GAZING FROM HOME: CULTURAL TOURISM AND ART MUSEUMS

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Abstract: This study reconstructs and expands well-established cultural tourist typologies while offering an alternative model to help explain the subtle differences between different cultural tourists in art museums. Keeping in mind that art museum visitors differ from visitors of other kinds of museums and that museum visitation is not separate from everyday life, in-depth, semi-structured interviews in the participants' home country were used to explore museum perceptions and memories of past museum experiences. The main outcome of the study is the identification of eight different ways of perceiving the art museum whether at home or a tourist destination. Five case studies are presented in order to demonstrate the need for more inclusive and flexible typologies. Keywords: typologies, art museum, cultural tourism, everyday life, museum perceptions. © 2010 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Interestingly, when McKercher (2004) 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. This is not surprising if we consider that museums help define the overall tourism product of a destination by providing a sense of a particular time and place that is often unavailable elsewhere (Graburn, 1983, 1998; Tufts & Milne, 1999). Apart from providing a sense of “hereness” (Kirchenblatt-Gimblett, 1998), museums are part of a universal cultural system for the dissemination of knowledge and experience (Herreman, 1998). As Kirchenblatt-Gimblett (1998) mentions, “Tourism needs destinations, and museums are premier attractions” (p. 132).

The growing contribution of cultural institutions like museums to the attractiveness of a destination, and therefore to its economy, has urged researchers to turn their attention to the links between the economy and culture (Capstick, 1985). As a result, tourism professionals view museums as a part of the modern cultural complex of a...
destination that can attract tourists (MacCannell, 1999) while museum professionals view tourists as a distinct group with particular needs that must be satisfied.

Unfortunately, with a few exceptions, most tourism studies appear to be fragmented. This is mainly due to the fact that they investigate specific destinations or institutions and therefore no generalizations can be made that can eventually help build broad and strong theories regarding cultural tourism. Furthermore, there seems to be a lack of multi-disciplinary perspectives (Wall, 2010), which in some cases are essential to analyzing specific types of cultural tourism. For example, cultural tourists might seek different experiences in an art museum, a history museum, an opera, or an outdoor festival. Finally, many studies separate home behavior from tourism behavior, even though this separation seems more artificial than ever.

The good news is that post-modern theories have ignited new trends in the conceptualization of the tourist experience (Uriely, 2005). To begin with, there is an increased interest in the performances, subjective experiences, and meanings tourists make (Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen, & Urry, 2007; Edensor, 2000; Prentice, Witt, & Hamer, 1998; Richards & Wilson, 2006). Significantly, the emergence of tourist typologies is considered a step towards the recognition of the diverse and plural character of tourist experiences (Cohen, 1979a; Uriely, 2005). Additionally, while tourism has traditionally been considered as an escape from everyday life or a form of “getting away from it all” (Graburn, 1989), increasing evidence supports the view that tourism can be viewed instead as an extension of everyday life (Kim & Jamal, 2007).

Following these trends in theorizing tourists’ experiences, this study (a) does not separate everyday life from tourism experiences; (b) focuses on a specific form of cultural tourism—that of art museums; (c) acknowledges the subjective nature of experience without ignoring the factors that help shape it; (d) concerns itself with the development of a holistic and flexible cultural tourist typology for art museums which can account for a number of tourist experiences; and finally, (e) complements and expands rather than contradicts previous typologies. The two main purposes of this paper are to introduce an alternative cultural tourist typology for art museums and to argue that exploratory research which explores emerging narratives and is conducted in the participants’ home environment can be extremely valuable. Such methodological alternatives can potentially expose different aspects of the same intellectual puzzle.

CULTURAL TOURISTS AND MUSEUM PERCEPTUAL FILTERS

It still seems that the tourism literature has not yet settled on a single definition for the term “cultural tourism” (Dolnicar, 2002; Hughes, 2002). 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”
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). For the purposes of this paper, a “cultural tourist” is defined as any individual who visits cultural institutions or places such as museums, archeological and heritage sites, operas, theatres, festivals or architecture while away from home. A “visitor” is defined as any individual who visits museums or galleries whether at home or at a destination.

