

Much More Than a Museum: Motivations and Experiences of Young Visitors at Urban Cultural Clusters



Daria V. Kondrateva, Alexander M. Pakhalov, and Natalia A. Rozhkova

Abstract Statistics show that members of Generation Z (Gen Zers) are less interested in visiting “classic” museums than other age groups. At the same time, young visitors show a noticeable interest in contemporary art and prefer more collaborative formats of interaction with art and culture. Urban cultural clusters (art clusters) and cultural centers could be alternative attractions of potential interest to Gen Zers. Our study aims to identify factors that influence the motivations and the experiences of young visitors at urban cultural clusters and centers. Despite the presence of studies focused on these attractions, researchers have so far paid little attention to the experience of their visitors. We fill this gap with primary data obtained from a series of semi-structured interviews and a survey of young visitors at urban cultural clusters and centers in Moscow, which is well known for a number of such attractions. Based on the collected data, we test several hypotheses using factor and regression analysis. In particular, based on survey data, we measure the role of various factors that bring visitors to an attraction and the features of their visitor experience. Our results show that for Gen Zers information from social media is a key factor in shaping the initial intention to visit a cultural cluster or center. In turn, satisfaction and revisit intention increase if an attraction provides young visitors with more interactive and immersive experiences. Our findings confirm the earlier observation that young generation members want to be not just visitors but co-creators of cultural attractions.

Keywords Cultural clusters · Cultural centers · Visitor experiences · Visitor motivations

JEL Classifications M31 · L83 · Z11 · Z33

D. V. Kondrateva · A. M. Pakhalov (✉) · N. A. Rozhkova
Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia
e-mail: pakhalov@gmail.com

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2023
V. Katsoni (ed.), *Tourism, Travel, and Hospitality in a Smart and Sustainable World*,
Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-29426-6_28

435

1 Introduction

According to statistics from a number of European countries, representatives of generation Z (Gen Zers) are less interested in visiting “classical” museums than other age groups. In particular, according to the UK National Statistics Office for 2019–2020. The proportion of people aged 16–24 who visited museums at least once during the year was 45%, which is at least 9% points lower than the same indicator in other age groups (Allen & Rice, 2020). Recent study from Poland shows that more than 80% of surveyed Gen Zers visits art museums rarely, very rarely, or not at all (Kisiel, 2021). At the same time, representatives of generation Z show a noticeable interest in contemporary art (Illeris, 2005). In addition, the younger generation prefers more interactive formats of interaction with art and culture, involving a transition from passive observation to active participation (Nofal et al., 2020).

Urban cultural clusters (art clusters) and cultural centers could be perspective alternative attractions for Gen Zers (Engqvist & Möntmann, 2018). Such attractions include galleries, exhibition halls, workshops, stores, cafes, cinemas, educational sites, and other elements that are located close to each other and linked by a common concept (Kim, 2007; Mommaas, 2004). Examples of such attractions in Europe include *Westergasfabriek* in Amsterdam, *Löwenbräu-Areals* in Zurich, *Technopolis/Gazi* area in Athens, and many others.

In Moscow, since the mid-2000s, thanks to the activity of the art community and the support of large business groups (Kuleva, 2020; Milam, 2013), a number of such attractions have appeared. Most of them position themselves precisely as “urban art clusters” or “city cultural centers”. These cluster and centers include, for example, such attractions as *GES-2*, *Artplay*, *Flacon*, *Winzavod*, *Hlebozavod 9*, and *Red October*.

Despite the fact that art clusters and cultural centers differ significantly from traditional cultural institutions (such as museums or galleries), no research has yet been published that study these attractions in terms of the motivations that bring visitors there and the experiences visitors get there.

This study aims to identify factors that influence the motivations and the experiences of young visitors at urban cultural clusters and centers. We believe that understanding of this experience can be valuable both for academics and various professionals including urban policy makers, clusters’ residents, and managers.

