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Cultural Goods, Motivations and Consumer Behaviour

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Keywords: cultural good, motivation, emotion, consumption

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1. Introduction

Urban and regional studies show a growing focus on non-material goods as economic drivers. In particular, artistic goods, museums and music are becoming crucial factors in social and economic urban development (Markusen and King, 2003; Mommaas, 2004; Santagata, 2002; Russell, 2000). From a microeconomic viewpoint, culture is a sign of economic vitality and entrepreneurship, while from a macroeconomic perspective, it affects production specialization and employability. Leslie (2005) states that cities are privileged places for production and consumption of symbolic goods, so that they are special places for creativity. This means that a new economic role for cities is emerging. During the industrialization era cities were branded as factory towns while today, in the service economy, cities are the drivers of innovation and creativity. Nowadays, part of urban economic value depends on those capabilities devoted to the design and organization of creative resources – talents and artistic agencies or foundations – and to enhance the urban socio-economic supply of these with effective territorial marketing (Belussi and Sedita, 2006; Grandinetti and Moretti, 2004). A large heterogeneity in the supply of cultural goods supports the production of agglomeration economies because it feeds a virtuous cumulative circle between local production and consumption of culture. This new urban context affects the content of the urban export that is now addressed to satisfy the human need of consumption experiences (Grandinetti and Di Bernardo, 2007) and/or to attract artists' locations (Markusen, 2005). To build up the creative appeal of a city we have to pay attention to lifestyles, quality of urban spaces, cultural diversity and tolerance (Florida, 2002). To pursue culture-led development, urban strategies have to meet the creativity needs of individuals, rather than merely propose stereotyped cultural events (Miles and Paddison, 2005). This means that in an economic context based on the production and consumption of non-material goods, developing strategies to meet demands and needs is crucial. In this new perspective, cities can be described as cultural clusters (Santagata, 2002; Mommaas, 2004) requiring the support

of co-operative processes, the development of cultural activities and new patterns of cultural consumption. The aim of this paper is to focus on the last element. In order to investigate improved organization for cultural experiences (Paiola, 2007), we have explored the motivations and expectations of the cultural consumer. The starting point of this study is to analyse cultural needs, exploring the cognitive and emotional features involved during the consumption of cultural goods. Proper organization and an effective cultural policy call for knowledge of the fundamental qualities that define the utility of any cultural good.

In the second section we present a short review of cultural goods, and in the third we suggest a particular description of a cultural good, defining its utility in cognitive and emotional terms. In the fourth section we present an interpretative model for consumer behaviour with regard to cultural goods; in the fifth we introduce the methodology and data of the empirical study; in the sixth we illustrate our results. Final remarks follow.

2. Cultural tourism: needs and motivations

In order to understand the individual's willingness to consume cultural goods, we must assign an economic value to the goods. Only in this way can we analyse and evaluate the efficacy of the cultural goods supply. As Throsby (2001) states, there are many difficulties in defining the economic value of a cultural good. The consumer's willingness to pay is affected by both the private or public nature of the cultural good, and the individual experience of consumption. Nevertheless, it is difficult to accept this measure – willingness to pay – of the economic value for a cultural good because individuals do not possess complete information with which to define the monetary value of a cultural good or because they may find it difficult to assign an economic value to particular items of the cultural good. The goods concerned may be 'priceless', or the consumer may find it difficult to order preferences and thus to define the value of the cultural good.

As well as these difficulties, there are other value categories that can define any cultural good: aesthetic, spiritual, social or symbolic value¹. This means that individuals may assign very different values to cultural goods because they are creating them from very different needs and motivational perspectives. Besides these definition problems, we observe that any experience with culture involves learning, and this in itself will affect future consumption patterns and hence the economic value that an individual will assign to the cultural goods (Throsby, 1994). Broadly speaking, the economic value of cultural goods tends to increase in time because of the cognitive, emotional and social output of present consumption. Therefore, the consumer's need for culture, i.e. the consumption of an experience, must be investigated with a combination of psychological, social and anthropological analysis. Nonetheless, *aesthetic need* (Pirnes, 2002) reveals itself in *consumer need* and, more precisely, it becomes the consumption of an *experience*. We wonder whether the managers of urban cultural supply understand the nature of this consumption experience, and whether their cultural supply organization reflects this consumption profile.

A very short review of the anthropological studies on this topic can help us to better understand the linkage between cultural consumption needs and cultural supply organization. During the 1970s anthropologists described human cultures in terms of *adaptive systems* that is, as sets of behavioural models socially transferred to link human beings to the environment (Siniscalchi, 2002). Among these behavioural models there are the *perception* models that organize experiences for agency; the *assessment* models, which classify experiences as positive, negative or neutral; the *agency* models that organize the action steps to support the aims of the perception and evaluation models. Other scholars considered human cultures as systems for the production of ideas, that is *systems of knowledge*. We can imagine culture as a specific knowledge system for each human group including the necessary norms and beliefs to be accepted by the members of the group. A particular

¹ For a very detailed analysis of value of a cultural good, see Throsby (2001)

system is the *shared symbolic system*, defined as the output of the human mind by Lévi-Strauss, or a set of meanings used and understood only in their social usage by Geertz.

Since the 1980s many anthropological studies have sought a new definition of culture which shifts from shared systems of symbols, knowledge, and so on, to social actions and their actors. The analysis now concerns concepts like experience, interaction, practice, individual, and psychoanalytic self. Some scholars have enlarged the definition of culture to include the emotional and affective dimensions, in order to enrich their explication of human behaviours.

The aim of this theoretical advance was to deepen the cognitive, emotional and affective dimensions normally excluded from anthropological studies. They were marginal items in previous theoretical and empirical analyses because these only considered the biological aspects — and thus natural and universal features—of each human being. In other words, the study of anthropology now incorporates the cultural construction of emotions. With the term ‘culture’ we now consider not only the way members of a society think or act, but also their ways of feeling (Shweder and Levine, 1997; Nussbaum, 2001). This means that in the field of cultural studies and anthropology, the concept of culture does not have a metaphysical meaning but is the expression of real needs or the socio-economic problems of human groups.

