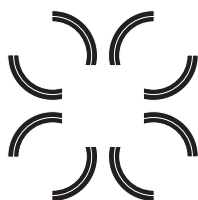# Archaeological Displays and the Public

Museology and Interpretations

Edited by Paulette M. McManus

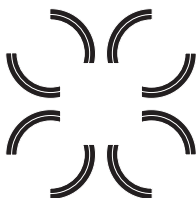SECOND EDITION

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISPLAYS AND THE PUBLIC

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Museology and Interpretation

edited by Paulette M. McManus

Second Edition

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Contents

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Jenny Hall is Roman Curator in the Department of Early London History and Collections at the Museum of London. A classicist by degree, she has worked for the museum for over 25 years. She is responsible for the Roman collections and for the Roman London Gallery, refurbished in 1996. She played a major role in the museum's temporary exhibition, High Street Londinium, where archaeological evidence had to be translated into full-scale reconstructions of Roman buildings. She has gained considerable experience of interpreting Roman London to a wide audience, the school Roman box scheme being one facet of public accessibility.

Sally MacDonald is manager of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College London. Since 1980 she has worked in regional and community museums in England, mostly with social history and decorative art collections. She set up and ran the museum and heritage service in Croydon, which opened to the public in 1995. She sits on the Heritage Lottery Fund's Expert Panel for museums, libraries and archives, on the Registration Committee for Resource, and on the Museums Association's Professional Development Committee. Her current research interests include public attitudes to Ancient Egypt and the role of object handling in stimulating learning.

Carolyn MacLulich B.Ed (Hons), M.Litt (Mus Studies) is Head of the Division of Education at the Australian Museum in Sydney, Australia. She is principally involved with exhibition and program policy and development. Carolyn has been at the Museum since 1986. She has tertiary qualifications in education and anthropology, and a master's degree in museum studies, focusing on public program accessibility and exhibition text production. Carolyn has been Vice President of Museums Australia NSW, a Board member for the Museum Studies course at University of Sydney, and a member of the Museums Advisory Committee to the NSW Minister for the Arts.

Paulette McManus has worked as a consultant specialising in the interface between visitors and museums and heritage sites since 1983. She has worked for many national and municipal museums and sites in Britain and abroad. Since 1994, she has also been a part-time lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, where she teaches Museum Communication and Heritage & Site Interpretation to post graduate students and supervises doctoral research into museum and heritage issues.

Jordi Pardo is the Chief Executive of IKONOS CULTURAL SL., Barcelona – a company that designs and develops heritage projects. At the time of writing he was the Managing Director of

the Centre for the Contemporary Culture of Barcelona. He wrote of his recent experience as the Director of the Organisme Autonom Conjunt Monumentes d'Empuries (OACME). An archaeologist by training he also has postgraduate business school qualifications in Public Administration and Management. Throughout his career he has also been a lecturer in Museum Studies at the Universities of Gerona and Barcelona.

Greg Richards obtained a PhD in geography from University College London. He founded the European Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) in 1991. With ATLAS he has led many EU-funded projects in the fields of tourism education, cultural tourism, sustainable tourism, tourism employment and ICT in tourism. He is currently a lecturer in leisure studies at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. His main research interest is cultural tourism, and he has edited volumes on *Cultural Tourism in Europe* (1996) and *European Tourism and Cultural Attractions* (2001).

Elaine Sansom is the Director of South East Museums Service, the museum and gallery development agency for the south east of England. She is currently the Secretary of ICOM UK and is the external examiner for the University of Newcastle Museum Studies course. With a degree in archaeology and postgraduate qualifications in museum studies and management, she has worked in field archaeology in the UK and Sri Lanka, in the local authority museum sector in the UK – most recently as Director of Watford Museum and Art Gallery, and as a lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology.

Carol Scott is Manager of Evaluation and Audience Research at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney Australia. She is President of the Evaluation and Visitor Research Special Interest Group and also a member of the Museums Australia National Council.