2 Literature Review

In this study, we define urban cultural (art) cluster as a specific form of attraction consisting of a set of independent but interconnected cultural facilities (such as galleries or small museums) and infrastructure facilities (such as cafes or shops) located within the same city area. This definition is based on basic features of such clusters described in the earlier papers (Kim, 2007; Mommaas, 2004).

Urban cultural centers are similar attractions, however, suggesting a closer connection between objects on their territory (including a possibility of their management by a single owner). Within the framework of the empirical part of this study, the terms “urban art cluster” and “urban cultural center” will be used as synonyms, which is due to the difficulty of their differentiation by the respondents.¹

Most of the previously published work on art clusters and urban cultural centers either focused on various aspects of cluster creation and intra-cluster interaction (Hitters & Richards, 2002; Zarlenga et al., 2016) or studied these attractions from an urban development perspective (Kim, 2007; McCarthy, 2006). Recent systematic review of papers focused on cultural and creative clusters (Chapain & Sagot-Duvauroux, 2020) and showed that research on clusters more often focuses on the supply side (cluster members or residents) than on the demand side (cluster visitors or guests). Empirical studies exploring the motives and impressions of visitors to such attractions have not yet been published.

In the absence of earlier empirical evidence on the experience of visitors (and particularly young visitors) to urban art clusters and cultural centers, we decided to conduct a comprehensive study in which the quantitative part is preceded by the qualitative one. Both parts of the study are built around three key research questions (RQ):

RQ1. What brings young visitors (Gen Zers) to urban art clusters and cultural centers?

RQ2. What factors shape the positive and negative experiences of young visitors (Gen Zers) to urban art clusters and cultural centers?

RQ3. What factors influence the intention of young people (Gen Zers) to revisit urban art clusters and cultural centers?

3 Qualitative Study

The qualitative part of our research includes a series of semi-structured interviews followed by content analysis in the QDA Miner package. Sixteen respondents aged 18–25 years old took part in the interview.² Invitations to participate in the interview were sent to users who had written a review on social networks about visiting the GES-2 Cultural Center³ with a geolocation mark. During the interview, the respondents

¹ Moreover, these difficulties are associated with the self-identification of attractions. For example, the Moscow “Winzavod”, which is certainly an art cluster from a theoretical point of view, positions itself as a “center for contemporary art”.

² We chose the age range of 18–25 for qualitative and quantitative research for two reasons. On the one hand, 25 years is the upper limit of generation Z according to a common classification (Dimock, 2019). On the other hand, 18 years is the legal age of majority in Russia, which makes it possible to involve respondents over 18 years of age in the study without obtaining the consent of their parents.

³ This cultural center was chosen for quantitative analysis due to its extremely high popularity among young visitors in early 2022. All interviews were completed before the cessation of exhibition activities at GES-2 due to the military and geopolitical crisis.

were asked questions about their reasons for visiting GES-2 and their impressions of the visit. As part of the content analysis, the visitors' statements were assigned codes, the frequency of which is presented in Table 1.

The interview participants named recommendations on social networks, publications of their friends or acquaintances on social media, as well as publications on lifestyle online media as the main reasons for visiting the GES-2. When describing the criteria for choosing a place to visit, 11 out of 16 respondents identified transport accessibility (proximity to the center or proximity to a metro station within Moscow). Eleven out of 16 respondents named the cultural center's website as a source of information used in the preparation and planning of the visit, since there it is possible to register for entry and for an event (master class, lecture), read the posters of ongoing events, study the history of the location, and find information about the concept of the exhibition. The website was mentioned as both a source of preparation for the first visit and for a revisit. Five out of 16 respondents also visited the profile of the GES-2 in social media in order to carry out an initial review of the location and a visual acquaintance with the exhibits.

