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The image of the national art museums among young audiences interested and not interested in art

Wizerunek muzeów narodowych o profilu artystycznym wśród młodych odbiorców zainteresowanych i niezainteresowanych sztuką

Abstract

The study aimed to compare the image of the national art museums in Poland among respondents studying art-related and non-art-related faculties and to identify significant differences in the image of national museums among those two groups surveyed. The study was conducted using a questionnaire survey among a purposely selected group. To evaluate whether differences in the image of Polish national art museums between the described groups of respondents are statistically significant, Student *t*-tests for independent samples were done. Although significant differences were found between the study groups, they were not as significant as expected. Students of art-related courses better perceive the national art museums, but even in this group, the image of the studied institutions is rather neutral. Respondents from both groups associate national art museums in Poland primarily with education and school trips. National art museums do not appear to young audiences as friendly and egalitarian places; at the same time, respondents do not see them as elite or prestigious institutions. While this does not mean an image failure for the museums surveyed, they should make an effort to make young audiences find them more welcoming.

Keywords

the image of national museums, the art museums, promotion of the cultural institutions, the image of the cultural institutions, young audiences

Streszczenie

Badanie miało na celu porównanie wizerunku muzeów narodowych o profilu artystycznym w Polsce wśród respondentów studiujących na kierunkach związanych ze sztuką i na kierunkach niezwiązanych ze sztuką oraz identyfikację istotnych różnic w postrzeganiu muzeów narodowych pomiędzy badanymi grupami. Przeprowadzono bezpośrednie wywiady kwestionariuszowe wśród celowo wybranych respondentów. Celem sprawdzenia, czy różnice w postrzeganiu polskich muzeów narodowych o profilu artystycznym pomiędzy badanymi grupami są istotne, wykonano testy *t*-Studenta dla prób niezależnych. Pomimo że stwierdzono istotne różnice pomiędzy badanymi grupami, nie były one tak znaczące, jak się spodziewano. Muzea narodowe o profilu artystycznym lepiej postrzegają studenci kierunków związanych ze sztuką, ale nawet w tej grupie wizerunek badanych instytucji jest raczej neutralny. Respondenci z obu grup kojarzą badane instytucje przede wszystkim z edukacją i wycieczkami szkolnymi. Muzea narodowe o profilu artystycznym nie jawią się młodym odbiorcom jako miejsca przyjazne i egalitarne; jednocześnie respondenci nie postrzegają ich jako instytucji elitarnych czy prestiżowych. Choć nie oznacza to wizerunkowej porażki badanych muzeów, powinny one podjąć wysiłek, by młodzi odbiorcy postrzegali je jako miejsca otwarte i warte odwiedzin.

Słowa kluczowe

wizerunek muzeów narodowych, muzea sztuki, promocja instytucji kultury, wizerunek instytucji kultury, młodzi odbiorcy

JEL: M31, M37, Z110

Introduction

Nowadays, the mission of museums, especially national museums, distinguished by this rank due to the possession of the most valuable collections

(Śmiałowicz, 2020), is not only to preserve cultural heritage but also to promote it to a broad audience, including new adult consumers. Therefore, it is particularly important to shape the image of the national art museum as a place worth visiting

(Cerquetti, 2016; Blasco-Lopez et al., 2019; Batat, 2020; Fronzetti Colladon et al., 2020; Gargiulo et al., 2021). Especially considering the fact that people visit a cultural event not only because of the quality of what is offered but also to show something of their personality to others. As a variant on Veblen, we could briefly describe this as "signaling-by-cultural-experiences" (Bronner & de Hoog, 2019; Jureniene & Peseckiene, 2020).

According to previous research, the primary motivation for visiting museums is visitors' interests (Gofman et al., 2011; Skutnik, 2019; Macalik, 2020; Cotter et al., 2021, Manolika & Baltzis, 2022). It seems evident that people interested in art are more likely to visit national art museums. Still, it is worth asking whether the image of the studied institutions is stronger and more positive among this group. Museum image is a concept that results from a combination of both, the viewer's rational and emotional perspectives, and is a consequence of two closely related factors: cognitive evaluation, which refers to an individual's knowledge and beliefs about the attributes of a museum, and emotional judgment, which refers to an individual's feelings about the museum (Moreno-Gil & Ritchie, 2017; Bira et al., 2020; Hyun et al., 2018). The affective components of the museum's image are, in other words, the viewer's emotional attitude toward the museum, mostly measured by tools such as the semantic differential, where opposing characteristics are placed on a seven-point scale, e.g., the museum is worth visiting/not worth visiting, friendly/unfriendly, empty/full of people, stressful/relaxing, modest/prestigious, elite/egalitarian, boring/interesting, etc.

