

# 8 Museums of the Future: Cultural Tourism Experiences for Wellbeing and Transformation

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## Introduction

Experiences are no longer enough, visitors now seek to be personally transformed. They want cultural tourism experiences to guide them in their change towards being the best, most authentic, version of themselves (Pine & Gilmore, 2013). The transformative potential of travel has been well documented (e.g. Kirillova *et al.*, 2017; Reisinger, 2013). Travel takes people into unfamiliar situations and places, which allows them to try out new ways of being to satisfy their needs, yielding personal transformation (Kirillova *et al.*, 2017). Ross (2010: 54) suggests that travel ‘when approached consciously, can be a widely available, individually tailored, and enjoyable way to gain self-awareness, spiritual experience, and an expansion of consciousness’. UNWTO (2016: 8) equally reports on the transformative role of tourism as having the ‘potential to set new paradigms of thinking, to encourage social and cultural changes and to inspire a more sustainable behavior’. Transformation may well apply both at the level of the local community offering tourism services as well as exhibiting paradigm shifts towards more responsible travellers who care about the destination but at the same time expect exceptional and memorable tourism experiences, which may in fact increase their wellbeing.

While transformation is not an easy process as it requires a physiological change in the neural networks, there are indications that museum tourism experiences may become a polygon for experimentation for new models of cultural tourism. Previous studies have already shown that museums are no longer static places, but are assuming new social and political roles (Desvallées & Mairesse, 2010). Yet, the change does not stop here. Bowen and Giannini (2019) stress the dynamism of physical and virtual life, which forces museums to embrace change by maintaining ties

with their real and virtual audiences, thus stressing the digital environment as a new, additional space for museum activities. Furthermore, the study by Aizpuru *et al.* (2021) revealed that audiences expect museums to offer activities related to the social welfare of citizens. Therefore, one may assume that future museum activities will increasingly rely on new technologies, stories and experience design in order to facilitate wellbeing and transformation in visitors. These activities have already appeared (mostly stimulated by the COVID-19 crisis); however, they are expected to increase in numbers in the near future, especially due to UNWTO's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for good health and wellbeing to be prioritised in tourism development. Besides visitor engagement, the use of new technologies, and public involvement in content generation (which are current trends in the field of museum experience design; Vermeeren *et al.*, 2018), museums will need to use distinct wellbeing cues to stimulate visitor wellbeing. Emotions will be the key ingredient in experience design because greater emotional engagement is said to lead to memorability, and only memorable events have the potential to transform visitors through promoting their psychological wellbeing (Pine & Gilmore, 2013). Given the dearth of studies in this field, our aim here is to determine the current and future role of museums in fostering tourist transformation and how such transformation can be supported with different internal (e.g. elicitation of emotions and other wellbeing cues shaping experience design) and external museum factors (e.g. outside support for wellbeing initiatives).

## Theoretical Background

As one of the most visited cultural tourism attractions (McKercher, 2004), museums have an important role to play in visitor wellbeing, which has so far been demonstrated by several studies (e.g. Chatterjee & Noble, 2016; Jelinčić & Matečić, 2021; Lawler & Tissot, 2021; Šveb Dragija & Jelinčić, 2022; Thomson *et al.*, 2018). Indeed, as noted by Chatterjee and Camic (2015), studies have shown that engaging with museums provides

positive social experiences, leading to reduced social isolation; opportunities for learning and acquiring new skills; calming experience, leading to decreased anxiety; increased positive emotions, such as optimism, hope, and enjoyment; increased self-esteem and sense of identity; increased inspiration and opportunities for meaning-making; a positive distraction from clinical environments, including hospitals and care homes; and increased communication among families, caregivers, and health professional. (2015: 2)

