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## A YOUNG AUDIENCE'S EXPECTATIONS OF A CONTEMPORARY MUSEUM OF ART<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

The aim of the article is a sociological analysis of the way young visitors (post-millennials) perceive art museums in the context of their expectations in a mobile communications era. This problem is very interesting because young visitors, members of the post-millennial generation, participate in social and cultural life in a quite different way than previous generations. This problem is also very important because just post-millennials will decide the fate of this kind of institution in the not too distant future.

The analysis of the perception of museum institutions is based on the results of an empirical study carried out among high school students (16–20 years old). The main areas of interest in this study were their preferences in the style of visiting museum exhibitions, their opinions about the exhibition being visited, and their expectations regarding changes in the formula of presenting art in the museum space.

**Keywords:** post-millennials, museum of art, expectations of museums

### INTRODUCTION

The functioning of all cultural institutions, regardless of whether they are part of the commercial sector or publicly funded, is hugely dependent on the opinions and the assessment of their stakeholders. Of course, in the case of commercial

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institutions, this dependency is evident. It is the user who largely influences the final shape of the cultural offer through the choices he or she makes. When it comes to cultural institutions belonging to the public sphere, the dependency on the users' opinions is not so evident. However, these institutions' ability to carry out their mission in society, their ability to reach a defined target audience, and satisfying the expectations of stakeholders of various types become a meaningful premise for the decisions makers who shape cultural policies at every level of the authorities' structure.

On the other hand, this translates to the way in which practically all cultural institutions function and means that every institution of this type ought to be aware of the expectations that not only the current but also potential users may have [Bendixen 2001: 78–91, 189–190; Murzyn-Kupisz 2016: 43–51, 100–111]. This is clearly visible in the case of museum institutions, for which this aspect of functioning has become vital, as it is an element of conducting the social function of a museum, particularly significant if we adopt the point of view of the “new museology” [Vergo 1989; Folga-Januszewska 2008]. And it is worth emphasizing that this perspective currently sets the course for museum institutions, which is reflected in the new definition of the museum (in force since 2019) adopted by the International Council of Museums:

Museums are democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing [ICOM 2019].

Knowing what the users of a cultural offer expect is important not only for individual cultural institutions, but also for the people responsible for creating cultural policies. Depending on what those expectations are and what transformations they undergo, the manner in which a given area of political policy is shaped changes. Knowing expectations can not only help the cultural offer be better adapted, but also, through modifying the offer, actively modify users' expectations and also potentially change them. Therefore, taking into account the abovementioned premises, one may assume that one of the contemporary material challenges that cultural institutions and decision-makers who shape cultural policies are facing is how to identify the attitudes and social expectations in the area where they operate.

Of course, the purpose is not for the creative activity of cultural institutions to be limited by the expectations of potential users. It is more significant that the cultural offer they prepare evokes an appropriate social response and, most importantly, that the way they communicate with the user allows for effective contact. In order for this to happen, the users' attitudes and expectations of cultural institutions must be known, which is why many cultural institutions are conducting research on the users of culture. However, this research usually concerns users who have already established contact with a given cultural institution; therefore, they constitute the audience of those institutions. On the other hand, the expectations of users who have not yet been in contact with a given cultural institution but who could become its audience once certain expectations have been met are usually unknown.

### THE POST-MILLENNIAL GENERATION

In this context, it ought to be of particular importance to know the attitudes and expectations of cultural institutions of the current youngest generation who are now entering adulthood, the post-millennials, also known as the Generation Z or the i-generation (those born in 1997 and later [Dimock 2019]). It should be noted here that the meaning of the concept of a generation will be consistent with this understanding of Karl Mannheim, which means a set of people connected not by a communal bond, but by the fact they participate in the same historical, social, and cultural events in a similar period of life [Mannheim 1952: 286–292; Artwińska, Mrozik 2016: 255]. It should also be emphasized, after Garewicz, that belonging to a given age group does not mean that everyone automatically becomes members of the same generation [Garewicz 1983: 77]. It is more important that the members of the generation participate in the historical process in a similar way, at a similar location in the social space, and, above all, that they are a point of reference for each other [Hildebrandt-Wypych 2009: 113].

