

ATTENDANCE TO MUSEUMS IN COLOMBIA: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS
DETERMINANTS

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Abstract

In the latest edition of the “Directory of Museums of Colombia 2003-2004” one can see that there are 393 active museums (173 in capital cities and 220 in intermediate cities) plus 30 more museums that are being planned. 53% of the property of the active museums is private, 42% is public and 5% is blended. Furthermore, the growth rate for new museums between 1996 and 2008 reached 21%. According to Colombia’s Cultural Consumption Survey 2012 (ECC2012), the attendance to museums [14.7%] is ranked fourth in preference as a way of outdoor cultural-participation for people older than 12 years of age, after the participation in local and national parties [31.9%], movies [31.1%] and the visiting to libraries [19.6%]. The empirical information comes from the ECC2012’s microdata. The results contribute to the design of a cultural policy in the country. These same results are centered especially on the effect that variables such as income, wealth, and capital of accumulated cultural consumption have on the individual decision of going to a museum.

Classification *JEL*: Z11, L83

Key words: cultural participation, attendance at museums, Colombia.

1. Introduction.

The modern museum is shown as a renewed institution and constantly growing, perfectly able to compete not only with other cultural alternatives, but with other ways of spending leisure time (Asuaga and Rausell, 2006). In recent years it is aimed at helping visitors to learn about society, culture, history, and science; as well as to provide entertainment (Smithies, 2011).

The demand for cultural goods is particularly sensitive to the individual's preferences, subject to certain restrictions both budgetary linked to traditional economic variables of prices and incomes, and to the time limitation (Fernández and Prieto, 2011). According to Frey and Meier (2006) the largest number of visits to museums can be attributed to the leisure activity, where the cost of time, not only depends on the time spent in the museum, but also on the time required to get there. For Palma, Aguado and Pulido (2016) leisure can, in principle, be defined in terms of "state of mind", activities, time or technology.

Zakaras and Lowell (2008, 11-12) draw up that three components are necessary so that a cultural experience takes place: the artwork (offer, creative work), the opportunity to meet it (physical access, and cultural infrastructure) and an individual with the ability to appreciate art (demand, "consumption skills"). This capability is achieved through experiences of consumption, accumulation deriving from past cultural consumption and investment in cultural education, which generates a rational addiction process (Stigler and Becker, 1997).

The statement above is ratified by Frey and Meier (2006), who state that the more educated people have the human capital needed to benefit more fully from visiting museums. Besides, Lévy-Garboua and Montmarquette (2011) state that the taste for art is acquired or discovered and the consumption rate increases over time with exposure to it, especially at an early age and sufficiently.

There is a growing demand for cultural goods, which include museums. As a result of the development of a tourist market, an increasing number of people visiting museums in recent years has arisen (Smithies, 2011; Frey and Meier, 2006). Hence the interest in knowing the general characteristics of visitors and the motivations behind the visit, as fundamental means to try to detect clear segment to whom address cultural products with efficiency and profitability (Azcue, 2002).

The museum is the most democratic of all cultural institutions, attracting a broad spectrum of population (Schubert, 2008, 88). Empirical evidence shows that the museum is an institution frequented mostly by young people, with medium-high income levels; the most frequent visitor is the undergraduate with specialties in humanities (Arezo and Pereyra, 2008; Linero, Oliva and Romero, 1986), and longing for new cultural, symbolic, spiritual or historical contents (Bonet, 2011). Women participate at higher rates and singles have a higher chance of assistance than other categories of marital status; this last feature seems to indicate that the presence of family responsibilities especially displace cultural activities that take place outside the home, especially being a housewife reduces the probability of attendance (Fernández and Prieto, 1997).

The aim of this research is to identify the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of those people attending museums in Colombia and how often they do; they especially focus on the effect that variables such as age, socio-economic stratum, and accumulated capital cultural consumption have on the individual decision on visiting a museum. Likewise, to characterize the museum offer, since the properties of museums are factors contributing to the demand for their services (Frey and Meier 2006).

Colombia since 2008, has headed for developing the potential of museums, creating new programs and projects, to manage knowledge of museum entities and identify their performance levels, with the aim of defining strategic lines of public policy. The results are intended to contribute to its design.