In other words, museums have the potential to impact visitors' longer-term psychological wellbeing, which, according to Ryff (2013), goes beyond momentarily hedonic happiness to prompt personal transformation in

terms of increased self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relationships with others, autonomy and environmental mastery. Because one of the necessary psychological mechanisms for psychological wellbeing to occur is reflection (i.e. thinking about oneself, one's actions and world), the International Council of Museums (ICOM) (2022) now includes 'reflection' in its definition of what a museum is by stating that museums 'operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing'. This recognition of the role of reflection reiterates the likely impact of museums' experiences on visitor wellbeing. Moreover, Helen Chatterjee, a leading researcher in the field of creative health, has confirmed with multiple studies that museums can have a long-term effect on the wellbeing of people suffering from mental and/or physical health problems. For example, object handling sessions in museums which allow visitors to explore objects by touching them are an important tool for increasing the psychological wellbeing of hospital patients (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2009; Thomson *et al.*, 2018). In addition, due to the great benefits gained from museum visitation, Camic and Chatterjee (2013) proposed the formation of strategic partnerships between museums and local healthcare authorities and healthcare funders to offer museums 'on prescription' referral services. A good example is the London Dulwich Picture Gallery, which has one of the most longstanding 'art of prescription' programs for older adults, and which was developed in partnership with local physicians (Harper & Hamblin, 2010).

As a response to this research trend as well as to the stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, museums across the world have started to incorporate health and wellbeing activities into their programs, both for marginalised visitors and for the general public. To name just a few, the Museum of Modern Art in New York and Queensland Art Gallery in Australia have established wellbeing programs for people suffering from dementia and their caregivers. The Louvre Museum in Abu Dhabi boasts Arts for Health and Wellbeing program, which includes wellbeing webinar series, kayaking around the museum and yoga under the dome. Also, the Peabody Essex Museum (UK) has a Being Well initiative that focuses on providing yoga in the galleries and online breathing exercises while observing art. By way of further illustration, the National Gallery in Singapore offers a sensory-friendly space called Calm Room, which allows visitors to disengage and rest, while Getty Museum in Los Angeles enjoys a Mindfulness Program that fosters contemplative visitor experience within the museum. These few examples demonstrate that not only museums are increasingly aware of their restorative potential, but also that healing programs are not limited to marginalised groups, as the general public can also benefit from them.

Although museums have only recently started to design experiential spaces and programs for wellbeing, research in this field has a long history

(Šveb Dragija & Jelinčić, 2022). In the early 1990s, researchers were already interested in researching museums as spaces where visitors could rest their minds from the cognitive and emotional overload of everyday life (Kaplan *et al.*, 1993). Early studies found that four museum properties can propel restoration, namely being away from the everyday environment, the extent of time a visitor spends there, a fascination that presupposes inherent interest without mental effort and compatibility of the museum and visitor's needs and purpose. It was also noted that the museum environment should also promote reflection in order to achieve greater wellbeing benefits (Chrystlee, 1995; Kaplan *et al.*, 1993). Later, research foci shifted towards participative activities in museums that sought to promote social interaction, such as explorative activities and object-handling sessions (Binne, 2010; Chatterjee *et al.*, 2009; Fenton, 2013; Thomson *et al.*, 2018; Vogelpoel *et al.*, 2013). Currently, there are two complementary research trends in museums and wellbeing. The former combines arts and nature to achieve greater wellbeing benefits for the visitors and the environment (e.g. Thomson *et al.*, 2020), and the latter centres on museum experiences that foster personal growth in visitors (e.g. Šveb Dragija & Jelinčić, 2022; Thomson *et al.*, 2018). To create museum experiences that would contribute to personal growth, it appears essential to first establish a wellbeing culture within the museum organisation. This means that museum leaders need to first hone their growth leadership mindset and leadership skills before they can stimulate personal growth in employees and visitors (Šveb Dragija & Jelinčić, 2023).

Museum experiences that aim at offering meaning and promoting personal growth belong to the largely under-investigated research stream that focuses on eudaimonic wellbeing in tourism. *Eudaimonic tourism* refers to travel experiences that stir tourists' positive emotions but also provide meaning, a sense of achievement and personal growth (Nawijn & Filep, 2016). Eudaimonic tourism experiences are transformational because they go beyond mere positive emotional experiences (such as hedonic experiences) to offer tourists opportunities for self-expressiveness through activities that enable them to find meaning and realise their potential (Šveb Dragija & Franić, 2023). Such meaningful experiences require some effort, experiences of flow and a sense of self-realisation (Matteucci & Filep, 2017; Waterman, 1993). Sometimes, eudaimonic tourism experiences involve negative emotions, which may trigger self-reflection, and which in turn may lead to self-transformation (Šveb Dragija & Franić, 2023). According to Jelinčić (2020):

while tourism is usually related to the conditionally called positive emotions, an efficient [...] interpretation may not always convey joy and happiness. Negative emotions (e.g. anger, fear or sadness), if successfully elicited in visitors, prove that storytelling and other experience design techniques have been used with effect. (2020: 222)

