting” to emphasise their uniqueness, are considered unique, valuable and unattainable. On the other hand, the objects in the museum store are believed to be less authentic, can be handled and even purchased.

Most theories of perceptions and art experience rely largely on the imaginary situation of one individual interacting with one artwork (Heath & vom Lehn, 2004). However, this fictional situation is rarely applicable to museums, which typically involve a complex exhibition design and often a social situation to go with it. For example, some exhibitions are designed to be more forceful in promoting a message than others, therefore leaving less space for free-choice attention. In addition, a large number of visitors go to museums as a part of a social group, whether parents with their children, couples, friends or co-workers (Falk & Dierking, 2000). Thus, no two social situations or exhibition environments will draw an individual's attention in the same way. Heath & vom Lehn (2004), while examining the group interaction of visitors in art galleries and museums, observed that conduct and experience emerge through socially organized action and interaction. In other words, the group language and gestures determine what is seen, what is considered important, how it is looked at, and the ways in which an aesthetic experience is created. Thus, the personal context interacts with both the social and physical contexts of the museum to determine what is noticed and what is remembered (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Rennie, 1996).

In conclusion, our spectacles of perception, within a certain social and physical environment, are responsible for the process of selection and organization of relevant stimuli, as well as for the meaning and experience created in museums. First, our spectacles of perception help us focus our attention by selecting relevant stimuli. The concept of selective perception can be used here. Second, the spectacles of perception help us organise these stimuli by placing them in the mental, emotional, imaginative, and intuitive drawers of our pre-existing worldviews, knowledge, experiences, attitudes, and notions of self-identity. It is useful here to keep in mind the concept of cognitive dissonance. Through the selection and organization process we eventually construct meaning which informs us about the world around us and about ourselves – the foundation of our experiences. Finally, the constructed meaning reinforces or reshapes our preconceived perceptions and, therefore, our spectacles of perception. Figure 5.3 illustrates this relationship.

Figure 5.3

The Selection, Organization, and Meaning Making Process



5.6 Conclusions

The review of the existing literature revealed a debate between two opposing camps: (a) the supporters of the idea that our actions are being structured by our socio-cultural environment, which functions as a dominating power over our seemingly free choices; and (b) the supporters of the notion of the free audience who believe that people have the freedom to creatively construct and re-construct their identities through their free choices. This study shows that both approaches are valuable and relevant to museum audience studies. As we have seen, structural elements such as education, upbringing, and socio-economic position do influence art museum visitation as Bourdieu argued. However, there are a number of interviewees who do not fit the “high cultural capital = high museum visitation” model. In addition, as Peterson’s omnivorous theory predicted, the findings show that people who often visit art museums do not exercise distinction by exclusively engaging in high leisure activities.

What is most apparent from the research results is that our identity is defined relationally by the Other. For this reason, we seek to establish a sense of distinction from certain groups and a sense of belonging with others. We have seen that interviewees from all visitation levels engage in this process by distinguishing themselves from art museum visitors or/ and non-visitors. Interestingly, most museum visitors are less concerned with distinguishing themselves from non-visitors than from other kinds of visitors. It seems that in this case symbolic boundaries are used to reinforce the image of an exclusive group of genuine art-lovers who have the education and previous experience to appreciate art.

Museum visitors seem to live in a world of spectacle and performance, as Abercrombie & Longhurst suggested, where they continuously, and simultaneously, need to be active interpreters and performers in their efforts to construct their identities and make sense of the world around them. But this activity takes place within a predetermined social, political, economic and structural environment that partially shapes people’s seemingly free decisions. With this view in mind, a conceptual model was developed that attempts to explain museum visitation issues by merging sociological and psychological approaches while examining museum visitation issues as a part of daily life and as a building block of identity.

Chapter 6

Museum Perceptual Filters

“[...] visitors, walkers, fit their experience of the exhibition into their own experiences of everyday life, and in so doing construct, as bricoleurs, their own fragmentary, but meaningful, rhetorics and narratives from the materials which confront them.”

Silverstone, 1988, p. 235

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we saw that individual, socio-cultural, as well as environmental factors shape our spectacles of perception and therefore influence the way we perceive, understand and use museums. This chapter will expand the initial conceptual model by introducing eight specific ways of perceiving museums, which emerged from the data. These are named *museum perceptual filters* (MPFs). The first and second part will examine in detail all the MPFs and what it means to use them. The third part offers a discussion on the problem of categorization while the fourth part explains how interviewees were categorized according to the MPFs they use. The fifth and final part explores how the interviewees' MPFs are connected to their art museum visitation frequency.

6.2 The Eight Museum Perceptual Filters (MPFs)

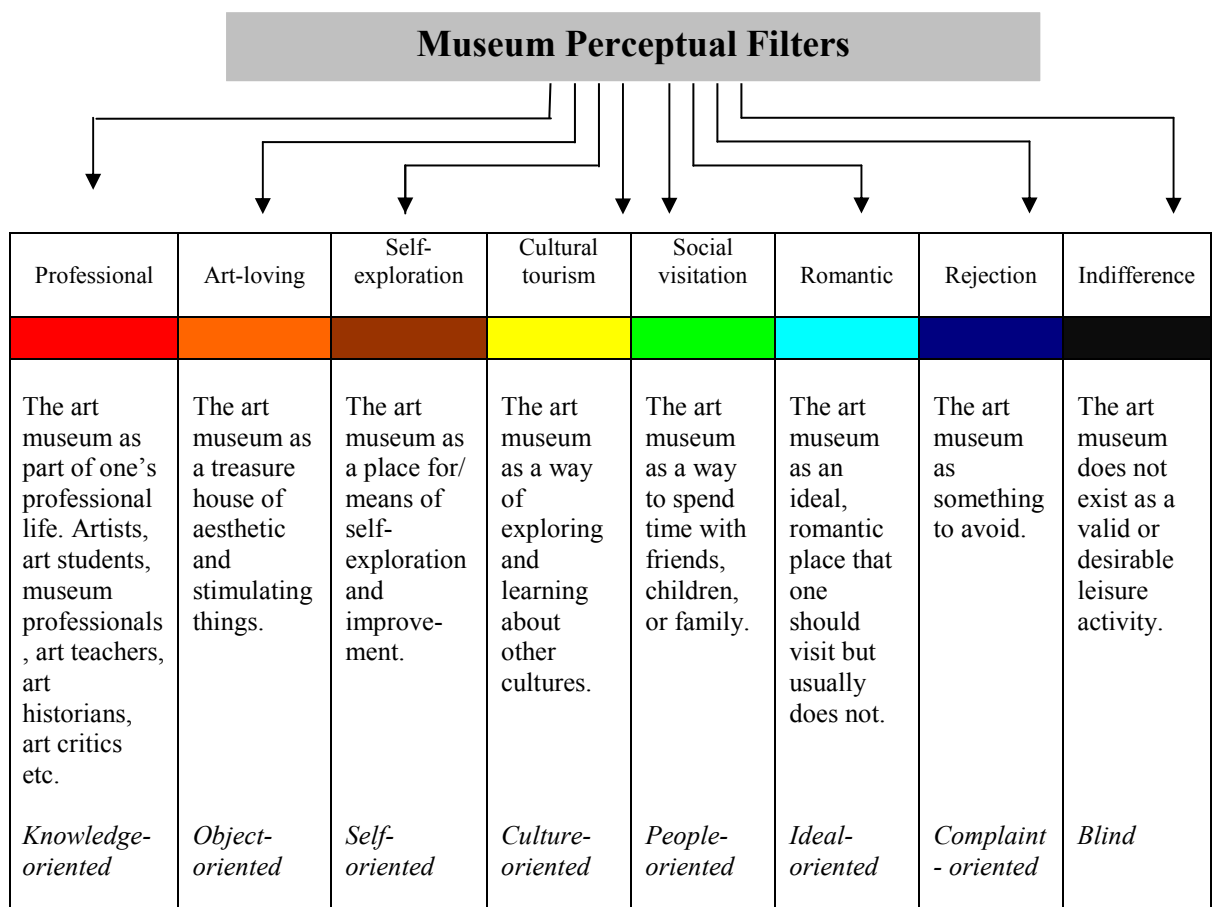
Art museums are viewed in a variety of ways: as places of inspiration, places of exploring the world and the self, places of cultural education, or places of social connection. At the same time, art museums can be viewed as exclusive places, frequented by pretentious people, irrelevant to one's life, or even as places showcasing incomprehensible things. In order to understand how museums are perceived by individuals and how their perceptions are connected to their visitation decisions the research asked questions regarding the interviewees' visitation frequency; reasons for visiting (motivation) or for not visiting; attitudes regarding art museums; attitudes towards the people who visit art museums and the people who do not; use of art museums and what the interviewees believe they gain from the museum experience; whether the interviewees prefer to visit alone or with

company; their connection to art as well as how often they discuss art and how comfortable they feel doing so.

After considering the above factors for all the interviewees it became clear that there are at least eight different ways of approaching art museums. I will refer to these ways as the *museum perceptual filters* (MPFs). By “filtering” or “colouring” the way we see museums, MPFs can ultimately influence visitation decisions, individual roles enacted inside the museum, and the uses made of art museums and galleries. The eight MPFs identified in this study are as follows: *professional*, *art-loving*, *self-exploration*, *cultural tourism*, *social visitation*, *romantic*, *rejection*, and *indifference* (see Figure 6.1). After examining each interview transcript with the help of the qualitative computer software N5 and the researcher’s diary, each interviewee was assigned a main MPF and often a secondary MPF. It is important to keep in mind that individuals can use more than one filter at any time.

Figure 6.1:

The Art Museum Perceptual Filters that Comprise our Spectacles of Perception



In the following sections we will examine in more detail each museum perceptual filter.

6.2.1 Professional Filter (red)

Through this filter, the art museum is viewed as a resource for one's occupation. People who use this filter are dealing with the arts and view art as a necessary and integral part of their life and work. They might be artists, art students, art critics, art historians, art teachers, museum professionals, commercial gallery owners etc. As one interviewee who happens to be an art teacher put it: "It's art. All the time. From the morning till the night" [very frequent visitor, female, 35-44 years old, I32]. Since art is part of their work and life, people who use this filter do not consider visiting art museums as something extraordinary or even as something they do in their free time. It seems that leisure and work time are mixed together. For example, Kostas explained:

So I insist that it's [art] a way of life. I don't consider it important in the sense that I don't elevate it. I don't make it into God or whatever, but I consider it a modest ... existence that influences us like the moon influences our behaviour. [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I44]

For Kostas, art is something subtle but constant in his life. It is actually a way of life. People who use the professional filter talk about art often and they feel quite comfortable doing so. However, they prefer talking with people who have the same interests and art knowledge as they do. Some of the interviewees mentioned that they sometimes feel that they bore others when talking about art. For this reason, they avoid talking too much about art-related topics, or at least they choose with whom to talk to and when. They usually prefer to visit art museums alone or with people who have similar interests. When visiting alone, they feel more focused than when visiting with others. They can spend as much time as they desire in front of a painting without being bothered. On the other hand, when visiting with others who have similar interests they believe that they can engage in meaningful conversations.

Looking at Art: putting the puzzle together

Through the professional filter, museums are used in a selective way. Interviewees who use this filter mentioned that they usually select what to pay attention to and for how long. When they find something that intrigues them, they spend more time looking at it than other museum visitors. It is not uncommon for people using this filter to talk about looking at specific artworks for long periods of time. This is something that other museum visitors might find perplexing or wrongly attribute to pretension and snobbery.

Maria, an art student, animatedly explained that during one of her art courses she studied a particular Picasso painting and finally got the chance to see this painting on one of her trips abroad. The work made a huge impression on her and she emphatically mentioned that she spent half an hour looking at it. In the following passage she describes what she was looking at when she finally found herself in front of this particular painting:

First of all, I wanted to see every detail of the painting. I didn't want to lose anything of the image. Then, I wanted to understand why did he do this thing and what was he looking at, what attracted him so much in order to sit and do this thing? Then, you combine all the things you learned and you understand. You think about which movement he belonged to, what were his influences. You just look at it. You are impressed. It's the contact with what is there. It's not a book. [very frequent visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I33]

For Maria, information like the artist's influences and the movement he belonged to are important elements in the viewing process. They are used as pieces of a puzzle in order to de-code and understand an artwork. Similarly Elias, a museum curator and a PhD candidate in Byzantine studies, talked about one of his own experiences with artworks:

I was in the first year of my art history degree when I went to see the 'Maesta' of Simone Martini in Siena. And I knew that Simone Martini used luxurious materials. I went there with a friend of mine and it took us one hour. You can't imagine - one hour to discuss that huge fresco. We saw where the stones were, the precious stones that shine with the sunlight, the impasto decorations, the gypsum decorations, eh, all these, the gold that was shining and was stunning, the valuable fabrics. It was a pleasure. [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I43]

In Elias' case, his intimate knowledge of Martini's work and use of materials forced him to observe the piece in a way that someone who did not possess this knowledge could not have done. Elsewhere, when he described an experience with another painting, he emphasized the fact that knowing something about the artwork is essential:

Those colours. That is, I was standing in front of the paintings for half an hour, 20 minutes? And I was looking all the time. And this gives you an energy you can't believe. It's something that only if you live through it ... But again, it is only because I knew something and I knew what to look for and I know how to read a

painting. If you don't know how to read a painting you will pass it by and it will not tell you anything. [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I43]

If one's occupation is connected with the arts or if he/ she studied art history or was trained as an artist, it is almost unavoidable not to recall his/ her previous experiences and knowledge. Each person seems to have a library of images in his/ her mind, which expands with time. People who deal with art or art museums have a richer library of images and art history related issues to refer to and this reflects on the way they look at artworks. They usually choose to look at a few artworks in depth for long periods of time. Previous research also supports this finding. Smith & Wolf (1996) have conducted a visitor survey at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and found that "Self-reported knowledge of art was positively related to looking at a few works of art in depth as was frequency of visitation to the museum" (p. 230). Therefore, the more people visit art museums and the more they know about art, the more selective they become in their viewing patterns. They look at less works but spend more time doing so.

Art museums/ galleries as a resource for one's work

Apart from using previous knowledge in order to experience artworks, the interviewees who mainly use the professional filter might also use art museums and exhibitions as a way to professionally improve themselves. In the following paragraphs we will see how a commercial gallery owner, an arts journalist and two artists view museums through the professional filter.

Margarita has been a part owner of a commercial gallery in Nicosia for the last six years. Her experience working in a commercial gallery changed the way she now sees art museums and other exhibition spaces. She explained that before working as an art dealer, she used to experience art exhibitions in a different way:

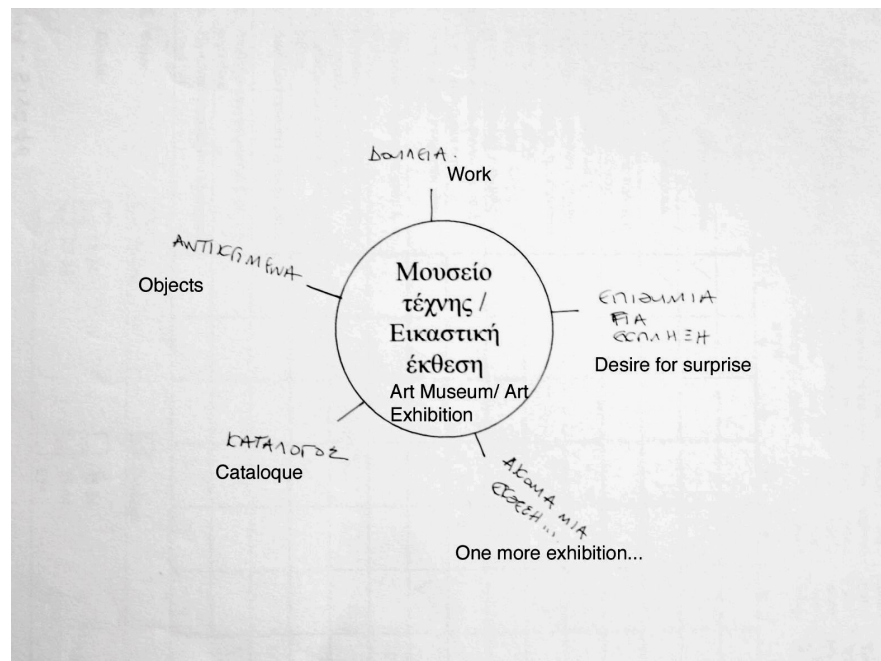
The emotions are not the same. When I enter [an art exhibition] I appreciate other things. [...] I know how much effort is hidden behind it and how much time was spent to put it up. Before, I was not thinking about this at all. I was just saying 'How nice it is, how nice the space, how nice the objects' or I was thinking 'How nice it is that they are telling us about culture, civilization, the place's identity'. Now I see it a bit differently. Like, oh my god, how much work they put in, how many hours, how much stress in order to put up this exhibition. My mind goes immediately elsewhere. [very frequent visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I37]

The organizers' point of view is more prevalent in Margarita's mind since she now organizes art exhibitions herself. She explained that when visiting a museum or gallery she examines the technicalities of putting up an exhibition: the lighting, the labels, the setting, the time spent. She mentioned that she visits many exhibitions "because of my profession, so I can see (the artist's) prices, his work. To look at the people who will be there, how interested they will be in the work" [very frequent visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I37]. Margarita seems to use exhibitions as a resource for her work and as a way to understanding the art market.

The personal meaning map (PMM) of Froso, a young arts reporter, also demonstrates this (see Figure 6.2). The first thing that came to Froso's mind when completing her PMM was the word "work" because her work is directly connected with visiting art exhibitions. She mentioned that through her visits she is searching for that one exhibition that will surprise her. She is also the only interviewee who mentioned the word "catalogue". Froso uses catalogues and art books quite often in her work and they immediately came to her mind when she thought of art museums/ exhibitions.

Figure 6.2

Froso's Personal Meaning Map [very frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I19]



Artists also use the professional filter. For example, Chrysanthi, a painter and poet, uses museums in order to get inspiration and develop her own work:

Chrysanthi: OK, I also make the mistake, because I'm an artist, to always compare the work [in art exhibitions] with my own work. I get influenced etc.

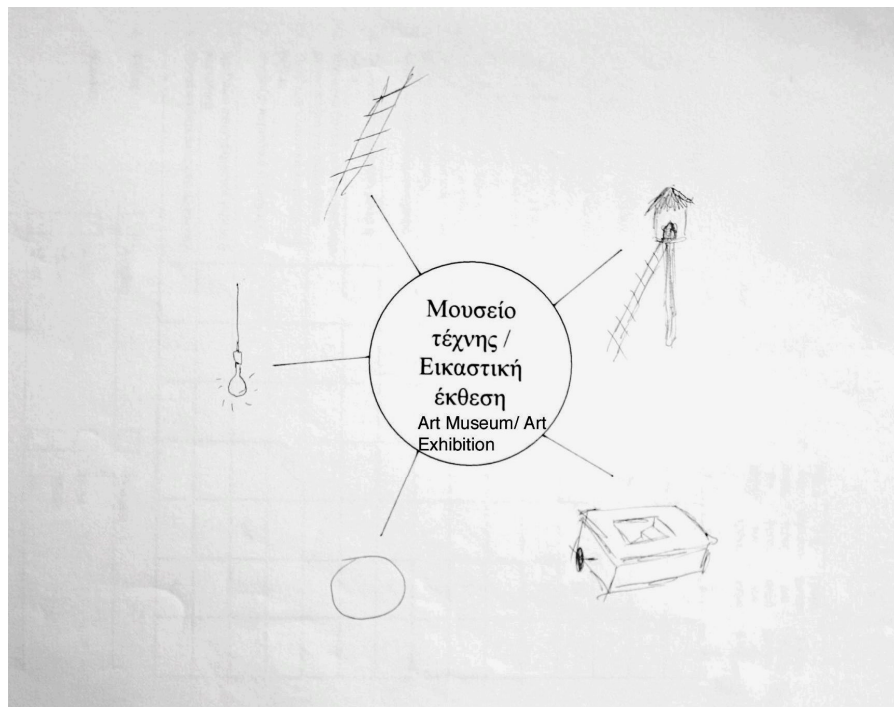
Researcher: You get ideas?

Chrysanthi: Yes, yes, I get ideas ... No, it's nice. I mean it's necessary to visit exhibitions when you are an artist. Otherwise you don't develop. You have to see what the others are doing. [very frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I20]

As we can see, Chrysanthi considers visiting exhibitions, not only as a source of inspiration, but also a necessity for all artists. Another artist, Kostas, who makes mixed media constructions, demonstrated the fact that he finds art museums inspirational by sketching some interesting drawings for his personal meaning map (see Figure 6.3). Kostas was reluctant to comment on his drawings because, as he said, each time he would think about them, he would have offered a different explanation. However, his drawings reveal a very playful approach to art museums. The light bulb reminds one of light and ideas while the ladders remind of a way to something higher and unknown. Meanwhile, the little box with the winder reminds of a construction much like Kostas' work. Like Chrysanthi, Kostas seems to use art museums as places of inspiration and exploration.

Figure 6.3

Kosta's Personal Meaning Map [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I44]



6.2.2 Art-loving Filter (orange)

While people who use the professional filter talk about the importance of art knowledge, people who mainly use the art-loving filter talk about the emotional and aesthetic value of artworks and try to connect with the work and its creator(s) using the visual elements of the work along with their personal memories and experiences. Most people who use the art-loving filter have friends and family who are also interested in art. Therefore, they usually have the chance to talk about art and feel comfortable doing so. They might not be absolutely confident about their opinions regarding art but they feel comfortable expressing them. They visit alone or with company. Even though they might not create art themselves, they feel that art is a way of life, something that fulfils some aesthetic need, and often own artworks themselves.

When the interviewees who mainly use the art-loving filter spoke about their museum encounters they referred to something esoteric, and more specifically, to the emotions and sense of beauty gained from this experience. Their experience resembles what we can call an aesthetic experience. According to Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson (1990) an aesthetic experience is:

An intense involvement of attention in response to a visual stimulus, for no other reason than to sustain interaction. The experiential consequences of such a deep and autotelic involvement are an intense enjoyment characterized by feelings of personal wholeness, a sense of discovery, and a sense of human connectedness. (p. 178)

Many elements of this definition appeared in the descriptions of the interviewees who mainly use the art-loving filter. We will further discuss the elements of: (a) involvement of attention in response to a visual stimulus, (b) feelings of personal wholeness, and (c) feelings of human connectedness with the work's creator.

(a) Involvement of attention in response to a visual stimulus

Focusing on the experience of looking at art while responding to a visual stimulus is the main characteristic of the art-loving filter and the main motivation for visiting museums for people who use this filter. As Georgina, a graphic designer and occasional museum visitor, saw it:

Georgina: I'm not as interested in history as Theo [Georgina's husband] is. I mostly see it through the experience of looking.

Researcher: What is this experience?

Georgina: What each painting creates in you. The emotions it creates, how you perceive it, how you see it. And if you knew the painting from before, thinking about the artist but also what is your perception and how you perceive it. That is, you see it through your own experiences, through your own knowledge. Do you see what the artist wanted to show? Do you see something different?

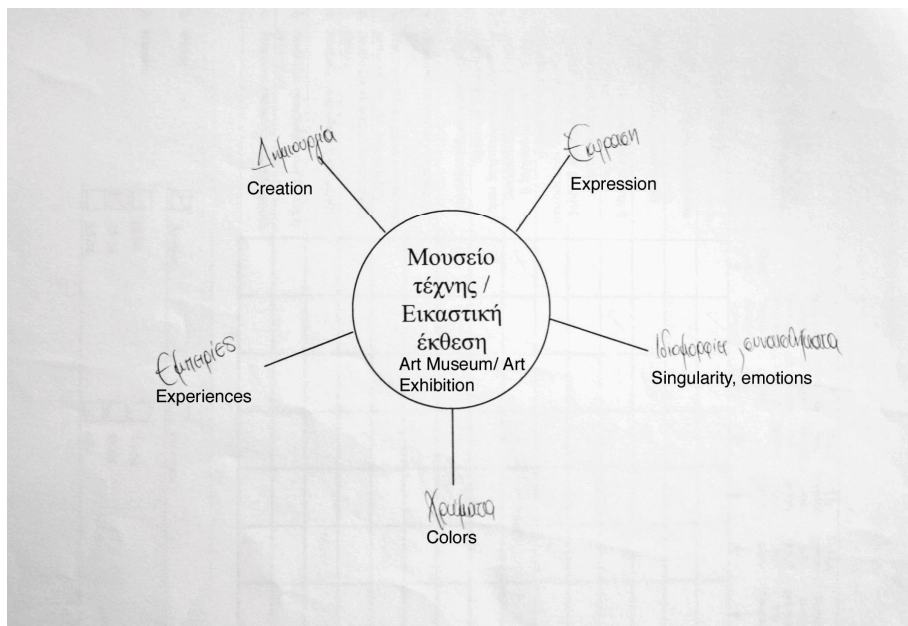
Researcher: Yes.