Post-millennials are quite a specific segment of cultural institution users who, in the near future, will become key for many institutions. They are the ones who will soon become the core museum audience. They will also constitute an important group among potential stakeholders, and they will strongly impact the decisions on cultural policies made by political decision-makers. What is more, the cultural specificity of this generation is becoming more and more visible in many areas. However, post-millennials cannot be broadly and systematically characterized, as there are no results of comprehensive empirical studies that allow for in-depth comparative analysis. As a result, the image of this generation that

is currently crystallizing is somewhat random and fragmentary, but there is also reason to suppose that contemporary generational differences may prove to be more long-lasting than was in the case of previous generations (e.g., Generation Y or “baby boomers”), who, following a period of youthful rebellion, succumbed to the previously binding social norms without much resistance. Currently, young people have a greater chance to retain their distinctness, which is obviously helped by the digital revolution whose beneficiaries are primarily young people rather than the old.

Consequently, this means that knowledge and experience, which previously privileged older generations, are now less important than IT competences, which privilege the young. Thus, this generation fits perfectly into the rules of functioning of the prefigurative generation, the characteristics of which were once formulated by Margaret Mead [Mead 2000; 96–133]. And it is worth underlining that the current youth is different primarily because, impacted by the effects of the digital revolution, they shape their relations in the sociocultural sphere in a unique and distinct way; they also take advantage of technological advancements in their own, unique way [Strauss, Howe 2000: 3–30].

Characterizing post-millennials as the prospective stakeholders of cultural institutions, it is worth observing a few important facts. First of all, this young generation constitutes an important part of the whole of society. In the case of Polish society, post-millennials account for over 16.3% of the population (6.2 million people), whereas on the European scale, they constitute more than 19.5% of the continent’s inhabitants (98 million) [GUS 2020, Eurostat 2020].

The specificity of the identity of the post-millennial generation is undoubtedly influenced by numerous factors. However, it is worth noting here that this generation, especially in Poland, is growing up in a vastly different socio-political reality that the previous generations did. They do not have any war experience or memories of war; they did not live in the times of the stand-off between the capitalist and the communist blocks, the times of the “Solidarity” movement or martial law. They did not experience a divided Europe. On the contrary: for them, the European space means a borderless space; a space that undergoes dynamic integration not only politically, but also socially and economically. Thanks to that, in the perception of young people, political divides become less important, which increases their mobility and acceptance to take up work outside of Poland (this opinion is expressed by 64.0% of the representatives of this generation).

However, it is also worth noting that, at the same time, local cultural and civilization divisions matter to them, the effect of which is that their sense of local identity is definitely stronger and is expressed in the pride in the place they

come from (83.0%) and attachment to local traditions (76.0%) [The Next Normal 2013]. It is also worth observing that the economic standing of post-millennials is generally better than that of the previous generations – the difference in wealth compared to their peers in Western Europe is currently smaller than it was, e.g., during communism. However, at the same time, it comes with greater exposure to the risks of the market economy and the related hazards, such as unemployment.

Yet, the greatest influence on the mental specificity of the young generation is exerted primarily by the changes in IT technologies, particularly the “smartphone revolution,” which enabled full consolidation of the real and the virtual world [Levi 2001: 107–112]. Although the potential benefits stemming from these changes are available to all, they are not assimilated to the same extent by all generations, and it is the young generation that turns out to be the greatest beneficiary in this sphere.

The consequence of the depicted processes and shifts is the new lifestyle of the post-millennials, according to which the fundamental value is social participation realized not by direct interpersonal contacts but through online activity, which is equivalent to direct contact. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that as early as 2013, as much as 92.0% of the representatives of the youngest generations declared that they had at least one email account, 85.0% actively used social media, 94.0% participated in online discussions, and 68.0% admitted to being logged in all the time [The Next Normal 2013]. Currently, these indicators are even higher, but importantly, such high activity in online contacts does not result in reducing their interactive activity outside of the Internet [Jiang 2018].