A Tripadvisor (2014) report reveals that traveller trends are changing from travellers enjoying food and themselves in tourist destinations, to actively seeking new experiences that promote self-reflection, hence eudaimonia. In the same vein, Jelinčić and Senkić (2019: 50) suggest that ‘in the future, (creative) tourism will need to: (1) create attractions which are able to relate to individual personal experiences; (2) use creativity in art therapy tourism programmes; and (3) offer experiences that have the power to transform the visitor, thus leaving memorable traces’. In short, in order to capitalise upon the potential that museums have for promoting visitor wellbeing, it is necessary to understand how transformational and wellbeing effects of museum visitation on tourists can be achieved. To investigate this matter, we conducted one focus group discussion with three different stakeholder groups: museum professionals, tourism agencies and decision-makers. The following three research questions guided the research process:

- RQ1. What is the role of museums in promoting wellbeing and what will be their role in the future?
- RQ2. Which museum factors, internal and external, are necessary for the successful promotion of tourist transformation and wellbeing?
- RQ3. What is the role of emotions in promoting transformation and wellbeing of tourists in museums?

## Research Methods

To determine the current and future role of museums in the transformation and wellbeing of tourists and how transformation may be achieved and appraised, we carried out a qualitative study in the Croatian context. We conducted a focus group with 10 participants, which included decision makers from tourism and culture ( $N = 3$ ), museum and interpretation centre professionals ( $N = 5$ ), and travel agency representatives ( $N = 2$ ). Focus group is a qualitative technique, which uses in-depth group interviews with participants that are chosen based on their knowledge on the specific topic that is being studied (Rabiee, 2004).

After thorough desk research, we selected 10 participants who through their work showed prominence and authority in the topic of tourist/visitor wellbeing. The names of the participants are not disclosed; hence, pseudonyms are used to refer to them in the findings section. Participants were approached by telephone, informed about the research study and asked to participate in it for which they expressed interest. We opted for conducting an online focus group via Zoom because participants were in different parts of Croatia. The aim of the study was clearly explained to them and we obtained their consent for recording the conversation. The focus group lasted about two hours. The recording of the focus group was transcribed verbatim in Croatian and then translated into English by a bilingual

speaker. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the textual data. As a first step, we read the transcripts multiple times, which enabled us to familiarise ourselves with the data. We then used open coding to record the key observations, which were then grouped into initial codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As a subsequent step, we engaged in identifying key themes. Finally, evocative quotations best representing each theme were chosen to illustrate the findings.

## Findings

The research findings are presented thematically to answer the three research questions. Firstly, we report on the role of museums and their future in promoting tourist wellbeing and transformation. Subsequently, the internal and external factors for the design of wellbeing and transformative museums experiences are presented. Lastly, we address the role of emotions in fostering wellbeing and transformative museum experiences.

### The future of museums

The findings indicate that, according to the Croatian experts, the future of museums will bring three types of transformations: transformation of the museums, transformation of the local communities and transformation of the visitors. In other words, the study participants have emphasised that museums' role in society is becoming increasingly polyvalent. Although work in New Museology has already explained the social and political role of museums (Desvallées & Mairesse, 2010), our results show that the role of museums is extending to new fields of activities (e.g. in health generation). At the outset, museums will need to adapt to visitors' needs and wants and develop new functions by focusing on the contemporary topics that are prone to foster personal growth because personal transformation is becoming the goal of most tourist activities. This view is expressed by Ana in the following quote:

Throughout history, the role of museums have changed, museums must adapt to the current times. The modern role of museums seems to be that museums must be much more active in the local community and more dynamic. Museums need to maintain some basic functions of preservation, heritage collection, but also develop some new functions. This means that they cannot remain only a conservator of the past, but that they need to participate in social reality. Museums must be co-creators of reality.