The task currently facing national museums in Poland and similar institutions around the world is to attract the attention of young but adult people (Burton & Scott, 2003; Cerquetti, 2016). The "new adults" segment comprises of 18–29-year-olds, who are seen as a distinct subcultural group (Campbell, 2015). The study aimed to find out whether the image of national art museums is stronger and more positive among young audiences (new adults) interested in art who visit national museums more often. Thus, the primary focus of the study is the image of national museums among recipients studying art-related faculties and non-art-related faculties.

Research methods

The study of the image of national art museums in Poland was carried out using a questionnaire-based individual direct interview (PAPI) method. The questionnaire was created based on the literature and the author's previous research (Śmiałowicz, 2019).

Research sample

With a high scale population, Generation Z plays a key role in society, being a large dynamic and creative human resource (Nguyen et al., 2021). However, young audiences are consistently identified as a group that, despite attempts to reach and engage them, constitutes a small percentage of museum visitors in Western countries (Gofman et al., 2011; Barron & Leask, 2017; Hughes & Moscardo, 2019). The selection of the research sample was purposive. It included new adults, who are representatives of Generation Z, and university students of universities in seven Polish cities where national art museums are located. The number of respondents was 1435. In purposive sampling, the selection of participants acts as a representation of a population that delivers relevant information (Ozuem et al., 2021), therefore students of art-related faculties (potentially interested in art) and students of non-art-related faculties were invited to participate in the survey. University students were selected for the study because they make up a significant percentage of the population of the cities where the investigated museums are located (GUS, 2018) and meet the age criteria for the young audience group (Szafranec, 2011; Gracz & Ostrowska, 2013). The purposive sampling is illustrated in Table 1.

The purpose of the investigation was to identify the image of national art museums in Poland among young audiences. Based on previous literature studies, the following hypothesis was formulated: "The perception of the image of national art museums by recipients studying in art faculties differs significantly from the perception of the image of national art museums by recipients studying in non-art faculties."

First, the frequency of visiting national art museums in both groups of respondents and their associations with the national art museum in their city were examined. Next, respondents evaluated the image of the museum in their city, using a semantic differential. Due to the complexity of the museum image construct, 12 aspects of the image were distinguished (Figure 3). The data was analysed using the PS Imago 7/IBM SPSS Statistics package. In order to check whether the image of national art museums as perceived by new adults potentially interested in their offer differs from the image of these museums as perceived by the wider public (people with different interests than art) – the responses of students studying art-related faculties and those studying non-art-related faculties were compared. To verify whether the differences in the perceptions of national museums by the described groups of respondents are statistically significant, Student's *t*-tests for independent samples were conducted.

Table 1. Structure of the sample

Variable	Variable type	Abundance	Percentage
Gender	Female	978	69.8
	Male	423	30.2
Faculty	Art-related	713	49.7
	Non-art-related	722	50.3
City	Gdańsk/Gdynia	212	14.8
	Kielce	201	14.0
	Kraków	206	14.4
	Poznań	206	14.4
	Szczecin	204	14.2
	Warszawa	204	14.2
	Wrocław	202	14.1

Source: own study.