The information is initially presented with an introduction, then a second section with the characteristics of the current offer of museums in Colombia, followed by a third section where socio-economic and demographic features of visitors to these institutions, once found, are specified. In the end some conclusions and the list of the bibliography are indicated.

2. Colombia, territory of museums. Characteristics of its offer.

A significant growth in the museum sector in Colombia has been shown over the last 20 years and this has generated the need to manage the new reality in the country through programs and projects (National Museums Policy, 2008).

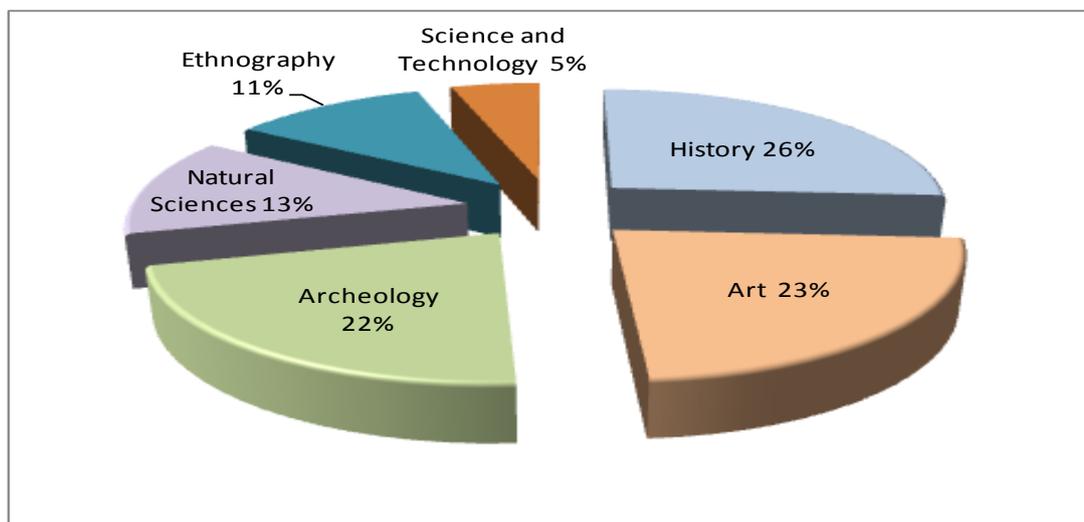
Facing this situation, and based on the 2008 No. 1185 Act, the Ministry of Culture Strengthening Program Museums (PFM), is created, which led the implementation of the Information System of Colombian Museums (SIMCO) as a tool to manage knowledge of museum entities and identify performance levels, with the aim of defining strategic lines of public policy. Other institutions serving museums are the National Museum of Colombia, the National Museum Network and the National Council of Museums (Diagnosis of the Colombian museum sector, 2014).

According to the latest "Directory of Museums of Colombia 2003-2004" published in 2008, there are 393 museums in service and more than 30 museums in creation process in the country. These museums are outlined in the main categories of History (26%), Arts (23%), Archaeology (22%), Natural Sciences (13%), Ethnography (11%), and Science and Technology (5%) (see Graphic 1). However only 57% of museums specialize exclusively in one category, the rest of museums can present up to four categories in their collections. 43% out of these institutions are constituted as private entities, 5% are mixed entities and 52% are public entities.

Despite the large number of existing museums in Colombia and a rate of progressive creation of new museums (approximately 21% between 1996 and 2008), they can be classified as small (83%) and medium (17%) according to the number of its collection, with a very uneven development, with large differences among the museums of the capital, in relation to the municipalities ones (Diagnosis of the Colombian museum sector, 2014).

The departments showing a greater number of museums are Antioquia (73), Valle del Cauca (34), Boyacá (28), Santander (27) and the Capital District of Bogotá (63). It is also notable that departments such as Amazonas, Guajira, Sucre, Caquetá, Chocó, Guainía and Vaupes, have 3 or fewer museums.

Graphic 1. Categories of museums in Colombia - 2008



Source: Directory of Museums of Colombia 2003-2004 (2008), own calculations.

