Can Interactive Mediation Tools Bridge the Identity Gap Between the Public and the Art Museum?

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Introduction

In 2012 there were 62 million admissions to France's 1,200 museums and one in three of these were for art museums.[1] While these figures attest to the growing enthusiasm of the French for visiting museums and heritage sites, the frequency rate could still be improved. New mediation tools for museums rely on new technologies (Web sites to prepare visits or tools such as tablets and smartphones to accompany visitors). Might the use of interactive mediation tools be one means of bringing in more visitors or attracting a new public?

Identity construction is at the heart of museums' concerns and those of their publics. Having been identified as a temple of arts and culture, the museum must now invent a new model for itself. Alain Seban, director of the Centre Pompidou, says, "We are going to have to . . . give the museum new legitimacy in society [by making it] a major place for constructing individual and collective identity,"[2] to which digital mediation tools might contribute. For Bernard Deloche (2010), "the public come to museums to find the principle behind their own identities" (p. 53).

Our research seeks to produce evidence confirming or refuting the view of interactive mediation tools as possible levers for enhancing identity proximity of the public and art museums. The identity of the public and art museums on the one hand and the context on the other seem to influence consumer behaviour with respect to museums. The aim is not to change the content of the art museum but to approximate its identity to that of the public so as to provide the public with access to art.

The idea is to look more closely into the concept of identity proximity and confirm its role in access to art and culture. In managerial terms, the use of interactive mediation tools might bring the identity of a museum closer to that of its visitors.

The study addresses two questions: What are the component parts of public–art museum proximity identity? How do interactive mediation tools influence the dimensions of public–art museum proximity identity?

We first set out the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study and then describe our qualitative methodological approach and present the results.

Theoretical Foundations

This study is based on two theoretical frameworks. We use the experiential approach (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Roederer, 2008; Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009) and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Bagozzi et al., 2012) to understand how the use of interactive mediation tools can increase public–art museum identity proximity.

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Experiential Approach to the Museum Visit

In terms of theory, the experiential strand (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) might account for the influence of the use of interactive mediation tools on public–art museum identity proximity. Moreover, identity construction is developed in the context of consumer culture theory (CCT) through the concepts of membership in or opposition to groups and the sharing of standards and values (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Chaney, 2008; Muratore, 2008). Askegaard and Linnet (2011) invite us to consider another level: the contextual (social, cultural, political and institutional). This article draws on this last strand, because, according to Christensen and Askegaard (2001), organizations are sources of identification and their symbols become signs of belonging.

There are several categories of obstacles to accessing art (Kotler, 2001; Bourgeon-Renault, 2014): money barriers and non-money barriers (time constraints; cultural distance; physical, psychological, intellectual and sociological obstacles). This study focuses on psycho-sociological obstacles to gaining access to museums. We posit that the use of interactive mediation tools might be a lever for reducing symbolic (non-monetary) barriers and the identity distance between the public (and non-public) and the organization.

Experiential dimensions of the visit

We draw on the experiential strand (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) because it enhances the symbolic and hedonistic aspects of cultural consumption that may be directed at the self (such as the search for hedonism, pleasure, emotion or experience) or at others. In addition, we use the work of Roederer (2008), which centres on the consumer experience in general. Roederer claims that experience comprises four stable theoretical dimensions:

- hedonic–sensory: emotions and sensations felt by the individual

- rhetorical: symbolic or metaphorical value accorded by the individual to the experience

- praxeological: interactions with the physical and social environment

- temporal: management of time allocated to the experience

Moreover, the work of Doering, Karns and Pekarik (1999) centred on the museum visit identifies four types of experience that are not mutually exclusive: experience of the object, cognitive, introspective and intimate, and social. For Walls et al. (2011), any touristic or cultural experience can be situated on two axes (extraordinary–ordinary, cognitive–emotional). Duke (2010) advocates a holistic approach to the museum visit and refers to museums as gymnasiums of the imagination, indicating experiential content beyond the simple acquisition of knowledge.