Results

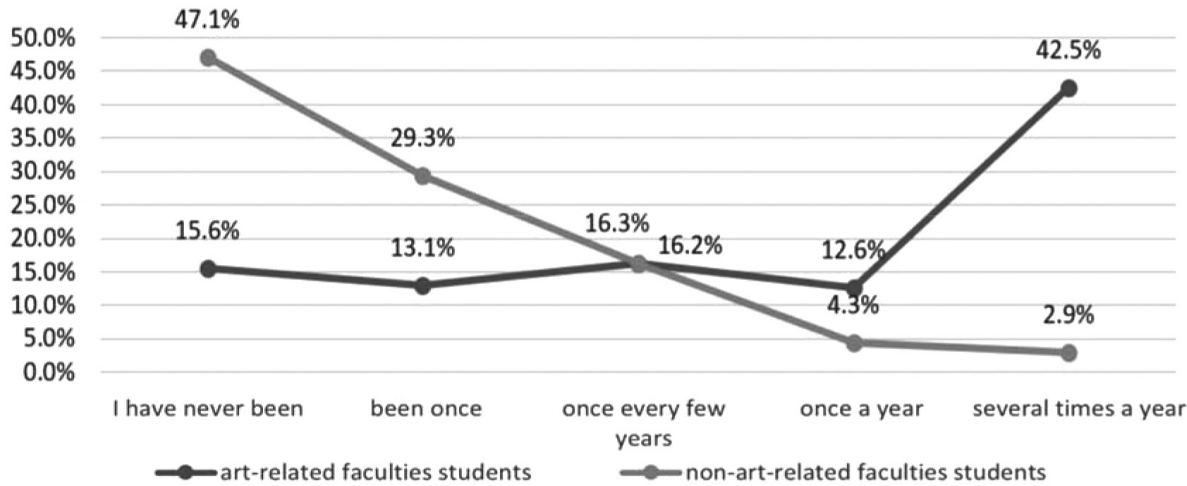
The survey confirmed that art-related faculties students visit the national art museum much more often; 42.5% of them visit the national museum several times a year.

However, it is worth noting that among the group potentially most interested in the national art museums' offer, more than half visit studied museums only once a year or less often, and 15.6% of art-related faculties students have never been to the national art museum in their city. Among non-art students, 47.1% had never been to a national art museum, and 29.3% had been there only once (Figure 1).

Art-related faculties students associate the national art museum in their city mainly with school

trips (51.7%) and with education (45.9%), but also with impressive masterpieces (42%) and with good leisure activities (31.2%). Non-art students also associate the national museum mainly with school trips (66.8%) and education (49.2%), but less so with impressive works of art (26.9%) and interesting stories (26.1%). In this group, far fewer respondents associate a visit to a national art museum with a good leisure activity (14.9%). Only 7.5% of respondents in the group studying in an art-related faculty and 10.2% in the group studying in a non-art-related faculty associate the national museum in their city "with boredom and dust," and 12.4% of art-related faculties students and 7.7% of non-art-related faculties students associate the national museum with fatigue caused by the size of collection/

Figure 1. Frequency of respondents visiting the national art museum



Source: own study.

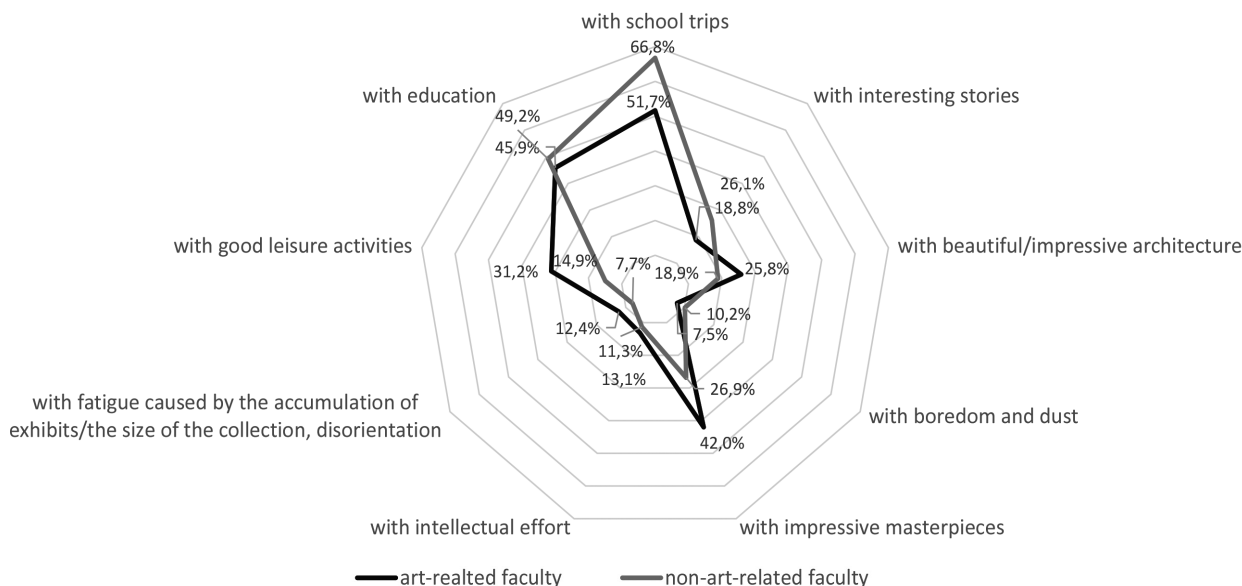
loss of sense of direction due to accumulation of exhibits (Figure 2).