The new lifestyle of the young generations and the dynamic increase in the importance of cyberculture is also conducive to the creation of a new type of participants of culture. They are characterized by the full ability to integrate the virtual and the real world (interconnectivity). This results in the decline in the importance of traditional authorities based on the old knowledge model; in its place appears a new type of authority based on a knowledge model which does not rely on traditional ways of acquiring knowledge, but on the competences in searching for solutions to concrete issues, most commonly online (e.g., Wikipedia or via the social media). This is accompanied by the inclination to negate the cultural canon, as preferences and aesthetical experience undergo deep individualization in the contemporary processes of the reception of culture. This is also helped by the reduced interest in purely autotelic processes of the perception of culture, which are replaced by aesthetic-social experiences. On the other hand, one might observe a higher level of cultural activity among post-millennials, although it may be carried out not only through traditional and institutionalized experiences

with culture, but also through experiences outside institutions, frequently by using electronic media [Dostatnia 2014; Trojanek 2015; Kisiel 2016].

Taking into account the vital significance of the distinct differences that characterize the young generation, one may presume that they should also impact the way in which the young generation shapes their attitudes and expectations of modern cultural institutions. One may therefore assume that if institutions of culture still play an important role in the lives of post-millennials, the ways in which they are used should be compatible with their lifestyles and post-millennial's modes of participation in culture, which is largely based on the experiencing a deep integration of the material and virtual worlds and continuous (on-line) use of social networks through social media, using the various opportunities that mobile communication technologies provide.

## **RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

The assumption formulated above was subjected to empirical exploration based on the results of field research. It investigated how post-millennials perceive museum institutions when we analyze their place and role in the context of the digital revolutions and the development of social media. The purpose of the research was, therefore, to acquire information on the extent to which the new principles of creating social relationships are changing the expectations of how a museum's social space is shaped and used. The research was not concerned with a substantive assessment of the contents of museums; it focused solely on how objects are displayed and on issues related to behavioral patterns in the museum space. Therefore, neither the expectations of the works of art themselves nor their aesthetical value were researched, but the expectations concerning the manner in which they are shown and the principles of behavior in the museum space.

The research was conducted by means of an auditorium questionnaire among the second- and third-year students of secondary schools (general and technical secondary schools) in the Małopolska voivodship between September 2018 and April 2019. It was carried out during school classes, at times agreed with the school authorities and the class teachers. The time dedicated to the questionnaire was circa 20 minutes. The sample selection was random and based on the list of secondary schools in the Małopolska voivodship. Schools and class groups where no comprehensive education was carried out, but which provided only vocational training (basic vocational schools) were eliminated from the sample frame. The final research sample is not representative, however, because the selection of the classes in which the research was carried out depended on the decision of

the director of the school, and the number of respondents in each class depended on the attendance of students in each class.

Three-hundred and ninety-six students took part in the research, out of whom 221 respondents (55.8%) were students of general secondary schools, and 175 respondents (44.2%) were technical secondary school students. Out of the whole sample group, 245 respondents (61.9%) were citizens of Kraków, while the others were inhabitants of other towns and villages in the Małopolska voivodship (151 respondents – 38.1%). The demographic structure of the sample group was as follows:

TABLE 1. Demographic structure of the sample group

Demographic variables	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Gender (N=396):		
- female	181	45.7
- male	215	54.3
Age (N=394):		
- 16	51	12.9
- 17	144	36.6
- 18	150	38.1
- 19	41	10.4
- 20	8	2.0
Mother's education (N=392):		
- primary	18	4.6
- basic vocational	80	20.4
- secondary	153	39.0
- higher	141	36.0
Father's education (N=390):		
- primary	27	6.9
- basic vocational	129	33.1
- secondary	143	36.7
- higher	91	23.3
Financial status (N=393):		
- very poor	1	0.2
- somewhat poor	5	1.3
- average	60	15.3
- somewhat good	216	55.0
- very good	111	28.2