Georgina: Or is what he was trying to show not clear and he wants you to feel by yourself, each person to have a different opinion for the specific painting? [...] It's mostly experiential that I see it. That is, the experience at the time you see it and the dialogue that is created between you and the artist at that moment. [occasional visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I53]

From this interview extract we gather that Georgina mainly enjoys two things in her museum visits. The emotional experience of interacting with artworks and the dialogue created between the work, its artist and the viewer. If we also look at Georgina's personal meaning map (PMM) (see Figure 6.4), we will observe that all her museum connections are positive ones. She wrote the words "expression, singularity, emotions, colours, experiences, and creation". Georgina's claim that she mainly focuses on the experience of looking is validated once more in her PMM. She sees art museums as places of unique artistic expressions that can provide meaningful experiences through looking and connecting with the artwork and its artist.

Figure 6.4

Georgina's Personal Meaning Map [occasional visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I53]

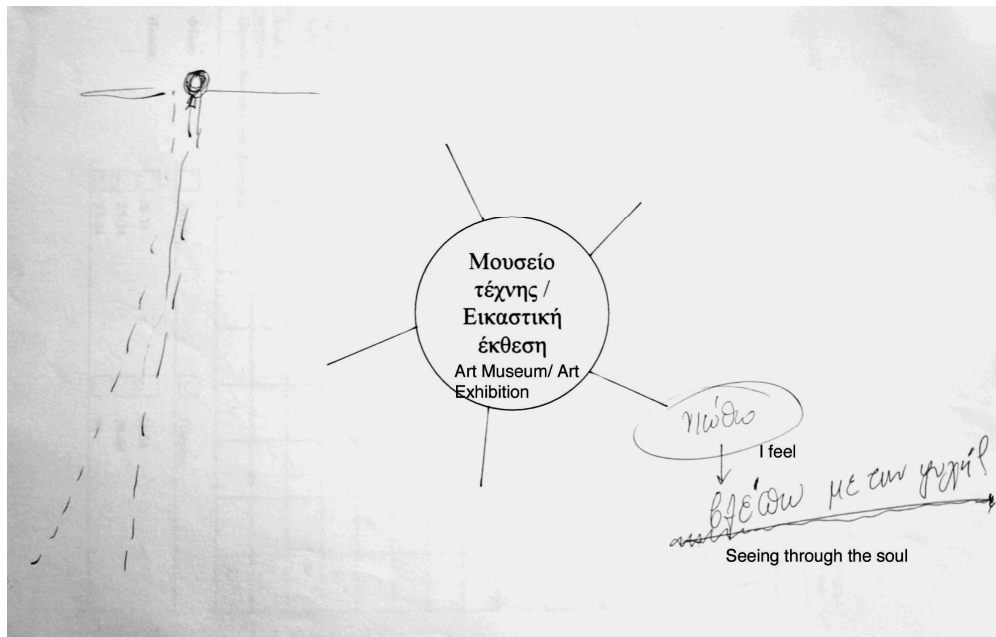


The experience of looking at art described by Georgina can result in different forms of enjoyment. The enjoyment can be emotional, sensory, or intellectual.

Anastasia, an architect and frequent visitor of art museums responds emotionally to art. When we asked Anastasia what comes to her mind when she thinks of art museums and art exhibitions she said: “The only thing that comes to my mind is ‘I feel’” [frequent visitor, female, 34-44 years old, I35]. In her PMM she drew a sketch of a painting she recently saw and was moved by it, as well as the words “I feel”. When further probed, she added the phrase “seeing through the soul” (see Figure 6.5). For Anastasia the viewing process is a very moving one and she mostly uses her emotions to experience artworks. She also mentioned that only when something “speaks to her” does she stop to look at it. Therefore, she selects the works that she considers worthy of an emotional involvement.

Figure 6.5

Anastasia's Personal Meaning Map [frequent visitor, female, 34-44 years old, I35]



(b) Feelings of personal wholeness

Andreas, a high school teacher and very frequent visitor of museums and art galleries, described what he gains from his museum visits:

Look, personally, you feel an internal satisfaction, ok? Either optical, either the museum's feeling, the space inspires you, so I find satisfaction of the soul in general. And this satisfaction of the soul includes either acoustic, or bodily, you know ... stimulations. So I find satisfaction, yes. [very frequent visitor, male, 45-54 years old, I2]

Andreas emphasized the fact that art can satisfy his senses and therefore “his soul” referring to something internal. Similarly, Penelope, a middle-aged librarian mentioned, “I enjoy looking. It fills ... I don't know ... this thing fills me up. I like looking at something beautiful” [I4, female, 35-44 years old, frequent visitor]. Andreas and Penelope seem to experience feelings of personal wholeness as described by Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson (1990) and these feelings are part of an aesthetic experience.

The words “beauty” or “beautiful” reappeared many times in our dialogue with people who use the art-loving filter. Even though these words are used in a non-specific and subjective way, they suggest an aesthetic satisfaction or pleasure of the senses. This pleasant feeling

seems to be sufficient to satisfy an aesthetic need and even reach euphoria as a couple described:

Antis: Personally, OK I wouldn't say it's a special experience or it gives me something metaphysical, but whatever beautiful - of course beautiful is a general term - but whatever beautiful can stimulate me, I would say, it can stimulate some of my senses. I highly appreciate this and I can spend some time looking at artworks in any case. But I can't talk about a particular feeling or that I probe deeply, but in general, I like looking.

Anne: Yes. Let's say it's a pleasant feeling, a satisfaction that you feel when you see something you like, your time passes pleasantly, it's nice, you feel nice. I don't know, a kind of peace in any case.

Antis: (interrupts) Euphoria!

Anne: Yes, a kind of euphoria. [very frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I6]

Antis: Yes. [very frequent visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I7]

Interviewees who use the art-loving filter described their experience from merely “pleasing” to a sense of “euphoria”. we will see that the experience of looking at art can sometimes become so strong that an individual can have the feeling that he/ she is being lost in the work. Two interviewees, who use the professional and the art-loving filters, described the experience of almost fainting in a museum from the visual and mental stimulation. Pambos, an icon painter is one of the interviewees who described this experience:

Researcher: What do you mean? Did it happen to you?

Pambos: Yes, yes. You faint, faint from what you see. I didn't faint. I almost fainted. From what you see in front of you that is, there is an internal communication and ... you give, you don't only receive from what you see, you give, you enter - that happened. You take the artist's hand that created it and you enter, and after you enter you loose contact with today's reality. Eh, this is a bit strange but ... because it happens [...] It's like being in a huge space and in that space I am tiny. I am the tiny bit and the work-space the big bit. In this way, I disappear. [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I12]

Perhaps the combination of knowledge and love of art, and therefore the professional and the art-loving filter, is what can create such strong emotions.

(c) Sense of connectedness with the artist

Apart from pleasing the senses through connecting with an artwork, people who use the art-loving filter can also feel that they connect with the artist who created the work. Andrew is a Greek soldier who is doing his military service in Cyprus. He is a frequent museum visitor and was very happy to answer any questions since he felt that he did not talk about art as much as he would like to. He mentioned that understanding the work and the artist's psychology is important for him:

I try to understand what each artistic creation I see wants to say. That is, whatever that might be. It might be even the most stupid thing. It might be the strangest. For me, all of them have a purpose and hide something. Eh ... I try to explore them, to enter the psychology of the artist. This is what I am trying to do at that point.
[frequent visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I31]

Understanding what the artist is trying to communicate is important for Andrew's viewing experience.

6.2.3 Self-exploration Filter (brown)

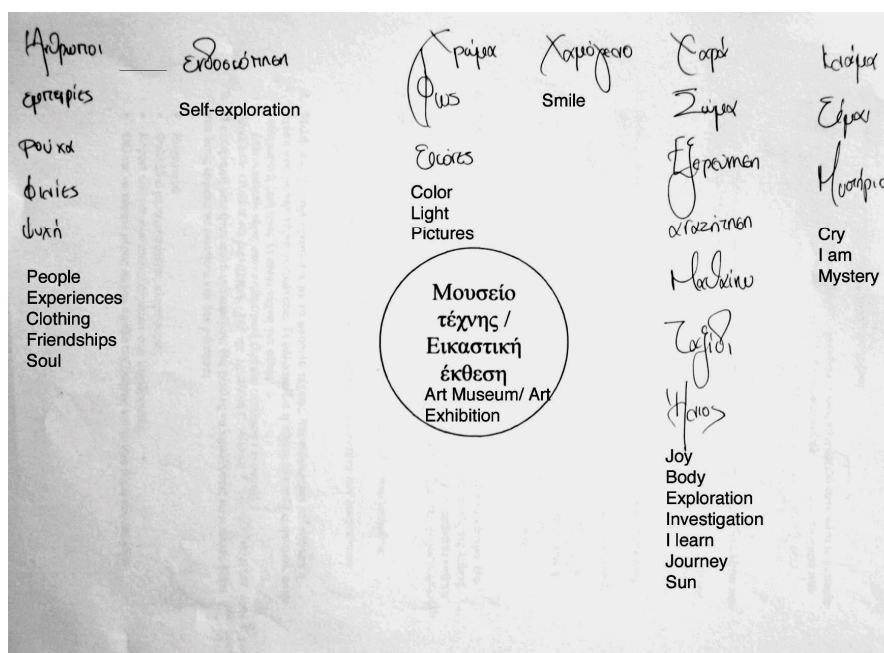
People who mainly use the self-exploration filter see the art museum as a way of exploring themselves. The museum becomes a resource where they can discover and expand themselves, learn, see and experience new things, form opinions, and satisfy their self-image. They have the internal need to expand their knowledge and experiences. The art museum provides them with an opportunity to do so. Usually, they find all kinds of museums interesting and they can use the self-exploration filter in any of them. They have the gift of adjusting the museum to their needs and they are selective in the way they use it. They might visit alone or with company but they connect with works that personally interest them. This connection is closely associated with their sense of identity.

Internal dialogue

Individuals using this filter seem to engage in an internal dialogue between themselves and the museum environment with the help of visual, informational or other stimuli. Cassandra, a 30 year-old economics journalist, initially found it difficult to talk about her relationship with art museums. Her personal meaning map (PMM) helped her focus her thoughts. The words/ phrases "I am", "exploration", "investigation", "I learn", "journey" and finally "self-exploration" appeared in her PMM (see Figure 6.6). All of these words imply an inner journey where Cassandra explores and learns about the world around her and herself.

Figure 6.6

Kassandra's Personal Meaning Map [frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I1]



I asked Kassandra to elaborate on the meaning of the word “self-exploration”. After writing down the words “people, experiences, clothing, friendship” and “soul” she jumped up with excitement:

Kassandra: I discovered what I wanted to say to you before! I feel that when I visit museums I learn something about myself. I feel that I learn something about my soul, not about for example history etc. I feel self-knowledge. I feel like I’m facing myself and I’m talking to me. That’s why I want to be by myself, not to be bothered, to be quiet, to walk alone, to go and see ... I think it’s a very personal experience.

Researcher: Yes. It’s like what you wrote [from the PMM]: ‘exploration, investigation, learning.’

Kassandra: That I turn inside me. That’s how I feel. I look outside and I turn deep inside me. That it’s a kind of *introspection*. Ah! This is the word. This is it - this is what I was looking for. [frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I1]

Kassandra clearly described her museum experience as an introspective and personal one. She believes that she learns not so much about the museum objects but more about her person since she is engaging in a dialogue with herself. This dialogue usually means that people using this filter are selective in terms of what they choose to see. They select what

works they can associate with their lifecycle. Phrases like “something that speaks to me,” “have something in common with me” or “I look for the one work that will satisfy me” re-appeared in the interviews of people who use the self-exploration filter.

Learning, having a new experience, forming an opinion, and satisfying a self-image

People who use the self-exploration filter are perhaps the ones who most directly mentioned seeking personal learning experiences from museums. They want to learn, see, and experience new things. As one informant put it, “[I visit museums] In order to learn something I don’t know about. And in order to see something I don’t know about” [occasional visitor, male, 55-64 years old, I48].

Apart from experiencing and learning new things, some people visit museums in order to connect what they see with what they already know. In fact, they might seek out works that reinforce current knowledge and preferences and avoid unfamiliar works (Gunther, 1990). For example, Theo, who is fascinated with history, mentioned that when visiting museums he confirms what he knows as well as learns new things. Connecting what he sees with what he already knows is a vital part of the process of expanding his knowledge. This was apparent when he described one of his museum visits:

They had the history of ... Venice, of the empire of Venice in the 10th, 12th, 13th century. We were in America, in Detroit, and we were looking at a painting of Ekaterini Kornaro. The last Venetian Queen or ... she was the last Lusignan Queen and through Ekaterini Kornaro Cyprus was transferred to the Venetians. You know, you see them there and at once you connect them with what you know, with what you heard. There is a meaning. You don’t go in order to see one painting ... visually, but you are going to connect it with some events. [occasional visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I39]

For some, the desire to learn might take a different form. Someone might be particularly interested in learning about history, like Theo, but for others the word *learning* might have a different meaning. For example, Antis found it difficult to explain why he visits museums and had trouble with the word learning:

I’m sure that if I think about it I can find out why I’m urged to visit exhibitions etc., but I can’t think of a particular reason at the present moment. I just have an appetite to see things and ... I repeat this ... it’s important for me to see ... because

I learn from them even though I do not particularly - I don't visit for the particular reason to learn or to enrich my knowledge because OK maybe it's not needed - perhaps I know more things than needed - but in general it's something very very interesting and important for me. [very frequent visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I7]

Antis mentioned learning but he was quick to explain that enriching his knowledge was not really the main reason for visiting museums. The driving force seems to be that he considers museum visiting and seeing new things interesting and important for his personality. Exploring and expanding oneself is a process that is closely linked to the individual sense of identity. Interviewees who mainly use this filter see themselves as people who always want to evolve by learning, seeing, and experiencing new things. By doing so, they construct opinions for a variety of subjects which can be later shared with their social environment. The museum provides them with an opportunity to explore their self-identity and the world around them.

Kassandra helped us understand that an internal dialogue takes place when people use the self-exploration filter. Now she will help us demonstrate how an individual's sense of identity can be sufficient motivation for museum visiting. She characteristically said:

Kassandra: I feel that it's like my obligation to visit - not that someone is making me visit - I feel that it fits with me, how can I put it, I feel that if I don't visit I won't be who I am ...

Researcher: Hm, this is very interesting.

Kassandra: ... it's something that comes from inside me. Honestly, it's something like an obligation but towards me. Not that someone else is forcing me or that I'll mention it to someone and will tell me well done. I feel that I follow what I am when I visit. [frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I1]

Kassandra is one of the interviewees that sees herself as an explorer of life and identity and therefore strives to have as many meaningful experiences as possible. This belief usually creates a strong motivation for visiting museums, which can approximate an *obligation* to do so.

Even though Kassandra mentioned that she visits museums without considering what other people might say, museums provide experiences that can be later shared with others. Some people mentioned that museum visiting gives them the opportunity to form an opinion

about things. For example, Sam, a young school teacher who spends her free time in dance and language classes, shares Cassandra's belief that people should explore life to its fullest and considers museum visiting as:

Sam: [...] a necessary experience. I see it as clearly existential.

Researcher: Why as an experience?

Sam: While you live you have to experience exhibitions. Because I believe you have to do everything. You have to have an opinion on the fine arts. (I visit) In order to form an opinion – no other reason. [frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I8]

Alex elaborated on this same point:

OK, I just believe that, using as a base some thoughts that I have about myself, a person shouldn't remain in one (life) course, that is, his mind shouldn't follow only one direction. He has to follow many directions and one of these directions is art. So, he has to also look at this side of his brain. So, perhaps this is the reason I visit. That is, I like having an opinion. It might not be a deep opinion for something but I would like, for example, to know something about a subject. So that's one of the reasons why I also visit museums. [frequent visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I21]

As Cassandra, Sam, and Alex demonstrated, the visitation decisions of some people are guided by their sense of identity. As we have also seen in Chapter 5, museum visitation can provide one of the building blocks for self-identity.

The self-exploration filter and the omnivorous theory

Sam and Alex believe that it is necessary for an open-minded individual to experience and form an opinion about a variety of things. For this reason, it is possible that individuals who mainly use the self-exploration filter are more omnivorous in their leisure participation than other individuals, by seeking to expand themselves in all kinds of activities. The results of this study support this assumption. As we have seen in Chapter 5, the more people frequent art museums the more they participate in other low *and* high leisure activities and thus can be called omnivorous. After further analysis it was realized that out of the interviewees who frequent art museums, the ones who mainly use the self-exploration filter are the most omnivorous ones. They are involved in more leisure activities and more often. Furthermore, they are the most omnivorous ones in both high and low leisure activities. Table 6.1 and Figure 6.7 demonstrate this.

Table 6.1

Average High, Low, and Total Leisure Participation According to Museum Perceptual Filters Used

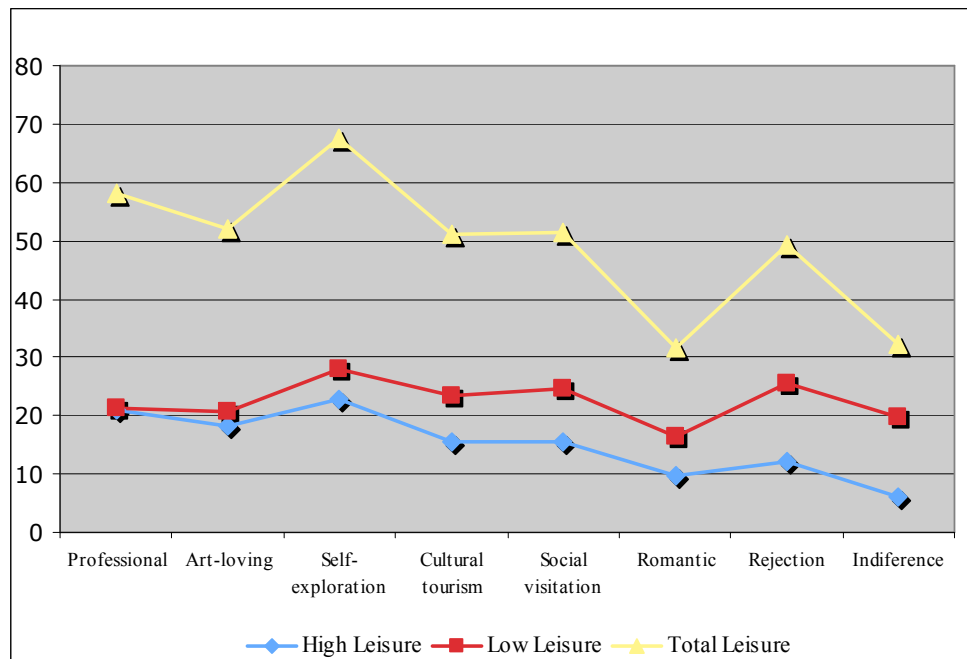
MPFs	Leisure		
	High Leisure	Low Leisure	Total Leisure
Professional	21.1	21.3	58
Art-loving	18.25	20.8	51.9
Self-exploration	22.75	28	67.5
Cultural tourism	15.6	23.5	51.1
Social visitation	15.6	24.7	51.5
Romantic	9.75	16.3	31.5
Rejection	12.2	25.6	49.4
Indifference	6	19.8	32.2

Note 1: *High leisure* includes: going to theatres; visiting archaeological museums/ sites; attending concerts of classical music; reading classical literature; and reading professional literature. *Low leisure* includes: going to sports matches; playing board, electrical or card games; attending concerts of popular music; going to night clubs and bars; driving or riding in car for pleasure; and reading magazines or newspapers. *Total leisure* includes all the above plus doing active sports, going to the cinema, and going on vacation abroad.

Note 2: The numbers in this table are the result of adding up the frequency [never=0, every week=7] of each activity in each leisure category (high, low, and total) for all interviewees who use the same MPF as a primary filter. Then, the numbers were divided by the number of people that use the same MPF. Thus, the resulting numbers represent the averages of high, low, and total leisure for each MPF used.

Figure 6.7

High, Low, Total Leisure, and Museum Perceptual Filters Used



We will see in the last part of this chapter that the interviewees who mainly use the professional filter are the most frequent museum visitors. Interestingly, we can see from figure 6.7 that they are not as omnivorous as people who mainly use the self-exploration filter (not even when it comes to high leisure activities). Furthermore, the interviewees who mainly use the rejection filter might not visit art museums but they are quite active in their leisure participation. As a matter of fact they appear to be the second most active category when it comes to low leisure participation. As we will see, people who mainly use the rejection filter consciously choose not to visit art museums and get involved instead with other activities. Finally, interviewees who mainly use the romantic and the indifferent filter seem to be the least omnivorous ones.

6.2.4 Cultural Tourism Filter (yellow)

People who only visit art museums when they travel to a new destination mainly use the cultural tourism filter. Museums are viewed as places that offer information about the culture and history of a specific place, city, or country. Because of this, art museums are competing with other kinds of museums, as well as with other cultural and sightseeing options.

Experiencing the culture of a destination

Museums become places where one can experience the culture of a destination. As Andria, a university student, explained:

Basically, [I visit museums] when I go abroad for a trip and I explore a new territory, a new country, a new city. It's one of the things I do in order to understand the culture, the history of the place. [regular visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I31]

Museums can become windows into the history and culture of the visiting destination and its people, a place where someone can find “representative samples of the city's culture” [frequent visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I21]. Anne, a very frequent visitor who uses the art-loving filter as her primary filter and the cultural tourism filter as her secondary filter, explained why she learns more about the culture of a place from visiting a museum than from reading a book:

Anne: Another reason I want to visit museums is to really see the country, what is this place? In any case, to see its history. Em, how did this country start out?

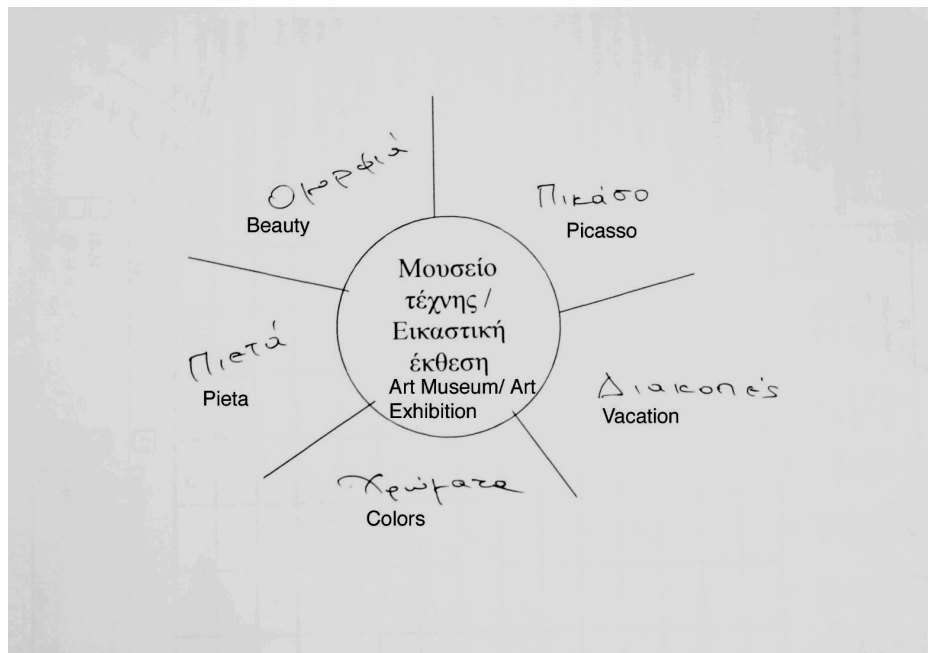
Researcher: But can't you read a book instead?