As factors that caused positive impressions, six out of 16 respondents singled out a library with unusual rare books, which is also used as a co-working area, seven out of 16 respondents mentioned a book and gift shop where you can browse books and buy vintage and rare editions books and magazines. The majority of respondents (14 out of 16) noted the importance of the social aspect of the experience: visiting such places enriches their relationship with friends/acquaintances, as new topics for discussion and the opportunity to reveal a familiar person from a new side appear. Respondents positively perceived the architecture and design of the location. The beauty of the building was noted even by those respondents who, in general, were not too pleased with the visit. Many respondents singled out the musical installation, in which musicians from different parts of the world synchronously played a common melody. In general, the respondents positively perceived the use of new technologies.

Speaking about their attitude to the main exposition, the respondents were divided in their opinions: Five respondents expressed a positive attitude toward the exposition, they liked the presentation of the exhibits, their originality, they responded to the problems that were raised in the exposition; eleven out of 16 respondents expressed an ambivalent attitude toward the exposition: The exposition was either not fully understood and uninteresting for them or simply ridiculous, meaningless, and made in haste.

The main factors that had a negative impact on the respondents' impressions were problems with navigation through the building and through the exposition: Six out of 16 respondents mentioned that due to the unusual layout and the lack of signs, respondents often could not understand how to move forward according to the exposure. At the same time, seven out of 16 respondents reported that they did not receive proper support from the staff in case of difficulties with navigation. Nevertheless, one of the interview participants noted that she had been provided with the first-class service at the information desk. Some respondents also noted the lack of interactive activities, and they expected something more interactive. Six out of 16

Table 1 Codes used in the content analysis of the interviews with the visitors to the GES-2

Code name	Occurrence in the conducted interviews (out of 16)
<i>Reason for the first visit</i>	
Location	11
Publications on social media	8
Publications/stories of friends/acquaintances	7
Publications in urban lifestyle media	7
Watching the reconstruction process during walk	6
<i>Sources of information for the first visit</i>	
Cultural center website	11
Accounts of the cultural center in social networks	5
<i>Factors that shaped positive experiences</i>	
New topic for discussion with friends/acquaintances	14
Modern interesting space	12
Book and gift shop	7
Feeling of falling into another reality	7
Library	6
Observation of the filming process	5
Café	5
Music installation	5
Exposure	5
Good place for a photoshoot	5
<i>Factors that shaped negative experiences</i>	
Unclear exposure concept	8
Lack of staff support	7
Incomplete usage of space	7
Lack of explanatory information	7
Pre-registration required	6
Difficulties with navigation in the building and in the exposition	6
Lack of interactive events/exhibits	5

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Code name	Occurrence in the conducted interviews (out of 16)
<i>Future intentions</i>	
Recommend	14
Revisit	13
<i>Motives for a return visit</i>	
See the new exhibition	11
Bring friends/acquaintances	5

respondents mentioned that they were disappointed with the need to preregister for certain events and the difficulties associated with registration.

In general, almost all respondents (13 out of 16) were ready to visit the GES-2 again: They wanted to wait for the exposition to change and they planned to come for new impressions, to attend a master class/interactive event, and to bring friends and acquaintances to the cultural center. Most interview participants (14 out of 16) were ready to recommend GES-2 to friends and acquaintances. The intention to recommend was expressed, among other things, by those respondents who were not completely satisfied with the first visit, and nevertheless, they believed that everyone needed to go, to see everything with their own eyes, and to form their own point of view.

4 Quantitative Study: Design and Sample

Qualitative data for our study were collected using an online survey. The online survey questionnaire included questions to assess drivers of internal visit intention, experiences, satisfaction, and revisit intention. The questionnaire also included two screening questions (age and date of the last visit to Moscow art clusters) and several questions to control the sample structure.

The main part of the questionnaire includes several statements on different aspects of experiences proposed based on the results of our qualitative study. We measure satisfaction using the statement, “*I am satisfied with my visit to this cultural center*”, while for revisit intention we use the statement “*I plan to visit this cultural center again*”. All the items (internal visit intention, experiences, satisfaction, and revisit intention) are rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale, where 1 is for “strongly disagree” and 7 is for “strongly agree”.