Use of interactive mediation tools during the visit

All of the above studies concern the classic museum visit experience and do not refer explicitly to the use or non-use of interactive (technological) mediation tools. For some years, research has considered the impact of interactivity of mediation tools on the museum visit and all of its component parts (Candito and Miege, 2007; Tsitoura, 2010), emphasizing that these interactive tools encourage discussion, debate, social cohesion and cooperation (social dimension), experimentation (active dimension) and, lastly, knowledge enhancement (cognitive dimension).

For example, the various definitions of the concept of perceived interactivity identify salient and commonplace dimensions of online

A B S T R A C T

Consumer behaviour in the field of art museums appears to be influenced both by the identity of the public and the art museum and by the context. It is a matter not of changing museum content, but of bringing its identity closer to that of the public in order to promote access to art. The authors first present the theoretical and conceptual framework for their research and then suggest a qualitative methodological approach to addressing the issues described in the results.

K E Y W O R D S

Mediation devices, identity proximity, art museum experience, organizational identification, social identity

interactivity: two-way communication between the organization and an individual or between individuals, active control left to the user, and the tools' reactivity or synchronism. Interactivity corresponds to the "the degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, on the communication medium, and on the messages, and the degree to which such influences are synchronized" (Liu and Shrum, 2002, p. 54).

This research, we believe, can be transposed to the notion of interactive mediation tools for museums, which in variable proportions enable bilateral and synchronous communication by allowing the visitor to take control of the tool and the museum visit.

In this context, the experience of using an interactive mediation tool has two dimensions: a functional dimension corresponding to the useful, clear, relevant, exhaustive and efficient use of the tool; and a dimension that rests on the pleasant, soothing, stimulating, surprising, convivial, fun or aesthetic character of the tool.

These interactive tools are increasingly being used by museums as experience-enhancing levers, because they promote interactivity between the work of art and the visitor, provide more information, make the visit more dynamic with fewer spatio-temporal constraints, and quite simply enable "visitors to better understand the works and enjoy greater social interaction" (N'Gary and Petr, 2012, p. 27).

Moreover, recent research (Jarrier and Bourgeon-Renault, 2012) confirms that interactive mediation tools (fixed or mobile) enhance the museum visit. More specifically, in an art museum the visiting experience with an interactive mediation tool is defined as comprising six dimensions: cognitive, rhetorical, hedonic-sensory, temporal, social and active.

We have specified the theoretical underpinnings of our research by presenting the state-of-the-art bearing on the way in which interactive mediation tools may enhance the museum visit. This raises a question. Does the interactivity of mediation tools used in the museum experience make the public feel closer to the museum and does it attract a remote public? This question leads to the evocation of interactive mediation tools as levers for reducing cultural distance and contemplating the idea of identity proximity.

Conceptual Approach to Public–Art Museum Identity Proximity

In order to define the concept of identity proximity, we discuss social identity theory, which leads to the dimensions of the construct.

Social identity theory

Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) posits that the self is composed of (a) personal identity, or the characteristics, aptitudes and preferences that make an individual different from others; and (b) social identity, or one's sense of belonging to a social group (e.g., a business or consumer group), thus defining the individual's place and concept of self in society (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Brewer, 1991; Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994; Simon, 1997; Volle, Reniou and Monnot, 2009).

With respect to the organization, the concept of identity brings together the central, distinctive characteristics (Albert and Whetten, 1985) of a structure as perceived by all of its members (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994; Gombault, 2003). What of organizational identity? Ashforth and Mael (1989) define this as the proximity of an individual to an organization and the individual's conception of his or her cognitive connection with the organization.

RÉSUMÉ

Le comportement du consommateur dans le domaine des musées d'art semble influencé à la fois par l'identité du public, par le musée d'art et par le contexte. Il ne s'agit pas de changer le contenu du musée, mais de rapprocher son identité de celle du public de façon à promouvoir l'accès à l'art. Tout d'abord, les auteurs présentent le cadre théorique et conceptuel de leur recherche, puis ils suggèrent l'implantation d'une approche méthodologique qualitative afin de répondre aux problématiques décrites dans les résultats.