Anne: It's not the same. It's much more ... it's more comprehensive. In a museum you will see exhibition items, you will see sculptures, you will see what these people did ... what their ancestors did, in any case, something. That is, who are these people who I am visiting today! What was their culture? And this is another serious reason that we visit museums. You learn a lot of things about cultures, about countries. [very frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I6]

Many interviewees mainly visit art museums when abroad and therefore associate museums with travelling. For example, Toula mentioned in her PMM the word “vacation” and some specific artworks she saw when abroad – the “Pieta” by Michelangelo and paintings by Picasso (see Figure 6.8). When she finished her PMM she mentioned that the only thing missing was the word “sea”, again something that is tightly associated with vacations.

Figure 6.8

Toula's Personal Meaning Map [regular visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I9]



For Toula, art museums are synonymous with vacations. When asked if she prefers to visit alone or with company she answered: “Definitely with company [...] Usually museums equal vacations, and during vacations I can't be completely alone – I'm with other people” [regular visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I9]. Most interviewees (12 out of 15) who mainly use the cultural-tourism filter usually visit museums with company. As Toula mentioned, this makes sense since most people go on vacation with other people.

Furthermore, through the cultural tourism filter, museums are considered to be a part of the cultural life of a place, which is inseparable from its other aspects. This point is exemplified by Alisia:

Look, when you travel - this is what I think, this is my opinion, I don't claim that it is the right one - in order to experience a place you have to see not only the things that God made like nature, nice mountains, the sea etc., but you have to experience the way humans live. That is, to eat the local food [...] To live the way they live. That is, to see their houses, their habits etc. in order to understand why you visit this place. As an extension to this, you have to also visit the museum because it is a part of the history of this place. Right? [very frequent visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I49]

Museums as a must-see site

Since museums become a part of the city's culture, they cannot be separated from other important sightseeing opportunities. Stavros explained how he and his wife go about finding the museum(s) they want to visit:

Most of the times we buy a booklet that has information about the country. It's very important. It has all the sightseeing inside with many details, etc. Also, if we don't have the booklet, we ask at the reception of the hotel 'Where can we go sightseeing?' and they will tell us 'There is this museum, this ... park, etc.' They will tell us the most important ones so we can choose the ones we want to visit. [occasional visitor, male, 45-54 years old, I46]

In this case, visiting museums becomes synonymous with sightseeing and as a result, a must-see site. For this reason people feel that they "have to" visit some kind of museum when abroad [regular visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I25]. Interestingly, this feeling of obligation moves people to visit museums they are not particularly interested in. For example, Sam [frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I8] mentioned that she visited the house of Picasso, even though she does not like his work, just because she felt this obligation to do so. Similarly, Omiros, a student who only visits museums when abroad, visited the van Gogh museum in Amsterdam even though he was not particularly interested in van Gogh's work and he only spent 10 minutes looking at the paintings. He mentioned:

I remember characteristically that I saw the paintings. The museum was eight floors if I remember correctly. To tell you the truth, van Gogh's work does not

express who I am so I cannot say I was enthusiastic. Because I was also with company [...] I was annoyed because I had to wait for them so I went outside and I waited for them to finish. [occasional visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I59]

Another interviewee mentioned that you have to be crazy not to visit the Louvre when you visit Paris [very frequent visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I49]. A lot of people seem to feel the same way since people from all over the world who could not be described as art enthusiasts make their way to the Louvre to see some of the world's most famous artworks. The "Gioconda" by Leonardo da Vinci is perhaps the most popular work in the Louvre. It is also the work that disappointed a few of the interviewees. The disappointment seems to come from the fact that people heard so much about the painting and the artist that they expected to be stunned by its beauty or by the artist's talent. However, the actual experience is of a smaller-than-expected artwork, surrounded by tourists with cameras. The one-to-one connection with the work is lost for those who seek it, while the painting does not appear as stunning as other Paris landmarks like the Eiffel tower. Nevertheless, people feel some psychological pleasure in the fact that they saw the "Gioconda". Danos, an occasional visitor to art museums mentioned:

If I do visit [art museums] I would like to go and see for example 'Gioconda' because it has a history behind it. Not because I'll see it and I would like the painting. [occasional visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I51]

The sense of history and having seen something considered a masterpiece, in itself gives a sense of satisfaction. Even though the interviewees who saw Leonardo's masterpiece did not describe a substantial connection with it, they all mentioned the fact that they saw it. Being able to say that they have seen it seems to be quite important by itself.

There is no doubt that world famous museums attract a lot of cultural tourists. None of the interviewees who use the cultural tourism filter as their main filter mentioned visiting any less famous museums or galleries. In addition, they do not only visit art museums, but any museum considered to be an important landmark of their destination. For instance, Nicos, a bank clerk who mainly uses the cultural tourism filter, explained:

Nicos: I would visit. If I know there is a well-known museum, I'll visit. If I go abroad, I do visit. But it's not only the art museum, there are other things as well. If I go abroad, for example, I'm not going to only visit art museums, I'm also going

to visit other museums that show some things from the culture of the country. I like to go deeper in the culture of the place I'm visiting.

Researcher: So, it's not only art museum you will visit but any famous museum a country might have.

Nicos: Bravo. Exactly. At least some things that I feel that I have to see. [regular visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I56]

Paul, another interviewee, echoes Nicos' comments:

I look for museums in general. Hmm. My priority is not the art museum. I prefer some other museums, historical, archaeological or ... movement and technology museums ... these are what I prefer but I also visit art museums. [regular visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I57]

As we have seen, when people mainly use the cultural tourism filter, art museums compete for attention with other kinds of museums as well as with other cultural sites.

The cultural tourism filter will be further discussed in Chapter 7 for three main reasons. First, the travelling frequency of the Cypriot population is gradually increasing making this filter the most used one by the interviewees (as a primary or secondary filter). Second, the field of cultural tourism already has a substantial previous literature, which will be connected with the theoretical model of this study. And finally, the cultural tourism filter is easily combined with other filters. Such combinations result in different ways people approach and use art museums when abroad. Chapter 7 will give us the opportunity to expand on this issue.

6.2.5 Social Visitation Filter (green)

As we can see, people who use different primary filters experience the art museum in different ways. Research by Pekarik, Doering & Karns (1999) into the experiences visitors find satisfying in nine Smithsonian museums showed that experiences can be classified into four categories: object experiences, cognitive experiences, introspective experiences, and social experiences. This last type of experience is what people who mainly use the social visitation filter seek in museum. They always visit with other people and cannot imagine visiting alone. For example, parents or grandparents who want to spend time with children, friends or couples who want to spend time together, or people showing around foreign visitors, might be motivated to visit an art museum for social reasons.

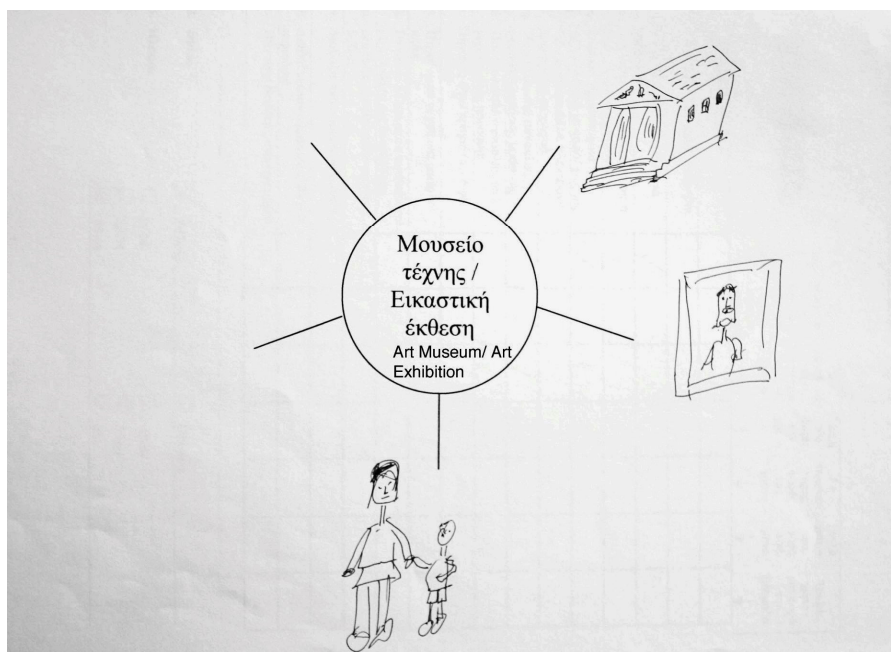
Nicolas, an interviewee who mainly sees museums through the social visitation filter mentioned: “There is no way for us to visit alone. When company is visiting, we visit as well” [occasional visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I17]. Nicolas cannot imagine visiting a museum alone but would follow his friends if they decide to visit one. He went on to say that he only visits with his sister and her friends. He described his sister and friends as frequent museum visitors and “individuals with a different cultivation”. He said:

I’m not going to visit, I’m not attracted to go and see a museum. When I visit, I simply visit for public relations so I can be with my sister’s circle, her company, who are individuals who deal with these things. It’s compulsory. [occasional visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I17]

For Nicolas, museum visiting becomes something compulsory, the means to a social goal. When I interviewed Danos, he just returned from a trip to New York where he experienced something similar to Nicolas: “When we went to New York we visited because others wanted to go. If I had a choice I wouldn’t have gone” [occasional visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I51]. The interviewee continued by explaining that he would much prefer to visit some other museum than an art museum. However, when his wife and friends chose to visit an art museum he agreed to join them so he could spend time with them. Again, like Nicolas, Danos becomes an incidental art museum visitor. In Danos’ personal meaning map (PMM) we can identify another social situation. Danos drew three sketches which were identified as: a classical façade of a museum, a portrait painting, and finally, a mother holding her son’s hand in a museum. Danos explained that he remembers visiting museums with his parents as a child.

Figure 6.9

Danos' Personal Meaning Map [occasional visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I51]



None of the interviewees who mainly use this filter described looking at a painting for a long period of time or a meaningful experience with an artwork. Danos characteristically mentioned: “I walk as fast as possible. Very rarely I’ll sit and look at them [the paintings] like some people do. They try to understand feelings and things” [occasional visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I51].

On the other hand, Eleni actually enjoys her art museum visits. However, she only visits art museums when in Athens with her cousin who studies art. In Cyprus she only visited once when a friend from abroad came to visit. She admitted that she does not understand art but enjoys visiting art museums, especially when her cousin shares her knowledge with her. She explained:

The first time I went (to an art museum) was 7 years ago in London and then I went twice in Athens because my cousin studies in the Fine Art School there. That’s why I went ... Otherwise I wouldn’t have gone. [regular visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I55]

Even though Eleni enjoys visiting museums she cannot imagine herself visiting alone. Her main motivation for visiting is still a social one.

Another example is Natalie. Natalie has not visited art museums in the last few years. During a period in her life things were different: “But before, I used to visit. I had one or two friends who liked these things so they called me and we went. I didn’t miss the opportunity to visit” [occasional visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I27]. When Natalie stopped seeing her friends she also stopped visiting art exhibitions. Towards the end of the interview Natalie also mentioned that in a few years, when her grandchildren would be older, she would like to start visiting museums again with them. That is, when another social occasion arises, museum visiting becomes once again a valid option. As we have seen, in the absence of a social motivation, people who primarily use the social visitation filter find it very difficult to visit art museums.

Social visitation as a secondary filter

People who do not use the social visitation filter as their primary filter might also have a strong social motivation for visiting. For example, we have seen that many interviewees who mainly use the cultural tourism filter usually visit art museums with company. Their primary motivation might be to experience the culture of their destination but a secondary motivation might be to spend time with friends or family. Furthermore, some people simply find it easier to visit art museums with company. Alex, a frequent visitor who mainly uses the self-exploration filter remarked:

I believe that you need a bigger motive to visit by yourself ... than to visit with company. With company, for example, because ... the other individual might urge you to visit ... it’s easier if there are two. You might want to visit alone but not find the courage to visit alone. The truth is that people are social [beings]. Many times they need the motivation. [frequent visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I21]

As Alex stated, people are social beings so the social visitation filter is a filter that is easily acquired and can be used in different ways. Even if it is not used as a primary or secondary filter it is a quite basic and flexible filter. Even people who prefer visiting museums alone often visit with other people. For example, Kostas [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I44] mostly uses the professional, the art-loving and the self-exploration filters. However, he usually visits museums alone or with his partner. When using the gallery spaces of a museum, Kostas might look at individual artworks by himself without engaging in long conversations with his partner. However, when they exit the galleries and visit the museum café or shop, then the social visitation filter might be mostly used. The couple talks

about the exhibition and shares opinions. The museum café and shop are designed to be social spaces and are integral parts of any museum.

6.2.6 Romantic Filter (light blue)

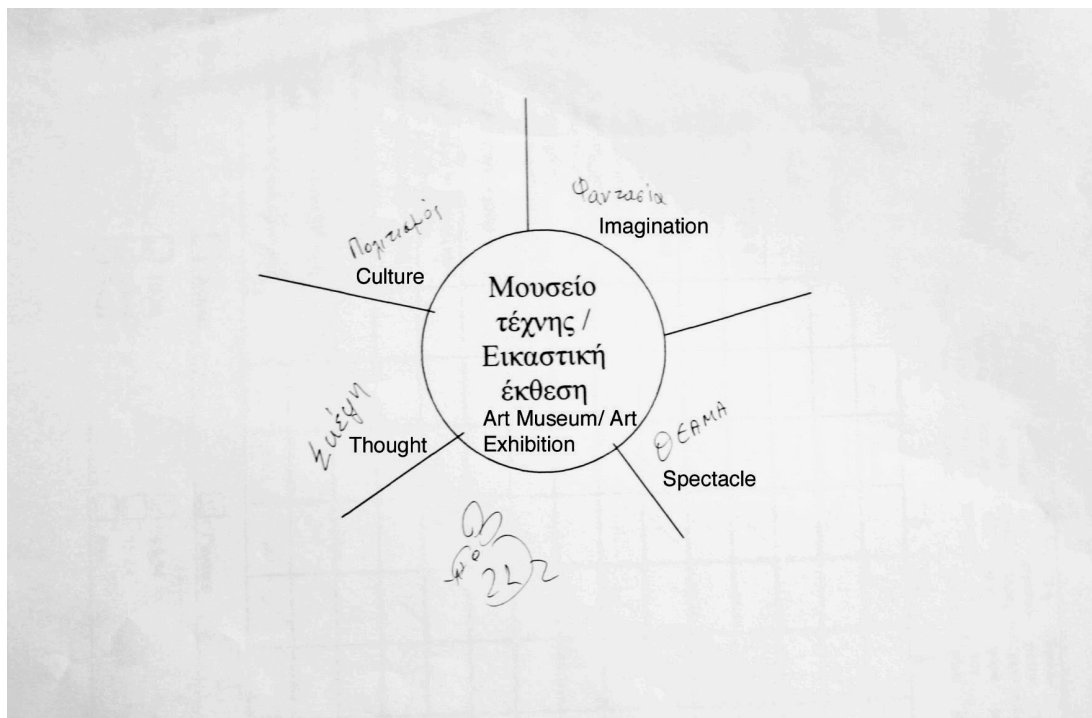
People who mainly use this filter have positive attitudes towards art museums but they do not usually take the extra step to visit one. They characterize museums as relaxing, enjoyable, peaceful, and as places one can see beautiful things. For example, Lakis, a retired turner, talked about his feelings regarding art museums:

Me at galleries, it's very different. You visit and you get out with a refined spirit – how can we say this – you earn a kind of peacefulness. It's a very nice feeling you feel after. But we don't manage to visit. [rare visitor, male, 55-64 years old, I28]

His personal meaning map reflected similar sentiments. He wrote the words “imagination, spectacle, thought, culture” and he drew a little mouse because, as he said, it is the only thing he can draw (see Figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10

Lakis' Personal Meaning Map [rare visitor, male, 55-64 years old, I28]



The interesting thing about people who mainly use the romantic filter is that their extremely positive attitudes towards museums are not enough to motivate them to visit. While not

rejecting visiting art museums, they might not consider museum visiting as an appropriate leisure activity for themselves. When asked if art plays a role in her life, Miriam, a seamstress in a small factory and non-visitor of museums, answered:

Miriam: In my everyday life no because my free hours are very few and for me this is a luxury. Anything that is not related to work [is a luxury]. It's a nice thing. It's nice to have the time to deal with it.

Researcher: Why is it nice?

Miriam: For example, it shows sensitivity, something. [non-visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I30]

Miriam has positive attitudes towards art even though she considers dealing with it a luxury. Miriam's perceptual lenses inform her that museum visiting is something out of the ordinary, much like visiting the moon would be – the experience must be very nice but she would not seriously consider it. Nevertheless, later on in our conversation she emphasized the fact that she would be happy to visit if someone asked her to:

Like us, we don't have anyone. But if Maria [her daughter-in-law] comes, who I know she likes it and asks me 'Mrs. Miriam, today I'm going to an art exhibition, do you want to come with me?' I'll go! I won't say: 'No, I don't like it I won't go'. [non-visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I30]

Apparently, Miriam is a non-visitor who can easily become a visitor if someone showed her the way. However, if Miriam did visit an art museum it does not mean that she would later be transformed into a regular visitor. That would require Miriam to feel comfortable in art museums and to be able to use them. Many people, especially people who come from the lower socio-economic levels, feel intimidated by places like museums, libraries, concert halls, operas, even bookstores. They feel that they do not belong there because they do not know enough. As Eisenbeis (1972) said:

Cultural institutions may be invested with the character of an educational status symbol, and people without what they then imagine to be the necessary educational background regard themselves insufficiently equipped for coping at all with this kind of educational material. (p. 114)

As a result, people might be discouraged from visiting an art museum if they believe they do not know enough about art. This psychological barrier resembles the theory of

“threshold fear” in which people are discouraged from entering spaces that make them feel uncomfortable (Mason & McCarthy, 2006). Furthermore, feelings of self-consciousness, insecurity or anxiety disturb what Csikszentmihalyi called the “flow experience” and, as a result, learning and personal growth (Csikszentmihalyi & Hermanson, 1995). Therefore, even if an individual overcomes the “threshold fear” and visits a museum, it does not mean that the experience would be a pleasant or satisfactory one.

Lakis, who primarily uses the romantic filter, timidly talked about this intimidating feeling. He mentioned that people might not visit art museums because of some kind of “complex” and he offered an analogy:

Like me for example, I might pass by a bookstore and avoid entering. There are times that I want to go into a bookstore but if I go I understand how uneducated I am. Understand? ... And someone might not understand, he might say ‘look at these beautiful things and I don’t understand anything’, and avoid it, fight it. [rare visitor, male, 55-64 years old, I28]

Lakis might be tempted to visit a museum (or a bookstore) but he prefers not to because he feels insecure about his knowledge of art. He chooses to avoid bringing himself into an unfamiliar and uncomfortable situation where his self-esteem might be damaged. Lakis answered all the interview questions thoughtfully and with honesty and was the only interviewee who admitted feeling threatened by an experience he considers beautiful. Nevertheless, other interviewees also mentioned that they prefer not to visit art museums because of their perceived lack of art education or lack of previous experiences. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that others might share Lakis’ feelings. Interestingly, none of these people felt that art museums exclude them in any way. This reminds us of Bourdieu’s critique of art museums. Bourdieu (1968) believes that museums are institutions which offer “false generosity” (p. 611), apparently wide open for anyone but in reality only usable by those with the appropriate cultural capital to decode the cultural codes of art. For people who mainly use the romantic filter this is apparently true.

The romantic filter is especially interesting because through it museums appear to be ideal places. Yet, it is mainly used by rare or non-visitors. Can museums offer more confidence to these people in order to make museum visiting a valid and more approachable leisure option? This is a subject that will be discussed further in the final chapter.

6.2.7 Rejection Filter (blue)

Interviewees who mainly use the romantic filter did not make any negative comments about art museums. Even though they felt that museums are not for them, they never questioned why. On the other hand, interviewees who mainly use the rejection filter *did* question museums and voiced their negative attitudes. They made the conscious decision not to visit and were aware of the reasons behind their choice. However, we have to keep in mind that museums are generally considered to be educational, keepers of history and culture, and inspirational, by the majority of people. For this reason, it is probably difficult for someone to go against these prevailing conceptions and voice his/ her negative attitudes. Therefore, more people might have negative attitudes towards museums but do not voice them as directly or as clearly as some interviewees did.

The main negative attitudes towards art museums described by the interviewees in this study are: (a) museums are not considered important; (b) museums are populated by rich, snobbish people; (c) interviewees do not understand or learn anything from looking at art; and finally (d) interviewees reject the artists of today.

(a) “Not important for me”

People who use the rejection filter feel that art museums are not interesting or important for them. This point was clearly expressed by Fanos, a student:

I don't consider it [museum visiting] important. I don't know. It depends on the character of each individual. For me, personally, I don't consider it important and I don't like it. Now, if you say archaeological museums I might consider them important. I might consider them important because you have something to learn - the history of a country, your own history, whatever. But when it comes to artworks, I don't consider them important and I don't feel that I should deal with them. [rare visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I58]

It is easy for Fanos to understand why archaeological museums are important but he cannot understand why art museums are important. At least he does not consider them important for himself. Fanos went on to say that art does not play any role in his life and he would much prefer visiting a pub than visiting an art museum. Once, he and his friends visited the van Gogh museum in Amsterdam and he preferred to spend his time outside waiting for his friends than entering the museum.

(b) “Art museums are for snobbish people”

Apart from considering art museums as unimportant, a number of interviewees felt that art museum visitors are mainly rich, snobbish people.

Tommy, a fire-fighter, and his fiancé Lydia feel that museums are intended for a specific social group, mainly rich, snobbish people or people who pretend they like and understand art in order to enter a higher socio-economic circle of acquaintances. When I asked them if they feel that museums are addressing a specific social group they answered:

Lydia: Yes.

Researcher: Yes?

Tommy: Em, yes, it's a part of another culture. For example, me, I'm not attracted to them at all.

Researcher: How do you see it?

Tommy: For me it's a waste of time.

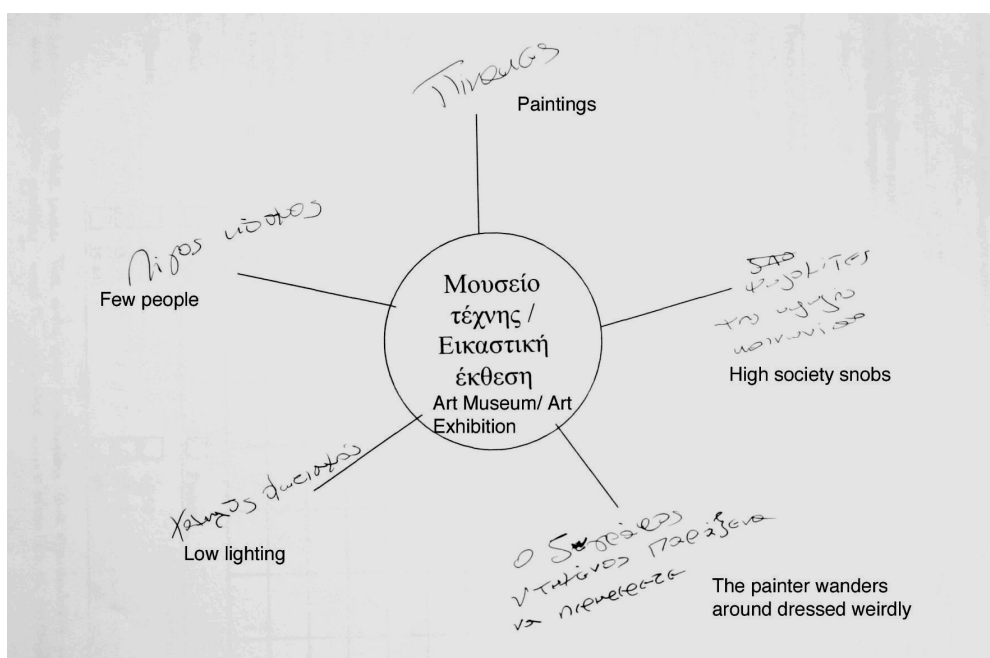
Lydia: It's a luxury. I believe it's a luxury... to understand, to do what? [rare visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I11] [...]

Tommy: And it's usually rich people [who visit] who have nothing else to do and have lots of time. [rare visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I10]

For Tommy and Lydia, visiting an art museum is something irrelevant to their everyday life, a luxurious activity, and finally, a waste of time. This is also obvious in Tommy's personal meaning map (see Figure 6.11).