The survey of art clusters’ and cultural centers’ visitors was conducted in March 2022 using Anketolog online survey platform. The link to the questionnaire was distributed through thematic communities in the VK (also known as VKontakte), one of the most popular social media services in Russia. We received 246 filled questionnaires. Out of all the participants, 207 had experience of visiting at least one

Table 2 Sample structure (n = 207)

Sample characteristic		Frequency	(%)
Age	18–25	207	
Gender	Female	161	77.8
	Male	46	22.2
Region	Moscow	141	68.1
	Moscow region	52	25.1
	Other Russia’s region	12	5.8
	Other country	2	1.0
Frequency of visits to cultural institutions	Once a week or more often	47	22.7
	Once a month	68	32.9
	About every few months	85	41.1
	Once a year	4	1.9
	Less often	3	1.4
Name of the last visited Moscow art cluster or cultural center	GES-2	47	22.7
	Artplay	43	20.8
	Flacon	39	18.8
	Winzavod	27	13.0
	Hlebozavod 9	24	11.6
	Red October	21	10.2
	Other	6	2.9
Total number of visits to the selected cluster or center (including the last visit)	1	82	39.7
	2–3	57	27.5
	4 and more	68	32.8

Moscow art cluster or cultural center during the last year. These respondents form our final sample (Table 2).

The sample structure is balanced in terms of frequency and places of visit. The geographical imbalance in favor of Moscow residents is explained by the focus of the study only on Moscow attractions, while the prevalence of female respondents in the sample is consistent with both the results of previous studies and the demographic structure of the social media communities through which we distribute the survey link.

5 Quantitative Study: Results and Discussion

We conduct the two-step data analysis of survey results. At the first step, we produce an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to propose structure for “experiential” variables,

while at the second step we conduct a regression analysis to test relationships between variables. Both steps of analysis were made using IBM SPSS 25.

Before doing EFA, we estimated the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure and the Bartlett test of sphericity. In our study, we observe KMO of 0.86 ($0.86 > 0.6$). When analyzing the Bartlett test, we observe the significance of <0.01 .

We perform EFA using the principal components and the direct oblimin rotation methods, with a cutoff eigenvalue of 0.5. Results of EFA allow to propose the following three-factor structure (Table 3). Three proposed factors together explained 68.5% of the total variance of items.

The first two of the three proposed factors correspond to two dimensions of experience in the “experience economy” concept (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) that was already tested for traditional cultural institutions such as museums (Radder & Han,

Table 3 Factor loadings (EFA)

Factor (construct)	Initial variable (item)	Factor loading	Cronbach’s alpha
Active_experience	During my visit to the cultural center, I actively communicated with people around me (ACT1)	0.82	0.74
	During my visit to the cultural center, I actively interacted with the exposition and art objects (ACT2)	0.73	
	While visiting the cultural center, I felt more like a participant than an observer (ACT3)	0.53	
Immersive_experience	Inside the cultural center, everything encourages me to understand and feel themes of expositions (IMM1)	0.56	0.85
	While visiting the cultural center, I was immersed in what surrounded me there (IMM2)	0.66	
	While visiting the cultural center, I felt like I was in a different reality away from the daily routine (IMM3)	0.91	
	When I was inside the cultural center, I felt nostalgic for a while (IMM4)	0.73	
	When I was inside the cultural center, I felt like I was transported into the future (IMM5)	0.84	
Digital_experience	I followed the accounts of the cultural center on social media even before my visit (DIG1)	0.82	0.64
	I read online reviews written by other visitors to the cultural center before my visit (DIG2)	0.79	

2015). Nevertheless, the sets of variables within the factors look quite interesting. For example, immersive experiences in art clusters and cultural centers are shaped by both a sense of nostalgia and a feeling of being transported into the future. This can be explained by the fact that many clusters and centers are located in old (usually industrial) buildings, while exhibitions and events held inside these buildings are often devoted to contemporary art and innovations.