David Simmons is Director of Visitor Services and Senior Archaeologist at Old Sturbridge Village, where he has worked since 1982. He assists in the direction of ongoing archaeological fieldwork and directs the museum's program of audience research. He holds a BA in Anthropology and History from Duke University, and an MA in American Civilization from the University of Pennsylvania, where he is also a doctoral candidate in Historical Archaeology.

Jim Specht MA, PhD, FAHA, head of the Division of Anthropology, joined the Australian Museum in 1971. Since then his interests have been primarily focused on the Pacific Islands, both as an archaeologist working in Papua New Guinea, and in cultural heritage matters more generally. Between 1974 and 1983 he was a member of the advisory committee to the Minister for Foreign Affairs on cultural assistance programs in the Pacific Islands. Jim has also served on the Australian National Commission for UNESCO, and is a fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities.

Hedley Swain is Head of Early London History and Collections at the Museum of London. He was previously Finds Manager with the Museum of London Archaeology Service. He has done much work on archaeological archives and providing public access to them.

Foreword

Peter Ucko

Many illustrious academic archaeologists have stressed the importance of the principle of communicating to the wider public lessons gained from archaeological investigations. In practice, however, few of them have tried to do so themselves, except as part of their normal university teaching activities, or occasionally within an adult or continuing education lecture. In fact, communicating archaeological results to non-archaeologists is a complex matter, often raising some fundamental questions about the very nature of archaeological enquiry. After all, it often turns out that it is even difficult to decide what exactly the messages are which should be widely disseminated.

Like any healthy discipline, archaeology is also continuously engaged in re-examining its own disciplinary assumptions and methodologies; currently in a world-wide context it is debating whether the ongoing emphasis on a culture-historical framework for interpreting the past is really the most suitable one. In the choice of what is to be presented in museum displays or highlighted in site signage and tourist guides, culture-history retains its domination almost everywhere. Since many of the attempts to gain a wider audience – to inform the public about the past – are often tied to activities aimed at preserving the physical remains of the past, such attempts are often overtly based on appeals to a public's claimed pedigree, whether in terms of overt nationalism, regionalism or ethnic identity. Site and museum visits, therefore, often have an inbuilt tendency to reinforce culture-historical preconceptions and stereotypes.

Furthermore, it is frequently an impossibly complex and daunting task first to attempt to identify, and then to attempt to remove from any archaeological messages, all the encumbrances of gender bias, racial or ethnic preconception, and subjective evaluation based on assumed degrees of technological progress, which have, relatively recently, come to be recognised as some of the pitfalls of past archaeological interpretations. It is vital, however, that these issues are tackled, even though archaeology is at a particularly difficult moment in its development. In fact, the current difficulties facing archaeological interpretation emerge particularly clearly in the context of discussions about the exact nature of the archaeologists' responsibility to the wider public, whether that public be the adult, free to enjoy a vacation and to visit museums and archaeological sites, or the captive child, forced to study the past and take examinations about it. The real problem lies not only in deciding what messages about the past should be communicated, but also how 'meaning' should be 'explained' to others.

No wonder that archaeology itself is in a mood of self-analysis. Arguably, for example, it is more difficult attractively to present the past as unknown territory, than it is to equate the material remains of the past with identifiable human groups, or with dateable events such as battles or the history of the building of particular structures. The very real problem arises that in divesting itself of unwanted baggage as a result of its self-analysis, archaeology may alienate itself from its wider public. To do so could all too easily spell the end of any social, public role for the past in the present, with archaeology returning to being merely the intellectual pastime of a small elite.