**Cultural Tourist Typologies and Art Museums**

For a long time cultural tourists were treated as an undifferentiated group of people. Recent tourist literature recognizes 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 recognized that “the” cultural tourist did not exist (Dolnicar, 2002), researchers started identifying different types of cultural tourists.

Even though it is not the purpose of this paper to provide an exhaustive overview of the studies dealing with cultural tourist typologies, it is necessary to mention the ones that influenced this study the most. Cultural tourist typologies often depend on classifying factors such as motivations, interests, experiences sought, or activities the cultural tourist engages with.

To start with, in a study of foreign tourists to Australia, Foo and Rossetto (1998) categorize cultural tourists into the specific and the general. Specific cultural tourists, they found, have a specific desire to experience a particular cultural aspect of Australia and this is their primary motivation for traveling there. On the other hand, general cultural tourists consider culture a secondary motivation for traveling. Similarly, Silberberg (1995) divides 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. 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 a museum.
Like Silberberg, Hughes (2002) presents another four-part classification of cultural tourists. This time interest determines the classification. Hughes recognizes 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, that is, people who travel to a place to experience its culture and people who travel for other reasons. He then divides core tourists 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.

Apart from considering the centrality of cultural tourism in the decision to visit a destination, some researchers also consider the depth and quality of the experience sought. McKercher (2002) considered the depth of experience sought and the level of engagement with the attraction to design a two-dimensional model comprised of 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).

Some other notable studies recognize that different cultural tourists engage in combinations of different activities with different levels of enjoyment (Dolnicar, 2002) and that the level of participation in and enjoyment of cultural activities depends on variables related to cultural capital, such as museum visitation from an early age, current museum visitation, self-assessed cultural capital, and travel motivations (van der Ark & Richards, 2006).

Researchers have succeeded in identifying different dimensions that make classifications of cultural tourists possible as well as in pointing out that not all cultural tourists are equally motivated by or interested in culture. Furthermore, they indicated that more motivated people will most probably engage at a deeper level with a cultural attraction and, as a result, have a more meaningful experience. Despite the many advantages of the cultural tourist typologies outlined above, two main limitations are most apparent.

First, most cultural tourism typologies refer to all kinds of cultural attractions without making a distinction between different kinds of museums or even between different kinds of cultural activities. Most tourism research stamps art, history, science, and even children’s museums with the same general “museum” label even though it should be quite obvious that different kinds of museums offer different kinds of experiences (Dicks, 2003) and thus attract different kinds of tourists. As a matter of fact, research has shown that tourists who visit art museums belong to higher educational and income levels than tourists who engage in festivals, musical activities, theme parks, amusements parks,
local fairs, and events (Kim, Cheng, & O’Leary, 2007). Additionally, it is established that art museum visitors are more likely to come from high-income households, are more likely to have tertiary educational qualifications, and are more likely to be students or professionals than visitors to other kinds of museums (Bennett, 1994; Schuster, 1991). Therefore, research might be more effective if it separated cultural attractions, and more specifically museums, according to their subject matter and experiences offered.

Second, apart from van der Ark and Richards’ (2006) research, an explanation as to why certain tourists 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 tourists behave and how they experience cultural sites; however, these typologies cannot explain why some people are more motivated, are more interested in museums, or why they seek a deeper experience than others. It is possible that the answer can be found in the home behavior of individuals. Therefore, research which explores the relationship between tourism and home behavior, without separating the two, might shed some light into these questions (Hamilton-Smith, 1987).

Tourism, “Gazes”, Perceptions, and Everyday Life

Most studies have a tendency to abstract tourism from everyday life for research purposes even though the notion of the tourist experience as separated from everyday life has been challenged since the 1990’s (Bærenholdt et al., 2007; Uriely, 2005). Everyday life is usually associated with home routine and behavior, work, and ordinary social functions. The concept of everyday life often appears in opposition to behavior that takes place away from home, to tourism, and to the extraordinary (Urry, 2008). Tourists are envisioned to adopt a “tourist gaze” as soon as they find themselves at a foreign destination (Urry, 2008).