3. The consumption of art between cultural motivation and biological need

The concept of ‘experience of consumption’, based on the linkage between consumption and participation, has its roots in various approaches to cultural studies (Van Oost, 2002; Grandinetti, Di Bernardo, 2007). For the behavioural approach, the visitor is a passive subject who gathers the same information and assigns to it the same meaning as others. On the other hand, in the constructivist approach, when an individual shares a cultural experience, he is active in the process of ‘meaning construction’ through an ‘active listening’ (Hall, 1997). In general, this perspective is commonly found in cultural studies, particularly in museum studies (Prummel-Sacy, 2001) where the visitor herself is an interpreter or a writer, (in the view of semeiotic scholars). To this theoretical viewpoint of ‘active visitor’, already known in aesthetics thanks to observations by Aristide Quintiliano during the second century AD, we add creativity as a fundamental element. Thus, the *creative-active visitor* has become the subject of our work hypotheses.

Museum visitor studies (Greenberg, 1996) show that the museum approach to visitors has changed greatly in recent years. A new fruitful question from the constructive perspective is: ‘What does a museum mean?’, or, ‘What value does it include in the life of an individual?’ (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000) instead of: ‘Are you satisfied with the organization or layout of the museum?’ (Zammuner, 2006)? In light of the anthropological shift to the emotional dimension, an analysis of the emotion-consumption relationship is potentially very fruitful. However, in order to gain better understanding of this relationship, we must define the meaning of culture from a biological viewpoint. ‘Culture is not interesting because it is useful, but it is useful because it is interesting.’ (Sacco, 2006) This means that culture is worthwhile because it serves a purpose, and it is still living because we need it. In the Neo-Platonic tradition, the aesthetic experience is considered a spiritual elevation uncoupled from other dimensions like ethics or functional goals. It was Freud who assigned a biological function to the arts. From our viewpoint, the functional definition of the arts is definitely important in the analysis of motivations and expectations deriving from the consumption of cultural goods. At present, and in accordance with Throsby (1994), aesthetic activity is considered a complex experience whose study requires many disciplinary perspectives, such as those of anthropology, sociology and psychology. We have enlarged this required disciplinary co-operation to include cultural anthropology and cultural studies. More precisely, we refer to studies with psychological roots like the psychology of art (Arnheim), psychoanalysis of art (Gombrich), sociology of art (Hauser), anthropology of art (Maquet), until the most recent contributions (Elkins, 2001; Argenton

and Messina 2000; Arieti, 1997; Plutchik, 1994; Chasseguet and Smirgel 1989). In these disciplines, art is not considered an optional activity but as an output of the human biological activity. Thus, it is not a casual activity but a necessary one. The artistic product links together awareness and the unconscious, either for the artist or for the visitor. The resulting symbolic language for the creative visitor is that stemming from the aesthetic experience.

Another interpretation of the question: ‘Why do we need to consume a cultural good?’ is suggested by Morris (1993), for whom the effectiveness of the artistic experience consists in the opportunity to test events independently from real existence. From this theoretical perspective, we have designed our hypothesis and then tested it with interviews. The question we address is: Can we say that the individual biological need to link awareness and aspects of the unconscious self is the basic ingredient of the demand for consumption experience of cultural goods?

4. The interpretative model of museum consumer behaviour

In this paper we investigate the social and individual dimensions of aesthetic experience in order to suggest directions for local cultural strategies. Our theoretical viewpoint with regard to the concept of culture agrees with the most recent anthropological perspective which attributes a biological value to culture (Smelser, 1985; Kluckhohn, 1982; Brunelli, 1994). More precisely, culture plays a crucial role in the evolution of human beings; it provides conditions for survival in a similar way to instinct, the genetic mechanism for species evolution. This is the perspective currently used either for museum education activities, or the practical use of artistic heritage or for permanent expositions. It implies that art is a knowledge resource even if there is not enough evidence on what kind of knowledge drives the demand for cultural goods.

In this empirical study we investigate whether the aesthetic categories ‘*I like/I dislike*’ are signals of a tacit knowledge related to biological needs. Our hypothesis is that two components are fundamental to the demand for cultural goods: a *personal discovery* function and a *social binder* function. With regard to *personal discovery* concerns, the aesthetic experience matters (Elkins, 2001; Argenton-Messina 2000; Arieti, 1997; Chasseguet-Smirgel 1989). We have addressed this function looking for output from the aesthetic experience, i.e. we have investigated what the visitor *thought*, what *emotions* stemmed from and what *memories* were experienced during the visit. Briefly, we look for the unexpressed potential for demand. The call for an integration of emotional, sensorial and cognitive aspects is increasing in the literature on cultural goods teaching (Bodo, 2003). However, there are not enough studies on what happens during the cultural visit. With this explorative analysis, we try to contribute to and enrich knowledge in the field of cultural goods’ consumption. Our questionnaire concerning the aesthetic experience takes into account two different times: before starting the visit, and following the aesthetic experience. Personal discovery arises from investigation of three levels of perception, somatic, affective and cognitive via exploration of memories, emotions and thoughts. Through Giotto frescos, the visitor gets in contact with his emotions, memories and thoughts and the work of art is an external object that brings to life *that* emotion, *that* thought and *that* memory. We assume that psychology and consumption are two faces of the same coin: they are intertwined with motivations and expectations. It is difficult to detect their relationship because often this stays veiled, even to the consumer himself.

In accordance with other studies (Bordieau, 1979), we assume that cultural experience has a strong social dimension because it produces beliefs and ‘embeddedness’. This is the *social binder* function that stems from investigation of the need to share, compare and exchange individual experiences.

5. Methodology and data sources

We interviewed 302 visitors at the Scrovegni Chapel, decorated by Giotto and assistants around 1305 in Padua, to describe cultural motivations and needs that could activate the consumption of cultural goods. As stated earlier, we analysed the cultural visit from a complex viewpoint, to take into account all the dimensions involved in the aesthetic experience, i.e. cognitive, affective and somatic-emotional.

The aim of the study was to identify the motivations and expectations of the cultural visit, and then to assess the experience in retrospect, on leaving the Chapel. Comparing the two phases of the visit we aimed to detect the relationship between expectations and emotional behaviour on beginning and on ending the visit. For this reason visitors were interviewed twice: at the entrance and at the exit of the visit.