MOTS CLÉS

Outils de médiation, proximité de l'identité, experience du musée d'art, identification à l'organisation, identité sociale

Individuals are attached to an organization when they include, in their concept of self, the characteristics that they attribute to the organization (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994; Pratt, 1988, 2000; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003).

Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) describe the following organizational facets of identification: a cognitive component, including the categorization of self; an emotional component, or affective commitment (Ellemers, Kortekaas and Ouwerkerk, 1999), combining what the individual feels towards the organization with the feelings perceived by the organization; and an evaluative component concerning the strengthening of value and self-esteem through membership in the organization (Ellemers, Kortekaas and Ouwerkerk, 1999).

Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) define customers' identification with the firm as a process by which their beliefs about the firm enable them to consolidate, define in part or assert their identity (the beliefs are then said to be self-defining). These beliefs bring them to see themselves as like other customers of the firm and unlike people who are not customers.

Our research looks at the dimensions enabling individuals to define their identification with an organization, specifically a museum, and seeks to broaden the concept of identity proximity between art museums and their public.

Definition of public–art museum identity proximity

According to Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) and Bagozzi et al. (2012), the concept of identity proximity in the realm of museums is associated with the perceived similarity of one's own identity and that of the museum.

It is possible, then, to define the concept of identity proximity as a cognitive connection based on the perceived overlap of the characteristics of one's own identity (salient, representative and distinctive attributes, interests and values) and those of the relevant institution. The organization is relevant when the assimilation of its identity with that of the individual becomes more important for him or her than assimilation of other social identities. The word "value" is defined in a societal context as an ideal to be reached or to be defended. Values are at the origin of laws, rules, conventions and customs governing groups and relations among the individuals of whom they are made up (Brée, 1994).

Moreover, to consider oneself a member of a group, one need not interact with or have a strong interpersonal connection with it (Turner, 1982; Brewer, 1991; Pratt, 1998; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). Individuals who are not members of the organization (the non-public) may identify with it if they find it attractive and capable of enhancing their social identity (Ahearne, Bhattacharya and Gruen, 2005), in which case inclusion becomes an important mechanism. According to Bagozzi et al. (2012), personal inclusion is the construction of a unique identity of the individual through assimilation of the organization's values. In such a context, assimilation is more important than social inclusion, which relies on interdependence with other persons in the group.

Consequently, we discern two levels in the identity proximity process: an individual level, due to one's perceived connections with the museum; and a social level, arising from the individual's interdependence with the museum's public.

The literature review therefore leads us to posit that public–art museum identity proximity (considered a positive cognitive connection) allows individuals to

RESUMEN

La conducta del consumidor en los museos de arte parece estar influenciada tanto por la identidad del público y del museo como por el contexto. No se trata de cambiar el contenido del museo, pero sí el acceso al arte. Los autores, tras presentar el marco teórico y conceptual de su investigación, sugieren implementar un enfoque metodológico cuantitativo para abordar las cuestiones que se describen en los resultados.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Dispositivos de mediación, proximidad identitaria, experiencia de los museos de arte, identificación organizacional, identidad social

- perceive themselves as having characteristics similar to those of the museum and its public, and to integrate the museum's identity into their own and see it as distinct from the identity of other social organizations (cognitive component)

- feel a personal affective commitment to the museum and a social commitment to the public (emotional component)

- enhance their self-esteem (positive evaluation) and their social identity; this has symbolic meaning for individuals, for the cultural, social and psychological benefits that membership in a museum organization procures (evaluative component)

Other researchers (De Miguel De Blas, 2013) have developed a tool for measuring public–art museum identity proximity by taking into account two levels (individual and social).

Individual identity proximity comprises three dimensions: cognitive, emotional and evaluative.

- The cognitive component concerns self-categorization through a connection or other distinction allowing the characteristics of the individual's identity to be compared and shared with the museum's characteristics: "I recognize myself in this museum, which reflects what I am." "I share similar attributes, interests and values with this museum." The cognitive dimension is also based on incorporation of the museum's characteristics into the individual's identity (assimilation).