However, several factors make the home/everyday—away/tourism dichotomy seem too artificial and, thus, unnecessary. First, the tourist of today (at least in western counties) travels much more than the tourist of the past and it is possible that the tourist of tomorrow will travel even more often. Therefore, travelling, which was considered a “luxury good” in the past, is nowadays an integral part of people’s lives (Blichfeldt, 2010). Second, tourists do not leave their previous experiences, motivations, preconceptions, and attitudes behind when they travel the same way they leave their coats in the cloakroom upon entering a museum. Third, the effects of a journey are not limited to the time spent at the destination. Tourists connect information and construct meaning before traveling to a place and continue to do so months or even years after their journey (Bærenholdt et al., 2007).

Early on, Cohen (1979b) provided an alternative to the separation between home and away by identifying five modes of tourist experiences according to where the “spiritual centre” of the individual is
located: the recreational, the diversionary, the experiential, the experimental, and the existential. Recreational tourists remain committed to their center back home while, on the other end of the continuum, existential tourists acquire a new “‘elective’ spiritual centre” (p. 190) within the new culture they are experiencing. Cohen argues that even though people might be released from their home spiritual center at different levels, they cannot dramatically change the routines of their culture and more importantly, their sense of identity. Even in cases where the main motivation for traveling is to leave one’s everyday life behind, it was found that tourists still try to retain many of the routines of their own culture (Wickens, 2002), or at least those that are close to their sense of identity.

In the case of art museums, there is indeed proof that tourists have an increase in desire to visit cultural attractions, including art museums, when abroad (McIntyre, 2007; Prentice, 2001). However, it was also shown that tourists who visit museums when abroad are already predisposed to do so (Harrison, 1997). This supports the “spillover hypothesis” (Nash, 2001) in which “individuals’ experiences in everyday life carry over into the tourism arena, which results in a similar pattern of everyday cultural practice and tourism cultural practice” (Kim, Cheng, & O’Leary, 2007, p. 1370). It will be shown that the results of this study also support the spillover hypothesis. One might argue that tourists’ true spiritual centre is in themselves and cultural tourism satisfies not only the desire to discover the “‘Other’” but also the “‘Self’”. As McIntyre (2007) mentions, vacationing is a way of “‘being able to ‘be yourself’ or, perhaps more accurately, to ‘be the self you more wanted to be’” (p. 123).

If we view tourism as an extension of everyday life, it then becomes reasonable to assume that the tourist gaze might not be the only gaze used when away from home. Multiple layers of “gazes”, which can be used both at home and away, might be in effect at any time. These other gazes are influenced by the way we see the world and more specifically, our perceptions about the self, the Other, objects, spaces, and institutions. According to Schiffman and 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). In our case, tourists visiting art museums are influenced not only by the tourist gaze but also by their “museum gaze”, or better, their museum perceptions. Schiffman and Kanuk’s definition is slightly adjusted for the purposes of this study. Museum perceptions can be defined as the way individuals make sense of museums, whether at home or a destination, inside and outside their walls, in relation to their everyday lives and their conception of self-identity. As we will see, this study explores art museum perceptions and identifies eight different museum perceptual filters (MPFs) that people might use. By “filtering” or “coloring” the way tourists see art museums, MPFs can ultimately influence visitation decisions, individual roles enacted inside the museum, and the uses made of art museums and galleries when at home or at a destination.
Study Methods

Responding to the realization that cultural tourism is not separated from everyday life, interviews with 60 participants in their home (instead of away) were used to uncover art museum perceptions as well as cultural tourism practices. The initial purpose of this study was to explore people’s perceptions about art museums and the way these perceptions influence visitation decisions in their home country and abroad. No questions were directly asked about cultural tourism practices but nevertheless relevant narratives naturally emerged throughout the interviews. As a result, exploring cultural tourism issues became the second main research purpose of the study.