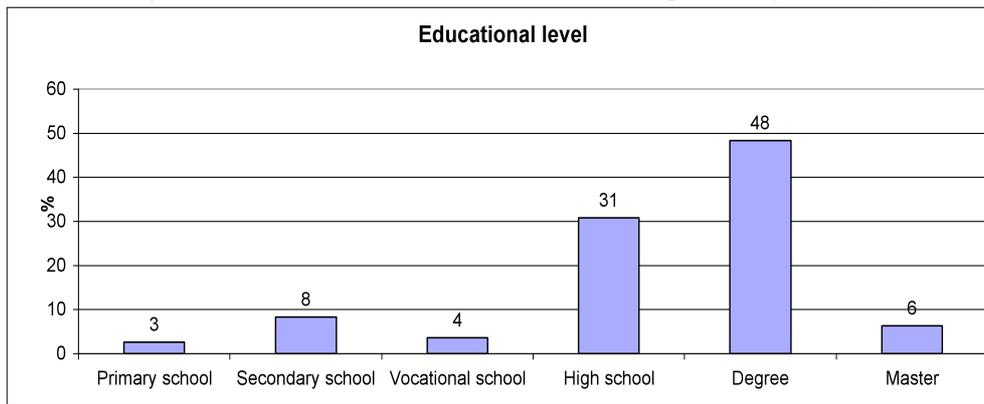
The questionnaire consisted of four sections: the first section, motivations, looks at the basis of the decision to visit the Scrovegni Chapel and the following cognitive process of documentation regarding the artistic content of the visit. The second section concerns expectations about the visit, their relative importance and the way in which the visit is carried out. The third section describes the personal and cultural profile of the visitor. The fourth section, completed at the exit, concerns the emotional and cognitive experience of the Scrovegni Chapel visit.

6. Empirical results

6.1. Personal profile

Personal data shows that the 302 people interviewed are well distributed with respect to gender: 134 (44%) were males and 168 (56%) were females. 43% of the interviewed visitors were between the ages of 35 and 60 years (*adults*), 26% were between 25 and 35 years (*young*), 17% were over 60 years (*elderly people*) and 13% were less of 25 years (*very young*).

With reference to educational level, 55% of the sample had a degree or a higher award, and 89% of the interviewed visitors were at least high school educated. These results support the well known correlation between cultural consumption and educational level (Figure 1). With respect to occupation, visitors mainly comprised white-collar workers (24%), students (16%), retired (12%), freelancers (9%) and teachers (8%); other occupations were less important (Table 1). Finally, looking at the place of origin, 80% of the sample came from Northern Italy (of which 6% were from Padua and 18% from another town in the region Veneto); 11% were from central Italy, 5% from the Southern Italy and 4% from foreign countries.

Figure 1. Distribution of educational level (percentage values)**Table 1. Distribution of occupations of people interviewed (percentage values)**

| <i>Occupation</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>Occupation</i> | <i>%</i> |
|---|----------|-------------------|----------|
| White-collar | 24 | Businessperson | 3 |
| Student | 16 | Blue-collar | 2 |
| Retired | 12 | Craftsperson | 2 |
| Freelance | 9 | Health worker | 2 |
| Teacher | 8 | Researcher | 1 |
| Manager / University teacher / Magistrate | 6 | Artist | 1 |
| Doctor / Pharmacist | 4 | Trader / Retailer | 0 |
| Housewife | 4 | Other | 5 |

6.2. Motivations

In the questionnaire visitors were asked to state if their motivation for visiting the Scrovegni Chapel was ‘indirect’ (e.g. to be in Padua for a trade fair, to be in Abano/Montegrotto for a thermal treatment, to take a friend or a relative to the visit) or ‘direct’ (to be fond of the art of that period, to have read about the visit in newspapers or magazines, to have been told about it by a friend or relative, etc.). For our purpose, the kind of motivation denotes whether the visitor is a ‘conscious’ cultural consumer.

Table 2 shows that, of the 302 interviewed visitors, 43% replied ‘*to be fond of the art of that period*’, 15% ‘*to take a friend or a relative to the visit*’ and the 14% were ‘*told about it by a friend or relative*’. Only 5% said because they were in Padua for the De Chirico’s exhibition, while 6% had expressly come to see the Scrovegni Chapel.

The prevailing motivation - *to be fond of the art of that period* – turned out to be ‘direct’, conveying that:

- some previous knowledge of the history of art was confirmed by the educational level of the people interviewed and by the kind of documentation used before the visit. Indeed, 61% of the sample collected background information before the visit via monographs on Giotto (48%), web sites (33%), consulting tour guides (30%) and reading art magazines (22%) (see Figure 2).
- the basis for choosing and travelling to see a cultural good is the pleasure that it produces.

The percentage values of each kind of documentation used before the visit are reported in Table 3 (half on the left) for the three principal visitor profiles (as pointed out in Table 2). These were: ‘to be fond of the art of that period’, ‘to take a friend or a relative to the visit’ and ‘to be told about it by a friend or relative.’ Even though the three profiles are conceptually quite distinct, we can see that there are not big differences between the profiles in terms of their collection of background information—except that those keen on art preferred books on Giotto (51%), while those recommended by a friend preferred web sites (40%) and did not consider art magazines at all (1%).

Table 2. Motivations for visiting the Scrovegni Chapel (percentage values for each motivation based on the number of interviewees)

| <i>Motivation</i> | % | <i>Motivation</i> | % |
|--|----|--|----|
| Fond of the art of that period | 43 | To see the Scrovegni Chapel | 6 |
| To take a friend / relative to the visit | 15 | In Padua for the De Chirico exhibition | 5 |
| Told about it by a friend /relative | 14 | In Venice for tourism | 5 |
| Spending free time | 12 | In Padua for a conference / trade fair | 3 |
| Read about the visit in newspapers / magazines | 9 | In Abano/Montegrotto for a thermal treatment | 3 |
| In Padua for tourism | 7 | Other | 13 |

Figure 2. Type of documentation used before the visit (percentage values of each type of documentation for the visitor sample previously documented)