- In the emotional component, the individual has feelings towards the museum: "I like this museum and enjoy visiting it." "I feel valued."

- In the evaluative component, the individual feels enhanced because of the connection with the museum: "I feel enhanced by visiting this place."

Social identity proximity arises from interdependence between an individual and the museum's public, apprehended through the same three dimensions:

- In the cognitive component, the individual perceives similarities with other visitors ("I'm like the other visitors") or stands apart from non-visitors ("I'm different from those who don't visit"), but also integrates the characteristics of other publics.

- In the emotional component, one searches out the shared experience and the social bond with the public (developing relations with others, opening up to others): "Visiting this museum brings me emotionally closer to others."

- The evaluative component enables the individual to achieve status (reinforced self-value, self-esteem): "Visiting this museum enhances my worth relative to my social circle."

Let us now look more closely at how the use of interactive mediation tools during a visit may influence public–art museum identity proximity.

As shown in the literature review, art museums use interactive mediation tools as levers for experience enhancement. The interactive character of such tools may have a positive impact on the visitor's learning, on the hedonic dimension of the experience, on the social bond, and on the participation of the public and its appropriation of the museum offer (Bourgeon-Renault and Jarrier, 2011). How do interactive tools influence the dimensions of public–art museum identity proximity? Do they allow the public to get closer to the museum as an institution, and do they encourage identity proximity to the museum and its public?

To summarize the foregoing theoretical developments, we present a conceptual schema in Figure 1.

Public–Art Museum Identity Proximity: The Influence of Interactive Mediation Tools

We use qualitative methodology to analyze the influence of interactive mediation tools on identity proximity.

Methodology

We focus on fixed interactive tools (particularly interactive terminals and multi-touch tables), mobile tools (audioguides, smartphones, tablets), and occasionally three-dimensional images and augmented reality.

Semi-structured face-to-face exploratory interviews were conducted during the period December 2012 to February 2013 with a convenience sample of 21 people (11 men and 10 women). Semantic

FIGURE 1

CONCEPTUAL SCHEMA

EXPERIENCE OF USING AN INTERACTIVE MEDIATION TOOL

Functional component
Useful, clear, relevant, exhaustive and efficient character of the tool

Hedonic component
Pleasant, soothing, stimulating, surprising, convivial, fun or aesthetic character of the tool

EXPERIENCE OF THE MUSEUM OFFER

Cognitive component
Observation, concentration, understanding, memorization, knowledge acquisition

Rhetorical component
The meaning that one gives to the visit

Hedonic-sensory component
Aesthetic pleasure, positive or negative sensations and emotions during the experience

Temporal component
Ability to manage and optimize time as a resource

Social component
Visitor exchanges and interactions with other visitors and museum staff

Active component
Appropriation of the place

PUBLIC–ART MUSEUM IDENTITY PROXIMITY

Cognitive component
Categorization of self (individuals perceive similarity between their identity characteristics – attributes, interests and values – and those of the museum and/or those of other members of the public)

Incorporation (individuals integrate the perceived characteristics of the museum and the group into their own social identity)

Emotional component
Feelings (pleasure, affective commitment, etc.) towards the museum and the public

Evaluative component
Reinforcement of self-esteem through association with the museum

Self-value and enhancement of social identity through belonging to the group made up by the public

saturation was reached after 21 interviews. The interviews, which lasted an average of 90 minutes, were audiorecorded, transcribed and analyzed manually.

Socio-demographic (age, education, geographic location, occupation) and individual (degree of museum expertise) characteristics were varied (Appendix 1). Of the respondents, 13 were regular visitors (attended at least twice in the last 12 months), six were occasional visitors (attended at least once in the last five years and no more than twice in the last 12 months), and two were non-visitors (had not attended for at least five years).