Evaluating the image of the national museum in their city, respondents from both groups most often chose a neutral judgment, but they did not doubt that the national museum in their city was well located, friendly, and worth a visit. Both groups of respondents found the surveyed institutions rather interesting, relaxing, popular, and egalitarian. In these aspects, national art museums were rated higher by art-related faculties students. On the other hand, a higher percentage of respondents

among those studying non-art-related faculties considered national museums to be rather well-equipped, more prestigious, and pretty modern.

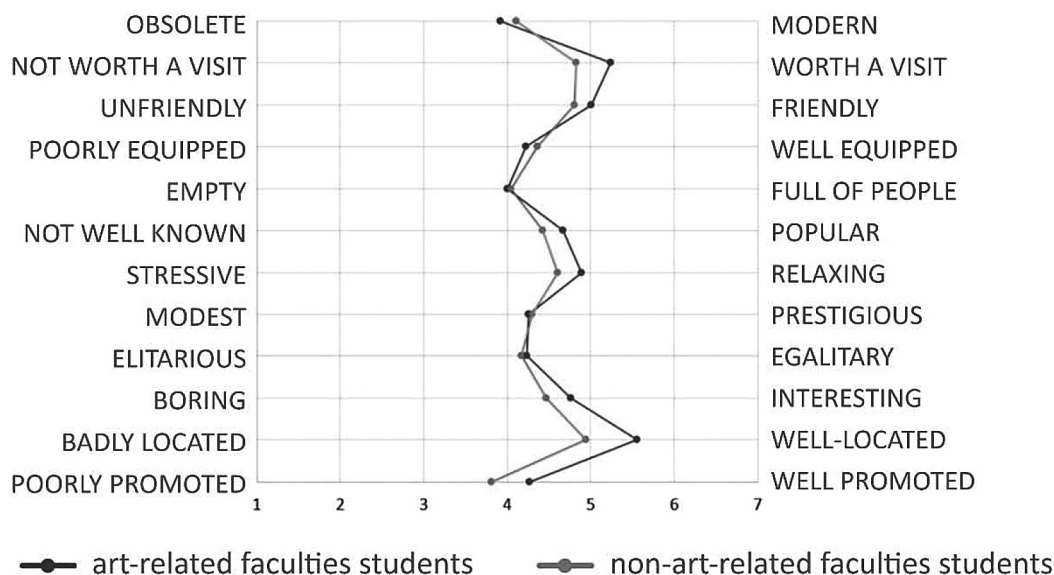
However, this group of respondents found that national art museums in Poland are rather poorly promoted. Art-related faculties students rated this aspect slightly higher, which confirms that national art museums are more likely to reach them with promotion. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that this group's opinion of the quality of the national art museum's promotion in their city is close to neutral (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Respondents' associations with a national art museum in their city



Source: own study.

Figure 3. Profile of the image of national art museums in Poland among art-related and non-art-related faculties students



Source: own study.

The results were subjected to statistical analysis. The hypothesis that the image of national art museums by young recipients studying in art-related faculties differs significantly from the image of national art museums by young recipients studying in non-art-related faculties was made. Due to the complexity of the museum image construct, 12 aspects of the museum image were examined, and then the results were subjected to Student's *t*-test for independent samples. Statistically significant differences were found in 7 of the 12 items, and the first hypothesis can be considered positively tested in 7 items, and negatively tested in the remaining 5 items.

The results of the Student's *t*-tests presented in Table 2 gave grounds for rejecting the null hypothesis that there were no differences between the surveyed groups of respondents in only some aspects of the evaluation of the image of national museums. That is, students of art-related faculties perceive national museums as significantly ($p \leq 0.01$) less modern, yet more popular than in the assessment of students of non-art-related faculties. This group of respondents also has a significantly ($p \leq 0.001$) stronger belief that the national art museum in their city is worth visiting, interesting, and well located. Students of non-art-related faculties perceive the national museum in their city as significantly ($p \leq 0.001$) more stressful and poorly promoted.