Source: own research

The respondents presented a generally positive attitude to traditional cultural institutions (e.g., theatres, philharmonics, museums). An opinion that such institutions are needed also in times of the dynamic development of

cyberculture, as well as multifunctional sports and entertainment venues, was expressed by 82.6% of respondents (the opposite opinion was expressed by 6.3%; no opinion – 11.1%). But the respondents' general cultural activeness was somewhat average – 19.7% of them declared that they use the offer of cultural institutions at least once a month, and an additional 37.6% stated that they use it at least once every two months. On the other hand, 31.1% declared that they use traditional institutions of culture not more often than 2–5 times a year, and 11.6% said that it is quite sporadic or they have no contact with them whatsoever.

Generally, their attitude to the institution of a museum of art was quite favorable; however, the frequency of contact with such institutions still leaves a lot to be desired (Table 2). Although as many as 75.3% of respondents deemed museums of art important and of use to society, their contact with such institutions was usually quite limited. Only 4.9% of respondents declared that they visit a museum at least once a month, whereas 46.8% do this no more than once per year. What is more, 35.4% claimed that they visit museums once every two months or less often, and 12.9% do it a little more often. The collected data lead to the conclusion that the research participants were of a generally positive attitude to the institution of a museum of art, although it is an institution they are not particularly interested in. They usually visit museums during school trips (54.8%) and while visiting other cities (37.6%). Those who are actually interested in art and those who love museums of art are not numerous (13.6% and 16.4%, respectively).

These characteristics allow us to form the opinion that the research participants constitute an important segment of participants of culture; nevertheless, they are potential and not actual users of what museums have to offer. On the one hand, members of this segment appreciate the social importance of museum institutions, but on the other hand, there are no strong attachments to these institutions. That is why the staff of museum institutions ought to focus specifically on the members of this segment, as the expectations they express may inspire changes in the museum space, which are part of the traditions of the “new museology,” whose purpose is to increase society's interest in museums.

TABLE 2. Cultural activeness of respondents (in %)

Frequency of activeness	Experience of cultural institutions (N=396)	Visits to art museums (N=395)
Very rarely or not at all (no more than once a year)	11.6	46.8
Somewhat rarely (2–5 times a year)	31.1	35.4
Average (6–12 times a year)	37.6	12.9
Quite often (1–2 times a month)	15.7	4.1
Very often (more than 2 times a month)	4.0	0.8

Source: own research

Another reason why knowing the post-millennials' expectations may be important is that some shifts in the museum space seem to be necessary. First of all, this is because the characteristics of the respondents' satisfaction with the museum facilities should encourage an in-depth reflection. As few as 11.4% of respondents deemed their contact with works of art in a museum completely satisfying. The greatest number of respondents, 44.9%, stated that although their contact was not optimal, they were generally satisfied with their visit to a museum. Another 32.0% stated that visits to museums allowed them to experience works of art, but that those experiences were never completely satisfying. A negative assessment of previous visits to museums was expressed by 11.7% of respondents, including 4.1% who claimed that the conditions of visiting museums of art never allowed them to appropriately experience art. A relatively less critical group were those who declared an interest in art (only 5.5% had negative opinions) and those who visited museums the most often (no negative opinions). Socio-demographic variables did not have a considerable impact on the structure of the response.