We performed vertical and horizontal thematic analyses. These were conducted using the lexical analysis technique. Our epistemological position was based on hypothetical-deductive reasoning. A thematic analysis grid, developed from the literature review, was built around the cognitive, emotional and evaluative dimensions of the individual's relationship with the museum and its public. During this phase of analysis of the corpus, a horizontal approach was used to identify and quantify the terms present throughout multiple interviews. These recurring terms were grouped into subcategories and then manually categorized and quantified by means of independent thematic double coding. Comparison of thematic coding analysis revealed homogeneity of the results (Cohen's K = 0.77).

The results of the thematic analysis of the 21 interviews appear to confirm the theoretical definition of identity proximity between the public and

the art museum: individual identity proximity as a result of the connections between the individual and the museum, and social identity proximity arising from the interdependence between an individual and the museum's public. Each identity proximity construct is assessed through its cognitive, emotional and evaluative components.

Use of Interactive Mediation Tools to Influence Identity Proximity

Thus far, identity proximity between the public and the art museum has been based on the overlap and assimilation of the identity characteristics between individuals and museums and/or other members of the public. We now present the results of our qualitative approach, highlighting the influence of the use of interactive mediation tools on each component (cognitive, emotional and evaluative) of identity proximity between the public and the art museum, differentiating individual identity proximity (to the museum) and social identity proximity (to other members of the public).

Cognitive component

Proximity to the art museum

The following statements by respondents highlight a number of identity characteristics shared by the public and the museum.

Use of interactive mediation tools in an art museum seems to increase the sense of freedom to enjoy the visit. The public perceive the institution as a guardian of freedom and as generous and caring and interested in the public good: "I was talking about freedom of expression, but we can talk about freedom in general. I think the person who really wants to learn . . . is entitled to use it . . . it corresponds to these values" (Benjamin, regular visitor).

The use of digital mediation tools seems to facilitate access to the museum and allows for a reconciliation of its identity values: "It is access to modernity. I think it's good to move forward, it's a step forward and it makes them more accessible . . . it fits with my values" (Laurianne, non-visitor).

Furthermore, interactive mediation tools seem to give the museum a modern, dynamic and responsive image, the ability to adapt to societal trends (growth and diversification of digital uses): "The museum is forced to move with society, otherwise it . . . will die" (Dominique, regular visitor). "The offer . . . since the technology is new, it is still appropriate for what is currently being done" (Mehlia, occasional visitor).

The use of interactive mediation tools shows that the museum is looking to its public and listening to them in order to enable them to access the offer: "It's about being open to others, becoming more accessible. I always prefer an approach that focuses on proximity rather than on elitism, so obviously it's these values that I share: accessibility and proximity" (Elodie, regular visitor).

However, the use of interactive mediation tools may not strengthen the connection with the museum and therefore may not facilitate identity proximity; not all visitors identify with a museum that offers interactive tools: "It's not something that will generate a relationship between the institution and you" (Marc, regular visitor).

Proximity to the museum's public

The use of interactive mediation tools allows individuals to define themselves as similar to or different from the museum's public by comparing one's own identity characteristics with those of others.

Individuals might identify with a group according to their age: "It's a generational thing, surely" (Marc, regular visitor). "I can't imagine a grandmother of 80 looking at a screen, or a man of 25 who's never [used] an iPhone or a tablet" (Susana, occasional visitor).

Members of the public may perceive themselves as belonging to a group whose intra-individual dominant characteristic is either cognitive or emotional, leading to different behaviour with respect to interactive mediation tools. The former group would be more willing to use such tools than the latter: "There are people [those using interactive tools] who want to discover everything, learn everything, read everything, and there are people who, like me, go to the museum often just to see things . . . people who want to have impressions, sensations . . . and not necessarily learn things" (Benjamin, regular visitor). "If he wants to . . . just be in the atmosphere of the museum he can leave the tablet aside, but if I really have the knowledge approach . . . the tablet . . . will give me more tools" (David, occasional visitor).

The use of interactive mediation tools seems to reflect the image of a more active visitor: ". . . an image [of someone who knows] where to find information: I am not passive" (David, occasional visitor). These tools can also be good channels of communication.