Exploratory research conducted with a small number of participants was considered most appropriate for gauging people’s museum experiences, memories, and perceptions. Sixty individuals were engaged in semi-structured, in-depth interviews which were conducted in two phases from January to August 2006 in the city of Nicosia, Cyprus. The first phase included interviews with 30 individuals, transcriptions of the interviews, and their partial analysis. During the second phase, the interview protocols were revised by adding three additional questions that further explored emerging key issues, and 30 additional individuals were interviewed. There were no differences between the two data sets. The mean interview time was 38 minutes. In addition to the 60 interviewees, seven museum professionals were interviewed in order to shed some light on Cyprus’ museum environment.

Forty one out of 60 interviewees mentioned visiting at least one art museum when describing a visit abroad. Therefore, they have been cultural tourists (intentionally or not) at some point in their lives. The interviews of these 41 participants are examined in this paper. In general, a large percentage of Cypriots experience art museums mainly when abroad. This is the case for two main reasons: (a) even though Cyprus is rich in archaeological and Byzantine sites and museums, it does not have many art museums and galleries, and (b) Cypriots tend to travel frequently and therefore have the opportunity to visit a variety of museums. According to the latest governmental statistics, the population of South Cyprus (roughly 750,000 inhabitants) took 1,080,512 trips abroad in 2007 of which 66% were for recreational reasons (Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus, 2008), meaning that the average Cypriot takes one to two trips abroad per year. In this study, 34 interviewees (out of 60) travel abroad once or twice a year, while an additional 13 travel more often. Unfortunately, no statistical data exist 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 to know how the purpose of the trip abroad—recreational, business, or study-related—is connected to museum visitation.

A theoretical sampling (Mason, 2001) was taken for which the participants’ visitation frequency served as the classification unit for selection. Participants were intentionally recruited from all visitation levels. The visitation categories used were adopted from Merriman’s museum visitation research (1991) and are as follows: very frequent
visitors: visit at least once a month (12 participants); frequent visitors: visit three or more times a year (7 participants); regular visitors: visit once or twice a year (9 participants); occasional visitors: last visited between one to four years ago (15 participants); rare visitors: last visited five or more years ago (7 participants); and non-visitors: have never visited an art museum/gallery (excluding compulsory school visits, 10 participants). A “visit” was defined as any visit to an art museum, gallery, or other art exhibition space whether in Cyprus or abroad.

In order to achieve a diverse sample of museum visitors and non-visitors, several research sites were used. The interviewees were recruited from several cafes as well as two cultural institutions, the Byzantine Museum and Art Gallery, and the ARTos Cultural and Research Foundation. The “snowballing” technique was also used to recruit hidden populations, that is, populations which are difficult to recruit through more traditional methods (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). 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). In this case, some participants were asked to recommend friends, relatives, or neighbors who would be willing to be interviewed. Individuals who could not be recruited through museums or cafes, mainly older non-visitors or busy parents with children, were recruited in this way.

To complement the data gained from the semi-structured, in-depth interviews, two other research methods were used: a short questionnaire and the “personal meaning mapping” technique (Falk, Mousouri, & Coulson, 1998). First, participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire at the beginning of each interview. The use of a questionnaire generated demographic information, information about the leisure activities (including visitation to art and other kinds of museums) of each interviewee as well as their traveling frequency. Second, during the interview, interviewees were presented with a blank sheet of paper with the words “art museum/art exhibition” written in the centre, and were asked to write or draw whatever came to mind when they thought of art museums. A discussion of the resulting personal meaning map followed. Figure 1 provides an example of a personal meaning map.

Personal meaning maps have been successfully used by some researchers to assess learning in museums (e.g., Falk et al., 1998; Mousouri, 1997). The main advantage of the meaning mapping method is that it offers participants some time to reflect on their feelings and thoughts through free association, and thus elicits deeper responses. The maps were analyzed along with the transcriptions as an integral part of the interview.