In addition, museums will have to offer real-life and virtual experiences that promote transformation and wellbeing in tourists. Museums will have to be the place where authenticity can be experienced, the place where visitors cannot experience it anywhere else in the World. Museums will also need to engage in the creation of a virtual museum space where

visitors can interact with the museum before, during and after the visit. This virtual space is likely to stimulate longer-term engagement, which may potentially lead to personal transformation. Due to shifting visitor trends, our research participants anticipate virtual spaces to become essential. Indeed, new generations of visitors, who are well-versed in technologies, are also more likely to seek virtual experiences than older generations. To illustrate this point, Sofia stated:

So, people come to us once or occasionally, and I think that today technology allows us to create a space where we will attract them before and keep them later, where we will enable them to interact, contribute, participate, belong, and thus raise that experience to a higher level. Where we will be able to prepare and influence them even after they have bought a ticket to our museum. A space that is available 24/7 and where they can contribute. I think that should be the future. We must prepare for new generations, for a completely new type of audience. For an audience that consumes content in a completely different way than what we are used to, and I think we will have to adapt to that. The approach with interactivity is not enough for the period ahead.

By designing museum experiences that are attractive, museums can also transform local communities (and tourist offerings). In other words, when museum experiences are designed to appeal to the new wave of travellers seeking entertaining and enriching experiences, museums can significantly boost tourism in the area, resulting in various benefits, such as increased job opportunities and the production of related products and services. One of the ways to achieve this is through opening craft and eco-museums, which are museums that function as interpretation centres for specific areas of interest (e.g. museum of toys, museum of broken relationships, museum of chocolate). These specialised museums would provide several advantages. First and foremost, they would cater to the diverse interests of modern travellers, appealing to those who are looking for unique and intellectually stimulating experiences during their visit. By offering engaging and immersive exhibits, museums would attract a broader range of tourists. Local businesses, such as restaurants, shops and accommodation providers may experience a boost in revenue, ultimately contributing to the economic wellbeing of the community. Furthermore, these museums could stimulate the development of spin-off products and initiatives. For example, a museum dedicated to toys might inspire the production of unique, locally-made toys. At the same time, museums would contribute to enhancing social cohesion by bringing local community members together, united around the same idea. This view is reflected upon by Lucia:

Ivana's house of fairy tales is the (craft) museum that makes people come to Ogulin; that museum transformed the whole town because it brought people to an otherwise touristically neglected town. The transformation



that this museum has brought to the local community and to generations of children who grew up with its programs is wonderful. It meant a lot to inhabitants of Ogulin, for their creativity and self-awareness.

## Internal and external museum factors for transformation and wellbeing

Our analysis indicates that there are both internal and external factors that contribute to museums' capabilities to produce transformative experiences. Internal factors include museum staff, visitors, museum artifacts and exhibits and sustainability aspects around museum experiences. External factors include professional support, public authority support and the interest of the IT sector and other professions in working with museums.

### *Internal factors*

To increase visitors' wellbeing, museum staff will need to hone their interpretation and communication skills, which will be necessary to attract visitors, long before they visit the museum premises, as Philip put it:

...everyone is looking for some “wow effect” and what you have that would be interesting for them compared to, for example, Amsterdam or Athens. One must not lose one's identity, but tourists really want it to be either some good storytelling, or a short promo tool that conveys attractiveness and is easy to understand.

Furthermore, museum curators and managers should be educated about the variegated ways how to foster visitor wellbeing and transformation. Interdisciplinarity should be cultivated in the museum. It is no longer enough to have educated art curators who ‘grow their little garden, a bonsai of museum collection’. Today, as exemplified by Lukas in the following excerpt, museums need interdisciplinary teams of experts who together are able to produce a meaningful interpretive content:

What we need is absolute interdisciplinarity, we need psychologists, philosophers, filmmakers, playwrights. Interdisciplinarity that will raise all that we have mentioned from emotions and experiences to the level of that ultimately demanding audience that is spoiled more and more by everything. We cannot achieve the “wow effect” by ourselves, even if we are the biggest genius in the world, we still need a team of 10 people to generate the content.