These results are not alarming; still, they signalize quite a significant problem. Although most of the respondents generally assessed their previous museum experiences positively, it is worrying that almost 89% of respondents stated that their presence in a museum does not enable anticipated contact with art and does not provide full satisfaction. It is evident that not all visitors can be fully satisfied with their visits to a museum. However, the formulated opinions indicate that it is worth taking steps to allow larger audiences to experience museum visits in the optimal way. Otherwise, there is a risk that in the future, museum institutions will only be interesting to those who are already present and are fully satisfied with the museum offer. The rest may be inclined to stop visiting museums; since their experiences are not optimal, they may replace them with alternative

activities, such as virtual visits, which already have many fans even among the older generations. Virtual visits do not allow for direct contact with an original work of art, but the comfort of experiencing a virtual copy may be greater than that in a museum, and access to works of art may be much cheaper. A meaningful advantage of a museum is, of course, the possibility to experience an original work of art, yet this strength is largely nullified if a museum institution does not provide optimal conditions to do so.

Therefore, what can museum institutions do so that the contact with museum works of art would be perceived by post-millennials as more convenient? Information collected via the empirical study (Table 3) leads to the conclusion that the desired course of action would be to enhance access to information on individual works that are on exhibition. The possibility to expand one's knowledge on a given work of art was deemed important by 58.6% of respondents, while only 8.6% were not interested in having such a possibility. This expectation was formulated relatively more often by people interested in art (78.2%), by those who visit museums of art often (81.3%), those who live in small towns and villages (66.7%), and those of good financial standing (64.9%). Other socio-demographic variables did not have a considerable impact.

What is more, enriching information on museum works of art may also be provided through video presentations. The respondents deemed this form of communicating with visitors even more attractive and desirable. As many as 69.5% of respondents agreed that a museum would be more interesting if, next to a given work of art, there was a video presentation explaining it; only 6.8% thought the contrary, and the first opinion was expressed relatively more commonly by people who visit different cultural institutions (81.3%). Socio-demographic variables did not have a considerable impact on the structure of the response.

The respondents' declarations clearly indicate one area of activities that can enhance the attractiveness of museum space and improve the conditions of visiting. The proposal to provide richer information on works of art may be implemented both in the form of traditional notes or through smartphone applications (e.g., QR codes, etc.), which, by the way, perfectly correspond to the new model of post-millennials' authority – the virtual authority. Such initiatives have successfully been introduced in museums in Poland and globally, though they could be carried out on a larger scale.

Another area of potential interventions in the museum space refers to how post-millennials function in the social world, i.e., their constant presence on social media. Transplanting their new principles to the museum environment, one might expect that they would encourage young visitors, in the spirit of

multitasking, to carry out various activities concurrently, e.g., visiting a museum and simultaneously communicating with people outside of the museum.

However, the results of the research (Table 3) do not provide a definite answer to this supposition. Interest in simultaneously visiting a museum and being active on Facebook or Instagram, or listening to music, was declared by 31.0% of respondents, whereas 41.7% were of the opposite opinion; positive declarations were relatively more commonly expressed by respondents not interested in art (48.7%) or visiting museum exhibitions (45.7%), as well as inhabitants of medium-sized towns (52.6%). There was also a large group who did not have any opinion (27.3%). 37.1% of respondents were interested in the possibility of taking a selfie with certain works of art and immediately posting it on social media, while 27.0% were opposed to that idea. There was also a large group of undecided (35.9%). Those who declared no interest in art (51.4%) and those who deemed museum institutions unnecessary (53.1%) expressed positive opinions on this topic relatively more often. On the other hand, the ability to constantly comment on and like the works of art seen during a visit was deemed important by 31.3% of respondents, while an almost equal number expressed the opposite view (31.1%). However, the greatest number of respondents had no opinion on this topic (37.6%). Other socio-demographic variables did not have a considerable impact on the respondents' answers.