The interviews were translated from Greek to English by the researcher, a bilingual speaker who made sure that the translation is true to the intent of the original Greek transcription. After each interview was translated, the data were stored, coded, and organized using the qualitative research software program N5 (NUDIST 5 by QSR International Pty Ltd.). The data were then analyzed cross-sectionally, again with N5, which helped locate, retrieve, and analyze topics in an
accessible and straightforward manner. Apart from the computer-aided analysis, the data were also interpreted on a case-by-case basis by assigning visitation categories and museum perceptual filters to each interviewee. Looking at data in a holistic manner is known as non-cross-sectional analysis (Mason, 2001). A research diary was used for this purpose. The research diary included field notes made immediately following each interview. The notes included the essence of the interviewee’s answers, information about the interview, first impressions, ideas, feelings, assumptions, as well as any surprising, noteworthy, or unexpected data.

The computer software and the researcher’s diary were used together in order to identify patterns and themes, explore museum perceptions, and conceptually categorize data. After coding and assigning visitation categories and MPFs, conceptually clustered matrices (see, for an example of this, Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 130) were used to further aid comparisons between interviewees. Conceptually clustered matrices helped represent important data and information in a readable table format that made comparing groups with the same visitation level or same primary filter easier.

Museum Perceptual Filters (MPFs)

After analyzing the data, it became clear that there are at least eight different ways of approaching art museums, whether at home or away, which were named museum perceptual filters (MPFs). The eight MPFs identified in this study are as follows: professional, art-loving, self-exploration, cultural tourism, social visitation, romantic, rejection, and indifference.

Seen through the professional filter, museums are part of one’s professional life (knowledge-oriented experience); through the art-loving filter, they appear as treasure houses of aesthetic and stimulating
things (object-oriented experience). People who mainly use the self-exploration filter see art museums as places of self-exploration and improvement (self-oriented experience), while the cultural tourism filter forces people to view museums as a way of exploring and learning about other cultures (culture-oriented experience). People who see art museums through the social visitation filter view them as a way to engage in social activities (people-oriented experience), while people who use the romantic filter view them as ideal, romantic places that one should visit but usually does not (ideal-oriented experience). Seen through the rejection filter, museums are viewed as something to avoid (complaint-oriented experience); and finally, the indifference filter does not allow the individual to see museums as a valid or desirable leisure activity (for a more detailed analysis of the MPF model see Stylianou-Lambert, 2009).

It is important to note that, contrary to other cultural tourist typologies, the MPF model does not categorize individual visitors but their museum perceptions. Individuals might “own” and therefore use more than one filter at any time. After examining each interview transcript, interviewees were assigned a primary MPF and, when evidence existed, one or more secondary filters. Interviewees were assigned MPFs in the following way: at the conclusion of phase I of the interviews, definitions for each MPF were developed. During the analysis stage of the research, any use of specific language or expressions that fit the MPF definitions were noted. 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 a destination in four different instances, and also mentioned that he/she appreciates or loves art twice, his/her primary filter would be the cultural tourism filter and his/her secondary filter the art-loving filter.

Table 1 outlines the primary MPFs in relation to the visitation frequency for the 41 participants who visited at least one art museum on a trip abroad.

Table 1. Primary Museum Perceptual Filters and Visitation Frequency for Participants Who Visited at Least One Art Museum on a Trip Abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary MPFs</th>
<th>Visitation frequency</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art-loving</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-exploration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural tourism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social visitation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
on a trip abroad. As Table 1 indicates, there is a relationship between MPFs and art museum visitation frequency. More specifically, 17 out of 18 interviewees who are very frequent or frequent visitors use as their primary filter one of the three first filters (the professional, art-loving, and self-exploration filters). On the other hand, 20 out of 22 regular and occasional museum visitors mainly use the cultural tourism or social visitation filters (see Table 1). Fifteen research participants were assigned the cultural tourism filter as their primary filter since they only visit art museums when abroad and their main motivation is to learn something about the culture of their destination. Furthermore, an additional 14 participants from all visitation levels were assigned the cultural tourism filter as a secondary filter. The fact that the cultural tourism filter was found to be so popular among the interviewees lends support to Urry’s (2008) concept of the tourist gaze. It seems that the tourist gaze motivates people to visit institutions they consider defining enough of a destination. However, in many cases, people’s museum perceptions seem to be stronger than any tourist gaze they might assume.