3. Demand analysis

3.1. Data and Methodology

The empirical exercise comes from the micro data of Cultural Consumer Survey 2012 (ECC2012) carried out by the National Statistics Administrative Department (DANE) in Colombia¹. The analysis unit corresponds to people 5 years old and even older, classified into two large groups ranging from 5 to 11 and from 12 onwards. This survey includes on the whole 29.285 individuals living in 8.636 homes placed in the chief Colombian towns. The individual data are their demographical socioeconomic features, such as age, sex, marital status, number of children, main activity, educational level, income, cultural consumer capital and leisure time available, among others (DANE, 2013).

For this analysis, the 12 year old and even over annex has been used according to attendance to cultural activities in the last 12 years (September 2011-August 2012). The survey deals with participation, therefore it includes both those people visiting museums and the ones who do not.

¹ For further information about the survey you can visit: http://formularios.dane.gov.co/Anda_4_1/index.php/catalog/248#page=data_collection&tab=study-desc, consulted on May 20th 2016.

The key question in this survey in order to check people's attendance to museums is:

- . Question 65: In the last 12 months, how often did you visit museums?

a. Yes

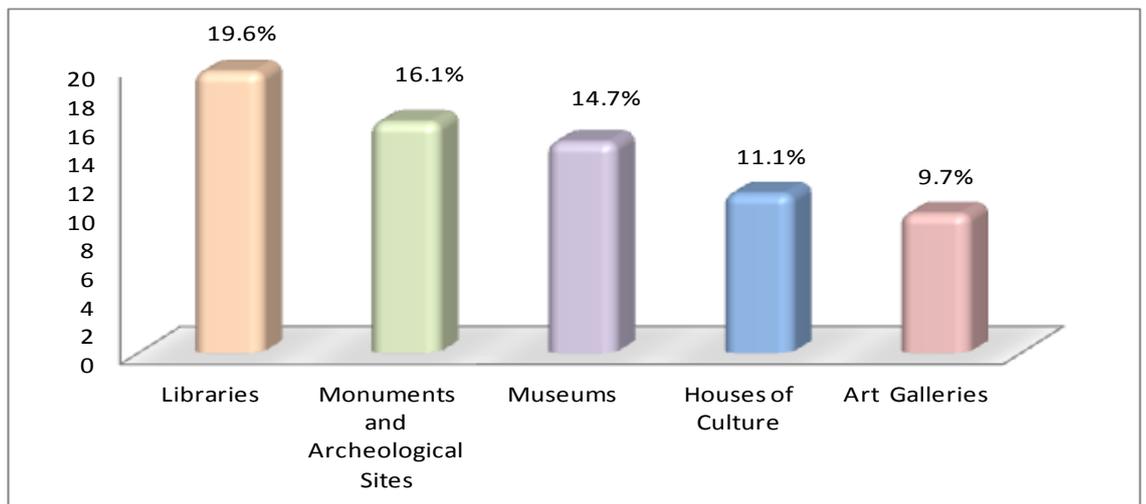
- Once a week.
- Once a month.
- Once every three months
- Once every six months
- Once a year.

b. No

3.2 Attendance to museums in Colombia. A descriptive profile.

According to ECC2012, museums attendance (14.7%) shows the fourth place in terms of preference as a way of cultural participation outside home for people over 12, just after local and national holidays (31.9%), cinema (31.1%), local fairs and handcraft exhibitions (27.3%). It also takes the third place in cultural space attendance, just after libraries (19.6%), historic monuments and archeological sites (16.1%) (see Graphic 2).

Graphic 2. Attendance at cultural space in Colombia - 2012



Source: Cultural Consumer Survey 2012 (ECC2012)

Chart 1 shows the main features of museums attendance in Colombia. Among the visitors to these institutions, as well as schoolchildren (12 to 17), who show a high attendance (21.4%), there is a higher number of young people (18-35) that represent 41.8%. Just after this, attendance decreases (25.5%) while people from

55 to 65 hardly represent 11.2%. 82.5% are occasional visitors, that is, they go to the museums once or twice a year while only 1% consider themselves as regular visitors, at least once a week along a year (>50 times a year). Nevertheless, there is a group visiting the museum 4 to 12 times a year, which represents 16.5%.