TABLE 3. Respondents' opinions on selected directions of changes in museums (in %)

Tested statements	Agree	Disagree	No opinion
I would like to have access to more information about the museum objects (N=394)	58.6	8.6	32.8
I would like to see video presentations explaining the work of art next to the information about it (N=396)	69.5	6.8	23.7
I want to listen to music or look at Facebook/Instagram at the same time while visiting the museum (N=396)	31.0	41.7	27.3
I would like to take a selfie with selected museum pieces while visiting the museum (N=396)	37.1	27.0	35.9
I would like to be able to comment on and like the art objects while visiting the museum (N=396)	31.3	31.1	37.6
I would like to have the possibility to tag the location of a museum on Snapchat (N=395)	29.6	34.4	36.0
I would like the museum to create a hashtag for the exhibition (N=394)	21.6	34.2	44.2

Source: own research

The results, which illustrate the respondents' attitudes towards using selected functionalities of mobile devices in a museum, provide an ambiguous diagnosis of the situation. On the one hand, their declarations suggest that enabling such behaviors in a museum may be welcomed by young visitors, as it would allow them to maintain their presence on social media. On the other hand, the number of respondents who are not convinced by such solutions suggests that the museum space and the time spent there are unique and different to everyday activities. The respondents are reluctant to introduce smartphones (or other modern mobile communication devices) – which they use in everyday life – into the museum space

This reluctance to use smartphones is also visible in other activities. However, it does not concern those related to the museum space itself, rather, it concerns ways of perceiving and describing museum institutions in the social space (Table 3). Relatively few respondents would like to have the possibility to tag the location of a museum in Snapchat or would like the museum to create a hashtag for the exhibition. The former was supported by 29.6% of respondents (34.4% were opposed, and 36.0% had no opinion). Interestingly, girls (37.2%) were more interested in this option than boys (23.3%). The latter was supported by only 21.6% of the respondents, with 34.2% against (44.2% did not express any view); however, those who were interested in art (30.9%), and the inhabitants of medium-sized towns (42.1%) relatively more often showed interest in this possibility. Other socio-demographic variables did not have a considerable impact on the respondents' answers. It is clear that the number of people who support museum institutions using new technologies falls as the number and scope of functionalities grow. At some point, views close to the traditional perception of a museum, characteristic of previous generations, begin to dominate.

Components of the traditional approach to the institution of a museum of art stand out even more in the context of the question about the ways that museums are present in and use virtual space and the Internet. 24.7% of respondents support the idea that a museum must guarantee direct contact with works of art, and therefore, that the Internet is only good for informing about and advertising the resources of the museum. Meanwhile, 40.9% of respondents believe that when experiencing art, it is important to have direct contact with work of art in the museum, and that on the Internet, one can place copies of works of art, extensive informational content on the pieces, and even show items that are currently not on display. Furthermore, 27.2% of the respondents agreed that becoming acquainted with a work of art can happen both in a museum and online, and that both forms have their advantages and limitations. Finally, a mere 7.2% of respondents agreed that museum facilities and physical access to existing works of art are not

necessary and that access to museum resources online is sufficient to experience art. Thus, for them, it is enough for museums to be accessible in the virtual space. However, this answer was chosen more often by people not interested in art (24.3%), who considered traditional cultural institutions unnecessary (57.1%), and those who rarely visited them (17.4%). Other socio-demographic variables did not have a considerable impact.

The results clearly show that for these respondents, the social role and the place of the institution of a museum of art are unequivocally bound to the physical space. The virtual space may serve only – and at best – as complementation. Therefore, the space can only support the former; it certainly cannot substitute it. What is more, both types of space are of a different quality; they are not merged according to the rule of interconnectivity, which substantially hinders smoothly transitioning from one to the other, which post-millennials have become accustomed to.

## CONCLUSIONS

Looking from the helicopter view at the structure of respondents' preferences describing the links between modern museums and cyberspace using smartphones, museum institutions are distinctly located in the traditional, physical space even by post-millennials. This is probably the reason that the previously formulated assumptions that post-millennials who visit a museum expect profound modifications of museum rules, incorporating the possibilities of mobile communication technologies, was not supported by strong empirical evidence. Clearly, the articulated expectations of respondents refer only to greater access to knowledge on museum artifacts, which broadens the possibility of independent and personalized contact with a work of art. On the other hand, constant internet access, geotagging or constantly being on social media during a visit to a museum are not generally perceived as necessary, and they are required primarily by people who expressly declare a lack of interest in art or trips to a museum. When it comes to others, their patterns of presence in a museum fit in well within traditional patterns of behavior in a museum. This, however, is a clear deviation from or even distortion of the model of participation in culture that describes the post-millennials' general cultural activity. It is an anomaly, and it is worth investigating its origins and its consequences.