Interestingly, very frequent and frequent visitors, the participants who become cultural tourists the most, do not use the cultural tourism filter as their primary filter. When at an art museum away from home, filters like the professional, art-loving, and self-exploration seem to be stronger than the cultural tourism filter. As a result, cultural tourists who visit art museums the most are not necessarily motivated by a desire to experience the cultural product of their destination. Ironically, visitation frequency in cultural attractions and motivation to experience the culture of a destination are most often interconnected in most well-established tourist typologies.

Furthermore, people who are rare or non-visitors do not usually visit art museums when abroad. The research included ten non-visitors and seven rare visitors of art museums. Only one of these 17 participants reported visiting an art museum when abroad. This finding supports the “spillover hypothesis” (Kim, Cheng, & O’Leary, 2007; Nash, 2001). People, who would not normally visit art museums when at home, will most probably not do so just because they are on vacation at a foreign destination. On the other hand, people who would normally visit art museums at home, will probably also do so when away from home.

To clarify how the MPFs can influence the way cultural tourists approach museums, five representative case studies from the research are presented. Each individual uses a different primary MPF. Cases of participants who primarily use the indifference, rejection, or romantic filters are not presented here since they rarely or never visit art museums in their home country or abroad. Pseudonyms are being used in order to preserve the anonymity of the research participants.

Using a Professional Filter. Kostas [very frequent visitor, male, 35–44 years old] is the director of a cultural centre that includes an art gallery. He is also an artist himself and married to a painter. Kostas
explained that his work is something he consciously chose for himself and that he is incapable of separating work from leisure. As a child, he remembers traveling and visiting museums with his parents, while nowadays he visits museums with his two children. Kostas considers visiting museums as a fun activity for children but also a necessary one. He believes that the familiarity created by repeat visits will allow his children to view museums as a natural extension of their lives and not as something out of the ordinary.

Kostas is a very frequent visitor of art museums and galleries in Cyprus and abroad. When he travels, he does not restrict himself to the most well-known museums as most interviewees do but also explores lesser-known art museums. Kostas explained that, when abroad, 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 as a professional, from the point of view of art history, and the other is when I’m looking for 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 available. I’ll take notes. I’ll take a “warmer” approach—a more educational one… The other approach, which 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. […] 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.

Kostas views museums in a variety of ways. He mainly 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 he sometimes spends time in art museums with his children. Therefore, he also uses the art-loving filter and the social visitation filter. Even though he travels frequently and becomes a cultural tourist often, there were no indications that he is using the cultural tourism filter.

Using an Art-loving Filter. Anastasia [frequent visitor, female, 34–44 years old] 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 does not seem to approach art in an intellectual way. On the contrary, she expressed her annoyance with the way art critics discuss art because she believes that a viewer does not need to know anything about art in order to experience and feel it.

Anastasia is a frequent art museum visitor and only an occasional visitor of other museums since she prefers visiting art museums over other kinds of museums or cultural sites. She makes active choices about the type of art or exhibitions she chooses to visit and seems well-informed about exhibitions in Cyprus as well as abroad. When asked 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”. Anastasia confessed that, for her, looking at art is a purely emotional
experience and that it is only possible with artworks that touch her in some way. She quietly and confidently talked about how she sees artworks “through the soul” and explained that this direct and honest viewing approach is very important for her. Art is part of her everyday life and she often talks about art with her children and colleagues. Anastasia uses the art-loving filter as a primary filter and the self-exploration filter as a secondary filter.

Considering the previous literature, Kostas and Anastasia can both be labeled as greatly motivated (Silberberg, 1995), core (Hughes, 2002), or purposeful (McKercher, 2002) cultural tourists. 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).

Kostas and Anastasia fit comfortably 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 museums. As a result, it is possible that the cultural tourist types identified so far might be too broad.