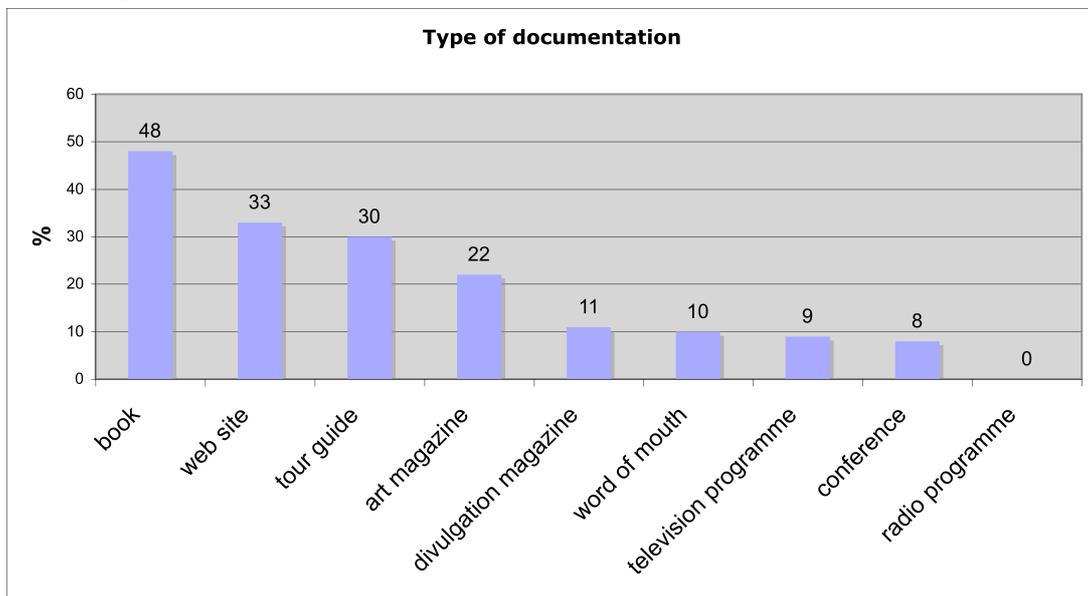


Table 3. Documentation and expectations

This table shows the various kinds of documentation used before the visit, and expectations as expressed for the three principal visitor profiles: *to be fond of the art of that period*, *to take a friend or a relative to the visit* and *to be told about it from a friend or relative* (percentage values for each kind of documentation and expectation, based on totals for each profile).

| | <u>Type of documentation</u> | | | | <u>Type of expectation</u> | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------|------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| | Books on Giotto | Web site | Tour guide | Art magazine | Broaden one's culture | To know Giotto better | To experience emotions | To share experiences |
| To be fond of the art of that period | 51 | 34 | 33 | 26 | 63 | 60 | 53 | 41 |
| To take a friend/relative | 42 | 29 | 38 | 21 | 63 | 48 | 48 | 52 |
| To be told from a friend/relative | 36 | 40 | 32 | 1 | 67 | 74 | 47 | 35 |

6.3. Expectations

Consumption expectation arises at the beginning of the consumer choice process and it comes out of motivation.

The expected results from the consumption are fundamental to our investigation because these affect the choice option triggering the actions of the visitor: how to find the museum, how to book the visit, finding someone to accompany, how best to enjoy the cultural goods, etc.

The most frequent expectation people declared was *to broaden one's culture* (59%) (Figure 3), followed by *to know Giotto better* (54%). The latter seems to be in accordance with the principal motivation, *to be fond of the art of that period*.

Also the expectation *to share emotions* is very significant (49%). 36% of interviewees expressed the social expectation *to share experiences*, while 20% answered, *to have a good time*. Only 16% indicated *to gratify one's curiosity raised from documentation*. This indicates that collecting background information does not cause an expectation even though 61% declared they had acquired information before the visit.

Table 3 (half on the right) indicates the percentage values for each kind of expectation for the three principal visitor profiles: *to be fond of the art of that period*, *to take a friend or a relative to the visit* and *to be told about it by a friend or relative*. There are no large differences between the profiles, even though art lovers gave less importance to sharing experiences (41%), and those visiting because recommended by a friend/relative had a preference for cultural aspects, expressing the desire to know more about Giotto (74%) and to broaden their own culture (67%).

The interviewees were then asked to indicate which expectation they considered the most important: the first choice was 'to broaden one's culture' (30%) and the second 'to experience emotions' (27%). It's important to stress that this preference order also holds when an exclusive choice between expectations is introduced: the cultural aspect remains marginally more important than the emotional aspect (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Expectations before the visit (percentage values for each kind of expectation based on the interviewed sample).

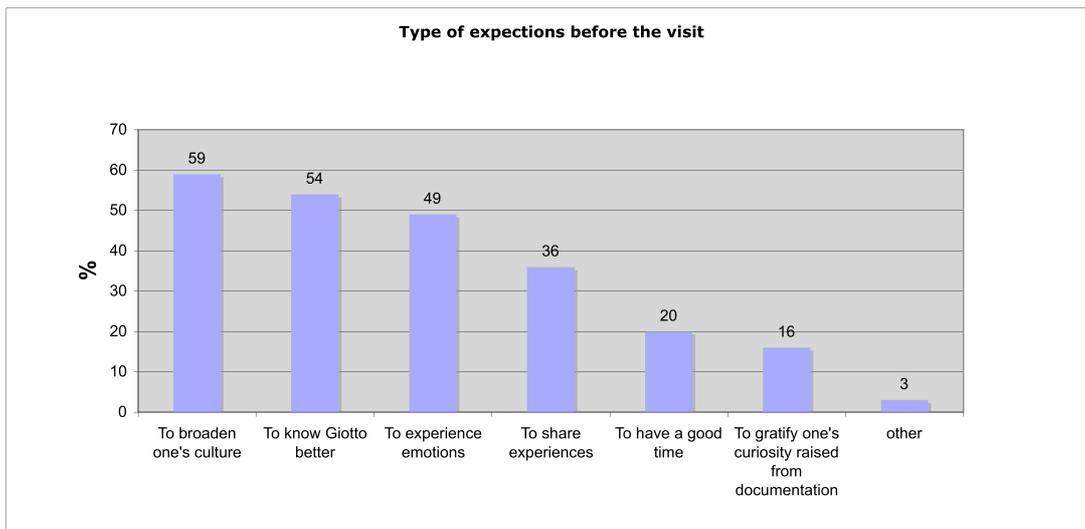
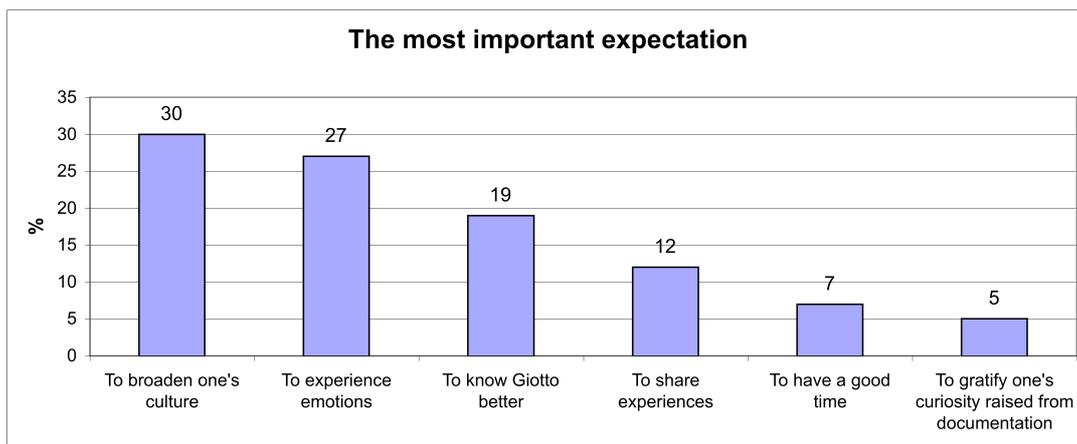