Additionally, to design such museum experiences, it will also be necessary to have growth oriented and motivated museum staff whose ideas are supported by museum directors. This idea is reflected in the words of Jack: ‘So, if you have a young employee who is alive and kicking and starts something interesting and if he/she is lucky enough to have a director who



recognises it, then something can happen'. For transformational effects, museum visitors will need to be active participants. Also, museum experiences will need to be personalised, interactive, creative and should engage all the senses, as put forward by Maria:

Tourists are looking for transformation and well-being, they don't want to be passive observers but active participants, and in the future, we need to include them interactively. So, don't set up a museum fund that they then observe, but involve them interactively through workshops and programs that are out of the box. With someone who values heritage, it is necessary to value it in an interesting way.

Moreover, museums should enable tourists to learn new skills, which could be achieved through various workshops on authentic topics that are specific to the museum or its location. For instance, Susan stated:

The real demand of today's guest is that the guest wants to be an active observer, wants to master some new skills, and not just a cultural tourist. Today, the cultural tourist is not the same as (s)he was 5 years ago, it is not the same as it was 10 years ago. Standard tours are passé, something out of the box is required, some experience is required. The workshops offered in terms of sculpture, ceramics, painting and wine, clay and wine are incredibly successful. The market itself, the demand for such products shows us the importance and need for more of such products or experiences. It reveals [the need] to create workshops of this type as part of the museum. So, we are moving towards creative tourism.

Museums should also aim to become a more dynamic space, where tourists can experience various cultural domains. On the dynamism of museum spaces, Mark suggests that:

connecting several activities within the museum contributes to the dynamics. For example, museums can have a library and a concert hall. So, as a tourist, you can come here and see an exhibition, go to a concert, or read a book.

The content or the themes of museum exhibitions, when possible, should be focused on contemporary topics, which would allow visitors to learn about themselves. When this is possible, but also or especially when it is not, interpretation (e.g. interesting presentation and storytelling) may be the key to transformative museum experiences, an argument that is reflected in Jack's words:

...the focus of the museum should be contemporary topics, so curators should try to connect them in some way with museums and what they have inside, what they can give to their community and tourists. This is what tourists would come for, and after they return to their homes so that

they can feel that they have really been enriched in that museum, that they have learned something new, that in some way, this can make them at least a little bit better people.

When designing museum experiences for wellbeing and transformation, museums should consider crafting experiences that are sustainable in the long-term; therefore, a long-term strategy is necessary. In other words, museums should design exhibits and programs that can be consistently offered for an extended duration, recognising that such experiences may take time to be valued by visitors. Furthermore, these experiences should be deeply rooted in and reflect unique aspects of the local culture and its community. A sense of authenticity and a sense of connection to the local context would promote meaningful and long-lasting impressions among museum visitors. This view is articulated by Ana in the following quote:

For something to be authentic, the local population should definitely be involved in the sense of understanding how they see themselves, and not projecting something from the outside, that is, how we would like tourists to see them.

### *External factors*

To maximise the transformative potential of museum visits, museums would need outside support from professionals who could help them to recognise and seize opportunities for creating meaningful experiences. For instance, decision makers would need to provide support through policy frameworks; travel agencies would need to recognise museum experiences as valuable and enriching; and other professionals (e.g. from the IT sector) would need to develop some interest in working in or with museums. The need for outside support is clearly articulated by Ana and Philip in the following two excerpts:

The role of the profession is to encourage, to show the beauties that often people who work with such a heritage or live in those cities have no distance from and are not aware of whether it is worth or not. The role of the profession in such processes is to be a mirror and to say, “that’s wonderful” and help in certain managerial and professional tasks. But it would never be so effective if local people didn’t carry it.

You have to understand that when you are a curator in institutions, in a community, you cannot do it alone. Someone has to bless the program. It depends on the finances; you are not the last link. You may have an idea, but you cannot realize it unless someone above you endorses it. Even if someone above you blesses it, the tourist board and the city must also bless it.