Figure 6.11

Tommy's Personal Meaning Map [rare visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I10]



Tommy envisioned the art museum as a place with low lighting, paintings on the wall and a few snobbish people looking at art who mainly come from the high society. Meanwhile, the painter wanders around the rooms dressed weirdly. From our conversation, it was obvious that Tommy did not want to be associated with what he perceived to be a museum visitor or an artist. Therefore, it is his choice to distinguish from them and avoid places where they frequent (see Chapter 5 for issues of distinction and belonging). As it turned out, Tommy's previous experiences fuelled his attitudes. Once, he and his fiancé visited the art exhibition of a colleague who they considered to be a pretentious, rich individual with too much time in her hands and no particular talent. Even though this was the only art exhibition experience they had had, it coloured the way they perceive art museums and galleries.

Another interviewee, Dinos, a non-visitor of art museums, shares Tommy's opinions. He mentioned:

It's what we call the elites. It's a caste, a group of society which shows off that they have a certain level ... but my difference with all these people is that if for example we all go to Koureio [archaeological site in Cyprus], and I saw that the head of Apollo is going to fall, I'm the only one that will run to save it. That is, they are all professionals. They went there because they want to have fun, and to see each other and to say that they went to Koureio. [non-visitor, male, 55-64 years old, I29]

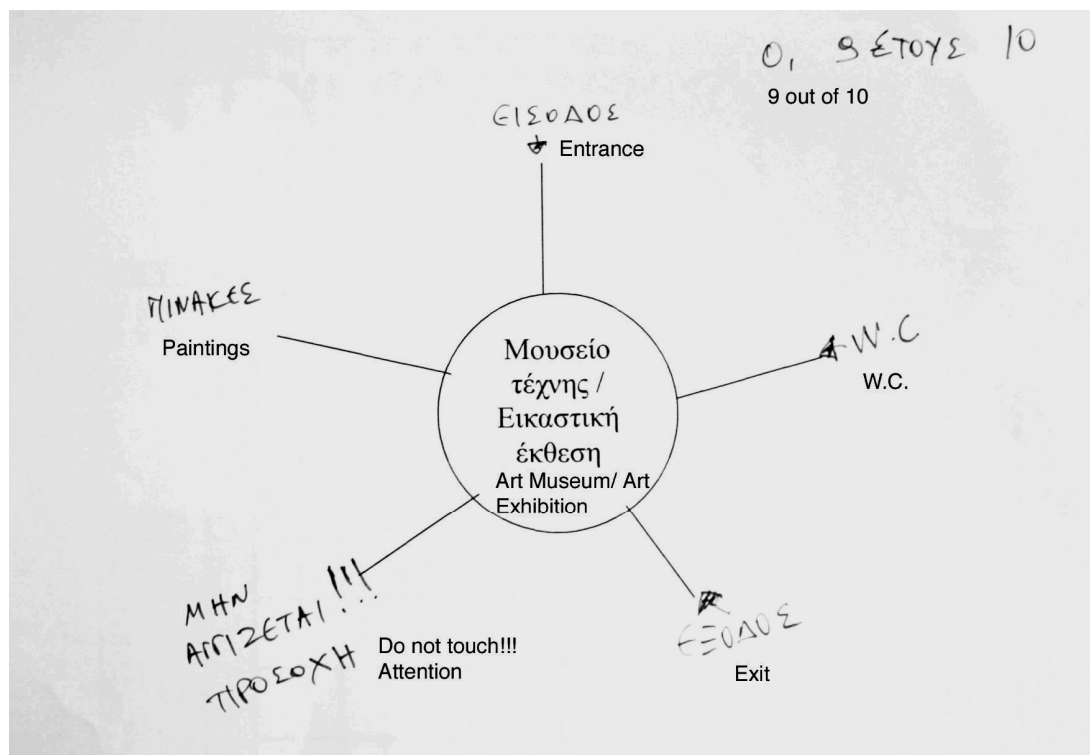
Dinos had negative attitudes towards museum visitors. He explained that if one of the sculptures at an archaeological site was going to fall and break, he would be the only one who would care enough to run, catch it, and save it. He believes that the visitors he calls “the elite” would not attempt to save it because their interest does not stem from their love of art but from other, mainly corrupted reasons. According to Dinos, they just want to be able to say that they have been there and to confirm the fact that they belong to a higher socio-economic class.

(c) “Nine out of ten visitors do not understand anything”

Lazaros, a leather salesman who is a non-visitor of art museums but a frequent visitor of archaeological museums, wrote in his PMM (see Figure 6.12) that nine out of 10 people only see the “Entrance”, “Exit”, the “Do not touch” signs, some paintings on the walls and they might look for the restrooms at some point. He could not see himself or others gaining anything deeper than this.

Figure 6.12

Lazaros’ Personal Meaning Map [non-visitor, male, 25-34 years old, 113]



Lazaros animatedly explained:

Lazaros: This is the way I perceive this, that is ... nine out of ... ten. Nine out of ten have this perception, they are ... there is no culture. Nine out of ten people do not understand what they see, they cannot comprehend. That is, if you take me by the hand and show me a painting, I don't know what I'll see. It might be ... one of the most beautiful, the most expensive ones. For example, why did the 'Sunflowers' reach that selling price? van Gogh's? What did he do? He painted two flowers? What did he show? Or the navy man of our own [painter] ... selfport ... how do they call this thing when you paint yourself? van Gogh's?

Pambos: Self-portrait. [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I12]

Lazaros: So what? This, this is what I understand. No one understands anything. Where is the depth? Let's say 'Gioconda' looks at you from right, left, it reminds you of ... something ... It looks at you from this way and that. Is there any culture? In a landscape, yes, you might say 'wow, it reminds me of my village'. No one understands anything when it comes to other things. [non-visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I13]

For Lazaros, art museums cannot offer anything because he cannot understand what he sees and why it is important. He knows that some of the paintings he mentioned are generally considered important but he cannot understand why that is. For this reason, he also believes that nine out of ten visitors feel the same way and therefore identifies with the majority. Nevertheless, Lazaros is a frequent visitor of archaeological museums. He went on to say that he often finds the same problem with archaeological museums and said that he would much prefer it if museums offered more explanatory information.

(d) "These are not artists"

Some people have negative attitudes towards artists. For example, Tommy believes that art is a moneymaking profession very different to how it used to be:

Tommy: Meanwhile, the most important painters wore rags. They [today's artists] try to show that they belong to high society.

Researcher: For you, is high society connected with art?

Tommy: Usually, yes. [rare visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I10]

Lydia: Yes, because a painting might cost ... a lot. [rare visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I11]

The romantic idea of the starving artist that lives for his/ her art was also prevalent in Dinos' comments. Dinos has some very strong opinions about art museums and galleries, and rejects artists of today because he believes they are more attached to the material world than they should be:

That romantic idea that we might see in some movies of the artist who holds his brushes and starts painting with his beret and he ends up in a corner starving, this is what moves me as art. When I think that someone sits down and thinks how much he will earn ... Art became a profession. Most of them work with commissions. They work with commissions! They go to someone's house and they paint for a hundred thousand pounds a whole wall. At this moment, I know painters who work like this. That's why I'm telling you that I felt, with the passage of time, a tendency towards estrangement from these things. Taking advantage of people bothers me a lot. It's the worst characteristic of an individual. [non-visitor, male, 55-64 years old, I29]

Dinos believes that artists take advantage of people by creating works which will bring them a lot of profit without putting their art first. Interestingly, some art professionals might also have similar negative attitudes but they usually offer specific examples and do not reject art exhibitions for this reason.

In conclusion, interviewees who mainly use the rejection filter have some strong negative attitudes towards art museums, museum visitors, or artists, and therefore avoid visiting.

6.2.8 Indifference Filter (black)

People who mainly use this perceptual filter are non-visitors who have never thought about visiting an art museum. They do not consider art museums as important or relevant to their lives. The colour of this filter is black because it blocks an individual's vision from seeing art museum visiting as a valid leisure activity.

For example, Lenia is a young woman who likes to spend time with her friends in cafes and who had never visited an art museum (apart from the time she visited as a student with her school). When asked if she considers art museums as important, she raised her shoulders a few times with an uncertain look on her face and said:

Lenia: No, they are not important.

Antonis: It depends on the interests of each individual. That is, if you are not engaged and it's not your kind of thing, then you are not directly interested. [rare visitor, male, 18-24 years old, I15]

Researcher: Yes, did it ever pass through your mind at any time to visit an art museum?

Lenia: No. [non-visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I14]

Lenia clearly stated that she does not consider art museums as important and had never thought about visiting one. Her brother, Antonis, added that you have to be interested in art in order to visit them.

Lenia, and other interviewees who use this filter, have not really thought about art museums so they sometimes feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions and find the personal meaning map (PMM) especially difficult. In one case, an interviewee spent several minutes thinking about her PMM but she could not think of anything at all. When Miriam was asked to fill in the PMM she said: "What should I do? I don't know what I should do. I don't know what to write, nothing comes to my mind (laughs) ... I'm stuck, nothing comes to mind (laughs)." Then a few minutes later she put her pen down and said: "I can't do anything. It's empty. It's emptiness" [non-visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I30]. If people who use the indifference filter thought of something to write on their PMM, they noted down things like: "paintings, statues" [non-visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I14], "paintings, ancient tools" and a drawing of an Ionic column [non-visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I17], or "painting of a village/ landscape, traditional costumes, customs and habits, sunset/ sunrise, traditional occupations" [non-visitor, female, 55-64 years old, I18]. Since all of the interviewees who mainly use this filter are non-visitors, most of their PMM comments come from what they imagine art museums contain. Their perceptions are coloured by what they saw on TV, read in magazines, or heard from friends. They seem to have no positive or negative attitudes towards museums and no signs of a personal connection with them. They are totally indifferent.

Sometimes the reason for adopting this filter is simply indifference or ignorance, but sometimes it is some deeper beliefs about museums. Penelope, a housewife, mother of four who spends her free time watching TV and exchanging recipes with the neighbours over coffee and cookies, laughs at the idea of visiting an art museum. She feels that you have to be educated in order to visit art museums. She mentioned that in order to talk about art you need to:

Penelope: [...] have a circle, to be highly educated, to go out, in order to talk about these subjects.

Friend: The ladies in the salons.

Penelope: Yes, the ladies in the salons. [non-visitor, female, 55-64 years old, I24]

She clearly believes that museums are not for people who are uneducated and come from lower socio-economic classes. This perception clearly blocks her perceptual lenses from seeing art museums as a valid leisure activity for herself. For this reason, she never contemplated visiting an art museum and probably would not like to. In contrast with someone who mainly uses a romantic filter, Penelope does not have any romantic ideas about art museums and is not interested in visiting one.

6.3 Using More Than One Filter

As we have seen, our perceptual filters, like camera filters, can “colour” the way we see reality and, as a result, also influence the way we see art museums, whether or not we choose to visit them, and the way we use them.

An individual might use more than one museum perceptual filter (MPF) and interchange them depending on the situation. For example, an individual can use the self-exploration filter along with the cultural tourism filter when visiting an art museum abroad. Or, someone mainly using the art-loving filter in an exhibition space might switch to the social visitation filter in the museum café, or to the cultural tourism filter in the museum shop. As a result, successful museums might be the museums that offer the opportunity for multiple role-playing. Individuals who use the indifference filter are the only ones considered to be “blind” when it comes to perceiving art museums. They have never visited an art museum before, have never thought about doing so, and are totally indifferent to the idea of art museums.

Even though people might use more than one MPF, it seems that they are mainly using one or two. After an initial analysis of the interviews, it became apparent that people usually chose to talk about one or mostly two ways they view art museums. I assume that what people chose to talk about is the filter(s) they mostly put to use or the one(s) closer to their sense of identity. Interviewees were assigned MPFs in the following way: At the conclusion of phase I of interviews, definitions for each MPF were developed. During the

analysis stage of the research, I noted when each interviewee used certain forms of language or expressions that fit the MPF definitions. A *primary filter* is the one that the interviewee used the most when describing his/ her museum experiences, memories, or opinions. All other filters used are defined as *secondary* filters. For example, if an interviewee used language that described museums as a way to explore the culture of his destination in four different instances, and also mentioned that he appreciates or loves art twice, his primary filter would be the cultural tourism filter and his secondary filter the art-loving filter (for more information on the methodology of assigning filters see Chapter 4).

6.4 The Problem of Categorization

One troubling issue that emerged during the analysis process was whether or not I could categorize the interviewees according to the main filters they were using.

6.4.1 Value of the Information Provided During the Interviews and Categorization

It is reasonable to believe that the information that each interviewee volunteered during the interview is the most relevant in his/ her present life and central to the individual's current conception of self. Furthermore, the personal meaning mapping technique was designed to reveal what is most immediately salient in the interviewee's mental map. A danger present in all in-depth interviews is that interviewees might "re-construct" their identity in order to match or oppose the identity of the interviewer. It is true that some individuals might have been tempted to adapt their self-projection to fit the specific social situation - for example, overstate their involvement with art and art museums because they were interviewed by a museum studies PhD student. However, I tried to minimize this effect by emphasizing the fact that I was a student seeking their own unique experiences and by trying to engage them in a friendly, informal conversation.

If we assume that the information gained from the interviews was the most salient in the interviewees' mental map and most relevant to their conception of self at the time of the interview, then comparisons can be made between the interviewees' museum perceptions. As we have seen, in attempting this comparison, eight main museum perceptual filters were identified.

6.4.2 Falk vs. Rounds and This Study's Approach

In the following paragraphs two main approaches of categorizing research participants are discussed, as well as the approach of this particular study.

Falk (2006) identified five museum-specific identities, which are enacted by museum visitors: the professional/ hobbyist, the spiritual pilgrim, the explorer, the experience seeker, and the facilitator. Even though Falk's research was published after the initial analysis of the interviews in this study, surprisingly enough, the conception of those five categories is very similar to the first five perceptual categories identified in this research (professional, art-loving, self-exploration, cultural tourism, and social visitation filters). Falk categorized visitors according to their museum-specific identities for the purposes of his research. He argues that the identity-related visit motivations influence the visitors' learning in museums and particularly their long-term learning.

On the other hand, Rounds (2006) argues that museum visitors' identities should not be used as a variable to be measured and categorized. He focuses his research on how we use exhibitions to "construct, maintain, and adapt our sense of personal identity, and persuade other people to believe in that identity" (p. 133). Rounds (2006), believes that:

By switching the analytical perspective from 'identity' to 'identity work,' we eliminate the need to measure, name, and categorize the identities visitors are presumed to bring into the museum. We then can turn our attention to how the visitor uses the museum in his or her lifelong work of identity construction, maintenance, and change. (p. 135)

Both Falk and Rounds present a strong case. The approach of this study lies somewhere between the approaches adopted by these two researchers, between categorizing and fluidity. First, unlike Falk, and like Rounds, I am not categorizing people's identities in any way. I am merely identifying a repertoire of roles people can play in a museum, or even better, potential *filters that individuals can use to make sense of art museums*. Moreover, Falk's research deals with how visitors' identities function inside the museum environment. On the other hand, this research is mostly dealing with how people view museums regardless of their visitation frequency and regardless of their location, that is, if they are inside or outside a museum. We have seen that non-visitors also engage in "identity work" by choosing *not* to visit a museum and by doing something else instead. For these reasons the interviews mostly took place outside the museum environment and the interviewees

were asked to comment on a variety of leisure activities. Museum visitation is viewed as an integral part of people's lives and, therefore, cannot be dissected as a separate activity detached from everyday life. Finally, Falk's attempt to categorize people's identities or motivations is notable. According to Spock (2006), "Falk's categories of 'self' are what Rounds would define as 'roles' – versions of the self enacted in the social sphere, but not the equivalent of identity" (p. 174). Whether categorizing visitors' identities or museum roles, the attempt to do so is important in helping us understand how people use and make sense of museums. After all, without the fuzzy categorization of ideal types sociology would be impossible (Jenkins, 1992). As Berger (1991) put it:

Everybody knows (or should) that real life is usually more complex than the analytic categories social scientists must use to make generalizations. But some of the purposes of social science are defeated when researchers get so close to lived experience that all they see are the complexities to be described and interpreted, rather than the ways in which the data can be *reduced* to parsimonious generalizations. (p. 9)

In conclusion, categorizing individuals according to their museum perceptual filters helped me recognize, analyse, and make sense of different museum perceptions and finally arrive at a visitation theory. Even though we must always keep in mind that people's perceptions can be fluid and might change according to different situations, perceptions do have a rather persistent character. The data of this research reflect the museum perceptions of the interviewees at the particular time of the interviews.

6.5 Primary and Secondary Museum Perceptual Filters

Taking into account that categorizing individuals in a fluid manner can provide valuable information for understanding museum visitors and non-visitors, each interviewee was assigned a primary MPF and usually one to two secondary filters. Table 6.2 presents the primary and secondary filters of the 60 interviewees. For example, five interviewees use the cultural tourism filter as their primary filter and the self-exploration filter as their secondary filter. Unfortunately, this table can only include one primary and one secondary filter. Some people, especially the people who use the "warmer" filters, might utilize more than two filters.

Table 6.2

Primary and Secondary Filters for the 60 Interviewees

Secondary Filters	Primary Filters								Tot.
	PRO	ART	SEL	CUL	SOC	ROM	REJ	IND	
PRO	1	1							2
ART	4	4	1	1	2	1			14
SEL	1	2		5					8
CUL	3	1	3	3	3			3	17
SOC				4	4				8
ROM				2		1	1		2
REJ							3		3
IND						2	1	3	6
	9	8	4	15	9	4	5	6	60

Note. PRO = professional filter; ART = art-loving filter; SEL = self-exploration filter; CUL = cultural tourism filter; SOC = social visitation filter; ROM = romantic filter; REJ = rejection filter; IND = indifference filter.

While looking at this table we have to keep in mind that the sample of 60 interviewees is not representative of the general population. What we are dealing with is a theoretical sample that was chosen to test my conceptual model. For example, art professionals were specifically recruited in order to explore the professional filter. For this reason, we cannot make any claims of generalization as to the general population. Table 6.2 is included as an indication of the MPFs used by the participants of this study.

The only result that seems important in this analysis is the fact that the cultural tourism filter seems to be the most popular filter both as a primary (15 interviewees out of 60) and as a secondary (17 interviewees out of 60) filter. For this reason it will be further discussed in the next chapter.

6.6 Museum Perceptual Filters and Visitation Frequency

What the particular sample achieved was to help us construct a visitation theory. Table 6.3 helps us compare the museum perceptual filters used by the interviewees with their visitation frequency.

Table 6.3

Primary Museum Perceptual Filters and Visitation Frequency

Primary MPFs	Visitation						Tot.
	Very Frequent	Frequent	Regular	Occasional	Rare	Non-Visitor	
Professional	9						9
Art-loving	2	3	1	2			8
Self-exploration	1	3					4
Cultural tourism		1	7	7			15
Social visitation			1	6	2		9
Romantic					2	2	4
Rejection					3	2	5
Indifference						6	6
	12	7	9	15	7	10	60

After examining Table 6.3 we can see that the visitation frequency of the interviewees is highly connected with the MPFs they use. The “warmer” the main filter used, the more one uses art museums. Interviewees who mainly use the professional filter are very frequent visitors since they consider art exhibition visiting as part of their job. Interviewees who mainly use the art-loving filter are occasional to very frequent visitors. Interviewees who mainly use the self-exploration filter are frequent to very frequent visitors, mainly because they are also the most omnivorous ones in their leisure activities. Interviewees who usually use the cultural tourism filter are occasional to frequent visitors depending on their travelling frequency. Those who mainly use the social visitation filter are rare to regular visitors depending on how often their friends or family visits. And finally, interviewees who mainly use the romantic, rejection and indifference filters are non-visitors or rare visitors since they cannot see art museum visiting as a valid or enjoyable leisure activity.

6.7 Conclusions

We have seen that people’s perceptions differ according to their visitation levels. However, this does not mean that people in the same visitation level necessarily have the same museum perceptions. We have identified eight museum perceptual filters (MPFs) that are part of our spectacles of perception. These filters influence the way we approach, experience and use museums. Warmer filters such as the professional, art-loving, and self-exploration filters are usually associated with very frequent and frequent museum visitation. On the other hand, colder filters such as the romantic, rejection, and indifference filters are associated with rare visitation and no visitation. The middle visitation level (regular and occasional visitors) is associated with the cultural tourism and the social visitation filters.

Chapter 7

Cyprus: Museum Environment and Cultural Tourism

“New lands you will not find, nor seas.
The city will follow you.
In the same streets you will wander.”

From the poem “The City” by K. P. Kavafis, 1910

7.1 Introduction

So far we have looked at how socio-cultural and individual factors influence our spectacles of perception and thus our museum visitation. However, we have not yet seen how environmental factors influence our visitation decisions. For this reason, this chapter is dedicated to reconstructing the museum environment of Cyprus, and particularly that of Nicosia (the capital of Cyprus and the research location) and to understanding the phenomenon of cultural tourism. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part describes some Cypriot-specific perceptions after examining the previous literature, the interviews with museum professionals and the participants of this study. The second part examines the phenomenon of cultural tourism, specifically, why it is so relevant to the case of Cyprus and how we can better understand cultural tourists with the help of the museum perceptual filters.

7.2 Museum Environment in Cyprus

The following paragraphs present three ways of understanding the museum environment in Cyprus. First, we will examine the previous literature in relation to the findings of this research. Second, we will see how museum professionals perceive the general museum environment of Cyprus and their public. Lastly, we will examine Cypriot perceptions of museums in Cyprus as well as the interviewees’ relationship with them. These three perspectives will give us a sense of the museum environment in Nicosia.

7.2.1 Perspective I: Previous Research

Cyprus does not have a tradition in museum research. There are currently no museum-related departments at the Universities or Colleges in Cyprus, which can promote museum research. Furthermore, museums and galleries do not seem to have the funding or the trained personnel necessary to conduct audience research. The only records that museums keep are the numbers of visitors per year. The Research and Development Centre of Intercollege (currently University of Nicosia) conducted the only relevant and available audience research in Cyprus in 1999. The title of the report was “Cultural Life in Cyprus” and it included an analysis of 932 questionnaires where Cypriots responded to questions related to their leisure activities. The findings that are relevant to this study are: (a) Cypriots visit archaeological museums more often than any other type of museum; (b) the higher the education, the higher the visitation frequency at all types of museums; and (c) archaeological and other museums are more approachable than art museums, especially for those in the lower educational levels. As we will see, my research results support these findings.

The Intercollege research revealed that only 11.9% of Cypriots regularly visit art exhibitions. 87.2% replied negatively to the question “Do you usually visit art exhibitions?” and 0.9% did not answer at all. However, a larger percentage of Cypriots reported that they visit museums and archaeological sites. 31% of research participants reported that they regularly visit museums and archaeological sites, 67.3% said they do not, and 1.7% did not answer the question. In my research, 28 out of 60 interviewees (46.7%) reported that they visit art museums and exhibitions at least once a year while 41 out of 60 (68.30%) reported visiting archaeological museums and sites. These findings cannot be compared to the findings from the Intercollege research for several reasons. First, my sample is not as large, or representative, of the Cypriot public. Second, visitation frequencies might have changed in the past 7 years. Third, the research design and questions asked were different. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, museum visitors are deliberately over-represented in my sample and, therefore, the percentage of people who visit art museums is inflated. Making generalisations would consequently be misleading. Despite this, we can still deduce that Cypriots visit archaeological museums more often than art museums.

The data suggest that the interviewees are usually more aware of and feel more at ease at archaeological museums and sites. For Fanos, archaeological museums are more interesting than art exhibitions. He explained:

Fanos: I believe it's different. For example if someone grew up in a family of painters. If you grew up in a, let's say, cultivated family, of the arts and letters, OK, they might ... visit and see artworks. Archaeological museums, more or less, are ... more common ... perhaps they are more interesting.

Researcher: Why more interesting?

Fanos: You have more things to learn. Instead of seeing a painting ... how should I put it ... it's just a painting. At least at archaeological sites and museums you can learn the history of a country, of the people.

Researcher: Is that why you visit when you travel every now and then?

Fanos: If I go [somewhere] and I have to choose between an art museum and an archaeological museum, I would visit the archaeological one ... I told you, I don't visit archaeological [museums] either but if it happens I might enter one. On the other hand, I won't visit art museums. [rare visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I58, rejection filter]

As a matter of fact most interviewees, when they thought of museums, immediately thought of archaeological museums. Elias said:

It's much more difficult for people to visit a gallery than a museum in Cyprus. Also, in Cyprus, the concept of museums is a bit misunderstood because when we say museums we always mean archaeological museums. [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I43, professional filter]

This was apparent in my conversations with many interviewees. A number of times interviewees would reply to my question "What art museums have you visited in Cyprus?" by mentioning mainly archaeological, but also history or folk museums.