The categorization may also emerge from the idea that interactive mediation tools are for tourists: "Japanese tourist groups often use audioguides" (Benjamin, regular visitor). ". . . a Chinese group" (Laurianne, non-visitor).

Through interactive tools, an individual may express his or her similarity to or difference from other visitors who demonstrate a high degree of technophilia: "I felt a bit different from the others, even though we shared the same interest in new technologies" (Elodie, regular visitor). "I'm pretty much a geek and I like innovation and all that" (Elodie, regular visitor). "Maybe it's just me . . . interacting with screens in museums – I don't see a reason for it . . . I consider myself fairly traditional" (Susana, occasional visitor).

The results suggest that the self-categorization process involves criteria such as age, intra-individual characteristics (cognitive or emotional orientation, technophilia) and situational context (active/passive in relation to the environment, tourist/non-tourist). These variables could explain the existence of different visiting behaviours. Two types of individual are identified: those who imitate others, and those who are in the process of differentiation: "At Cité de la Musique everyone has an audioguide; it's almost obligatory" (Benjamin, regular visitor). "It's become so common that . . . I don't think I differentiate myself if I come with my tablet or my iPhone . . . I would stay myself" (Mehlia, occasional visitor).

Emotional component

The use of interactive mediation tools during the museum visit can generate emotions that move the individual closer to the museum and its public.

Proximity to the art museum

Interactive mediation tools tend to bring individuals closer to the museum on an emotional level: "Augmented reality . . . flatters the visitor" (Alexandre, occasional visitor). "It [will bring] me closer to the museum. It will be less of a tourist excursion and I'll be more involved" (Lynda, regular visitor).

The attitude towards the museum can be negative if expectations are not met: "It could tarnish the museum's image to offer these tools and communicate [in a modern way] if in the end [the visit] is disappointing" (Elodie, regular visitor). "I prefer the traditional [way]. Cutting jobs because of the tablets is a pity" (Melhia, occasional visitor).

Proximity to the museum's public

Except for the few positive emotions expressed during the interviews – "[the digital table] can create specific emotions because of being together . . . it's about emotions, it's about sharing, seeking things together" (Nathalie, regular visitor) – the comments suggest negative connotations about the use of interactive mediation tools: "If I was with friends . . . I'd feel a little selfish using it" (Elodie, regular visitor). "I've always found it weird, people walking around all alone with the thing" (Marc, regular visitor).

Evaluative component

The comments indicate that the use of interactive mediation tools can influence self-esteem and one's social identity in relation to the museum and to other members of the public.

Proximity to the art museum

The individual may feel enhanced by the use of interactive mediation tools and may feel closer to the museum: "Visiting the museum with a smartphone enhances me" (David, occasional visitor).

Some people display a positive attitude towards the museum through the use of interactive mediation tools: "When it's offered, it seems to me that the least you can do is try to use it" (Dominique, regular visitor). Respondents regretted not using them when available: "It might be to my disadvantage that I haven't tried them enough" (Odile, regular visitor).

Proximity to the museum's public

The use of interactive tools could enhance the visitor's status with regard to other visitors: "Visiting the museum with a tablet allows me to feel good compared to other people in the museum" (Ericka, regular visitor).

**INFLUENCE OF INTERACTIVE MEDIATION TOOLS
ON PUBLIC–ART MUSEUM PROXIMITY IDENTITY**

Constructs / Components	Identity proximity to the museum	Identity proximity to the museum's public
Cognitive	Identity characteristics (freedom, generosity, concern for the public good, modernity, dynamism, reactivity, listening) shared by the public and the museum	Perceived similarity or difference between the individual and other members of the public: age, technophilia, cognitive/emotional orientation, passive/active nature, tourist/non-tourist
Emotional	Emotional reconciliation enabled between the individual and the museum, as long as the use of interactive mediation tools does not obscure the social function of the visit	Positive emotions felt by some visitors using an interactive mediation tool (pleasure in the visiting experience, etc.) Negative emotions felt by non-users of interactive mediation tools towards those who use them (presumed individualism of the latter)
Evaluative	Some individuals feel valued by the institution when it offers interactive mediation tools; others regret not having used them	Self-enhancement and self-esteem (follow a societal trend using an interactive mediation tool); unwillingness to use interactive mediation tools for fear of projecting an antisocial image

Some respondents evaluated positively the sense of belonging to the user category even if they did not belong themselves, referring to interactive mediation as a societal trend: "I think it's great that it's there, although for some people it's really a fad" (Noelle, regular visitor). "People are very attached to technology now" (Odile, regular visitor).