Figure 4. Distribution of the most important expectation (percentage values)



Of the 300 interviewees, 274 explained their choice of the most important expectation. Those who chose *to broaden one's culture* responded variously: *<it is essential>*, *<it is important>*, *<it is necessary>*, *<it is an experience for life>*, *<culture is everything>*; and again: *<to know more about our country>*, *<to expand life>*, *<men do not live by bread alone>*, *<to be more aware of the emotional side of culture>*, *<curiosity>*, *<it is always a good thing to increase knowledge>*, *<to feel better>*, *<to grow>*, *<personal enrichment>*, *<to know oneself better, and to understand the differences between the present and past>*, *<knowledge of history leads us to be better in the future>*.

To experience emotions led to more tautological answers: several people seemed to desire to experience emotions for their own sake i.e. *<it is nice to feel emotions>* or people thought that art must instigate emotions *<art gives emotions>*, *<a beautiful thing gives emotions>*. Others responded on the efficacy of the art as communication *<art must give you something and if it strikes you from an emotional point of view ... then the purpose of the artist has been achieved.>*; on the complexity of the aesthetic experience taking in the perceptive, affective and cognitive levels: *<When I experience art I want to understand my feelings>*; on the recent neuroscience discovery about the 'sticky function' of emotions for the mind *<It makes me feel alive. Emotions*

help us to keep memories>; Another respondent finds this explanation: *<Emotion gives me something; I feel enriched>*, *<In general art always provokes emotion, it makes a deep impression>*, *<Emotions help me to live more intensely>* *<I hope that art will have a bigger purpose than being merely an object to be viewed.>*

The expectation to know Giotto better is more frequently justified with a position 'ex cathedra' or by mentioning one's culture. For example: *<I must know>*, more than 'I want' or 'I need it' expressed thus: *<because he is the biggest artist>*, *<because, together with Cimabue, he changed the Italian art scene>*, *<Giotto is very famous>*.

A last note on the expectation of *A nice moment* is that, even if it is small, it gives an interesting agreement with the nature of the motivation, because it highlights the pleasure of the art experience: *<beautiful things give you wellness >*, *< art allows us to live well and to feel well>*.

Regarding the **social dimension** aspects, 61% of interviewees said that they preferred to spend their cultural experience with someone. To the question *Is it preferable to visit the Scrovegni Chapel alone or with someone?* only 31% preferred to go alone and 8% indicated both. We can explain these two items as representative of the concepts of 'concentration' and of 'sharing', respectively.

The need for dialogue and personal exchange during the cultural experience comes from various social and individual perceptions: from opinions, knowledge, impressions and emotions that could be jointly addressed by the saying, 'Pleasure must be shared!' The answers highlight that to experience emotions alone differs from when in the company of others; that is, it is better to feel emotions when part of a heterogeneous group of people, and that the art experience has to be shared. One respondent preferred to share emotions in order to receive 'assistance' from the others which indicates some dependence on the people. Others guessed that it remains a personal experience in any case.

Moreover, there are more minor opinions, such as: *<it is possible to interiorize and confront>* pointing out that a person should try to take in as much as possible alone and then communicate; that experiencing alone is better because it is easier to concentrate; then it is possible to exchange/communicate with others.

On the other hand, those who replied that they preferred the notion of concentration because art appreciation needs meditation, perceived the company of others as annoying. In solitude the visitor can walk forward and backward and talk with himself in peace. These respondents asserted that alone it is easier to enjoy art and to get in touch with themselves: *<I come in contact with the artist better>*, *<it is like smoking a cigarette>*, *<intimate>*, *<in the silence I feel more>*, *<If I concentrate more I feel emotions>*, *<time to reflect>*, *<in the loneliness emotions are more genuine!>*.

The cultural experience can be carried out not only in different social ways, but also in different cognitive manners. To the question *Is it better to visit the Scrovegni Chapel with an audioguide, with a visit guide or alone without any help?* 70% replied with a visit guide, 21% alone and 9% with an audio guide. Reasons of the ones preferring the visit guide are concentrated mainly on two aspects: *<the guide can explain things that I do not know or I do not see>* or *<I can ask questions>*. The degree of 'dependence' from this professional profile varies greatly: from statements about staff incompetence (leading to rejection of the guide), to an estimation of the guide provided as a widening but not substantial tool.