One of the reasons for this phenomenon might be that most Cypriots interviewed had an experience with an archaeological museum in Cyprus. For example, all interviewees were familiar with the Cyprus Archaeological Museum since it is an obligatory school visit for all elementary students in Nicosia. On the other hand, very few schools choose to take their students to art exhibitions. The research conducted by Intercollege revealed that the residents of Paphos visit archaeological museums and sites most frequently. This is not surprising since Paphos has the most archaeological sites on the island.

The Research and Development Centre of Intercollege also found that the higher the educational status of the participants, the more they visit art exhibitions and other museums. Table 7.1 and Table 7.2 were adapted from the report and show that education influences museum visitation. As expected, people in the higher educational levels are over-represented in art exhibitions and museums alike. Nevertheless, what is especially interesting is that people with lower education frequent archaeological and other museums more often than art exhibitions. For example, only 2.8% of participants with an elementary education and 10.9% with a secondary education reported visiting art exhibitions in contrast to the 20% and 30.3% respectively who claimed to visit other museums and archaeological sites.

Table 7.1

Do You Usually Visit Art Exhibitions (painting, sculpture, printing etc.)?

Education	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
No education	0	0	13	100
Elementary	6	2.8	208	97.2
Secondary Education	50	10.9	410	89.1
College	20	19.6	82	80.4
University	34	30.1	79	69.9
Total	110	12.2	792	87.8

Note: The table is translated and reproduced from the report “Cultural Life in Cyprus” conducted by the Research and Development Centre of Intercollege (1999, p. 29)

Table 7.2

Do You Usually Visit Museums or/ and Archaeological sites?

Education	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
No education	2	16.7	10	83.3
Elementary	43	20	172	80
Secondary Education	137	30.3	315	69.7
College	40	39.2	62	60.8
University	65	57.5	48	42.5
Total	287	32.1	607	67.9

Note: The table is translated and reproduced from the report “Cultural Life in Cyprus” conducted by the Research and Development Centre of Intercollege (1999, p. 52).

The research results of my study also support the fact that people in the lower educational levels visit archaeological museums more than art museums and exhibitions. Table 7.3 shows the number and percentage of interviewees who reported visiting art museums and exhibitions according to their education level. Table 7.4 shows the number and percentage of interviewees who reported visiting archaeological museums and sites.

Table 7.3

Visitation Frequency of Art Museums & Exhibitions and Education

Education	Visit at least once a year		Visit less often than once a year	
	Number	%	Number	%
No education	-	-	-	-
Elementary	0	0	2	100
Secondary Education	1	7.7	12	92.3
College	4	44.4	5	55.6
University	23	63.9	13	36.1
Total	28	46.7	32	53.3

Note: People who visit at least once a year = very frequent, frequent, and regular visitors. People who visit less often than once a year = occasional, rare, and non-visitors.

Table 7.4

Visitation Frequency of Archaeological Museums & Sites and Education

Education	Visit at least one a year		Visit less often than once a year	
	Number	%	Number	%
No education	-	-	-	-
Elementary	0	0	2	100
Secondary Education	8	61.5	5	38.5
College	5	55.6	4	44.4
University	28	77.8	8	22.2
Total	41	68.3	19	31.7

Note: People who visit at least once a year = very frequent, frequent and regular visitors. People who visit less often than once a year = occasional, rare and non-visitors.

We can see from Tables 7.3. and 7.4 that interviewees in the lower educational levels (secondary education or less) are more likely to visit an archaeological museum than an art museum. Only one interviewee out of 15 in the lower educational levels reported visiting art museums and exhibitions at least once a year. On the other hand, eight interviewees out of 15 in the lower educational levels reported visiting archaeological museums and sites at least once a year.

Once again, even though we cannot make a direct comparison with the Intercollege research, the results suggest that archaeological museums and sites are more familiar to and more frequented by the Cypriot public, despite the fact that people with higher educational levels are over-represented in all kinds of museums.

Taking a step back we have to ask ourselves: “How can museum visitation in Cyprus compare with that of other countries?” Shuster (1993) examined statistical data from audience research in several countries in order to compare the art museum visitation frequency for each country. This was a difficult task since various studies differ in terms of the analytic categories they use and the time periods over which participation is measured. Furthermore, there are considerable variations in what is considered to be an art museum or an art gallery. For example in the Netherlands, and in Cyprus, the word “gallery” means a commercial place where art is sold. This is not true in some parts of the USA or in England where the word “gallery” can be interchangeably used with the word “museum” (Shuster, 1993). Despite these problems, Shuster presented a compelling comparative table, which is reproduced in Table 7.5. The last entry about Cyprus is added to the original table for comparative reasons and the participation rates for this entry are taken from the Intercollege research mentioned above. It is worth mentioning that while the studies mentioned by Schuster usually ask respondents to think back to the previous 12 months, the Cypriot research asks whether or not the respondents *usually* visit art exhibitions. The other difficulty with the data is that the phrase “art exhibitions” is usually associated with commercial gallery visiting.

Table 7.5

Comparing Participation Rates for Art Museums Among Different Countries

Country	Percent	Participation rate for
United States	22	participation rate for 'art museums or art galleries'
Britain (a)	21 15	currently attend 'art galleries or art exhibitions' currently attend if 'less than once a year' is omitted
Britain (b)	21 (32)	nowadays attend 'painting or sculpture exhibitions or galleries' or 'photography exhibitions or galleries' nowadays attend 'museums')
Netherlands (a)	21 (41)	participation rate for 'galleries' participation rate for 'museums')
Netherlands (b)	(51)	participation rate for 'museums or exhibitions')
France	15 23 (30)	participation rate for 'art galleries' participation for 'temporary exhibitions of art or sculpture' participation rate for 'museums')
Spain	21 (28)	participation rate for 'art exhibitions in a gallery or an exhibition hall' participation rate for 'museums')
Portugal	24	participation for 'exhibitions'
Sweden	12 25 30	participation rate for 'art museums' participation for 'art or craft exhibitions' participation rate for 'art museums or art or craft exhibitions'
Norway	27 (26)	participation rate for 'art exhibitions' participation rate for 'museums')
Denmark	25	participation rate for 'exhibitions of art'
Finland	35	participation rate for 'art exhibitions'
Quebec	28	participation rate for 'art museums'
Germany	(25)	participation rate for 'museums and exhibitions')
Austria	(48)	participation rate for 'museums and exhibitions')
Poland	13	participation rate for 'contact with fine arts in museums, galleries or exhibitions'
Ireland	8	participation rate for 'exhibitions of paintings or sculpture by living artists'
Cyprus	12 (31)	<i>participation rate for 'art exhibitions (painting, sculpture, printing etc.)'</i> <i>participation rate for 'museums and/ or archaeological sites')</i>

Note 1. Source: Schuster, M. D. (1993). The public interest in the art museum's public. In T. Gubbels & A. van Hamel (Eds.), *Art Museums and the Price of Success: An International Comparison* (p. 48). Amsterdam: Boekman Foundation.

Note 2. The Cyprus participation rate (in italics) was added in Schuster's table for comparative reasons. The participation rates were taken from the report "Cultural Life in Cyprus" (1999) contacted by the Research and Development Centre of Intercollege.

Note 3: The numbers in parenthesis are the percentages for broader definitions of museums and they usually include all kinds of museums.

After reviewing the table, we realize that there are some slight differences between art museum participation in different countries. For example, we observe that Nordic countries, such as Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, seem to have higher participation rates. Cyprus has a relatively low participation rate for art exhibition participation but this might be due to the methodological variations inherited in the studies. Nevertheless, the percentage (12%) is not much lower than the participation of countries like Poland (13%) or France (15%). Furthermore, if we compare the Cypriot participation to museums in general, then the Cypriot participation rate (31%) exceeds that of Germany (25%), Spain (28%), and France (30%). Overall, differences in participation rates between countries are not that dramatic. As Shuster (1993) said: “Despite the differences in definitions and categories across these studies, the most striking thing to emerge from these results is that the overall participation rates are surprisingly similar to one another” (p. 47). Subsequently, we can deduce that the Cypriot participation rate to art and other museums is not remarkably different from that of other countries, even though, as we will see, Cypriots seem to believe that it is.

7.2.2 Perspective II: Museum Professionals

Seven museum professionals from five main museums/ art centres in Nicosia were interviewed in order to gain an insight into the museum environment in Cyprus. The museum professionals were asked questions about their particular institutions as well as general questions about their thoughts and feelings on Cypriot museums and their visitors (see Chapter 4 for more information on the interviewees). The interviews revealed some of the interviewees’ problems, concerns, and beliefs regarding the museum environment in Cyprus and, specifically, regarding their own institutions. These are highlighted in Chapter 1. In addition, the museum professionals explained why they believe that Cypriots do not regularly visit museums in Cyprus.

Most museum professionals agree that Cypriot people do not visit museums very often. They have offered a variety of reasons to explain this phenomenon. First, they believe that most Cypriots are not aware that museums and galleries exist in Cyprus. Furthermore, if they are aware of some museums, they have the impression that they never change. Therefore, if they have visited once in the past, they find no reason to visit again. Museum professionals also believe that crammed archaeological museums come to most people’s mind when thinking about museums. Implicit here is the notion that archaeological museums are not considered as exciting or worth visiting. Perceived faults in the

educational system were also highlighted. Some museum professionals believe that art education is not a priority, as it should have been, in Cypriot schools. In addition, they believe that schoolteachers and private art educators, for one reason or another, are not interested in making museum visiting an integral part of their curriculum. One museum professional went as far as to say that Cypriots, in general, are not interested in art. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that even though Cypriots might not appreciate or visit Cypriot museums, they *do* visit museums when they travel abroad and this usually happens under the guidance of a tour guide. In addition, it was recognized that museums and galleries are closed during the weekend when most people have free time and are most likely to visit. Interestingly, we will see that the research participants share most of the above perceptions.

7.2.3 Perspective III: Cypriot Public

The interviewees voiced, mostly without probing, their opinions about Cypriot museums and Cypriot people. The following paragraphs describe their main perceptions.

Perceptions of Cypriot museums

Interviewees had the chance to recall and comment on their experiences with specific art museums. Thought provoking was the fact that many interviewees described pleasant experiences with museums abroad but very few talked about pleasant museum experiences in Cyprus. As a matter of fact, a large number of interviewees had negative attitudes towards Cypriot museums or did not know of any art museums in Cyprus. Especially negative were their attitudes towards the only museum everyone had at least one experience with – the Cyprus Archaeological Museum in Nicosia.

Nicos asked: “Do we have any art museums in Cyprus?” [regular visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I56, cultural tourism filter]. 8 out of 60 interviewees asked a similar question. Anastasia was sure of her opinion and answered with certainty: “We don’t have any [art museums] in Cyprus. We should state this clearly. I don’t feel like going to the archaeological museum. That’s the only one we have” [frequent visitor, female, 34-44 years old, I35, art-loving filter]. All interviewees were aware of the Archaeological Museum in Nicosia and some assumed, like Anastasia, that the term art museum included archaeological and other museums. Unfortunately, very few people were aware of the State Gallery, which includes modern and contemporary Cypriot art, the Byzantine Museum & Art Galleries which

specialises in iconography, Cypriot art, and European art, or the Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre, which offers a variety of temporary exhibitions.

The image of the Archaeological Museum is not what a museum would hope for. It is considered to be an unchanging, cluttered, cold, musty and, in general, an unfriendly place. The interviewees did not mention anything negative about the permanent collection or the classical architecture of the building. The negative attitudes were mostly about the installation, general atmosphere, and lack of changing exhibitions. The interesting thing is that people from all visitation levels hold negative attitudes towards the particular museum. I asked Anne what museums she had visited in Cyprus:

I visited several. The Archaeological, the Leventio, the Museum for National Struggle, the Folk Art Gallery. It's been many years since I've been to the Archaeological Museum in Nicosia, but from what I remember it was not a place that was warm, that is ... now that I can compare because I've been abroad, it wasn't a place where it was easy - at least for me then - to see the things inside ... to be able to appreciate them as much as I should. [very frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I6, art-loving filter]

Anne compared the Archaeological Museum with other museums abroad and found it lacking in terms of installation and presentation. Similarly, Theo believes that the Archaeological Museum is too cluttered and does not have the space to showcase most of its artefacts. He blamed the Cypriot government for this:

They [government officials] have an archaeological museum and most of ... the objects are in storage in the basements. They have so many things to exhibit and ... they are in storage. You can see from this example how behind we are. When you go to other countries, they have a museum for each thing. [occasional visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I52, cultural tourism filter]

Unfortunately, in people's minds, the Archaeological Museum functions as a model for all Cypriot museums. For this reason, the negative attitudes associated with its image are transferred to other museums. For example, Lucy occasionally visits art museums when she is abroad. The only museum in Cyprus that comes to her mind is the Cyprus Archaeological Museum which she visited once on a school trip. She said:

I've been to the museum with school and everything, but like now I probably wouldn't go. I don't feel like there is anything new to see in a way. If there was, OK [I would visit]. [occasional visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I36, cultural tourism]

Lucy has the impression that once one sees a museum, there is no reason to see it again since it stays the same. Consequently, she chooses to visit art museums only when she is abroad. She went on to say: "You would visit the Archaeological Museum once, you'll visit twice, three times. After that you have to go abroad in order to see [something new]" [occasional visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I36, cultural tourism]. This seems to be a common perception among Cypriots. However, this appears to be a common conception held by people in other countries as well (e.g., Trevelyan, 1991). Michalis said:

We visit when we happen to be abroad. Because they [Cypriots] will see something they haven't seen before. In the Archaeological Museum, if you visit once you won't visit ever again. [occasional visitor, male, 55-64 years old, I48, cultural tourism filter]

Other complaints expressed by the interviewees were that the museums in Cyprus are not open during convenient hours and days, such as late at night or during the weekend, they do not offer enough information about the exhibits, and finally, they do not advertise enough.

Perceptions of Cypriots

The most commonly expressed beliefs regarding the Cypriot public by the interviewees are: (a) Cypriots will only visit when abroad and usually with a group, (b) museum visiting is not one of the things Cypriots are interested in, (c) people from other countries visit museums more often than Cypriots, and finally (d) art is becoming fashionable in Cyprus and some individuals use it in order to "show off".

Many interviewees mentioned that visiting art museums was something they do when abroad. Lucy explained that visiting museums is not a priority, it is just one of the things Cypriots might do when visiting a foreign country.

Rather than saying 'I'm going to an art museum', we say 'I'm going to Paris so we have to go to the Louvre.' That's why, because we are going to Paris. [occasional visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I27, cultural tourism filter]

Similarly, Stavroula said about Cypriots: “They go when they are abroad. That is, among the things they will see, they will also see art museums” [occasional visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I45, cultural tourism filter]. I asked Brian if he thought that Cypriots visited museums in general:

Brian: I don’t think that we have the opportunity or the time in our country. I believe the same happens with people in other countries. However, when you are somewhere else, you always let go, you visit in order to relax, you let go. Something internal externalizes and you visit, you do something you like. And one of these things is visiting a museum. I believe that a percentage, not a large one, of Cypriots have this tendency.

Researcher: What percentage would you say?

Brian: Let’s say 10%. [occasional visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I34, cultural tourism filter]

For Brian, visiting an art museum becomes relaxing and enjoyable when abroad. He projects his personal feelings onto 10% of the Cypriot population. Some interviewees believe that when Cypriots visit museums abroad they do so only because museums are part of their tour group schedule. For example, Anastasia, an architect who mainly uses the art-loving filter, believes that Cypriots will visit when abroad “because museums are part of organised tours. They will take a trip and then stop and look” [frequent visitor, female, 34-44 years old, I35, art-loving filter]. Catherine and Michalis, a couple, mainly use the cultural tourism filter. They believe that very few Cypriots would take the initiative to visit an art museum by themselves. They said:

Catherine: I think those in a group [visit museums]. I don’t think that the others visit museums. I don’t hear about other people who travel and visit museums. A friend of mine who is interested in them, yes, but I don’t hear about others who go by themselves and visit museums.

Researcher: What happens if they go with groups?

Catherine: If it’s obligatory, they will go.

Michalis: If it’s in the schedule. [occasional visitor, male, 55-64 years old, I48, cultural tourism filter]

Catherine: If it’s not in their schedule and they had an option between visiting a museum or the shops, they will choose the shops. [occasional visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I47, cultural tourism filter]

Catherine and Michalis are proud of their interest in museums and distinguish themselves from other cultural tourists who would only visit with an organised group because “it’s on the schedule”.

The phenomenon of visiting museums mostly when abroad than when in the home country is not unusual. According to Prentice (2001):

When overseas, a British tourist is more than twice as likely to visit a castle, monument or church as part of his or her trip than a British tourist within Britain (ETB et al, 1999). The same is true for visits to museums, art galleries and heritage centres, though not for performing arts attendance. (p. 15)

It is therefore possible that equating museum visiting with travelling abroad is not a purely Cypriot attitude after all.

Catherine and Michalis suggested that Cypriots were more interested in shopping than visiting museums. Other interviewees also had this perception. For example, Paul explained that Cypriots did not visit art museums as much as people from other countries because their priorities were not the same. He said:

I don’t think it’s only a matter of museums. I think that in general ... our culture, as a people, it doesn’t help. That’s what I think. We have different priorities from other people. [regular visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I57, cultural tourism filter]

According to David, the leisure priorities of Cypriots are cafes and clubs: “Cyprus’ culture is very different. People are used to cafes, club ... these things” [regular visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I22, cultural tourism filter]. Similarly, Vaso mentioned that: “Cypriots like to have fun. Things like museums don’t interest them” [Non-visitor, female, 55-64 years old, I24, indifference filter]. Finally, Tommy simply stated that “The society is not interested” [rare visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I10, rejection filter]. Dimitra offered a reason why this might be the case:

It is something that was a little bit introduced. That is, I don’t want to be all post-colonial but ... it was not a part of our culture – and when I say part of our culture, I mean part of our everyday life – to go and see something that is exhibited. This is also valid for archaeological findings ... it was slowly slowly that people got used to the concept that ‘Ah! This is an ancient thing and therefore, you know. This

glass is ancient so I'm not going to drink from it, I'll take it to the museum.' I want to say that it's not like visiting the Tate Modern and seeing the old ladies with their little bags and blue hair discussing the works ... for example about a brick, or something else. And they spend time discussing it. They might say 'Oh, my God! What a horrid thing!' but they have an opinion. [very frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I19, professional filter]

It seems that Dimitra believes that the main reason Cypriots do not visit art museums is that there is no tradition in museum visiting in Cyprus.

Many interviewees seem to have the impression that people from other countries visit museums more often than Cypriots. This impression might be based on a general feeling or on past experiences. Maria and Elias offer examples from their previous experiences in England and in Italy respectively. When I asked Maria if she believed that people abroad visited museums, she answered:

Yes. They also have more museums and more advertising is done for exhibitions. For example, here [in Cyprus], an exhibition is prepared and five people know about it. On the other hand, in England, where I went and saw, they do advertising, you can hear about it on the radio, you read about it. In Cyprus you don't. OK, only the people who want to go know about it. [very frequent visitor, female, 18-24 years old, I33, professional filter]

In response to the same question, Elias said:

Elias: I believe that abroad there is more education even though I can say that even in Italy, older people didn't visit. That is ... but because we are talking about big countries with big populations, we go and see their museums full and we have the impression that all people visit museums in that country. But it's not like this. I believe that the ratio is different than in Cyprus ...

Researcher: Yes ...

Elias: That is, if in Cyprus 1% visit, in Italy at least 10% visit - 10% of the Italians. And 10% of the Italians mean 5 million people.

A number of interviewees felt that studying art or attending art exhibitions was fashionable nowadays in Cyprus. For example, Margarita said:

I'm sorry to say this but it's a bit fashionable to study art. And before, in my time, parents didn't encourage their children to study art. They would say: 'You are not going to study art in order to starve your whole life.' Now parents – parents of my age, should I say young parents? – want their children to study fashion design. At the time I was a student nobody would study fashion design. Now it's very fashionable. Jewelry design! I didn't know anyone then [who studied jewelry design]. Now all girls study jewelry design. And what impresses me the most is that these parents [...] send their children to very good schools. For example, at St Martin's in London. You need a lot of money to study at St. Martin's and you need guts to get in. You need to get your GCE's with good grades. I don't know why. It's a bit fashionable. You are a bit 'in' – to call it this way – if you do art. [very frequent visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I37, professional filter]

Interestingly, interviewees from all visitation levels believe that some people visit art exhibitions because it is fashionable or because they want to show off. For example, Alisia, a very frequent visitor said: "Before, the people who used to visit were people who were interested in art. Today it is fashionable" [very frequent visitor, female, 45-54 years old, I49, professional filter]. Similarly, Fanos, a rare visitor, explained: "Most of them just want to say that they've been there. I believe this. This is pseudo-elitism, that's why they visit. Just to say they have been there" [rare visitor, male, 25-34 years old, I58, rejection filter]. We have also seen this in Chapter 5, when discussing people's perceptions about museum visitors.

In conclusion we have looked at previous literature that indicates that Cypriots visit archaeological museums more often than art museums/ galleries (Centre for Research and Development Intercollege, 1999) as well as international comparative research (Schuster, 1993), which shows that the museum participation rates in Cyprus are really not that different than the participation rates in other countries. However, we have also seen that Cypriots, regardless of their visitation frequency, have mostly negative attitudes towards Cypriot museums. This is especially true when it comes to the Cyprus Archaeological Museum, which is considered to be cluttered, never changing, and boring. Unfortunately, this particularly museum serves as a model for other museums in Cyprus since it is the most well-known museum in Nicosia. Furthermore, most Cypriots are not aware of what art museums exist in Cyprus. Perhaps for these reasons and because people in Cyprus travel often, most Cypriots experience art museums abroad. Due to the particular relevance of cultural tourism in Cyprus, the second part of this chapter explores the typology of cultural

tourists as it is presented in the previous literature. After mentioning some notable research, I will explain how the museum perceptual filter (MPF) model can help us understand cultural tourism in a deeper level than previous literature.

7.3 Cultural Tourism

Museum visitor literature has not paid much attention to how people view museums when they travel. Most research about cultural tourism comes from the tourist industry and explores the subject from the point of view of the destination – that is, it examines the amount of cultural tourism in a country or the benefits of cultural tourism.

In the previous literature, we encountered many different definitions for the term cultural tourism. However, it still seems that the tourism literature has not yet settled on a single definition (Dolnicar, 2002; Hughes, 2002). Some definitions are broad and others are narrow. Silberberg (1995) offers a broad definition by defining cultural tourism as: “visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a community, region or institution” (p. 361). According to this definition, cultural attractions can be museums, galleries, festivals, architecture, heritage sites, artistic performances, as well as attractions related to food, dress, language, and religion. Nevertheless, most often a slightly narrower definition is applied. Cultural tourism is usually related to trips that include visits to such places as museums, art galleries, historical and archaeological sites, festivals, architecture, artistic performances, and heritage sites (Hughes, 1996; Stebbins, 1996). Regardless of the breadth of the definition, visiting museums and exhibitions seems to be one of the main activities of the cultural tourist regardless of motivation or interests (Dolnicar, 2002; McKercher, 2004). Interestingly, when McKercher surveyed cultural attractions in five countries, he found that tourists tended to participate in the same types of activities regardless of destination. Museums were found to be the most popular attraction, usually followed by art galleries and monuments (McKercher, 2004).

7.3.1 Cypriots as Cultural Tourists

A recurrent theme that appeared in the interviews was the experience of travelling and visiting museums abroad. A large percentage of Cypriots experience art museums mainly when abroad for two main reasons: first, because Cyprus does not have many art museums,

and second, because Cypriots tend to travel frequently and therefore have the opportunity to visit a variety of museums.