Women visit museums more often than other groups (54%) while as regards marital status, the single are the most frequent visitors (53%), followed by married couples or free union ones (38.2%). Widows and widowers as well as those who are separated show a low degree of participation (8.8%); 90% of visitors do not identify themselves with a minority ethnic group and 3.7% identifies as Afrocolombian. People identifying themselves as native show a very low participation in using these services (1.6%).

The main activities are working (49.3%), followed by studying (30.9%) and home duties (13%); 96% do not have little children under 5 at home. The highest number of visitors concentrates on the middle strata, with a rate of 57.3%. However, we must point out that there is a stratum (“stratum 2”) which does not belong/respond / to the poorest population of the country, but it cannot be compared either with a medium stratum, which shows a high participation (34%) in visiting museums. As it can be expected neither the lowest strata (stratum 1) nor the highest (5 and 6) are among the most frequent visitors of museums as they represent 1.4% and 7.4% respectively. The most frequent visitors show a rate ranging between 1 to 20 hours of spare time, either along the week or at weekends.

As it has already been stated, 63% of the visitors of the museum are 12 to 35 years old, which explains the fact that the highest educational level corresponds to secondary school with a rate of 43.6% and to higher (technical, technological, university), with 40.5%. In addition, 26% performs cultural training such as videos, television, film or radio productions, while 18.3% is trained through courses and workshops in artistic and cultural areas.

Chart 1. Assistant to museums in Colombia Features - 2012

Age range	Age range (years)			
	12 to 17	18 to 35	36 to 55	56 to 65 or older
	21.4%	41.8%	25.6%	11.2%

Frequency of attendance	Ocasional	Frequent	Regular
	[1-2 times a year]	[4-12 times a year]	[> 50 times a year]
	82.5%	16.5%	1.0%

Mixed Variables	Genre		Marital Status			Colour / Race		
	Female	Male	Married / Free Union	Single	Widowed / Separated	No Ethnic Group (White / Mestizo)	Afro colombian	Native
	54%	46%	38.2%	53%	8.8%	90%	3.7%	1.6%

Cost of participation	Main activity				
	Study	Work	Job search	Housework	Other
	30.9%	49.3%	2.9%	13%	3.9%
	Small children at home (< 5 years)				
	None	Only 1	2 -3 children	Over 3	
96%	3.4%	0.5%	0.2%		

Socio-economic status	Socio-economic stratum					
	Low-low	Low	Medium- low	Medium	Medium-high	High
	Estratum 1	Estratum 2	Estratum 3	Estratum 4	Estratum 5	Estratum 6
	1.4%	34.0%	35.5%	21.8%	4.7%	2.7%

Leisure time availability	Week moment	Used hours in leisure time activities			
		0	1- 20	21-40	Over 40
	From Monday to Friday	16.6%	76.2%	6.75%	0.6%
	From Saturday to Sunday	12.5%	86.1%	1.5%	0%

Capital of cultural consumption	Generic	Education level				
		None	Preschool/ Primary	Secondary	Superior	Postgrade
		0.4%	8.2%	43.6%	40.5%	7.4%
	Specific	Active and practical participation in cultural activities				
		Courses and cultural workshops	Participation in cultural activities		Participation in specific cultural activities	
18.3%		26.0%		9.4%		

Source: Survey of Cultural Consumption 2012 - DANE, own calculations.

4. Conclusions

The museum shows itself as a renewed institution attracting quite a lot of young people who visit it at least once or twice a year. We can also state that the highest number of people among visitors corresponds to those who are not married, especially women. People visiting the museums in Colombia are not identified as those belonging to a specific ethnic group since, basically, they work or study on their main activities, concentrating on an average status, although there is an area “stratum 2” which, although it does not belong to this middle stratum, it does show a relevant presence in the museum

While having plenty of free time along the week is important as far as consumption and services are concerned, family duties seem to be an obstacle. This can be noticed since most elderly people who visit the museums do not have little children while those involved in home duties seldom go either.

Education, either secondary, technical, technological or higher has a great influence on the attendance and enjoyment of the museum, and cultural practices increase their demand.

It is important to keep on investigating, and in fact it can be done by using the given tools, the significant level of participation of family groups inside the museum demand, as a leisure choice.

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