However, the category of users could lead to a negative evaluation depending on whether the person feels they belong to that group. For some respondents, use of interactive mediation tools projected a serious image: "You seem to be more serious, more involved" (Lynda, regular visitor). For others, however, they did not reflect a positive image: "There are people, I think, who look a bit silly with the audioguide" (Benjamin, regular visitor).

Some commented on the obstacles to the use of interactive mediation tools and even expressed distrust for them, believing they could hamper the aesthetic perception of the cultural object: "What is he doing with a tablet? You come here to look at the painting and instead you look at the tablet'" (Charley, non-visitor).

Moreover, the tendency to use interactive tools seemed to disfavour social cohesion and to cut visitors off from the environment: "It creates unnecessary competition between people . . . [the visit] was not as sociable as I expected" (Elodie, regular visitor).

Conclusion

Our results show the importance of the membership process for an individual's behaviour with regard to museums. The use of

interactive mediation tools could influence the sense of belonging, affecting the perception of identity proximity between individuals and an art museum and to its public. The modernization of museums has served to change their identity (Gombault, 2003). Consequently, this quest for identity, with its distinctive character, encourages organizations to communicate such changes (Ashforth and Mael, 1989).

The theoretical contributions of the study could be significant. The results of the exploratory survey confirm some theoretical variations of identity proximity between the public and the art museum. The positive influence of interactive mediation tools on the proximity of the identity characteristics of the public with those of the museum seems to foster a process of self-categorization with regard to the museum and the public, while also incorporating the identity characteristics of the museum and the individual. However, this influence on identity proximity may not always be positive. Some theoretical variations of identity proximity between the public and the art museum could not be confirmed and will be the subject of future research.

The limits of the study include the exploratory nature of the research. A more thorough methodological approach will be used for the quantitative phase, which will include the construction of a scale for measuring identity proximity. Moreover, the results omit socio-economic variables (age, gender, etc.) and intra-individual public (technophile orientation), as well as specifics about the interactive mediation tools used.

On the managerial level, in recent years museum managers have favoured interactive mediation tools since these tend to attract, among others, younger audiences and inexperienced members of the public who might visit alone or in groups. This view is expressed and reinforced in the results of assessments presented at the Quatrièmes Rencontres Nationales Culture et Innovation(s) (Jarrier, 2013). The observations of the participating institutions indicate that interactive mediation tools do attract audiences, while also contributing to an institution's more modern and accessible image. A future line of research would be to conduct semi-structured interviews with museum managers, to compare their comments with those of the public about their shared attributes, interests and values. Segmentation of respondents by age would allow for a closer look at the values associated with digital technologies outside the museum experience and for comparison

of these with the values expressed in relation to the museum visit offering the possibility of using interactive mediation tools.

The managerial contributions also relate to strategies used by professionals to make interactive mediation tools available to the public and non-public, which for some (particularly young people) could reconcile their identity with that of art museums and could help to remove non-monetary obstacles to cultural access. This strategic direction would promote access to museums by modernizing their image. In addition, art museums could incorporate the identity characteristics of their public and non-public in their messages and communications (including social networks) to increase attendance and trigger intention to visit (non-public).

Notes

1. Chiffres clés, Statistique de la culture, Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, 2014.

2. Conference on the Future of Museums, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 25 November 2012. Contributors: Nicholas Serota, Alain Seban, Alfred Pacquement and Chris Dercon. http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xvh9fj_selon-chris-dercon-l-avenir-des-musees-le-25-novembre-2012_creation#from=embediframe.