Using a Self-exploration Filter. Kassandra [frequent visitor, female, 25–34 years old] is a young, single, and smartly dressed reporter who 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.

Kassandra can isolate items with ease that relate to her sense of identity, thus making her museum experience a particularly personal and meaningful one. She characteristically stated:

I feel that I’m a person who doesn’t want to waste her life. 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.

Kassandra also mentioned a desire to experience the culture of each destination she visits, but from the interview it became apparent that this is a secondary reason for visiting art museums. It seems that Kassandra would as easily have a personal experience in a science
museum, a history museum, a historical site, or even in a restaurant or a local market, since any site or institution can be used for self-exploration and actualization. The art museum is just another option available for exploration.

The filter that dominates Kassandra’s perception is the self-exploration filter. Whatever is viewed through this filter is related to the self and therefore experienced more deeply. As a secondary filter she uses the cultural tourism filter.

Using a Cultural Tourism Filter. Stavroula [occasional visitor, female, 45–54 years old], and Stavros [occasional visitor, male, 45–54 years old], a middle-aged couple with two teenage children, enjoy traveling abroad and do so once or twice a year. Stavroula, who happens to be an ex-stewardess, mentioned that they love traveling so much that they could have bought a house with the money they had spent so far on traveling. When they travel, their main goal is to visit the key attractions of each destination, learn about its history, and see new things. When they were asked how they decide what to visit at a destination, Stavros explained:

Most of the times we buy a guidebook which has information about the country. It’s very important. It contains all the sightseeing with many details etc. Also, if we don’t have a guidebook, we ask at the reception of the hotel [we are staying] ‘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.

In this way, Stavros and Stavroulla usually succeed in visiting the most popular ‘‘must-see’’ sites of each destination and still have enough time for another necessary activity, shopping.

According to Stavroula, visiting museums is one of the things one does when abroad. Perhaps this is the reason why they rarely visit museums in Cyprus. What attracts them to cultural sites such as museums is mainly their desire to learn about other civilizations and about the culture of the place they are visiting. Yet, they both seemed slightly uncomfortable when asked about their experiences with art museums. Timidly, they indicated that they are not particularly interested in art, or science, or history for that matter. They only visit 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, regular visitors of other kinds of museums and they usually travel and thus visit cultural destinations together. Even though Stavroula and Stavros could not recall the names of the art museums they had visited, they could recall objects they enjoyed. They pointed out that they especially like realistic landscape painting while they find abstract art intolerable. They consider artists to be gifted individuals who ‘‘make beautiful things’’ worthy of admiration.

Stavroula and Stavros use a cultural tourism filter as their primary filter because they only visit art museums when abroad and because they believe that 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 might be high, the resulting experience is usually 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 and Rossetto (1998) call the general cultural tourists, Silberberg (1995) the in part motivated cultural tourists, and Hughes (2002) the multi-primary core cultural tourists.

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. Existing typologies cannot account for these experiential differences.

Using a Social Visitation Filter. Danos [occasional visitor, male, 35–44 years old] is an educated economics editor of a major newspaper, an occasional visitor of art museums and a regular visitor of other museums. Before the interview even started, Danos declared that he was not very fond of art museums and expressed his doubts about his ability to help with the research. However, during the interview he mentioned that his wife, who is interested in art, occasionally manages to drag him to commercial art galleries in Cyprus. When on vacation abroad he finds himself in a similar situation; he ends up visiting art museums only because his wife or friends want to do so. This is how he described his latest experience as a cultural tourist:

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.

Danos confessed that he finds art museums boring and not a rewarding experience. Nevertheless, he also mentioned that he prefers visiting other kinds of museums, such as science or natural history museums, or perhaps some museums that house well-known masterpieces. As an example, he mentioned the “Gioconda” in the Louvre and the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. When asked about his behavior when visiting an art museum he said with a sneer:

I walk as fast as possible. Very rarely will I stand [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.