The third factor covers things that we call “digital experiences”. These experiences could happen even before the actual visit to attraction and potentially influence the intention to such visit. The emergence of this factor is also consistent with earlier work on the experience of museum visitors (Özdemir & Çelebi, 2017).

Three regression models were tested at the second step. The factors formed as a result of factor analysis, along with other variables, were included in the regression. We built three regressions for three different dependent variables. The first of these regressions explains the attractiveness of a cluster or center for an initial visit, the second regression focuses on factors of visit satisfaction, and the third regression focuses on factors sharpening the revisit intention. Table 4 summarizes the results of regression analysis.

The results of the regression analysis show that interaction with digital content is significantly associated only with the intention of the initial visit to an art cluster or cultural center. The satisfaction and intention of the revision are already formed on the basis of the real experience inside the attraction, which must be both active and immersive. Our findings confirm the earlier observation (Gofman et al., 2011) that young generation members want to be not just visitors but co-creators of cultural attractions. Our results also confirm the important role of immersive experience for art clusters and cultural centers, previously proven for museums (Komarac & Ozretić Došen, 2021).

The frequency of visiting cultural attractions has a positive effect only on the intention of the initial visit, while female respondents are more ready for the initial visit and more satisfied with their experiences. Other variables (including perceived convenience of location) do not affect any of the three dependent variables. The only exception is the dummy variable for the GES-2 center, which has a significant negative effect on visit satisfaction. This can be explained both by the increased interest in the center from “random” visitors due to the hype around its opening and by the suspension of many GES-2’s activities in early spring 2022.

6 Limitations and Further Research

Our study has some limitations that guide directions for future research.

Our approach to analyze visitor experiences leads to the first group of limitations. In our study, we focus on overall experience from a visit to an art cluster or center. However, this “macro” experience is built from many “micro” experiences that happens in particular galleries, workshops, art studios, and other facilities. One of the most perspective directions of further studies assumes shift to more “granular”

Table 4 Regression analysis results

	Visit intention	Satisfaction	Revisit intention
Active_experience	N/R	0.16 ^c (0.06)	0.38 ^c (0.09)
Immersive_experience	N/R	0.45 ^c (0.07)	0.25 ^c (0.08)
Digital_experience	0.19 ^b (0.08)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.08)
Location	-0.04 (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.04)
Frequency	0.45 ^a (0.24)	0.29 (0.18)	0.35 (0.23)
Female	0.34 ^a (0.19)	0.26 ^a (0.14)	0.22 (0.18)
Moscow	0.20 (0.17)	0.05 (0.13)	0.19 (0.16)
Ges2	-0.26 (0.21)	-0.29 ^a (0.16)	0.23 (0.20)
Artplay	0.09 (0.21)	-0.04 (0.16)	0.24 (0.20)
Flacon	0.30 (0.22)	-0.06 (0.16)	0.30 (0.20)
Constant	5.35 (0.39)	5.56 (0.30)	4.96 (0.37)
R ²	0.09	0.35	0.24
R ² (adjusted)	0.05	0.32	0.20
p-value(F)	< 0.05	< 0.01	< 0.01
N	207	207	207

^a = $p < 0.10$, ^b = $p < 0.05$, ^c = $p < 0.01$

Standard errors are shown (in brackets)

N/R = not relevant (we cannot expect the influence of the experience inside the attraction on the intention to visit it for the first time)

approach to analyze how visitors gain their experience during a journey through an art cluster.

The second group of limitations are connected with the structure of our sample. We use a non-probability sampling in our survey, so we cannot extend our results to the entire population of art clusters' visitors. Moreover, our evidence is limited to young visitors of art clusters located only in Moscow. Thus, we expect even more fruitful results from the future studies with cross-regional and cross-national comparisons.