Cyprus (we refer to the South part of Cyprus) is a major travel destination with about 2.5 million visitors per year (Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus, 2006), 3.5 times the population of the island. At the same time Cypriots travel quite often and we know that the number of trips taken by Cypriots per year is steadily increasing. This is probably due to the availability of cheap flights and the stable improvement of the standard of living. In Table 7.6 we can see the number of trips taken by Cypriots per year as well as the percentage of change over five-year periods. We can see from these figures that Cypriots' frequency of travelling has been increasing by at least 50% every five years for the last 20 years. If one considers that the total population is only 750,000 people, then it becomes obvious that most Cypriots travel abroad quite often and thus have the opportunity to visit and experience art museums in other countries. In 2005, Cypriots took 915,820 trips to Greece (43% of the total trips), the UK (14%), Russia (4%), or to neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Israel, Lebanon and Syria (10%) (Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus, 2006). In 2005, 64% of the trips were taken for recreational reasons, 21% were business-related, 12% were taken by students studying abroad, and 3% were for other reasons. Unfortunately, no statistical data exists to help us establish the percentage of Cypriot tourists who visit museums when abroad or the kind of museums they visit. Furthermore, it is difficult for us to know how the purpose of the trip abroad – recreational, business or study-related – is connected to museum visitation.

Table 7.6

Number of Trips by Cypriot Residents per Year and Percentage of Change Every Five Years

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Number of trips	121,638	151,204	234,678	360,000	587,622	913,820
% of change		24.3%	55.2%	53.4%	63.2%	55.5%

Note: Source: Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus
www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf, 2006

Table 7.7 shows the 60 interviewees' self-reported frequency of travelling abroad together with their art museum visitation frequency. As we can see, 34 interviewees (out of 60) travel abroad once or twice a year, while an additional 13 travel even more often.

Table 7.7

Travelling Abroad and Art Museum Visitation Frequency

Visitation Frequency	Travelling Abroad Frequency					Never
	At least once a month	3 or more times per year	1-2 times per year	Last time was 1-4 years ago	Last time was more than 5 years ago	
Very Frequent	2	2	6	2		12
Frequent		3	3			1 7
Regular		3	6			9
Occasional		2	10	3		15
Rare			5	1	1	7
Non-visitor		1	4	3	2	10
	2	11	34	9	3	1 60

Even though the sample is too small to be representative of the general Greek-Cypriot population, it seems that travelling abroad is related to museum visitation. People who travel more often seem to also visit art museums more often.

A large portion of the research participants (15 out of 60 interviewees) stated that their main motivation for visiting art museums when on a trip was to learn something about the culture of their destination. As we have seen, the cultural tourism filter is the one most used by the interviewees. The grey colour in Table 7.7 indicates the categories interviewees who mainly use the cultural tourism filter as their primary filter fall into. Most people who use the cultural tourism filter are either regular or occasional visitors and travel abroad once or twice a year. When they travel abroad, they tend to visit museums.

7.3.2 Cultural Tourism: Previous Literature

For a long time cultural tourists were treated as an undifferentiated group of people. Recent tourist literature recognises that cultural tourists are not a homogenous mass but a heterogeneous market with different characteristics and needs (Hughes, 2002). Furthermore, it is now understood that visits to cultural attractions are usually a secondary activity and not the main motivation for visiting a destination (McKercher, 2004). As soon as it was recognised that “the” cultural tourist did not exist (Dolnicar, 2002), researchers started identifying different types of cultural tourists. We mention some of the most important contributions below.

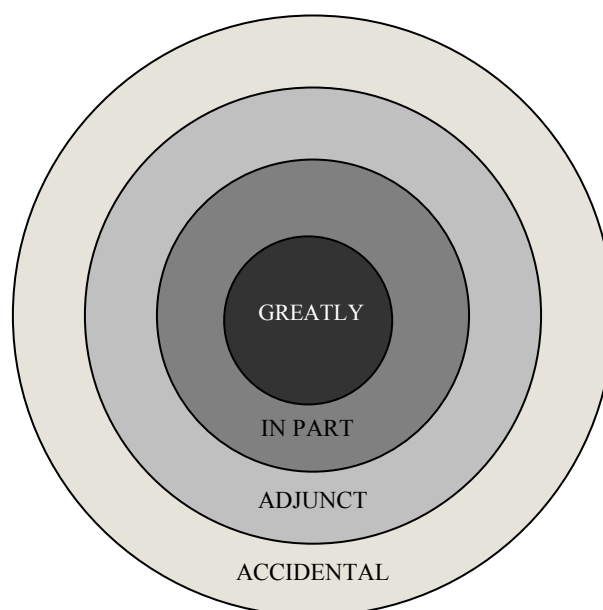
In a study of foreign visitors to Australia, Foo & Rossetto (1998) categorised cultural visitors into the *specific* and the *general*. Specific cultural visitors, they found, had a

specific desire to experience a particular cultural aspect of Australia and this was their primary motivation for travelling there. On the other hand, general cultural visitors considered culture a secondary motivation for travelling (Hughes, 2002).

Silberberg (1995) divided cultural tourists according to their degree of motivation for visiting cultural sites. Four types of cultural tourists were identified: the *greatly motivated*, the *in part motivated*, the *adjunct* and the *accidental* cultural tourists (see Figure 7.1). Greatly motivated tourists visit a destination primarily to experience its cultural products, while in part motivated tourists visit a destination to experience its culture in addition to something else (e.g., visiting family or attending a conference). The third type of cultural tourists view culture as an “adjunct” to another main motivation. Therefore, their motivation for visiting a destination is not cultural. Finally, accidental cultural tourists do not intend to engage in any cultural activities but somehow do. For example, their relatives or friends might insist on visiting one.

Figure 7.1

Silberberg’s Degree of Consumer Motivation for Cultural Tourism



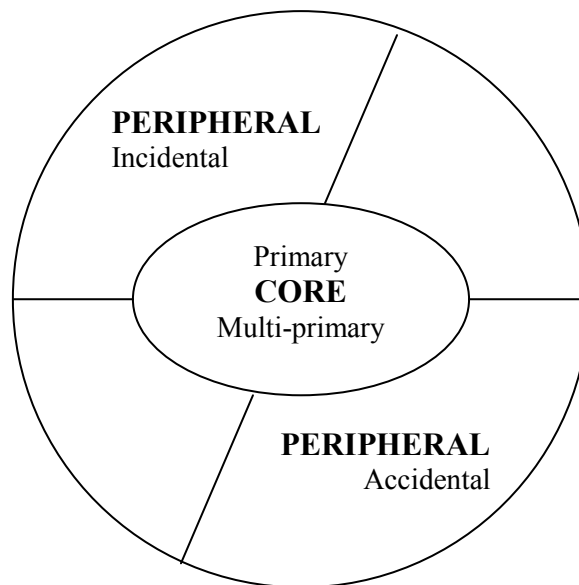
Note. From Silberberg, T. (1995) “Degree of consumer motivation for cultural tourism” p. 362

Like Silberberg, Hughes (2002) presented another four-part classification of cultural tourists (see Figure 7.2). This time *interest* determines the classification. Hughes recognises that cultural tourists might have a wide or narrow interest in culture, might want to focus on different types of culture or historical dimensions, or to experience a “stereotypical” aspect

of culture that assumingly captures the spirit of a place. Hughes initially divides cultural tourists into the *core* and the *peripheral* types, i.e., people who travel to a place to experience its culture and people who travel for other reasons. He then divides core visitors into *primary* and *multi-primary* tourists, categories that correspond approximately to Silberberg's greatly motivated and motivated in part types, respectively. The peripheral tourists are similarly divided into the *incidental* and the *accidental*, which correspond to Silberberg's adjunct and accidental cultural tourists, respectively.

Figure 7.2

Hughes' Cultural-related Tourists by Activity



Note: From Hughes, H. L. (2002) "Cultural-related tourists by activity" p. 170.

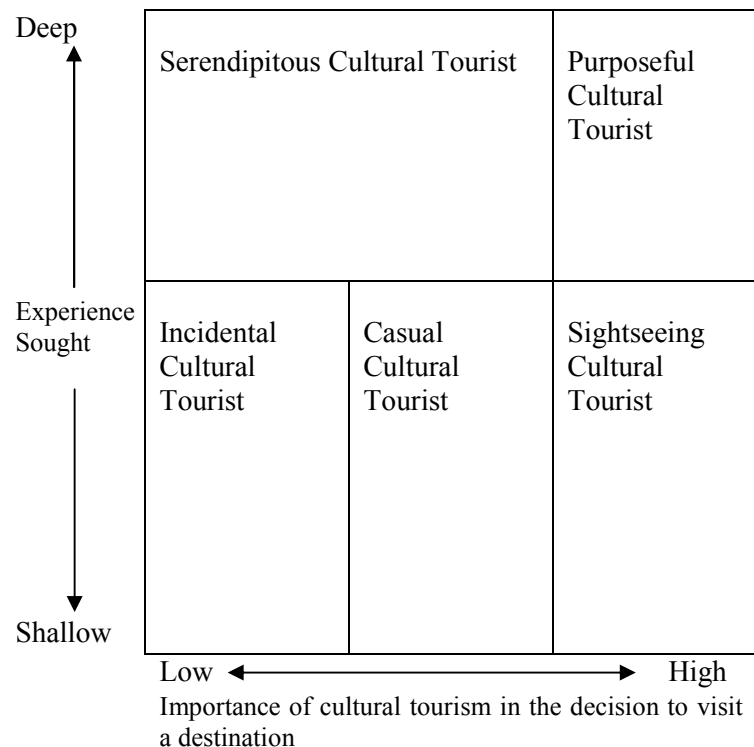
Dolnicar (2002) analysed the activities cultural tourists engage in at their destinations and subsequently identified nine types of cultural tourists: the *standard culture tour participant*, the *super active culture freak*, the *inactive culture tourist*, the *organised excursion lover*, the *event-focused*, the *individual culture explorer*, the *theatre, musical and opera lover*, the *super lean culture tour participant* and the *organised culture tourist*. Different types of cultural tourists engage in combinations of different activities. Tourism does not only involve cultural activities, but also other activities, such as shopping, organised bus trips and other sightseeing events. Nevertheless, most of the categories described include museum visits.

The most interesting model of cultural tourist typography suggested so far is McKercher's (2002). Apart from considering the centrality of cultural tourism in the decision to visit a

destination, McKercher went a step further by also considering the depth of experience sought or the level of engagement with the attraction (see Figure 7.3). This resulted in a two-dimensional model comprising five different types of cultural tourists: the *purposeful cultural tourist* (high centrality/ deep experience), the *sightseeing cultural tourist* (high centrality/ shallow experience), the *casual cultural tourist* (modest centrality/ shallow experience), the *incidental cultural tourist* (low centrality/ shallow experience), and the *serendipitous cultural tourist* (low centrality/ deep experience).

Figure 7.3

McKercher's Classification of Cultural Tourists



From McKercher, B. (2002) "Classification of cultural tourists" p. 32.

Another notable research analysed the level of participation in cultural activities and the level of enjoyment of those cultural activities in 19 European capital cities. Van der Ark & Richards (2006) identified three classes of cultural tourists. People belonging in *Class 1* have low participation in cultural activities but enjoy those activities. The visitors that fall into this category have a lower level of cultural capital, lower incomes, and are less interested in learning-related motivations. People in *class 2* have the highest participation level in cultural activities, the highest cultural capital, and enjoy consuming culture wherever they go. Finally, visitors who fall into *class 3* have a high participation level but a low enjoyment level. These have a relatively high cultural capital but are more inclined towards leisure-related motives than *class 2* visitors. Taking into consideration variables

related to cultural capital, such as museum visitation from an early age, current museum visitation, self-assessed cultural capital, and travel motivations, the authors then attempted to explain differences in levels of cultural participation among visitors – something that had not been attempted before.

7.3.3 Cultural Tourists and Museum Filters

As we have seen, the previous literature has identified different types of cultural tourists as well as a number of dimensions that make classifications possible. Still, apart from Van der Ark & Richards' (2006) research, an explanation as to why certain visitors fall into one category or another has not been attempted. We do understand that motivation for visiting cultural attractions, interest in visiting, or the experience sought, determine the way cultural visitors behave and how they experience cultural sites, specifically museums. However, we still do not know why some people are more motivated than others, are more interested in museums than others, or why some seek a deeper experience than others.

The following paragraphs will present five cases of cultural tourists with a focus on art museum visiting. With the help of specific examples from this research, we will attempt to demonstrate how the museum perceptual filter (MPF) model can offer a potentially fruitful explanation for the cultural tourist types identified in the previous literature. Each of the five cases uses a different primary MPF. The first case primarily uses a cultural tourism filter, the second a social visitation filter, the third a self-exploration filter, the fourth an art-loving filter and, finally, the fifth a professional filter along with a combination of other filters. The filters with the lower visitation frequency (romanticism, rejection, and indifference) were not examined since the people who use them rarely or never visit art museums.

Using a cultural tourism filter

Stavroula and Stavros [I45 & I46], a middle-aged couple with two teenage children, enjoy travelling abroad and do so once or twice a year. Stavroula, who happens to be an ex-stewardess, mentioned that they loved travelling so much that they could have bought a house with the money they had spent so far on travelling. They do not visit art museums in Cyprus but usually visit some when on a trip abroad. When they travel, their main goal is to visit the key attractions of each destination, learn about the history of the place and see new things. They usually use a guidebook to identify main cultural attractions before arriving at their destination. If for some reason they do not have the chance to use a guidebook, they

simply ask someone at their hotel about “what is worth seeing”. In this way, they usually succeed in visiting the most popular “must-see” sites of each destination and at the same time spend some of their time shopping. What attracts them to cultural sites such as museums is their desire to learn about other civilizations and about the culture of the place they are visiting. According to Stavroula, visiting museums is one of the things one does when abroad. Yet, they both seemed slightly uncomfortable when I asked them about their experiences with art museums. Timidly, they indicated that they were not particularly interested in art, or science, or history for that matter. They visited the most famous cultural sites regardless of their focus (e.g., they mentioned the Louvre in Paris and the Parthenon in Athens). They are occasional visitors of art museums/ galleries and regular visitors of other museums. Even though Stavroula and Stavros could not recall the names of the art museums they had visited, they could recall objects that they liked. They pointed out that they really liked realistic landscape painting and that they found abstract art intolerable. They also believe that artists are gifted individuals that make beautiful things audiences should admire. Here is a description of a seascape they once saw in Greece:

You could see the waves moving. It was so alive, so natural that it could nail you down for ten minutes looking at it and wondering at how it was made. It was like a photograph! A beautiful thing. If something is beautiful, you enjoy it. [occasional visitor, male, 45-54 years old, I46]

Stavroula and Stavros use a *cultural tourism* filter as their main filter because they visit art museums when abroad and only because they believe museums can offer information about a place’s culture and history. They use a *romantic* filter as a secondary filter because they admire and mythologize the talents and abilities of artists. They are a representative case of McKercher’s sightseeing cultural tourist, which also happens to be the most common type of cultural tourist. According to McKercher (2002), sightseeing cultural tourists prefer to collect a wide range of experiences rather than focusing on only one activity in depth. For this reason, even if their motivation for experiencing the culture of a place is high, their experience ends up being a shallow one. They are also most interested in entertainment and partly in learning something about the country or city they happen to be visiting (McKercher, 2002). They are what Foo & Rossetto (1998) call the general cultural tourists, Silberberg (1995) the in part motivated cultural tourists and Hughes (2002) the multi-primary core cultural tourists.

Using a social visitation filter

Danos is an educated, economics editor of a major newspaper, an occasional visitor of art museums and a regular visitor of other museums. He welcomed me into his office and immediately added that he might not be of any help since he was not very fond of art museums. Even though he does not specifically enjoy visiting art museums, he occasionally visits them, mainly for social reasons. He also has experience visiting commercial art galleries in Cyprus with his wife, who is interested in art. When abroad he finds himself in a similar situation: he ends up visiting art museums only because his wife or friends want to visit one. He referred to his last trip abroad:

When we went to New York I went [to an art museum] because others wanted to go. If I had a choice, I wouldn't have gone. Or if I [choose to] go, I will go to see the 'Gioconda' because there is a story behind it – not because I'll see it and like the painting itself. [occasional visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I51]

Danos readily admits that he finds art museums boring and that he does not feel that he gains anything from this experience (except perhaps spending time with friends and loved ones). Nevertheless, he also mentioned that he prefers visiting other museums, such as museums about space or dinosaurs, or perhaps some that house some well-known masterpieces, such as the "Gioconda" in the Louvre or the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. When I asked him what he does inside art museums, he said with a sneer:

I walk as fast as possible. Very rarely will I sit [in front of a painting] to observe something like other people do. They try to understand feelings and such ... I walk in front of the others in order to lead them so they won't delay. [occasional visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I51]

Apart from not enjoying the time spent in art museums, Danos cannot comprehend why other people would spend so much time in front of artworks. He actually believes that they are faking it so they can show how "cultured" they are.

Danos has no internal motivation for visiting art museums and he unavoidably has a shallow experience with them. His perceptual lenses have two filters: He mainly uses the *social visitation* filter and, secondarily, the *rejection* filter. He incidentally and unwillingly becomes a cultural tourist in art museums for social reasons and he has certain negative

attitudes towards art museums and the people who visit them. He can therefore be characterized as an incidental (McKercher, 2002) or as an accidental cultural tourist (Hughes, 2002; Silberberg, 1995).

Using a self-exploration filter

Kassandra is a young, single, and smartly dressed reporter. She frequently visits art museums in her regular professional and leisure trips abroad. She spoke in an animated manner when explaining why she visits museums:

I feel that when I visit museums I learn something about myself. I feel that - something about my soul, not about, for example, history etc. – I feel self-knowledge. I feel like I'm facing myself and I'm talking to myself. That's why I want to be by myself, not to be bothered, to be quiet, to walk alone, to go and see ... I think it's a very personal experience. [frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I1]

Kassandra does not mind visiting museums with company (she often does) but she prefers spending time by herself. She actively makes choices regarding which museums to visit, what wings of a museum to explore, and what particular artworks to spend time with. She can easily isolate items that relate to her sense of identity. Her museum experience is meaningful because she uses museums for self-exploration and identity work. She is oriented towards self-actualisation through learning and having new experiences. She characteristically stated:

I feel that I'm a person who doesn't want her life to pass by chance. I feel that I want to dedicate all the hours of my life to learning as much as possible and to have as many experiences as I can. Museums – and I consider going to museums a serious part of what I have to learn – and by visiting I satisfy this thing that I must be – that I want to be. [frequent visitor, female, 25-34 years old, I1]

She also mentioned that she likes experiencing the culture of each destination, but from our conversation it became apparent that this is a secondary reason for visiting art museums. Kassandra would as easily have a personal experience in a science museum, a history museum, a historical site, even in a restaurant or a local market, since any site or institution can be used for self-exploration and self-actualisation. She feels that she has to experience as much as possible and the art museum is one of the things that needs to be explored.

The filter that dominates Kassandra's perception is the *self-exploration* filter. Whatever is viewed through this filter is personal and therefore experienced more deeply. As a secondary filter she uses the *cultural tourism* filter. Kassandra, like Stavroula and Stavros, can also be considered an in part cultural tourist (Silberberg, 1995) or a multi-primary core cultural tourist (Hughes, 2002). Nevertheless, Kassandra's use of and experience with art museums differs dramatically from that of Stavroula and Stavros.

Using an art-loving filter

Anastasia has a strong emotional relationship with art. She usually visits commercial galleries in Cyprus and art museums whenever she is abroad. She studied art history while she was pursuing a degree in architecture, but she does not seem to approach art in an intellectual way. For Anastasia, it is all about the experience of looking and feeling art. She is actually annoyed at the way art critics discuss art and believes that you do not need to know anything about art in order to experience it. When she travels, she prefers visiting art museums rather than other museums or cultural sites. For this reason, she is a frequent art museum visitor and only an occasional visitor of other museums. She makes active choices about the type of art or exhibitions she visits and seems well-informed about exhibitions in Cyprus as well as abroad. Perhaps the fact that she is an architect, or that her uncle is a well-known artist, plays a role. When I asked her how she behaves inside a museum she said: "I pass by the artworks very quickly and only if something speaks to me do I stop" [frequent visitor, female, 34-44 years old, I35]. Anastasia admitted that, for her, looking at art was a purely emotional experience and that she could only connect with artworks that touch her in some way. She talked about how she saw artworks "through the soul" and explained that this direct and honest viewing approach was very important for her. Art is part of her everyday life and she often talks about art with her children and colleagues. Anastasia mainly uses an *art-loving* filter with a secondary *self-exploration* filter.

Using a professional filter

Kostas is the director of a cultural centre that includes an art gallery. He is also an artist himself and married to a painter. His whole life revolves around art. Kostas explained that his work was something he consciously chose for himself and that his leisure was filled with activities that were work-related. As a result, he is incapable of separating work from leisure. He remembers travelling and visiting museums with his parents. Nowadays, he visits museums with his two children because he believes that it is fun and important for them to become familiar with the museum environment. In this way, he mentioned,

museums can become a natural extension of their lives and not something out of the ordinary.

Kostas is a very frequent visitor of art museums and galleries in Cyprus and abroad. When he travels, he visits a variety of art museums, even some which are not well-known. Kostas explained that he sees museums in two main ways:

I have two ways of seeing a museum. The one is when I need to study a museum like a professional, from the point of view of art history, and the other is when I'm looking for *that* work [that will touch me]. If I'm going to study it, I'll read something before going there. I'll get whatever information there is. I'll take notes. I'll take a 'warmer' approach - a more educational one ... The other approach, that has become more and more prevalent for me, is when I enter a museum, I don't follow a particular pattern, I move completely intuitively and I do a 'scanning'. I know what I like. I know what is good even though I might not like it. There are things that I don't like but they are so right and so well done that I accept them, welcome them and honour them. Of course, I'm looking for something like this that will also satisfy *me*. I think it's the fate of every artist to visit all the museums and be moved by one or two artworks. [very frequent visitor, male, 35-44 years old, I44]

It is obvious that Kostas views museums in a variety of ways. From his quote we gather that he sees museums through a *professional* filter (when he studies museums) and a *self-exploration* filter (when he is looking for "that" particular artwork that moves him). However, he also talked about appreciating artworks and how sometimes he spends time in an art museum with his children. Therefore, he also uses an *art-loving* filter and a *social visitation* filter. At the same time, travelling a lot makes him a frequent cultural tourist and, therefore, he might also be using a *cultural tourism* filter (even though he did not talk about this).

Considering the previous literature, Anastasia and Kostas can both be labelled as greatly motivated (Silberberg, 1995), core (Hughes, 2002) or purposeful (McKercher, 2002) cultural tourists. They also belong to class 2 (van der Ark & Richards, 2006) because they frequently participate in cultural tourism, they enjoy it and they both have high cultural capital. According to McKercher (2002):

The purposeful cultural tourist, however, was the greatest consumer of intellectually challenging learning experiences. This visitor showed a predilection for museum experiences in general, and was also the greatest consumer of fine arts museums, art galleries and pottery museums. The purposeful cultural tourist also visited lesser known temples and heritage sites. (p. 37)

Anastasia and Kostas fit this description of the purposeful cultural tourist. They have a deep interest in art, the cultural capital to interact and appreciate it, the willingness to explore and learn new things, and the desire to have a deep experience in art museums. Having said that, Anastasia and Kostas are still quite different in the way they experience art museum. As a result, it is possible that the cultural tourist types identified so far by the previous literature might be too broad.

7.4 Conclusions

Several Cypriots interviewed in the context of this research have reported that they visit museums abroad and therefore adopt the role of cultural tourist. Naturally, the motivation to do so differs dramatically from visitor to visitor. The previous literature has recognized that cultural tourists are not a unified mass, but can be divided into distinct groups according to their motivation for visiting, their interest, experience sought, or according to the activities they engage in. Visiting museums seems to be a key activity of the cultural tourist.

Since the focus of this research is on art museums, we presented five representative cases of cultural tourists from the interviews. Each interviewee uses a different primary museum perceptual filter (MPF) and at least one secondary filter. After reviewing the five cases it becomes apparent that these cultural tourists are indeed quite different from each other in terms of the way they approach and use art museums. Consequently, their experiences in art museums abroad also differ. Stavroula and Stavros represent the majority of Cypriot cultural tourists encountered in this research. They feel that visiting museums helps them experience the culture of their destination and, thus, art museums become a part of sightseeing. They mainly use the cultural tourism filter. Danos seems to be an unwilling cultural tourist who only visits art museums in order to be with his friends and loved ones. He is mainly using the social visitation filter. On the other hand, Cassandra is making active choices about when, what and how to visit museums as well as about what to look at. She has a personal relationship with whatever she chooses to pay attention to. Anastasia also has a personal relationship with what she sees, but she is particularly interested in art museums

and she exercises art appreciation through emotional and aesthetic responses. While Cassandra mainly uses the self-exploration filter, Anastasia uses the art-loving filter. Finally, Kostas uses more than one primary and secondary filter with great ease and flexibility. Apart from the professional filter, he uses the art loving, self-exploration, social visitation and perhaps even the cultural tourism filter, depending on the situation.