Those preferring to visit alone show a level of autonomy and often of consciousness with respect to the aesthetic reward different from those who preferred the visit guide. Once alone you have to *<communicate inwardly to keep in contact with one's emotions>*, *<but I need to stay alone to do this>*, and the intolerance for the visit guides rises in those visitors that look for a solitary and autonomous dimension not compatible with a visit guide or a group. The following impressions: *<I imagine what I see by myself>*, *<my emotions are taken away>* stress they feel the necessity of exploratory freedom and widening, and to feel emotions without inducement. These visitors attributed importance to time spent alone to encounter the work of art; they looked for an element of privacy to successfully contact with the artist.

6.4. The cultural profile

To identify the cultural habits of the Chapel visitors, we have analysed by age level the distribution of popular television programmes, specialist magazines, newspapers arts sections or supplements, and art internet sites (Table 4). Results show that adults and elderly people watch popular television programmes regularly ('very often' and 'rather often') while these are less popular with young people and very young people ('rather', 'rarely').

Results also suggest, with regard reading habits, that specialist magazines attract only a small readership ('none' or 'very much') for each age level; especially if compared with the viewing figures for the 'popular television programmes' notably for elderly people.

The 'Newspapers' arts sections or supplements' are preferred by older people (22%) even if, at the same time, they record a higher percentage of lack of interest for this item (47%).

The same 'dishomogeneity' can be seen from very young people, who consume Art web sites: at the same time, they are the age group that uses it 'more frequently' (28%) and 'rarely' (28%). This result can depend on the availability of a home PC or of a fast Internet connection. At the opposite end of the scale, the percentage of elderly people that do not use the Internet is very high (67%), given that the PC is a tool used widely by recent generations.

Table 4. Distribution of some types of cultural consumption by age (percentage values)

| | <u>Popular television programmes</u> | | | | <u>Specialist Magazines</u> | | | |
|----------------|---|------|--------|------|-----------------------------|------|--------|------|
| | Very much | Very | Enough | None | Very much | Very | Enough | None |
| Very Young | 10 | 38 | 40 | 12 | 8 | 32 | 28 | 32 |
| Young | 16 | 35 | 36 | 11 | 8 | 32 | 34 | 25 |
| Adults | 31 | 44 | 17 | 9 | 11 | 37 | 31 | 21 |
| Elderly people | 27 | 39 | 22 | 12 | 12 | 24 | 22 | 43 |
| | <u>Newspapers arts section or supplements</u> | | | | <u>Art Web Sites</u> | | | |
| | Very much | Very | Enough | None | Very much | Very | Enough | None |
| Very Young | 10 | 28 | 30 | 32 | 28 | 32 | 28 | 12 |
| Young | 11 | 24 | 31 | 32 | 16 | 39 | 28 | 16 |
| Adults | 15 | 24 | 21 | 40 | 11 | 31 | 24 | 34 |
| Elderly people | 22 | 20 | 12 | 47 | 6 | 10 | 18 | 67 |

6.5. Cognitive and emotional experience

The second step of the interview — at the exit of the Chapel visit — addressed the individual learning function of the cultural experience. We tried to gather information on the three involved individual dimensions: the somatic (emotion), the affective (memory) and the cognitive (thought).

With the question: 'How do you feel after the visit to the Giotto frescos?', we suggested five basic emotions in order to reduce to a minimum the possible options and to avoid doubts on their

classification. 45% of the interviewees answered ‘joyful’ and 44% ‘meditative’ while the other basic emotions were rarely chosen. (Figure 5)².

In table 5, we present the percentage of emotions recorded at the exit of the Chapel visit with respect to the three principal profiles of visitors: *I am fond of the art of that period, to take a friend/relative, it was told me from a friend/relative*. The three profiles declare ‘to be joyful’ with the same frequency while visitors fond of the art of that period are more meditative with respect to the others.

Figure 5. Kind of emotions after seeing Giotto’s frescos (percentage values for each kind of emotion based on interview sample)

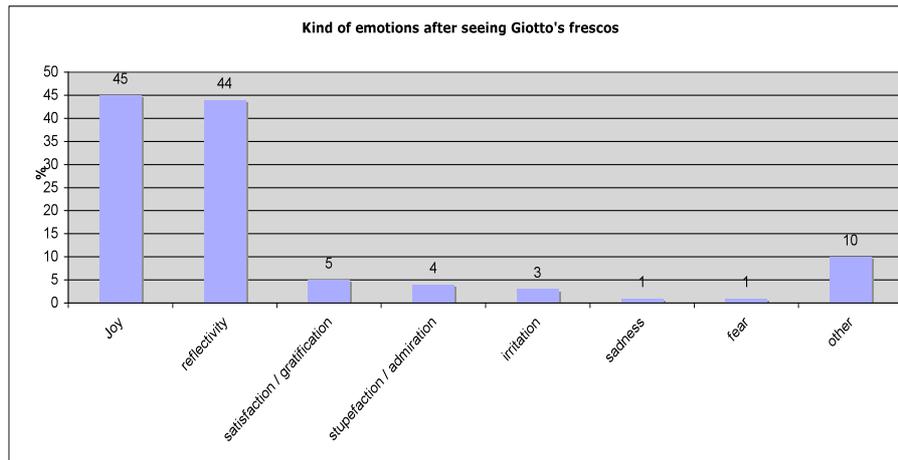


Table 5. Kind of emotion at the exit of the Scrovegni visit according to each of three visitor profiles (percentage based on totals for each profile)

| | <i>Joyful</i> | <i>Meditative</i> |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| I am fond of the art of that period | 44 | 50 |
| To take a friend/relative | 43 | 46 |
| To be told from a friend/relative | 44 | 47 |

In order to judge the depth of the emotional experience of the cultural visit we asked: *Which fresco did you prefer?* Our aim was to understand which pictures attracted the sensorial and cognitive attention of the visitors. 48% of interviewees said *The Last Judgment*. We suppose that this is a reflex-type answer that is responding to — as one interviewee said — ‘... its great visual impact’. However, reasons given for the choice do vary. 11% of visitors declared that they liked the *Kiss of Judas* and 9% *Lament over the Dead Christ*. 6% nominated the *Massacre of the Innocents* while 4% said *The Baptism of Christ*, *The Crucifixion*, and *The Flight to Egypt*. At the bottom of the preferences ranking we find *The Vices and Virtues*. In brief, the most preferred pictures were the most famous, either because these are commonly illustrated in art history books, or because before entering the Chapel, the visitor had watched a video about the life and artistic career of Giotto.