Apart from not enjoying the time spent in art museums, Danos cannot comprehend why other visitors spend so much time in front of artworks. As a matter of fact, he believes that other visitors are “faking it” in order to show “how cultured they are”.
Danos has no internal motivation for visiting art museums and unavoidably has shallow experiences with artworks. 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). It is worth noting that Danos’ MPFs might differ when experiencing other kinds of museums or cultural attractions since he expressed negative attitudes only towards art museums and not towards other kinds of museums.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to further explore a specific kind of cultural tourism—that of art museums. Keeping in mind that (a) tourists who visit art museums differ from tourists who visit other cultural activities and other kinds of museums, and (b) that cultural tourism is an extension of everyday life, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to explore cultural tourism in art museums. The main outcome of this study is the identification of eight different ways art museums are perceived, which influence art museum visitation and uses, both at home and away from home. These are named museum perceptual filters and are the following: professional, art-loving, self-exploration, cultural tourism, social visitation, romantic, rejection, and indifference filter. The five first filters are usually used by art museum visitors while the last three by non-visitors.

Five cases of cultural tourists were presented in order to demonstrate how the MPFs influence cultural tourism practices when it comes to art museums. These case studies also reveal how two individuals who might belong to the same type according to well-established typologies might differ in the way they perceive and use art museums. As a result, it is possible that the typologies identified so far might be too broad or too inflexible.

It is important to note that this research does not attempt to categorize people into yet another strict specialized cultural tourist typology. The reason for this is that the combination and the intensity of the filters used are different for each individual, which makes it extremely difficult to categorize people. We could theoretically split cultural tourists in art museums into five main categories according to the five MPFs visitors use. Having said that, the secondary MPFs used contributes greatly to the way people perceive museums. If we consider the different combinations of five primary with eight secondary filters then we could have, not five, but 40 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 categorization impractical, strict categorization into cultural tourist types might be misleading and unhelpful as far as it misses the subtle differences between different cultural tourists who might
belong to the same category. For this reason the MPF model categorizes museum perceptions rather than individuals and thus takes a more flexible and fluid form.

The concepts of home and away are most often inseparable since people might be released from their home spiritual center at different levels (Cohen, 1979b). Individuals cannot dramatically change their perceptions, sense of identity, or, in this case, museum perceptions when they find themselves away from home. Individuals might acquire a tourist gaze (Urry, 2008) when at a foreign destination but they do not abandon their other gazes or filters. Even though many interviewees use the cultural tourism filter when visiting an art museum abroad, the gaze of the most frequent cultural tourists seem to be dominated by other, stronger filters, such as the professional, art-loving, or self-exploration filter. The art museum perceptual filters identified in this study are necessarily embedded in people’s way of seeing, and thus influence museum visitation at home as well as away from home.

Cultural tourists in a museum might have more in common with local visitors than with each other. It was shown that participants who usually visit art museums in their home will most possibly do so when on vacation at a destination. Furthermore, it was shown that people, who do not ordinarily visit museums in their home country, will not do so when abroad. Consequently, this study supports the “spillover hypothesis” (Kim, Cheng, & O’Leary, 2007; Nash, 2001) and the notion that cultural tourism is an extension of everyday life.

To sum up, by pointing out the diversity of tourist experiences in art museums, this study reconstructs and expands well-established typologies while offering the MPF model as a more flexible alternative to help explain the subtle differences between cultural tourists in art museums without separating tourism from everyday life. Furthermore, it has been shown that exploratory research which is based on narratives of past experiences, and not on asking specific questions about specific destinations or museums, can provide valuable data. By talking about art museums in general, interviewees were often forced to distil and clarify their perceptions about art museums and their cultural tourism experiences without separating them from everyday life or their sense of identity. Nevertheless, future research which will examine people’s museum perceptions at home as well as at a tourist destination might reveal more about actual practices as well as provide information about issues of memory and identity. Finally, as this research investigated cultural tourists in art museums, no generalizations can be made across other types of cultural experiences. More research is needed when it comes to cultural tourists in other kinds of museums in addition to other types of cultural attractions.

REFERENCES