The survey also showed that there are aspects of the image of national museums in Poland with

which both groups of respondents agree. No significant differences were found in the following aspects:

- in the aspect of the friendliness of the surveyed museums – both groups of respondents considered the national museum in their city to be rather friendly,
- in the aspect of the equipment of the surveyed museums – both groups of respondents had no opinion on the equipment of the national museum in their city,
- in the aspect of crowding of the surveyed museums – neither group of respondents considered the national museum either empty or full of people,
- in the aspect of the prestige of the museums surveyed – none of the respondent groups considered the national museum either prestigious or very modest,
- in the aspect of the egalitarianism of the museums surveyed – none of the respondent groups considered the national museum in their city either elitist or egalitarian.

This fact can be considered surprising because, considering the literature (Gofman et al., 2011; Skutnik, 2019; Macalik, 2020), it was assumed, that respondents' artistic interests (studying an art-related faculty) would be associated with a stronger and more positive image of national museums in this group.

Aiming to test whether differences in perceptions of the image of national museums

Table 2. Differences in the image of national art museums by students of art-related faculties and students of non-art-related faculties – results of Student's *t*-test

Image aspect	Average ratings on a scale of 1–7			T value
	art-related faculties students'		non-art-related faculties students'	
Obsolete (1) – modern (7)	3.92	<	4.11	–2.847**
Not worth visiting (1) – worth visiting (7)	5.24	>	4.83	5.179***
Unfriendly (1) – friendly (7)	5.01	>	4.81	2.509
Poorly equipped (1) – well-equipped (7)	4.22	<	4.36	–2.047
Empty (1) – crowded (7)	4.00	<	4.05	–0.714
Little known (1) – popular (7)	4.67	>	4.42	2.848**
Stressing (1) – relaxing (7)	4.89	>	4.60	3.449***
Modest (1) – prestigious (7)	4.26	<	4.30	–0.609
Elitarius (1) – egalitary (7)	4.24	>	4.17	1.145
Boring (1) – interesting (7)	4.76	>	4.47	3.642***
Badly located (1) – well located (7)	5.56	>	4.94	6.896***
Poorly promoted (1) – well promoted (7)	4.27	>	3.81	5.130***

Note: marking statistical significance of relationships: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. In addition, statistically significant differences are marked in grey.

Source: own study.

between art-related faculties and non-art-related faculties students differed by the specific museum, Student's *t*-tests were also conducted on a city-by-city basis. The most significant differences between the studied groups were observed in the image of the National Museum in Wrocław, and the minor significant differences between the compared groups of respondents were observed in the image of the National Museum in Szczecin (Table 3).

differences between the two groups of respondents, and the other differences, while significant, are not large.

The study confirmed the problem described in the literature for national art museums in reaching a segment of the audience, which is the group of young recipients (Gofman et al., 2011; Barron & Leask, 2017; Hughes & Moscardo, 2019, Śmiałowicz, 2019). It is noteworthy that young

Table 3. Differences in image of national art museums among art-related and non-art-related faculties students – results of Student's *t*-test in different cities

Image aspect	T value in the cities						
	Gdańsk/Gdynia	Kielce	Kraków	Poznań	Szczecin	Warszawa	Wrocław
Obsolete (1) – modern (7)	–1.988*	–1.280	–0.694	0.081	–1.699	–2.031*	0.289
Not worth visiting (1) – worth visiting (7)	2.913**	–0.847	2.545*	3.079**	0.249	2.138*	4.109***
Unfriendly (1) – friendly (7)	2.072*	–1.722	1.202	2.911**	0.786	–1.457	3.178**
Poorly equipped (1) – well-equipped (7)	–0.292	–5.147***	0.590	0.127	–0.533	–0.325	–0.610
Empty (1) – crowded (7)	–1.568	–0.594	2.742	0.617	–2.241*	0.050	–2.011*
Little known (1) – popular (7)	0.653	–1.289	3.475***	2.006*	–0.687	0.776	2.494*
Stressing (1) – relaxing (7)	2.628*	0.458	0.127	1.966	1.747	0.157	2.117*
Modest (1) – prestigious (7)	–1.484	–2.183*	1.862	0.208	–1.166	–1.816	2.225*
Elitarius (1) – egalitary (7)	1.790	–0.751	0.871	1.241	–0.380	–0.660	0.661
Boring (1) – interesting (7)	1.835	–1.599	1.752	3.536***	1.498	0.408	2.622*
Badly located (1) – well located (7)	1.237	–0.336	2.886**	6.060***	1.741	2.496*	6.146***
Poorly promoted (1) – well promoted (7)	0.728	–1.049	3.726***	4.107***	–0.772	4.838**	2.190*

Note: marking statistical significance of relationships: * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. In addition, statistically significant differences are marked in grey.