We wonder whether the visitors chose the most famous pictures because they already knew them or

² The emotion categories ‘satisfaction/gratification’ and ‘stupefaction/admiration’ stemmed from the interview and we have added them to the five basic emotions we choose during the interview design.

have they have been selected for books and videos because they are more effective from an aesthetic point of view. This question does not find an answer in the present analysis, but it could be investigated in the future. Nevertheless, we can propose possible reasons, starting from the open question: *Why did you like it?* 38% of answers included reflections about the picture's expressions: <*You can see the dying weight*>, <*The touching and no touching hand*>; 23% were touched by techniques and composition <*for the contrasting colours*>; 19% were involved by the pictorial theme: <*Thomas near Jesus*>; spatial perception appealed to 14%: <*a strong visual impact*>; 9% mentioned cultural elements:<*I remembered Benigni*>, <*Dante*>; 4% chose for personal associations: <*this very strong flame feels you unlike to be bad*>, <*it voices my feelings*>; 2% for religious reasons: <*it tells you what faith is*>, <*Faith is a relationship*>.

With three different questions on thought, memory and emotion, we have deepened our analysis of the cultural experience. We are interested to observe the thinking activity in relation to the psychological activity of remembering and being moved, in order to see how much they affect the aesthetic experience.

In response to the question: *Have you thought about anything looking this picture?*, only 4% of interviewees claimed to have thought nothing. This means that during the perception of a work of art, people have a very active cognitive function.

47% of interviewees answered that they thought about *techniques* (colour, drawing, disposition of figures) showing that they experience an 'aesthetic perceptive' attitude and not a superficial factual knowledge. 26% thought about the *time of painting* which means that the cultural experience has also a historical-social value. 5% of them also compared the past with the present day. 11% thought about the artist, and the 4% about the depicted subject. This cognitive activity enlarges the aesthetic experience with cultural and personal dimensions giving it new meanings.

With respect to memory activity, we emphasize that it is the joint element between the activity of 'memory-thought' and the 'remembrance-to-be-moved' (Brunelli, 1994). It is the psychological experience that integrates the somatic experience with the cognitive one via emotional production. In other words, one becomes aware of the cultural experience by remembering an event which once created emotions. This is a meta-dimension that to be experienced; it requires an appropriate context, i.e. time, concentration and receptiveness. This conclusion is also in keeping with our results.

A large number of the interviewees (70%) had not experienced a memory. Only 6% declared that they remembered a *family event*, 5% a *childhood event*, 3% thought about other *works of art* and 2% thought of *Dante*. 5% answered in a personal way: <*I remember when adults threatened you with Hell*>, <*the desert where I went...*> (Table 6).

Table 6. Types of memories in response to a particular scene (percentage values for each memory type based on interview sample)

| <i>Memory</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>Memory</i> | <i>%</i> |
|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| None | 70 | A school event | 2 |
| A family event | 6 | Dante | 2 |
| Childhood event | 5 | A job place event | 1 |
| A friendship event | 3 | Other | 5 |
| Other art works | 3 | | |

Lastly, exploring the emotional dimension with the question: *What emotion did this picture make you feel?*, 51% answered they felt *meditative*. We could interpret this result as a cognitive activity if we assume that cognition and meditation are synonymous. However, interviewees had multiple-choice options and they also gave answers signifying a range of emotions. 19% declared *joy*, 14% *sadness*, 9% amazement (this category added later from received responses), 5% *fear* and 4% *anger* (Figure 6). This means that we could interpret the *meditative* answer as in keeping with an emotional experience.

In order to define the gradient of satisfaction of the interviewees, we have investigated the *somato-cognitive-affective* experience in the opposite direction, i.e. what they have not appreciated in their cultural visit. To the question: *Which picture did you find less interesting?* interviewees divided into two groups. 52% said *none*; another answered: *<Who am I to judge Giotto? >* providing a possible interpretation of why people avoid answering.

For the second group, 48% of interviewees, there was a less interesting picture. We asked them: *<What kind of emotion have you felt in front of this scene?>*. 16% were emotionally indifferent and 19% said that the pictures did not recall any memory. We can say that the evaluation of less appreciated artworks implied an affective and mnemonic disinvestment. Thoughts on technique maintained a high perceptive interest (34%) while those on the subject tended towards the meditative (32%). The latter is confirmed by the *meditative* feeling declared by 30% of the group. The less appreciated pictures were *The Last Judgment* (7%), *The Virtues and Vices* (4%) and *The Life of Joachim and Anne* (3%).

However, why have these works not produced emotions? We have no answer for 51% of the subgroup of interviewees; the few answers we did gather gave us various reasons: technical (15%) *<it was a foregone composition >*, for the theme (15%) *<the Annunciation is a recurrent subject>*, a non-emotional status (11%) *<it has no meaning for me>*, a very precise feeling *<it was not nice to see children piled>*, *<boring>*, a difficulty in interpreting the scene *<I did not understand>*, the short available time *<there wasn't enough time>*. The most common explication of dissatisfaction ranged through expressions of a judgement on pictorial technique and the use of pictorial space. The interviewees declared that either *'Something has not worked'* with the aesthetic device, or they cannot ascribe a meaning because they had not kept not in touch with it.

We notice that only 6% of the interviewees recognized and admitted the feelings of displeasure. This is an important element because it gives us the opportunity to deepen the unconscious reaction during the aesthetic experience. They have not locked out emotional empathy by substituting it with judgemental or negative responses; rather, they have used the aesthetic experience as an activity useful for their self-knowledge. Nevertheless, dissatisfaction also happens for cognitive reasons. In some cases it was difficult to understand and appreciate the meaning of allegories or the iconographical references typical of Giotto's era.

In general, the interviewees declared they were satisfied with the Chapel visit. 46% were very satisfied while 34% were very much satisfied (Figure 7). With respect to expectations, 97% of the

interviewees declared themselves to be satisfied. Moreover, 75% said they would talk about this experience with friends, 71% with their family and 46% with job mates. Sharing experience contexts were also observed by gender: no relevant differences emerged, but women showed a preference for family conversations instead of those at the job place.