The outlined topic requires further research based on a representative sample. We should remember that these empirical results are not based on such a sample, so they do not necessarily describe the real preferences of all post-millennials. But it seems that it is fully justified to interpret the results not as

a statistical verification of the assumptions, but as a specific way of exploring the outlined issue. With this approach, the results could be treated as an important premise and signal, especially because the observations are also confirmed in other studies carried out among post-millennials.

The first one was conducted in the National Museum in Krakow (NMK)<sup>2</sup>. The participants of that study were students taking part in museum lessons, so they were slightly better prepared for the reception of art; they also more regularly visit art museums, and they are usually more interested in artistic culture than the participants of our research. The results of this study also indicate a low tendency of young people to integrate the space of an art museum with everyday social space and their reluctance to use new communication technologies in the museum space. This study has shown that only 14.0% of respondents indicated the need for greater interactivity based on new technologies in the museum space. The same number of respondents showed an interest in listening to music and using social media during the visit to the museum; additionally, only 25.0% of respondents expressed a desire to make online comments about their museum experiences [Kisiel 2018].

Another study was conducted by Ewa Grigar in the form of a questionnaire distributed in selected cultural institutions in the Czech Republic<sup>3</sup>. The research shows that only 30% of young visitors expect to use new technologies in cultural institutions, while 23% of respondents declared that they need to listen to music and be active on social networks during a visit to an art museum/gallery. Finally, 37.0% of respondents were interested in video presentations and getting more information about the exhibition [Grigar 2020].

There are three root causes that could explain these anomalies. First of all, museum institutions have developed a particular status and equally unique patterns of behaviors that are acceptable in the museum space. Both the patterns and the status are passed down in the socialization processes, with a particularly strong influence of educational institutions (e.g., as part of school trips to a museum).

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<sup>2</sup> The study was carried out in cooperation with Anna Karwińska (CUE), Dorota Jędruch (NMK) and Anna Walczyk (NMK) at the National Museum in Krakow in 2017–2018 in the form of an auditorium survey. The sample consisted of secondary schools pupils in Kraków, participating in museum lessons organized by the NMK. The sample size was 132 respondents aged 17–19.

<sup>3</sup> The field research was conducted by Ewa Grigar in the Czech Republic. Questionnaires were distributed from September 2016 to May 2018. Two-hundred and eighty-one questionnaires were collected from eight randomly selected art institutions. Five were state-owned (Kinsky Palace, Rudolfinum, Stone Bell House, National Museum, and Trade Fair Palace) and three were private museums/galleries (DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, Museum Kampa, and Meet Factory) [Grigar 2020].

This socialization may prove to be so effective that even young people think of a museum according to the instilled pattern, and they are not willing to accept behaviors outside the accepted canon.

The second explanation may refer to tendencies that occasionally emerge of a return to tradition, which is a reaction to pervasive changes. The institution of a museum of art would, therefore, become a place of cultivating traditions, a place where modernization may be perceived not only as unnecessary but even as a threat to identity. A consequence of such a diagnosis may be the perception of the museum space as an enclave where one accepts only traditional ways of thinking and acting, ways which undergo a kind of process of sanctification. In the longer perspective, this will lead to the conviction that the museum is an elite space that requires appropriate preparation. However, the marked tendency of changes in the space of museum institutions in the social consciousness is obviously contradictory to the spirit of New Museology, and it is worth considering whether or not such a model of participation in the museum space is actually desirable.