The five individual cases reveal how different cultural tourists can be and how the MPF model can account for these differences. The previous literature attempted to categorise individuals into types of cultural visitors. However, the types identified so far are too broad since they group Stavroula, Stavros and Cassandra, or Anastasia and Kostas, in the same categories. In this research, we are not attempting to categorise people into cultural tourist types. The reason is that the combination and the intensity of the filters used are different for each individual, which makes it extremely difficult to categorise people. We could theoretically split cultural tourists into five main categories according to the five main MPFs identified above. Having said that, the secondary MPF used contributes greatly to the way people approach and use museums. Considering this, we could have, not five, but 25 categories of cultural tourists. Then, there are some individuals, like Kostas, who use a variety of filters. This can further increase the number of categories. Since a large number of categories makes categorisation impractical, we have concluded that a strict categorisation into cultural tourist types is misleading and unhelpful since it cannot help us explain much. The combination of MPFs used (primary and secondary) can best explain the differences between cultural tourists as well as the subtle differences between people who use the same primary perceptual filter.

At the beginning of this chapter, I included some verses from the Greek poet, Kosta Kavafi (1910): “New lands you will not find, nor seas. The city will follow you. In the same streets you will wander” (translation by the author). With these words, the poet indicates that no matter where you travel you carry your identity with you and, therefore, any new city or street looks the same as the one you left behind. Similarly, people carry their spectacles of perception with them, along with their sets of museum perceptual filters, wherever they go. People might instantly become cultural tourists as soon as they visit an art museum when travelling, but they do not become new people and their museum perceptions do not change. In conclusion, what determines the way people perceive and use museums is not their location in the world, but what perceptual filters they own and therefore can use.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

One main intellectual problem has instigated and driven this research. It was the need to understand why some people visit art museums and some do not. From the inception of this study it was established that any investigations should not rely solely on demographic characteristics (such as education, income, age, gender etc.), but should delve into new ways of exploring the matter. For this reason it was decided to explore people's perceptions regarding art museums, how these perceptions are formed, and how they influence museum visitation. Perceptions are generally multidimensional, complex and evolving structures, and therefore difficult to dissect and categorize. However, attempting to do so is vital to understanding how perceptions influence museum visitation. Following the analysis of the in-depth interviews with art museum visitors and non-visitors, I identified eight different ways of perceiving art museums, which I called *museum perceptual filters* (MPFs). It was successfully shown that these MPFs guide people's visitation choices, visitation frequency and how people use (or do not use) museums. The final result of this study is a conceptual model which provides deep, interconnected explanations concerning museum visitation issues.

This final chapter is divided into four parts. The first part answers the research questions; it presents the main findings and, where possible, connects them to the previous literature. Subsequently, an overview of the resulting conceptual model is provided. The third part examines the research's contributions on two levels: on a theoretical level (for other researchers) and on a practical level (for museum professionals in Cyprus and abroad). Finally, the fourth part looks at the limitations of the research and provides directions for future investigation.

8.2 Research Questions and Main Findings

Investigating people's perceptions through qualitative research can be an overwhelming task. The results can be too broad, rich or multidimensional. For this reason, it was essential to focus on the three main research questions posed in Chapter 1. The research questions guided the research design as well as the analysis and presentation of data. The following paragraphs briefly answer the research questions by stating the main findings and, where possible, connecting them with the previous literature.

8.2.1. The Formation of Our Perceptions

The first research question asks: "How are perceptions formed? What are the key factors that contribute to the creation of museum perceptions (e.g., education, social class, lifestyles, values, motivations, previous experience, personal and cultural history, interests, expectations)?"

I have argued in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 that both sociological and psychological approaches are relevant to understanding museum visitation and the following research findings support this view. After the data analysis, it was found that education is the best predictor for museum visitation. It was also established that people in higher occupational levels and people who were taken to museums by their parents are most likely to visit art museums. Consequently, the findings confirm the fact that socio-cultural factors influence museum visitation. However, these factors cannot adequately explain all visitation decisions. For example, they cannot explain why 18 out of 24 interviewees with higher education are only occasional, rare, or non-visitors or why 10 out of 28 interviewees who reported no parental influence are very frequent, frequent or regular art museum visitors.

Gender and marital status do not seem to influence visitation frequency. However, the findings show that age is relevant since people under the age of 25 and over the age of 55 are underrepresented in art museums. Nevertheless, the research sample was too small to make any generalizations as to the whole population of Cyprus (see Chapter 5 for more information). Furthermore, it was found that motivation for visiting and level of interest also influence visitation decisions (see Chapter 6 for more information).

To sum up, the findings show that socio-cultural factors such as education, occupation, and family influences, as well as individual factors such as age, motivations, and level of

interest, all conspire to shape the interviewee's museum perceptions. Therefore, our perceptions are formed by both socio-cultural and individual factors.

8.2.2 Museum Perceptions and Visitation Frequency

The second research question deals with the different ways people perceive art museums:

“Do different people perceive the art museum in different ways? If yes, in what ways and how are they related to people's visitation frequency?” In order to answer this question, interviewees were categorized into six groups according to their visitation frequency: very frequent, frequent, regular, occasional, rare, and non-visitors.

After careful analysis of the interviews, I identified eight different ways of perceiving the art museum, which I called *museum perceptual filters* (MPFs). The MPFs are the following: professional, art-loving, self-exploration, cultural tourism, social visitation, romantic, rejection and indifference filters. For a short description of these filters see Figure 6.1. The emphasis was on understanding how art museums are *perceived*, what they *mean* to individuals, and how they are *used*.

After establishing that there are indeed different ways of perceiving the art museum, each interviewee was assigned a primary MPF – the filter he/ she mainly uses. These filters were subsequently compared with the interviewee's visitation category. Each MPF was assigned a colour code from red (warm) to blue (cold) and black. It was found *that the warmer the MPF used, the more frequently the individual visits art museums*. More specifically, 18 out of 19 interviewees who are very frequent or frequent visitors, mainly use the three warmest filters (the professional, art-loving, and self-exploration filters). On the other hand, 15 out of 17 interviewees who are rare or non-visitors mainly use the three coldest filters (the romantic, rejection, and indifference filters). Finally, 21 out of 24 regular and occasional museum visitors mainly use the cultural tourism or social visitation filters. Table 8.1 illustrates this relationship.

Table 8.1

Primary Museum Perceptual Filters and Visitation Frequency II

Primary MPFs	Visitation Frequency		
	Very Frequent & Frequent	Regular & Occasional	Rare & Non-visitor
Professional	9		
Art-loving	5	3	
Self-exploration	4		
Cultural tourism	1	14	
Social visitation		7	2
Romantic			4
Rejection			5
Indifference			6
	19	24	17

Note: This is a compressed version of Table 6.3

It is important to note that different people visit or do not visit art museums for different reasons. For example, people who use the art-loving filter might visit art museums as often as those who use the self-exploration filter. However, they differ in the way they perceive and use museums. Similarly, people who use the romantic filter and people who use the rejection filter might both avoid art museums, but they do so for completely different reasons. In other words, the way leisure activities are used (or not used) is just as essential as the choice of those activities.

In Chapter 3 we have seen that the conceptualisation of audiences has changed over time. Initially conceptualised as passive recipients of messages, audiences are now conceptualised as reflexive cultural producers who are simultaneously spectators and performers in a world of continuous message flow (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). At the same time, the self is so interrelated with the Other that self-awareness is not completely possible without it (Fay, 1996; Langman, 1992; Silverstone, 1999). Consumption choices seem to be revolving around defining and re-constructing a self-identity. This is possible through a process of drawing symbolic boundaries, which help individuals distinguish from others and feel that they belong to certain communities of like-minded individuals (Lamont, 1992). The results of this study support the theories mentioned above in so far as interviewees from all visitation levels were found to use symbolic boundaries in order to define and re-construct their identities through a process of distinction and belonging. Symbolic boundaries were found to be stronger among individuals in the higher visitation levels. What was surprising was the fact that very frequent and frequent visitors do not try to distinguish themselves from non-visitors as much as from other visitors. Symbolic boundaries are used to reinforce

the image of an exclusive group of genuine art-lovers who have the education and previous experience to appreciate art. On the other hand, interviewees who belong to the middle visitation level seem to position themselves somewhere in the middle of two groups: frequent visitors with “impure” motives for visiting (such as showing off or pretending to understand everything), and non-visitors who are generally seen as not cultured enough, not interested in learning or simply as uneducated. Finally, rare and non-visitors mainly define themselves in opposition to museum visitors since they believe that museum visiting is something done by art professionals and their friends, tourists, or students. They also have the impression that galleries are populated with rich people or people who want to show off. Not identifying with any of the above-mentioned groups, rare and non-visitors distance themselves from museum visitors by avoiding art museums. By drawing symbolic boundaries between visitors and non-visitors, museum visitation becomes another way of re-constructing, defining, and communicating a sense of identity.

Another important finding is the fact that the more one visits art museums, the more he/ she engages in other leisure activities (high or low) as well. On the other hand, interviewees who usually do not visit art museums restrict themselves to a few low leisure activities. This finding supports Peterson’s omnivorous theory presented in Chapter 2 and subsequently revisited in Chapter 5 (see Figure 5.1) and Chapter 6 (see Figure 6.7). Surprisingly, when analysing the relationship between omnivorousness and MPFs used, a different picture emerged. The most omnivorous interviewees are those who primarily use the self-exploration filter, followed by those who use the professional filter. Interviewees who use the self-exploration filter are also more active in low leisure participation, followed by those who use the rejection filter. These findings suggest that different MPFs are associated with different levels of omnivorousness. Contrary to Peterson’s findings, a group that does not usually participate in high leisure (people using the rejection filter) is actually demonstrating an omnivorous behaviour when it comes to low leisure participation. Interviewees who use the rejection filter have very strong opinions about their conscious leisure choices and this is related to the way they perceive themselves and others. I would argue that these findings support Peterson’s (1997c) view that “high status now does not require being snobbish but means having cosmopolitan ‘omnivorous’ tastes” (p. 87). Nevertheless, the findings also throw some doubts on the straightforward relationship between high leisure participation and omnivorousness. The role of individual perceptions of self, as well as the process of drawing symbolic boundaries, might be relevant and therefore worth investigating.

To sum up, people perceive art museums in different ways. Our MPFs help us make sense of art museums, influence whether or not we use them and how. Moreover, our museum perceptions are interwoven with the way we perceive ourselves. We saw that interviewees create symbolic boundaries through a process of distinction and belonging. As a result, *what* people consume is equally important as *how* they consume it.

8.2.3 Cypriot Perceptions

The third research question deals with the specific environment of Cyprus and asks: “What kind of perceptions operate in contemporary Cyprus concerning the art museum/ gallery?”

Unavoidably, the unique museum environment of a country influences the museum perceptions of its residents. Apart from the MPFs, I have observed some specific museum perceptions in Cyprus. Cyprus is rich in archaeological sites and most Cypriots have visited the Cyprus Archaeological Museum as schoolchildren. For these reasons, when Cypriots think of art museums, archaeological museums immediately come to mind, and more particularly, the Cyprus Archaeological Museum. The results of this research, as well as previous research (Centre for Research and Development Intercollege, 1999), showed that Cypriots are more familiar with archaeological museums and visit them more often than any other kind of museum. Interestingly, when asked about their experiences with art museums, many interviewees described pleasant experiences with museums abroad but very few talked about pleasant experiences in Cyprus. The explanation is two fold. First, not many interviewees were aware of the art museums available in Cyprus, and second, a large number of interviewees had negative attitudes towards Cypriot museums. Unfortunately, the Cyprus Archaeological Museum, which in people’s minds functions as a model for all Cypriot museums, is considered to be unchanging, unfriendly, cluttered, cold, and musty.

Many interviewees have negative attitudes not only towards Cypriot museums but also towards Cypriot people. The beliefs most commonly expressed by the interviewees as well as by most museum professionals were: (a) Cypriots will only visit when abroad and usually with a tour group, (b) museum visiting is not one of the things Cypriots are interested in, (c) people from other countries visit museums more often than Cypriots, and finally, (d) art is becoming fashionable in Cyprus and some individuals use it in order to “show off.”

The other important finding is that a large number of interviewees (15 interviewees out of 60) use the cultural tourism filter as a primary filter, and an additional 12 out of 60 use it as a secondary filter. Opportunities to visit art museums are limited in Cyprus and Cypriots are avid travellers who mainly experience art museums abroad. The data suggest that the interviewees who travel more often also visit art museums more often. Because of this particularity, the cultural tourism filter is especially important in the case of Cyprus.

To sum up, environmental factors such as museum availability and quality, government funding policies, the general political and economic environment, as well as the predominant public perceptions about the residents of each country, plays a role in encouraging or suppressing certain filters. In the case of Cyprus, the cultural tourism filter is encouraged. As a result, apart from the socio-cultural and individual factors that shape our perceptions, we should not ignore environmental factors, which can be place-specific.

8.3 Conceptual Model

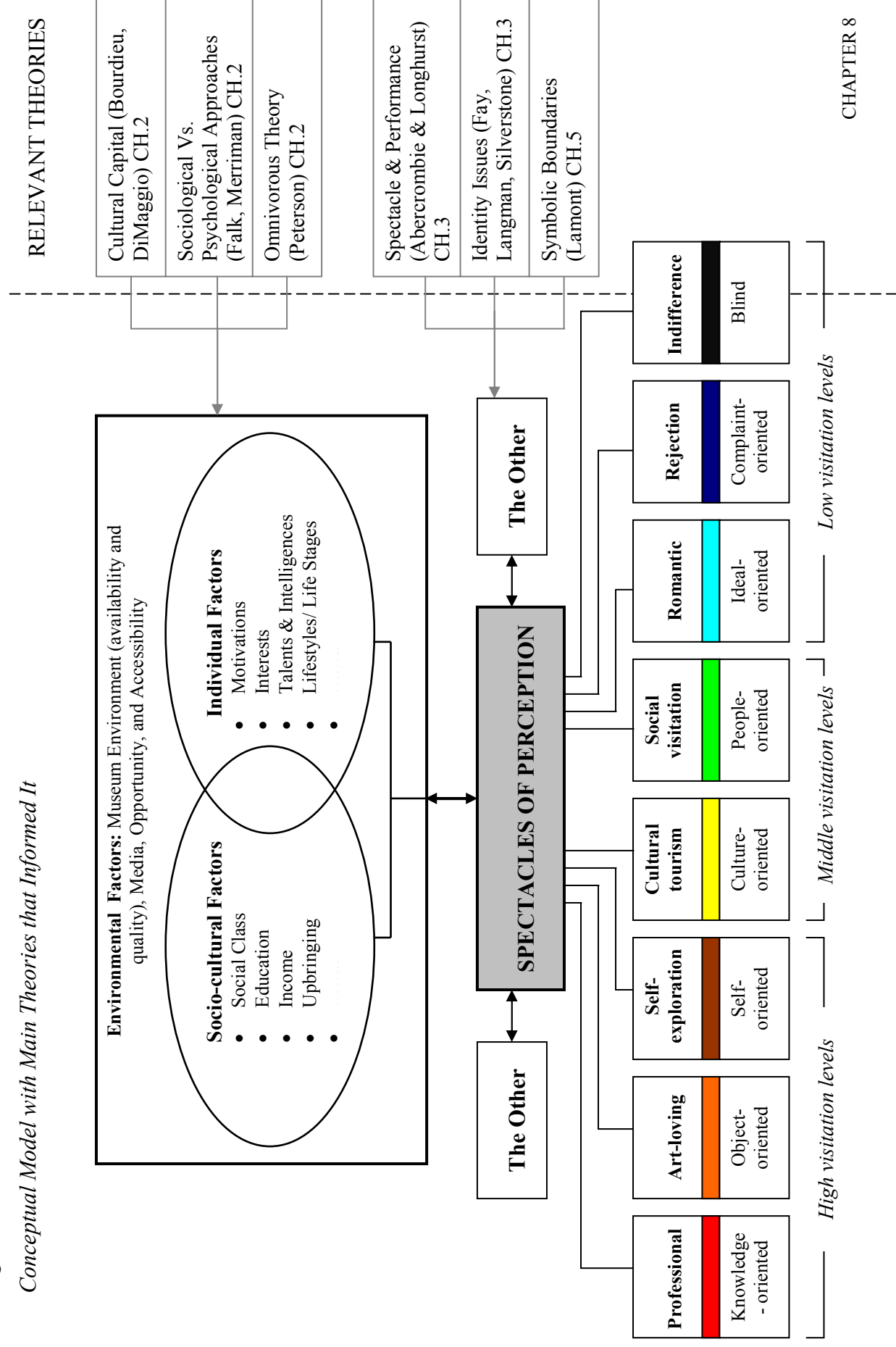
Our *spectacles of perception* can be envisioned as a set of imaginary glasses that help us perceive and make sense of the world around us in relationship to ourselves. Our spectacles of perception are informed and continuously re-shaped by socio-cultural, individual, and environmental factors. In the previous paragraphs we have seen that these three sets of factors were proven important in shaping our museum perceptions. Since this research deals specifically with museum perceptions, we can imagine that individual spectacles of perceptions are equipped with certain museum perceptual filters (MPFs). These filters influence the way we perceive, whether we choose to visit or not, as well as how we use (or do not use) art museums. The ownership of filters depends on our spectacles of perception and therefore on the socio-cultural, individual, and environmental factors that shape them. For example, the way we grew up, our past and present environment, our social and family influences, our travel opportunities, and especially our education, influence our acquisition of MPFs. Frequent visitors seem to have a more complete set of MPFs that can be selectively put to use. On the other hand, rare and occasional visitors seem to possess only one or two filters, which are situated in the cooler colour zones. In the most extreme situation, the indifference filter seems to completely block out art museums from someone's vision. Multiple museum filters suggest a more complex vision, as well as more flexible spectacles of perception. It is possible that multiple filters increase social mobility since

people who own warmer filters can relate with a variety of people, especially from higher socio-economic classes.

Figure 8.1 illustrates my conceptual model diagrammatically. On the right hand side of the model I have included some of the important concepts, issues, and theories from the previous literature, which influenced its formation. I have also included the chapter number in which the concepts were first introduced and explained. The spectacles of perception have a central position in this conceptual model but they can easily substituted with the word “identity”. The reason is that our perceptions are interwoven with, and almost inseparable from, our sense of who we are and our impressions of where we belong. Furthermore, the two boxes with the word “Other” emphasise the fact that people define their identities through a process of distinction and belonging which is not possible without the framing of the Other.

Figure 8.1

Conceptual Model with Main Theories that Informed It



8.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This research can be useful to researchers as well as to museum professionals in Cyprus and abroad. The conceptual model offers philosophical, theoretical, as well as practical implications.

8.4.1 Contribution for Researchers

This thesis offers a conceptual model for understanding art museum visitation based on people's perceptions. The conceptual model stretches from the general (spectacles of perception) to the specific (MPFs) and thus provides a more complete picture of the formation and function of museum perceptions. While most previous research stopped at the identification of attitudes and beliefs, and thus had little explanatory power, this study, with the help of qualitative research, took the extra step to investigate the underlying meanings and uses of attitudes and beliefs. Furthermore, I tried as much as possible not to artificially isolate one aspect (for example, previous experiences or education) from the complex system of interactive factors. Finally, considerable depth of understanding was achieved by addressing the participants' memories and sense of identity in connection to their museum perceptions. For these reasons, I hope that this research can provide a fluid and holistic framework for understanding museum perceptions and their relationship with visitation frequency and museum uses. In addition, I hope that it can serve as the foundation for further research.

8.4.2 Contributions for Museum Professionals

Museum professionals might use the proposed conceptual model in order to understand and cater to their diverse audiences.

Museum professionals have the challenging job of providing an environment for multiple role-playing where several MPFs should be satisfied. This is a difficult task if we consider that museum visitors who use different MPFs have different needs, visit for different reasons, use museums in different ways, prefer different social environments, and have different levels of art knowledge. Moreover, some MPFs might not be compatible with others. For example, the research data suggest that in the exhibition space the self-exploration filter is rarely used in combination with the social visitation filter. Therefore, offering exhibitions with many opportunities for social interaction might increase the satisfaction of visitors who use the social visitation filter but diminish the satisfaction of

people who mainly use the self-exploration filter. A delicate balance is required to satisfy all kinds of adult audiences. In this case, the MPFs can help museum professionals identify the visitor needs that should be satisfied so they can offer a balanced museum “product”. Table 8.2 presents some of the characteristics and needs of museum visitors according to the MPFs they use.

Table 8.2

Characteristics and Needs of Visitors Who Use Different Museum Perceptual Filters

	Professional	Art-loving	Self-exploration	Cultural tourism	Social visitation
Main motivation:	Knowledge, inspiration	Having an aesthetic and/or emotional experience	Knowledge, having new experiences	Experiencing the culture of their destination	Spending time with friends and family
Satisfactory feelings (forms of learning):	Intellectual satisfaction, inspiration	Aesthetic satisfaction, feelings of personal wholeness	Forming opinions, satisfying a self-image	Having been there, having seen that	Connecting with others
Visitation frequency*1:	High	High	High	Middle	Middle
Need for information:	High (specialized)	Moderate to low	High to moderate	High to moderate (general)	Moderate to low
Involvement with artworks:	High	High	High	Moderate to low	Moderate to low
Social needs*2:	Moderate to low	Moderate to low	Low	High to moderate	High
Connection with self-identity:	High	High to moderate	High	Moderate to low	Low

Note 1: The romantic, rejection, and indifference filters are not considered here because the people who use them are usually rare or non-visitors.

Note 2: *1 High visitation = very frequent and frequent visitors. Middle visitation = regular and occasional visitors.

Note 3: *2 When referring to social needs I mean the social needs inside the exhibition space. A high social need occurs when an individual cannot possibly imagine visiting an art museum alone. A low social need occurs when individuals report that they usually visit art museums alone.

In the case of targeting specific groups, the MPFs can function as a guide for the characteristics and needs of specific audiences. This suggests that if museum professionals would like to invest in repeat visitors, they have to satisfy needs for information, object-specific experiences, and offer opportunities for self-exploration. On the other hand, to attract less frequent audiences, museum professionals could create social opportunities such as family days, parties, etc. (social visitation filter) and invest in exhibitions, artworks or buildings that can offer a cultural destination (cultural tourism filter).

A variety of internal and external forces encourage museums to attempt attracting people who do not usually visit art museums. The findings of this study suggest that the rare and non-visitors who seem easier to attract are the ones who use the romantic filter. The reason is that they already have positive attitudes towards art museum. However, to do so is not an easy process. People who use the romantic filter must be convinced that museums offer spaces where they could feel comfortable and not be intimidated by their perceived lack of knowledge. They must be convinced that museums are *relevant* to their self-identity and that they can *belong* to a group of people who might visit an art museum. Furthermore, convincing people of these claims and therefore attracting them to art museums is only the first step. Once inside the museum, it is necessary to provide visitors with the tools to comfortably use it. And this is perhaps one of the most challenging tasks facing art museums today.

People who use the indifference filter are more difficult to attract because they do not have any strong positive (or negative) attitudes towards museums. At first glance, relevant and well-designed promotional campaigns appear to be a good solution to the problem of attracting indifferent non-visitors. However, it is not as simple as it seems. The concepts of *selective perception* and *cognitive dissonance* (see definitions in Chapter 1 and Chapter 5) will help me explain why. If an individual considers art museums as irrelevant to his/ her life, then, his/ her selective perception will ignore any museum messages. It is perhaps no coincidence that the only interviewees who complained about the lack of museum-related advertising were rare or non-visitors. But let us assume that a persistent promotion reaches non-visitors with a positive and relevant message. Here the concept of cognitive dissonance might influence a person's reaction to the message. Let us take as an example an imaginary non-visitor, Emily, a mother of four who believes that older, well-educated people frequent art museums, and that museums are not designed for families with children. Let us assume that Emily is exposed to an advertising campaign where a family is shown to enjoy a

museum visit. This might create a feeling of cognitive dissonance in Emily's mind. In order to reduce this cognitive dissonance, Emily might try to find supportive evidence for her pre-existing attitudes and ignore, or even distort, the message in the process. For example, she might claim that the image in front of her does not truly reflect reality. She might continue by saying that perhaps museums abroad are designed to accommodate families, but not in Cyprus. Having said that, if Emily is confronted with more than a single piece of supportive evidence for the case of a family-friendly museum (maybe she receives an invitation for a family day at her local museum or her children come home excited about a museum visit they had), then her attitudes might change. Of course, as mentioned above, the promotion and actual museum "product" must support each other in order to give a united message.