### **The role of emotions in transformation**

The findings show that tourists have diverging motivations in terms of experiencing different emotions. While some tourists may be motivated to

visit a certain museum to feel solely positive emotions, some may also be motivated to experience negative emotions (e.g. sadness, grief), which often bring true enrichment and meaning to their life (e.g. visiting a memorial museum). Although emotions are deeply personal, museums may design spaces to facilitate specific emotional reactions (e.g. negative content may stimulate negative emotions, funny content may stimulate happy emotions). This variety of emotions sought after by museum visitors is asserted by Lukas:

What is important is what emotion that museum product wants to stimulate in the visitor, because every visitor goes on a trip with a certain demand for an answer to his own emotions and when he finds an answer to his emotions, in other words, when he recognizes within that promotional, virtual and digital work something that can respond to his inner need, he then engages with a specific cultural tourism product and it then remains in his memory, which produces a transformation. For example, a visit to a battlefield stimulates the emotion of glory, strength, and power. There are different emotions that each user wants to recognize and incite during his/her travel.

In addition, although some negative emotions may not be desirable for promoting a tourist experience, they are important ingredients in the tourist transformational process and in fostering wellbeing. Instead of avoiding negative emotions, museums should find creative ways to interpret and present difficult topics, as elaborated by Mark:

In terms of war tourism, you have to work on changing the narrative, on different storytelling, telling the story so that people want to see it, and not removing it from the list, so that experience is transformed from a trauma into something good that tourists will want to engage with and learn from.

Moreover, to foster transformative visitor experiences, emotions should be perceived to be authentic, in that these should reflect the local community's realities. This notion is explained by Susan: 'Because everything that is authentic somehow contains emotions, or collective emotions towards something, it is necessary for the museum to have a connection with the local community'. At the same time, some emotions should be collective emotions or universal emotions; emotions that are common to everyone across the World. The significance of conveying universal emotions is suggested by Sofia when she says:

It is precisely this emotion that can be globalized, that is, put into a global context. For example, the Museum of Broken Relationships is a familiar experience for all of us if we are from Africa or Europe. When you put that emotion in a global context, then you somehow bring it closer to the

visitors. You don't have to put your collection in a global context, but that emotion must be global and something that is close and common to all of us as humans.

## Discussion

The research findings have highlighted the polyvalent role of museums in promoting wellbeing and in transforming the very museums, their visitors as well as local communities. For museum transformation to happen, it seems necessary to mobilise compelling topics, which can be experienced both in real life settings and virtually. This idea is in line with the work of Aizpuru *et al.* (2021) who found that audiences expect welfare activities from museums. Virtual experiences are seen as specific spaces where visitors can engage before, during and after the visit, or even independently of the visit, which offer them opportunities for longer-term engagement, possibly leading to self-transformation. This is in line with a number of recent studies (e.g. Jelinčić & Senkić, 2019; Šveb Dragija & Jelinčić, 2022; Thomson *et al.*, 2018), which assert a trend towards achieving personal growth through museum experiences. The argument that museums of the future should also exist in the virtual sphere (e.g. in the Metaverse), leaving more time for engagement and reflection, is particularly relevant as virtual environments may transform not only visitors/tourists but also the very notion of what tourism is. While real life tourism experiences are usually short-lived, a deeper connection with a museum that would allow for transformation would be hardly achievable. Virtual engagement, however, offers time-wise a limitless engagement where a deeper meaning and reflection could lead to personal growth. This is concordant with Bowen and Giannini's claim (2019) that museums must be attuned to modern changes and embrace the digital environment for serious engagement with their audiences. However, in terms of offering virtual services to tourists, this is contradictory to the UNWTO (1995) definition of tourism, which qualifies tourism as travel away from home for more than 24 hours. This definition does not include virtual tourism experiences, which have gained prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic; thus, the reconceptualisation of what tourism is seems overdue. Our study also demonstrates that local communities may undergo a process of positive transformation through leveraging authenticity. For instance, by opening craft and eco-museums, which would display their own identity grounded stories, local communities would be put centre stage and benefit from a sense of pride in their heritage.