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APPENDIX 1

SAMPLE						
	Gender	Age	Location	Socio-professional status	Attendance (visits/year)	Visitor status
Audrey	F	20	FR Dijon	Student	3	Regular
Benjamin	M	21	FR Dijon	Student	4	Regular
Damien	M	35	FR Mâcon	Manager	7	Regular
Dominique	M	38	FR Lyon	Manager	15	Regular
Ericka	F	25	FR Dijon	Student	5	Regular
Elodie	F	29	FR Dijon	Student	10	Regular
Lynda	F	35	FR Mâcon	Unemployed	10	Regular
Marc V	M	45	FR Lyon	Manager	7	Regular
Michael	M	24	FR Dijon	Student	3	Regular
Nathalie	F	51	FR Dijon	Manager	10	Regular
Noëlle	F	55	FR Paris area	Unemployed	3	Regular
Odile	F	54	FR Paris area	Retired	10	Regular
Santiago	M	26	SP Barcelona	Student	3	Regular
Alexandre	M	35	FR Lyon	Craftsman/ entrepreneur	1	Occasional
David	M	38	FR Lyon	Manager	1	Occasional
Marc C	M	28	SP Barcelona	Student	2	Occasional
Melhia	F	22	FR Dijon	Student	2	Occasional
Susana	F	26	SP Barcelona	Manager	2	Occasional
Vincent	M	22	FR Lyon	Employee	2	Occasional
Charley	M	27	FR Lyon	Employee	0	Non-visitor
Laurianne	F	20	FR Dijon	Student	0	Non-visitor

INTERVIEW GUIDE

I. ART MUSEUMS AND YOU

1. You and cultural venues (generally): Do you feel close to one or more cultural places? If so, which ones and in what way?

Are there any cultural places that seem suited to you? (theatre, cinema, museum, concert hall, etc.) If so, which ones?

Can you tell me about the first time you went to that place (those places)? (With whom, why, how)

Do you recognize yourself in this place (these places)? If so, in what way?

What are the elements that make you feel closer to this place (these places)?

2. Do you share characteristics, interests and values with art museums?

What do you have in common with these places?

In your opinion, what are the characteristics and values that define these cultural places? Do you share these values?

3. Do you ever imagine yourself in an art museum?

What strong image do you have of this cultural place? (entertainment, popular image, elitist image)

In what way does this place suit you?

Can you give some adjectives that define you and that would also correspond to this cultural venue?

Think about the contacts you have had with this museum (communication, experiences). In what way do you recognize yourself in it?

What positive or negative feelings are you experiencing in your relationship with this place? And in your relationship with other members of the public?

Do you experience a feeling of belonging to the institution?

Could you describe the profiles of other people attending this institution? How would you define yourself compared to other visitors/public/spectators of this institution?

4. Does attending an art museum enhance you?

What does this cultural place bring to you?

Do you think your relationship with this place has an influence on the way others see you?

II. USE OF INTERACTIVE MEDIATION TOOLS IN ART MUSEUMS

1. Do interactive mediation tools (such as audioguides, tactile tablets, smartphone applications, interactive terminals) bring you closer to this cultural place? If so, in what way?

2. Does the availability of interactive mediation tools correspond to your characteristics, interests and values? If so, could you explain?

3. What are your positive and negative feelings towards the museum and other visitors when using interactive mediation tools?

4. Does the use of such tools . . . give you a sense of belonging to a group? Does it endow you with special status?

5. Do you think your image, or what other visitors think of you, is modified if you use these tools during a museum visit?

III. IDENTITY PROXIMITY

1. In your country, what relationship do people have with art museums?

2. In your close circle, what relationship do people have with art museums?

3. In your social, professional or private life, what makes you closer to or further away from an art museum?

4. Could you describe how you have come closer to or moved further away from the art museum? Would you say that this closeness/distance is a result of the influences of your close circle, your experiences or museum strategies (e.g., communications)?

5. What could a museum do to attract people who do not visit?