The third explanation is quite pessimistic. Postmillennials' failure to formulate expectations of changes in the institution of a museum may mean that it is perceived by the new generation as an institution inherently incapable of being reformed, as an institution that represents an old social order that cannot be changed. This view of the museum may mean that post-millennials will turn their backs on that institution, as in their concept of reality, there will be no space for it. The consequences of such attitudes may prove to be very serious for the institution of a museum. It might be deemed redundant, which could be a threat to its existence. In order to prevent this from happening, museum institutions ought to send clear signals that they are willing to change and adapt to new expectations. When these expectations are not clearly formulated (as one can infer from the research), it is the museum that should create both the initiative and the idea in which direction these changes should go. It is not an easy challenge; it requires thinking out-of-the-box; but, observing how museums changed at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, one can hope that they will also handle this challenge.

The difficult situation of museum institutions is additionally complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the related social experience of lockdown. The closure of museum institutions and the inability to systematically participate in museum events have a negative impact on museum attendance, and, above all, they may effectively the process of museum education of young people and practices of direct participation in culture. During the lockdown period, the forms of participating in culture changed; direct contact was replaced by alternative (and in some sense, equivalent) activities in the virtual space, and many museums

(including the most important art museums in the world) made their resources available virtually.

Hence, one has to reckon that the new pandemic practices of cultural participation have increased the acceptance of cultural contacts via the virtual world (compared to the results presented earlier). And this may have a considerable impact precisely on post-millennials' participation in culture. Given their competence in information technologies and their ability to fully integrate the material and virtual worlds (interconnectivity), it can be expected that virtual access to museums will begin to be treated as fully equivalent to traditional access. Consequently, this may cause a further decline in post-millennials' interest in physical museum attendance.

If this happens, the situation of museum institutions may become similar to that of libraries. At a time when every book can be made available in digital form and made accessible without restriction (only financial issues are a barrier here), the role of the library as a place for making physical books available is disappearing. This is because the modern role of the library consists primarily of collecting books, digitizing them (if they are not digitally available), and making them available in this digital version. Visiting a library, therefore, becomes redundant, unless one prefers a physical book – but such people among post-millennials are probably in the vast minority.

However, museums and libraries are not entirely similar. In the case of books, the physical and digital versions may be functionally identical. However, in the case of a work of art, there is a huge difference between the original in a museum and a digital copy online. Seen from this perspective, art in the virtual world will never be the same as the original in a museum. The function of making a work of art accessible in the case of a museum can, therefore, never be completely reduced. The problem, however, is that it is currently unclear whether this is relevant enough for post-millennials. And because the fate of museum institutions may depend on it, it seems necessary to continue empirical research on the differences in post-millennials' reception of an original artwork and its digital copy, with a focus on both quantitative research on representative samples and qualitative, in-depth research.

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## **OCZEKIWANIA MŁODEJ PUBLICZNOŚCI WOBEC WSPÓŁCZESNEGO MUZEUM SZTUKI**

### Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest socjologiczna analiza sposobu postrzegania muzeów sztuki przez przedstawicieli młodego pokolenia zwiedzających (post-millennialsów) w kontekście ich oczekiwań w dobie komunikacji mobilnej. Problem jest bardzo ciekawy, ponieważ młodzi widzowie muzealni, uczestniczą w życiu społecznym i kulturalnym zdecydowanie inaczej niż przedstawiciele poprzednich pokoleń. Poruszany problem jest też bardzo ważny, gdyż właśnie pokolenie millennial-sów decydować będzie o losach tego typu instytucji już w niedalekiej przyszłości.

Przeprowadzona analiza postrzegania instytucji muzealnych opiera się na wynikach badania empirycznego, przeprowadzonego wśród uczniów szkół ponadgimnazjalnych (16–20 lat). Głównymi obszarami zainteresowań zrealizowanego badania były zarówno preferencje co do stylu zwiedzania wystaw muzealnych, opinie respondentów o odwiedzanych ekspozycjach, jak i oczekiwania, co do zmian w formule prezentacji sztuki w przestrzeni muzealnej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** post-millennials, muzeum sztuki, oczekiwania wobec muzeum