Based on our findings, the factors necessary for the successful promotion of museum-related transformation and tourist wellbeing entail (a) qualified and motivated staff (knowledge on wellbeing and transformation, good interpretation and communication skills) working in interdisciplinary teams (e.g. involving decision makers, travel agencies, IT sector,

psychologists, sociologists, etc.), (b) engaging museum activities (contemporary topics; personalised and authentic experiences promoting active participation, sensory and emotional engagement; skill-based activities), and (c) long-term museum strategic plans as to ensure sustainability. Our findings confirm the findings of previous studies by Binnie (2010), Chatterjee *et al.* (2009), Fenton (2013), Thomson *et al.* (2018) and Vogelpoel *et al.* (2013), which indicate that engaging museum activities are prerequisites for fostering visitor wellbeing and transformation. The argument that museums need leadership support for transformational experiences is concordant with Šveb Dragija and Jelinčić's (2023) study, who argue that when leaders support the development of museum employees, they create a culture of wellbeing, which, in turn, is essential for facilitating personal growth in visitors.

Lastly, the findings of this study stress the need for emotional elicitation in promoting transformation and wellbeing in museum visitors. In particular, our research participants have noted the important role of both positive and negative emotions in promoting transformation and wellbeing, which is in line with the findings of previous studies that have underscored the value of negative emotions in museum experience design (Jelinčić, 2020) and in fomenting transformative, eudaimonic tourism experiences (Šveb Dragija & Franić, 2023).

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the future role of museums in promoting wellbeing from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. It was found that museums, as physical places, will have a lesser role to play in serving temporary visitors (such as tourists today), but will assume a new role by serving local community members through transformational activities. The stakeholders that we have interviewed believe that visitor wellbeing and transformation will more likely to happen in the virtual-reality space (e.g. Metaverse museums), which will allow visitors to engage with exhibitions through extended periods of time. In Metaverse museum exhibitions, visitors will interact with computer-generated environments and with other like-minded users. These interactions may benefit visitors in various ways, such as by facilitating stress relief, self-realisation, self-actualisation and other wellbeing outcomes.

Three main factors are likely to impact the successful promotion of visitor wellbeing and transformation in museums. These are: qualified and motivated staff, engaging museum activities and long-term museum strategic plans. These factors reveal the creative, restorative and transformational turn in cultural heritage tourism. Thus, we envision new types of museums to emerge: besides the already well-established eco-museums, craft museums, creative museums, transformational and wellbeing museums will come to light. As already seen in some isolated cases

(Harper & Hamblin, 2010), and as discussed in the literature (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2009; Jelinčić & Senkić, 2019; Thomson *et al.*, 2018), such museums may offer focused art therapy programs, which will require longer visitor engagement in real or virtual environments. Experiences of wellbeing and transformation will not come about without some effort, dedication and the full engagement of the senses (Matteucci, 2022). Therefore, the importance of emotions (both positive and negative) in museum experiences seems unquestionable; in particular, the role of authentic and universal emotions will be prominent in future museum experience design. In the future, the museums which will focus on promoting wellbeing and transformation may be referred to as *eudaimonic museums*.

While promoting wellbeing and transformation is currently en vogue, a future challenge, however will be to measure visitor wellbeing and transformation in the museum context. The mere application of visitor satisfaction scales, albeit a ubiquitous approach, is not adequate for appraising transformation. Given that new generations and types of visitors will emerge, research that seeks to renew our understanding of the needs of various museum audiences will be necessary. Indeed, as suggested by Matteucci *et al.* (2022), if the future of cultural tourism will be heterotopian, in that clusters of rebellious consumers will seek ethical, emancipatory experiences, out-of-the-norm museum experiences will need to be sensitively designed. Furthermore, in the future, we can expect that Metaverse museums will measure the number of engaged virtual tourists, the duration and levels of their engagement as well as their returning visits. Such activities will require long-term planning, collaborative work within interdisciplinary teams, reconceptualisation of the tourism definition alongside innovative museum and tourism policy frameworks. In short, museum operations, strategies and governance structures will need to be changed if museums want to stimulate visitor emotions, and serve as spaces for visitor transformation.

The data presented in this chapter stems from a small number of research participants, which is a limitation of the current study. Although the informants are experts in the fields of museum and cultural tourism, their views narrowly reflect the Croatian context. Future studies may cover different geographical areas with more participants and using alternative research designs. Finally, it is worth noting that future empirical studies should examine the view, expressed by some research participants, that virtual experiences would allow longer-term engagement with museums, which in turn would foster wellbeing and possible transformation in visitors.

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