Source: own study.

Statistically significant differences were observed for 7 out of 12 national art museum image indicators. They indicate that the studied institutions better reach art-related faculties students, who perceive them as significantly ($p \leq 0.01$) more popular, worth visiting, interesting, and well-located.

Discussion

Students of art-related faculties rated the image of national art museums higher than students of non-art-related faculties in seven aspects. However, it is worth noting that even respondents studying art-related faculties do not rate national museums high, most often giving neutral ratings. They also found the studied museums as significantly less modern than the non-art-related faculties students. Surprisingly, 5 aspects showed no significant

audiences perceive national museums mainly as tourist sites (excursion destinations) and educational facilities, and less as places of leisure or cultural participation.

It was assumed that the image of national art museums would be stronger and more positive among respondents interested in art. Although the survey confirmed this prediction, even among this group of respondents, the image of the national art museum in their city is more neutral than positive and not strong. The institutions surveyed do not appeal to young audiences as friendly and egalitarian places; at the same time, respondents do not see them as elite or prestigious institutions. Museums' targeting of promotions to those potentially interested in art is also relevant in this context.

It is important to consider why, despite the better outreach of museum promotions to art-related faculties students, the image of museums

in the two surveyed groups of respondents differs slightly (although statistically significantly) in seven aspects, while there are no significant differences in other aspects. Young recipients from both groups do not think the national art museum in their city is poorly equipped, but they also do not think it is well equipped. While that is not mean an image failure for the surveyed museums, they should make an effort to ensure that young audiences find them more welcoming and egalitarian.

Aspects in which the hypothesis was verified negatively may mean that Polish national art museums reach both art-related and non-art-related audiences with their marketing communication activities. However, given the neutrality of most evaluations, a more critical conclusion can be drawn that they do not reach either group and that their greatest asset in the eyes of young audiences is their location. On the other hand, the image of the museums surveyed is not negative and this is a good starting point and an incentive to intensify efforts to communicate with young audiences, regardless of their interests.

Conclusions

A national art museum should be a place for cultural participation, but it can also be a place for meetings and leisure activities. There is no doubt that it is in the interest of national art museums to broaden the audience. In order to reach a wider audience than just the art-oriented public, it is worth analysing the form and language of communications in terms of their hermetic character, since these communications do not encourage interest in art or the museums offer to people who were not already interested in it.

The website is the most frequently mentioned source of information by new adults before visiting a museum, so it is worth investing in making the websites of national art museums as relevant as possible for today's audiences. Making online payments available to visitors and improving the responsiveness of the website is a one-off

investment that will result in long-term improvement. Polish national art museums should also take advantage of the potential of social media and online advertising (Śmiałowicz, 2020).

Mobile technologies and social media can be used in ways that support museums' visitor experience goals, especially for new adults. Mobile devices have several features that can encourage greater involvement in exhibitions including the taking of photographs, the ability to take and record notes, and providing access to other information sources to help visitors expand upon and make sense of what they see (Hughes & Moscardo, 2017). In the future, each museum will have a dedicated app for visiting exhibitions with a smartphone. Mobile apps, thanks to virtual assistants or audio descriptions, are also helpful for people with disabilities. Technology is in development that will allow the transfer of tactile experiences, but already, thanks to modern technologies, including AR and VR, mobile apps allow museums to make their collections accessible in increasingly engaging ways. Technological innovations, the growing and different requests from the audience, and the managerialization process of museums entities are driving the ongoing evolution (McCall & Gray, 2018; Chynoweth et al., 2020; Tregua et al., 2022). The evolution of national art museums is necessary to attract an audience of the z-generation, equally interested and uninterested in art.

Limitations and future research directions

The study has several limitations. The results of the study could be used to describe the image of national art museums among Polish audiences; however, should be noted that the image of art institutions may be different in other countries. Only a few examples of marketing communications activities targeting the new adult group are presented. Certainly, the search for a way to attract an audience of new adults, both interested and uninterested in the arts, requires further research.

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