Finally, it seems that the most difficult public to attract is the people who use the rejection filter. The negative attitudes they have towards museums and museum visitors are interwoven with their sense of identity. They value different leisure activities, and as we have seen in Chapter 6, they are also quite omnivorous in their leisure participation. This means that they actively choose not to visit art museums and to use their leisure time in a different way. Changing someone's sense of identity is infinitely more difficult than creating positive attitudes.

8.4.3 Contributions for Museum Professionals in Cyprus

This is the first research focusing on art museums in Cyprus. Apart from the implications above, it is specifically valuable for museum professionals in Cyprus because it reveals some place-specific museum perceptions.

First, most interviewees were not aware of the art museums available in Cyprus. Nevertheless, most participants were familiar with the Cyprus Archaeological Museum and it was frequently offered as an example of an art museum. Because most Cypriots experience the Cyprus Archaeological Museum through school visits, it is their first contact with museums. Unfortunately, it was obvious from the interviews that most participants had negative attitudes towards this particular museum. Therefore, museum professionals need to promote awareness and combat negative attitudes towards Cypriot museums and especially towards the Cyprus Archaeological Museum, where most Cypriots form their early – and often last – impressions of museums.

Second, we have seen that the cultural tourism filter is the most prevalent one in the case of Cyprus. This can be a disadvantage since most Cypriots seek museum experiences abroad. However, museum professionals can take advantage of this fact and create cultural destinations within the country. Travelling exhibitions from abroad which include works by famous artists, new and exciting museum buildings in different parts of the country, and big events, are just a few ways of encouraging people to use their cultural tourism filter in their own country.

8.5 Limitations and Further Research

This part of Chapter 8 comments on the limitations of this research and provides directions for future investigations.

8.5.1 Making Generalizations and Large Scale Quantitative Research

As we have seen, the methodology of this research focused on the in-depth exploration of people's perceptions by using a small theoretical sample that was specially selected to include participants from different visitation categories. This methodology is particularly appropriate when it comes to the construction of a conceptual model. However, it is transformed into a limitation when it comes to making certain generalizations. It is a fact that the research sample is not representative of the whole population; as a result, I cannot make any *statistical* generalizations about what percentage of the population uses each museum perceptual filter or what percentage of the population has certain attitudes. Furthermore, my sample mainly included people who live in Nicosia, an urban area, so I could not compare people's location of living (urban/ rural, different cities, etc.) with the MPFs they use. Moreover, even though I have achieved a gender and family situation (married/ unmarried, with/ without children) balance as well as included participants from all age categories, the sample was too small to allow for comparisons between these factors and the MPFs used. In order to deal with these limitations, a natural next step seems to be a large-scale quantitative research that would examine the participants' demographic and socio-economic characteristics in relation to the MPFs they use.

8.5.2 MPFs and Other Countries

Not to be able to represent a wider population in a strict statistical sense is a common limitation of qualitative research (Sim, 1998). Nevertheless, qualitative researchers can claim *theoretical generalizations* (Sim, 1998) or *transferability* to other instances

(Denscombe, 2003b). This means that the reader of qualitative research is able to make some logical inferences from the findings and thus “transfer” them to other situations. Similarly, I can reasonably argue that the conceptual model of this research can be “transferred”, with minor adjustments, to other museum environments outside Cyprus (especially in Europe, the US, and Canada). Of course, it is still possible that some further MPFs can be identified or that others would not be applicable in the case of other countries.

Having said this, there is some knowledge that is not transferable. The research took place in the specific cultural and political environment of Cyprus – an environment which surely differs from the museum environment of most countries. As we have seen, the interviewees had specific perceptions about Cypriot museums and Cypriot people, which we assume are unique to the museum environment of Cyprus and Cypriot psychology. For this reason, it would be desirable to repeat a similar research in other countries. It would be ideal if the research could be repeated in a number of countries with different museum environments for comparative reasons.

8.5.3 Art Museums Vs Other Museums

This research explored people’s perceptions towards a particular kind of museum – the art museum. From the beginning we maintained that art museums are different from other kinds of museums because they deal exclusively with art. It is reasonable to assume that people perceive the arts in a different way than they perceive history, science or industry. Therefore, it would be interesting to see if similar MPFs apply to other types of museums such as history, science, industrial, and folk museums.

8.5.4 Art and Everyday Life

One of the initial aims of this research was to examine the role of art in the everyday life of the interviewees. Very soon it was realized that this is a very broad theme and could easily be the subject of another thesis. The postcard game, which was experimentally used in the second research phase (for more information see Chapter 4 and Appendix 4), demonstrated that different people preferred different types of art. For example, it was shown that only people in the higher visitation levels enjoyed abstract art and/ or disliked purely representational works. On the other hand, most people in the lower visitation levels mainly liked representational art and did not care for abstract art. Nevertheless, all interviewees liked portraits and landscapes. Previous research has also dealt with these issues (see

particularly Halle, 1992; 1993), but more in-depth research is needed in order to explore the perceptions, meanings, and uses of different artistic representations in everyday life.

8.5.5 Omnivorousness and MPFs

Finally, one of the most interesting findings of this research is that there is a relationship between omnivorousness and MPFs used. However, more research is necessary in order to answer questions such as: Why are people who use the self-exploration filter the most omnivorous ones? What does it mean when people who use the rejection filter are almost as omnivorous as people who use the professional filter? And more generally: What makes someone omnivorous in his/ her leisure participation?

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research Protocols

1.1 Research Protocol for Visitors

1. What do you usually do in your free time?
Introductory question
2. I noticed from the questionnaire that you have visited art museums or galleries before (from questionnaire). Do you remember the first time you visited an art exhibition? Have you visited with your parents?
Listen for and follow up: with whom, when, how old, how did it feel, first impressions.
3. What attracts you in art museums? Are there any more specific factors that motivate you to visit?
Listen for and follow-up on: Lifestyle, values, motivations, previous experience, personal and cultural history, interests, expectations, travelling abroad, education, and media.
4. When inside a museum/ gallery how do you feel? What do you believe you get out of this experience?
Look for and follow-up on: discovery, education, entertainment, identity construction.
5. Do you usually visit alone or with other people? With whom? Do you find your museum experience the same or different when you visit with other people?
Look for and follow-up on: parent-child relationship, social life, place to take visitors.
6. This blank piece of paper has the words “art museum/ gallery” circled in its centre. I would like you to note on it, without thinking too much, anything that comes to your mind when you think of art museums or galleries. You can use words or drawings or whatever you feel like. We can then discuss it.
7. Can you guide me through what you have written here?
Discussion of the PMM. Probe for clarifications, elaborations, stories or specific examples. Follow up questions on insufficient answers or missing information. The aim is depth as well as the understanding of the value and meaning placed on associations.
8. We talked about your relationship with art museums. I’m also interested in your relationship with art in general. What role does art play, if at all, in your everyday life? What do you consider as art?
Listen for and follow-up on: art in everyday life and conception of self.
9. Do you discuss art-related subjects with your family or friends? Do you feel comfortable talking about art? About the classical arts (like painting, sculpture, classical music, theatre etc.)?
10. Our conversation has been very interesting. Would you like to add anything else? Something I should have asked and I didn’t?

Thank Participant. Give handout with research information. Ask if he/ she would like a report of the general findings in the mail.

Phase II included the following additional questions:

1. Who do you think usually visits art museums? Who do you think does not?
2. In general, do you think us Cypriots visit art museums often? Do you think people abroad visit more often?
3. What do you consider art? I have here 12 postcards with artworks. I would like you

to choose the one that you like the most and the one that you like the least. Why do you like this the most? Why do you like this the least?

Listen for statements related to criteria of judgment, taste, and art knowledge.

1.2 Research Protocol for Non-visitors

1. What do you usually do in your free time?
Introductory question
2. Do you think art museums are important and why/ why not? Most Cypriots seem to believe that art museums/ galleries are important but only about 12% visits them on a regular base. Why do you think is that?
3. What about you? I understand that you have never visited an art museum. Have you ever thought about visiting one?
*[If the answer is yes, What stopped you from visiting?
If the answer is no, Why do you think you never thought about visiting one?]*
4. Can you describe an art museum? How does it look like? Outside? Inside? The exhibition, the space?
5. Who do you think visits art museums and galleries? Why do you think they do so? What do you think people get out of their visit?
6. This blank piece of paper has the words “art museum/ gallery” circled in its centre. I would like you to note on it, without thinking too much, anything that comes to your mind when you think of art museums or galleries. You can use words or drawings or whatever you feel like. We can then discuss it.
7. Can you guide me through what you have written here?
Discussion of the PMM. Probe for clarifications, elaborations, stories or specific examples. Follow up questions on insufficient answers or missing information. The aim is depth as well as the understanding of the value and meaning placed on associations.
8. We talked about your relationship with art museums. I’m also interested in your relationship with art in general. What role does art play, if at all, in your everyday life? What do you consider art?
Listen for and follow-up on: art in everyday life and conception of self.
9. Do you discuss art-related subjects with your family or friends? Do you feel comfortable talking about art? About the classical arts (like painting, sculpture, classical music, theatre etc.)? What are the subjects you usually discuss with your friends or colleagues? What is an interesting conversation for you?
10. Our conversation has been very interesting. Would you like to add anything else? Something I should have asked and I didn’t?

Thank Participant. Give handout with research information. Ask if he/ she would like a report of the general findings in the mail.

Phase II included the following additional questions:

1. In general, do you think us Cypriots visit art museums often? Do you think people abroad visit more often?
2. What do you consider art? I have here 12 postcards of artworks. I would like you to choose the one that you like the most and the one that you like the least. Why do you like this the most? Why do you like this the least?
Listen for statements related to criteria of judgment, taste, and art knowledge.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Please tick where appropriate:

1. How often do you engage in the following activities?	Never	Last time was 5 or more years ago	Last time was 1-4 years ago	Once or twice a year	3 or more times a year	At least once a month	At least once per week
a. Going to the theatre							
b. Going to sports matches							
c. Doing active sport							
d. Visiting art museums or galleries							
e. Visiting historical or archaeological museums/sites							
f. Playing board, electrical or card games							
g. Attending concerts of classical music							
h. Attending concerts of popular music							
i. Going to the cinema							
j. Going to night clubs or bars							
k. Driving or riding in car for pleasure							
l. Reading classical literature							
m. Reading popular literature (magazines, newspapers, etc)							
n. Reading professional literature							
o. Going on vacation abroad							

2. Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female
-
3. Age: ☐ 18-24 ☐ 45-54
☐ 25-34 ☐ 55-64
☐ 35-44 ☐ 65+
-
4. Marital Status: ☐ Single ☐ Divorced/Separated
☐ Married ☐ Widowed
-

5. Do you have children?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<hr/>		
6. Occupation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Legislator, Manager	<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural/ Craft/ Machine Worker
	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional	<input type="checkbox"/> Student
	<input type="checkbox"/> Technician	<input type="checkbox"/> Housewife
	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Retired
	<input type="checkbox"/> Service Workers/Clerks	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently Not working
<hr/>		
7. Education:	<input type="checkbox"/> Never attended school	<input type="checkbox"/> Lyceum
	<input type="checkbox"/> Not completed primary	<input type="checkbox"/> Tertiary Non-University
	<input type="checkbox"/> Primary	<input type="checkbox"/> Tertiary University
	<input type="checkbox"/> Gymnasium	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate
<hr/>		
8. Are you a permanent resident of Cyprus?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<hr/>		
9. District of living:	<input type="checkbox"/> Nicosia Urban	<input type="checkbox"/> Larnaca Rural
	<input type="checkbox"/> Nicosia Rural	<input type="checkbox"/> Paphos Urban
	<input type="checkbox"/> Limasol Urban	<input type="checkbox"/> Paphos Rural
	<input type="checkbox"/> Limasol Rural	<input type="checkbox"/> Ammochostos Rural
	<input type="checkbox"/> Larnaca Urban	<input type="checkbox"/> Living abroad. Country: _____
<hr/>		
10. Ethnicity:	<input type="checkbox"/> Greek-Cypriot	<input type="checkbox"/> Central/Eastern European
	<input type="checkbox"/> Turkish-Cypriot	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian
	<input type="checkbox"/> Greek	<input type="checkbox"/> African
	<input type="checkbox"/> British	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Western European	
<hr/>		

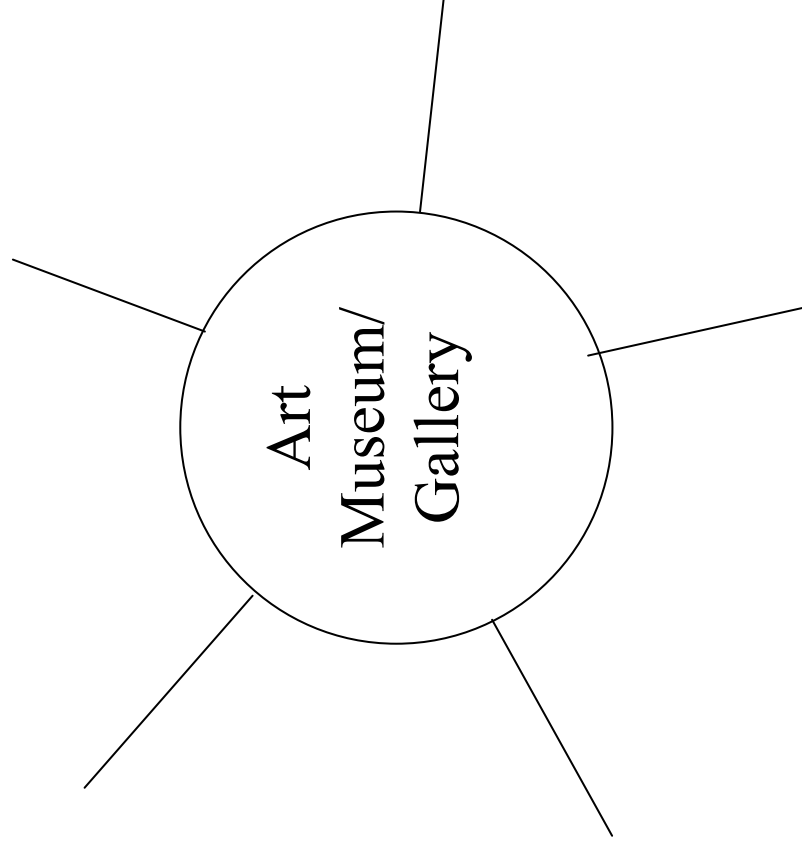
Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. Your answers are much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert
Leicester University, UK


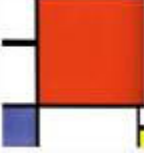

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

Appendix 3: Personal Meaning Map (PMM)



Appendix 4: Postcard Game

Appendix 4.1: Images for Postcard Game

	1. Jean-August-Dominique Ingres, <i>Comtesse d'Haussenville</i> , 1845, Oil on canvas		7. Kkasialos [1885-1974], <i>Workers in the fields</i> , Oil on canvas
	2. Claude Monet, <i>Water Lilies</i> , c.1920, Oil on canvas		8. Modigliani, <i>Nude</i> , 1917, Oil on canvas
	3. Pablo Picasso, <i>Self-portrait</i> , 1907, Oil on canvas		9. Piet Mondrian, <i>Composition in Red, Yellow & Blue</i> , 1930, Oil on canvas
	4. Robert Rauschenberg, <i>Bed</i> , 1955, Combined Painting		10. Andy Warhol, <i>Marilyn</i> , 1964, Silkscreen
	5. Emily [6 years old], 2004, Painting on plate		11. Jean-Francois Millet, <i>The gleaners</i> , 1857, Oil on canvas
	6. Vitaly Komar & Alexander Melamid, <i>America's Most Wanted Painting</i> , 1993, Oil on canvas		12. Marcel Duchamp, <i>The Large Glass</i> , 1915-23, Mixed Media

Appendix 4.2: Most and Least Liked Works

Research participants during phase II were shown 12 postcard images (for images see Appendix 4.1) and were asked to choose one work they liked the most and one they liked the least. Table 1 and 2 demonstrate their choices in relation to the primary museum perceptual filters (MPFs) they use. On the other hand, Table 3 and 4 show their choices in relation with their visitation frequency. The image numbers in the black boxes represent the most realistic paintings while the image numbers in grey indicate the most abstract ones. Sometimes interviewees chose more than one works.

Table 1

Most Liked Works and MPFs

MPFs	Images											
	11	1	6	8	2	7	3	10	5	4	12	9
Professional (6)	1			2	1	1		1		2		
Art-loving (3)	2					1	1				1	
Self-exploration (0)												
Cultural Tourism (11)	7	4	2		1	1	2			1	1	1
Social Visitation (5)	2	1	1	1	1		1		1			
Romanticism (2)		1					1					
Rejection (1)			1	1								
Indifference (2)	1	1							1			
	13	7	4	4	3	3	5	1	2	3	2	1

Table 2

Least Liked Works and MPFs

MPFs	Images											
	11	1	6	8	2	7	3	10	5	4	12	9
Professional (6)		1	2						2	1		2
Art-loving (3)			1						2		1	
Self-exploration (0)												
Cultural Tourism (11)		2	2	1	1			1	5		3	3
Social Visitation (5)					1				1	1	1	3
Romanticism (2)				1								2
Rejection (1)									1			1
Indifference (2)						1						1
	0	3	5	2	2	1	0	1	11	2	5	12

Table 3

Most Liked Works and Visitation Frequency

Visitation Frequency	Images											
	11	1	6	8	2	7	3	10	5	4	12	9
Very Frequent (6)	1			2	1	1		1		2		
Frequent (2)	1					1					1	
Regular (5)	1	2			1		1				1	1
Occasional (12)	9	3	3	1	1	1	3		1	1		
Rare (2)			1	1			1					
Non-visitor (3)	1	2							1			
	13	7	4	4	3	3	5	1	2	3	2	1

Table 4

Least Liked Works and Visitation Frequency

Visitation Frequency	Images											
	11	1	6	8	2	7	3	10	5	4	12	9
Very Frequent (6)		1	2						2	1		2
Frequent (2)			1						1			
Regular (5)			1	1				1	2	1	1	1
Occasional (12)		2	1		2				5		4	5
Rare (2)									1			2
Non-visitor (3)				1		1						2
	0	3	5	2	2	1	0	1	11	2	5	12

Appendix 5: Interviewee Information

	Name #1	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Visitation Frequency	MPFs #2 (primary & secondary)
1	Kassandra	F	25-34	University	Journalist	Frequent	Self-exploration Cultural tourism
2	Andreas	M	45-54	University	School teacher	Very Frequent	Art-loving
3		F	45-54	PhD	Head librarian	Occasional of art museums	Art-loving Professional, Social visitation
4	Penelope	F	35-44	Tertiary Non- University	Librarian	Frequent	Cultural tourism Art-loving
5	Arthur	M	45-54	University		Regular	Art-loving Self-exploration, Cultural tourism
6	Anne	F	25-34	University		Very Frequent	Art-loving
7	Antis	M	25-34	University		Very Frequent	Self-exploration Art-loving
8	Sam	F	25-34	University	Teacher	Frequent	Self-exploration Cultural tourism
9	Toula	F	45-54	University	Teacher	Regular	Cultural tourism Social visitation
10	Tommy	M	25-34	Tertiary Non- University	Fire fighter	Rare	Rejection
11	Lydia	F	25-34	Tertiary Non- University		Rare	Rejection Romantic
12	Pambos	M	35-44	University	Painter	Very Frequent	Professional Art-loving, Romantic

Name *1	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Visitation Frequency	MPFs *2 (primary & secondary)
13 Lazaros	M	25-34	High school	Salesman	Non visitor	Rejection
14 Lenia	F	18-24	High school	Works at parent's business	Non visitor	Indifference
15 Antonis	M	18-24	High school	Works at parent's business	Rare	Social visitation Cultural tourism
16 Emily	F	25-34	Tertiary Non- University	Nurse	Rare	Social visitation
17 Marinos	F	18-24	Tertiary Non- University	Nurse	Non-visitor	Indifference
18	F	55-64	Tertiary Non- University	Nurse	Non-visitor	Indifference Cultural tourism
19 Dimitra	F	25-34	University	Arts journalist	Very Frequent	Professional
20 Chrysanthi	F	25-34	Gymnasium,	Waitress/ poet	Very Frequent	Professional Cultural tourism, Self- exploration
21 Alex	M	25-34	University	Computer programmer	Frequent	Self-exploration Cultural tourism, Art-loving
22 David	M	25-34	University		Regular	Cultural tourism
23 Nicholas	M	25-34	University		Occasional	Social visitation
24 Vaso	F	55-64	Elementary School	Housewife	Non-visitor	Indifference Cultural tourism
25	M	25-34	University		Regular	Cultural tourism
26	M	25-34	University,		Frequent	Art-loving

Name *1	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Visitation Frequency	MPFs *2 (primary & secondary)
27 Natalie	F	45-54	High School	Clothing shop owner	Occasional	Social visitation Art-loving
28 Lakis	M	55-64	Gymnasium	Turner (retired)	Rare	Romantic Art-loving
29 Dinos	M	55-64	High School	Retired	Non-visitor	Rejection
30 Miriam	F	45-54	High School	Seamstress	Non-visitor	Romantic Indifference
31 Andria	F	18-24	University	University Student	Regular	Cultural tourism Self-exploration
32 Ruth	F	35-44	University	Art teacher	Very Frequent	Professional Art-loving
33 Maria	F	18-24	Foundation course in art	Art student	Very Frequent	Professional Art-loving, Self-exploration
34 Brian	M	35-44			Occasional	Cultural tourism Social visitation
35 Anastasia	F	34-44	University	Architect	Frequent	Art-loving
36 Lucy	F	18-24	University	English teacher	Occasional	Cultural tourism Self-exploration
37 Margarita	F	45-54	University	Gallery director	Very Frequent	Professional Cultural tourism
38 Monica	F	18-24	University	Marketing worker	Non-visitor	Indifference
39 Panayiota	F	18-24	University	Student	Non-visitor	Indifference Cultural tourism
40 Mary	F	18-24	Lyceum	Student	Rare visitor	Romantic

Name *1	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Visitation Frequency	MPFs *2 (primary & secondary)
41 Andrew	M	25-34	University	Soldier	Frequent	Art-loving
42	M	18-24	University	Soldier	Occasional	Social visitation Art-loving
43 Elias	M	35-44	University	Curator	Very Frequent	Professional Self-exploration, Art-loving
44 Kostas	M	35-44	University	Cultural organization director	Very Frequent	Professional Art-loving, Self-exploration, Social visitation, Cultural tourism
45 Stavroula	F	45-54	Lyceum	Service worker	Occasional	Cultural tourism Romantic
46 Stavros	M	45-54	Gymnasium	Service worker	Occasional	Cultural tourism Romantic
47 Catherine	F	45-54	High School	Housewife	Occasional	Cultural tourism
48 Michalis	M	55-64	High School	Public servant	Occasional	Cultural tourism Self-exploration
49 Alisia	F	45-54	University	Manager of Handicraft centre	Very Frequent	Professional Art-loving, Cultural tourism
50	F	65+	Elementary School	Retired	Non-visitor	Romantic Indifference
51 Danos	M	35-44	University	Newspaper manager	Occasional	Social visitation Rejection, Cultural tourism
52 Theo	M	25-34	University	Service worker	Occasional	Cultural tourism Self-exploration
53 Georgina	F	25-34	University	Graphic designer	Occasional	Art-loving
54	F	25-34	University	Accountant	Occasional	Social visitation

Name *1	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Visitation Frequency	MPFs *2 (primary & secondary)
55 Eleni	F	25-34	University	Bank clerk	Regular	Social Visitation
56 Nicos	M	25-34	Tertiary Non-University	Bank clerk	Regular	Cultural tourism Social visitation
57 Paul	M	25-34	University	Engineer	Regular	Cultural tourism Self-exploration
58 Fanos	M	25-34	University	Student	Rare	Rejection Indifference
59 Omiros	M	25-34	University	Unemployed	Occasional	Social visitation Cultural tourism
60	M	35-44	Tertiary Non-University	Real estate agent	Regular	Cultural tourism

Note 1: In order to protect the anonymity of the research participants, all the names mentioned in the table and text are pseudonyms.

Note 2: MPFs = museum perceptual filters. The first MPF mentioned for each interviewee is his/ her primary filter while the ones below are secondary filters.

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