The last (but not the least) set of limitations have arisen due to a very specific period of data collection. While the qualitative part of the study was finished in the middle of February 2022, the quantitative survey took place during the early spring 2022. This spring was already the time of heavy military and geopolitical crisis that

lead to termination of exhibition activities in many of Moscow art clusters and centers (Sauer & Roth, 2022). Such situation negatively influences visitor experiences that is why we are waiting for a chance to continue our study in better times.

Acknowledgements This paper was supported by the Lomonosov Moscow State University's Faculty of Economics under the research project "Entrepreneurial networking as a self-organization tool for the sustainable development of municipalities". We are also grateful to Dr. Marina Sheresheva for her valuable comments on the early version of our study.

References

- Allen P., & Rice A. (2020). *Taking Part survey, adults (16+), 2019/20: Museums*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/916533/Museums.xlsx. Last Accessed 25 Aug 2022
- Chapain, C., & Sagot-Duvauroux, D. (2020). Cultural and creative clusters—a systematic literature review and a renewed research agenda. *Urban Research & Practice*, 13(3), 300–329.
- Dimock, M. (2019). Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins. *Pew Research Center*, 17(1), 1–7.
- Engqvist, J. H., & Möntmann, N. (2018). *Agencies of Art: A report on the situation of small and medium-sized art centers in Denmark, Norway and Sweden*. OK BOOK.
- Gofman, A., Moskowit, H. R., & Mets, T. (2011). Marketing museums and exhibitions: What drives the interest of young people. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 20(6), 601–618.
- Hitters, E., & Richards, G. (2002). The creation and management of cultural clusters. *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 11(4), 234–247.
- Illeris, H. (2005). Young people and contemporary art. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 24(3), 231–242.
- Kim, H. H. (2007). The creative economy and urban art clusters: Locational characteristics of art galleries in Seoul. *Journal of the Korean Geographical Society*, 42(2), 258–279.
- Kisiel, P. (2021). A young audience's expectations of a contemporary museum of art. *Przegląd Socjologiczny*, 70(2), 11–28.
- Komarac, T., & Ozretić Došen, Đ. (2021). Discovering the determinants of museum visitors' immersion into experience: The impact of interactivity, expectations, and skepticism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 1–19.
- Kuleva, M. I. (2020). The only place where one can feel connected to an international context and still speak Russian: Hybrid creative work in post-soviet contemporary art institutions. In *The industrialization of creativity and its limits* (pp. 49–59). Cham: Springer.
- McCarthy, J. (2006). Regeneration of cultural quarters: Public art for place image or place identity? *Journal of Urban Design*, 11(2), 243–262.
- Milam, J. (2013). "Art Girls": Philanthropy, Corporate sponsorship, and private art museums in post-communist Russia. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 56(4), 391–405.
- Mommaas, H. (2004). Cultural clusters and the post-industrial city: Towards the remapping of urban cultural policy. *Urban Studies*, 41(3), 507–532.
- Nofal, E., Panagiotidou, G., Reffat, R. M., Hameeuw, H., Boschloos, V., & Moere, A. V. (2020). Situated tangible gamification of heritage for supporting collaborative learning of young museum visitors. *Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage (JOCCH)*, 13(1), 1–24.
- Özdemir, G., & Çelebi, D. (2017). A social media framework of cultural museums. *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research (AHTR)*, 5(2), 101–119.

- Pine, J., & Gilmore, J. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(4), 97–105.
- Radder, L., & Han, X. (2015). An examination of the museum experience based on Pine and Gilmore's experience economy realms. *Journal of Applied Business Research (JABR)*, 31(2), 455–470.
- Sauer P., & Roth A. (2022). *Empty galleries and fleeing artists: Russia's cultural uncoupling from the west*. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/17/ges-2-moscow-empty-gallery-fleeing-artist-russia-cultural-uncoupling-from-west>. Last Accessed 14 Aug 2022.
- Zarlenga, M. I., Ulldemolins, J. R., & Morató, A. R. (2016). Cultural clusters and social interaction dynamics: The case of Barcelona. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 23(3), 422–440.