Figure 6. Kind of emotions raised in front of the favourite scene (percentage values of each kind of emotion based on the interview sample)

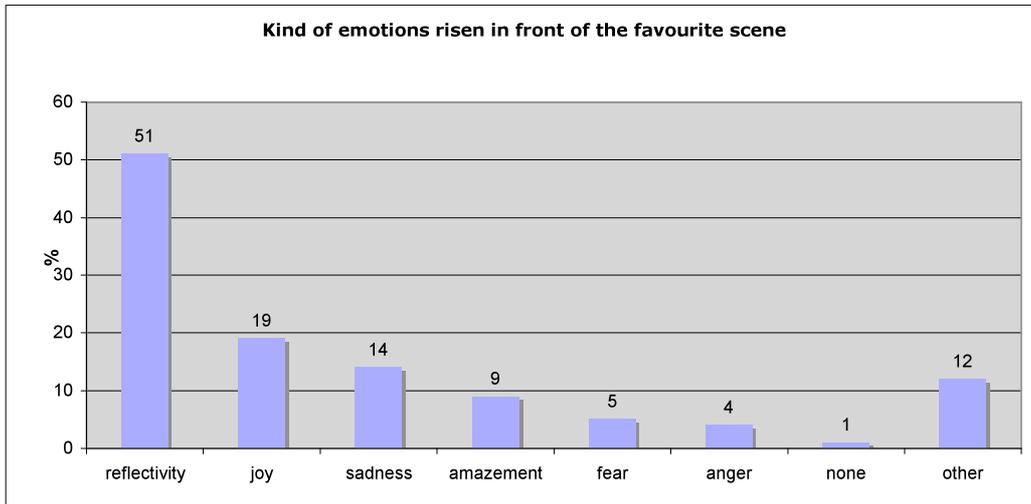


Figure 7. Distribution of general satisfaction from the Scrovegni Chapel visit (percentage values based on interview sample)

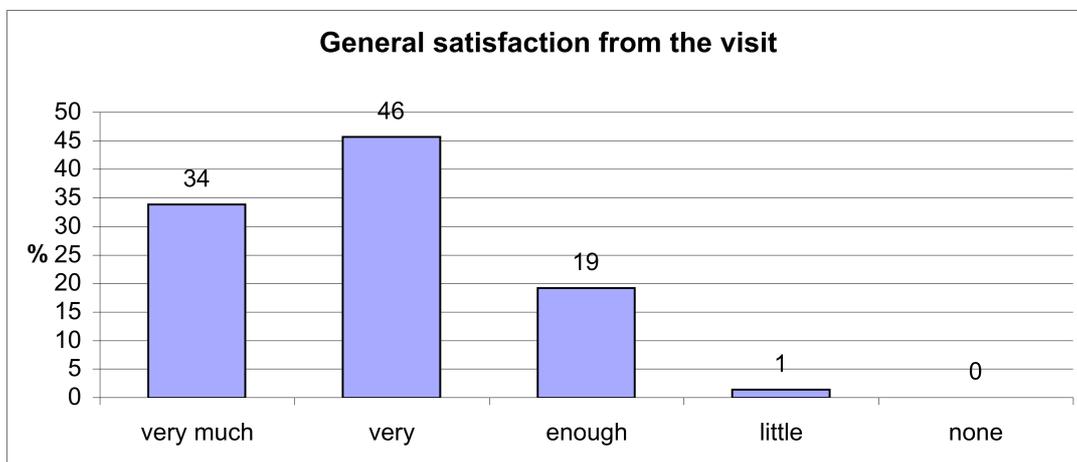


Table 7. Sharing and communicative contexts for the experience by gender (percentage values for each context, based on totals for males and females)

| | With friends | With the family | On the job place |
|--------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Male | 75 | 69 | 48 |
| Female | 75 | 71 | 45 |

For about 80% of the interviewees, the visit revealed something unexpected. For example, the spatial and aesthetic dimensions of the Chapel (12%): *<I didn't imagine it in that way >, It is different to actually enter the space rather than seeing it in books. >*, *<I didn't expect to see so much of everything!>*. Colours had an unforeseen impact (8%): *<I've never seen such a colourful place.>* as well as the communicative expression (8%): *<Wonderful!>*. Other statements of astonishment related to the pictorial techniques, the beauty, the frescos' themes, Giotto, unexpected emotions, memories, restoration, religious reflections.

7. Conclusion

This study shows that, even if we have no cultural or educational reference points to say *why* we spend time partaking in cultural experiences, each interviewee is capable of giving an individual answer. The experience of the Scrovegni Chapel seems mainly to respond to the two fundamental needs we investigated: *knowledge*, and *knowledge sharing*. The former can be interpreted either as knowledge about historical and artistic notions or as personal discovery, and in this case it may be more appropriately called self-knowledge. The knowledge-sharing need emerges quite clearly, demonstrating the strong social role of cultural visits.

The study shows that there is a discrepancy between prior expectation recorded before the visit and the satisfaction recorded after the event. Motivation for visiting a cultural good is mainly described in cognitive terms (*to broaden one's culture*) while satisfaction after the visit is described with respect to memories, emotions, colours perception, beauty and enjoyment. This shows that consumer satisfaction takes place at an emotional-perceptive level; a large number of the interviewees were able to understand the expressivity and the communication weight of the pictures even if they declared themselves incompetent. This means that, unconsciously, individuals practise an aesthetic and hermeneutic competence, in accordance with our starting hypothesis concerning the active-creative visitor. Also the competent visitor (historian, professor, fan) declares her incompetence but, in accordance with Elkins (2007), the answers typify those more personal reflections that usually characterize the unconscious-creative visitors.

From our empirical study results show that the aesthetic experience is a complex event, including somatic, affective and cognitive psychological dimensions.

Follow-up of the empirical study

Following our study's results, we wish to investigate the aims of the cultural supply of Padua in order to complete an explorative analysis. At present, we are involved in this second project, to analyse the territorial marketing of artistic goods in Padua. We wonder whether the organization of art visits takes into account the utility aspects we profiled: the *personal discovery* and the *social binding* functions. Given that this is a new theoretical path, we speculate that some aspects of urban cultural policy could be re-thought. Territorial marketing could find a new purpose, which is to reinforce urban identity both with respect to the citizen and the tourist.

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