Given the importance, therefore, of communicating successfully about the past with the wider public, it is all the more surprising to realise how little research has been undertaken which is

relevant to the question of how best to communicate about the past. Much of the discussion to date has been at the level of assertion and untested belief. For example, although it is popular to assert that hands-on experience is attractive to both young and old, there has been almost no informed discussion, within the archaeological context, as to what such 'direct' experience of the past is intended to achieve. Although it may be clear that students remember more about the past through hands-on learning, it is not known what it is they 'remember'. There is no in-depth research which seeks to investigate whether the knowledge of a past acquired in this way – by constructing one's own mud house, by making pots, or by using objects of the past – creates a past that is 'concrete' or tangible in a way that is different from that acquired without such hands-on experience. Still less is there any concrete evidence to show whether such an approach to teaching about the past removes some of the biases nowadays believed to be inherent in many of the existing attempts to create a story about the past from archaeological material evidence. It can easily be argued that because the people of the past were different from the people of today, and since they worked in very different contexts and cultural environments from our own, even when teaching through the use of past technologies, the instructor is – inevitably – merely creating a contemporary experience which relates to current interpretations of past processes.

Most archaeologists recognise a variety of important lessons which they hope can be demonstrated to a wider public. One of the problems is that these lessons may vary in their intensity – or even in the significance of their message – depending on the contemporary social and cultural context of those destined to receive the message(s) at any particular moment. There can be no doubt about the potential significance of the matters under discussion: they include encouraging pride in the past, recognising the longevity of tradition, stressing the complexities and ingenuity of those who have gone before. But, quite apart from the particular contexts within which these messages may be received and interpreted, archaeology may not currently be the most suitable vector of such matters, at the very moment that the discipline itself struggles to recognise and express the subjectivity of much of its own interpretation, and attempts to make explicit any biases or hidden agendas both of those who accumulated archaeological data and those who subsequently interpreted them.

Archaeologists are becoming more and more aware that archaeological evidence has often been used to 'fabricate' a (or, the) past that is the most appropriate one for those in power, for those with nationalistic aspirations, or for those seeking to establish pedigrees for their ethnic identities. As a result the realisation is growing that basic research to assess the most effective way(s) to disseminate such information is of fundamental importance. That such realisation is at least in the making is seen from current archaeological criticisms of the contextual nature of western-based museum collecting and display, and criticisms of the way that a particular 'frozen' moment in time is often arbitrarily selected, captured and presented to the public at (and often, as) an archaeological site. Despite the welcome growth in ways of enlivening museum and site visits, and attempts to combine entertainment with education, many of the significant questions, as this publication makes clear, still remain relatively under-researched and therefore poorly understood.

A final problem confronting those responsible for the future of the presentation of the past concerns the need for a fundamental revolution, whereby the use of the archaeological past is wrested away from those who control it from their positions of authority. Frequently, the current situation has resulted either in the physical evidence of the past being forcibly isolated from any living investment by the present, or has resulted in the knowledge about the past being made inaccessible to all but the privileged. Often somebody appears to have decided that the past is too important a commodity to allow its archaeological evidence to become a playground for all; somebody – and it may often have been an archaeologist – appears to have decided that archaeological interpretation should remain the preserve of those in positions of influence who

claim to 'know' the past, to have the right to preserve aspects of it, and who deny the possibility that its ongoing vitality should be allowed to result in re-interpretation of a site, or in modification of a monument's outward characteristics – or even, sometimes, in the actual destruction of a relic. No wonder, therefore, that archaeology currently is often perceived by the public as representing a conservative and anti-development stance, the epitome of those forces which they consider to be against 'progress'. Of course, in many western contexts at least, this is one of the reasons for its attractiveness.

Given the complexity of the current contexts within which the past is to be interpreted and displayed to public audiences, it is all the more vital that heritage presentation is undertaken not only within a clear realisation of the aims(s) of re-presenting the past at all, but also with all the above potential complications in mind. Gone are the days when it could simply be claimed that objects 'on display' will speak for themselves, unaided by contextual or other educative information easily accessible to the visitor; today's world is more aware of the deficiencies of past attempts to display archaeology to public audiences. Nowadays the world should demand the right to know that museum and site presentation practice is embedded in reliable research about its audience, both in terms of the public's expectations and how best to communicate with the public in the context of such expectations, and in terms of the most up-to-date baggage-free interpretations of the evidence from the past.

In short, therefore, although it would be easy simply to demand that archaeological evidence, and archaeological interpretation, should be well presented to the public, such an apparently simple conclusion would amount to deceit. The 21st century aim must be to encourage intelligent discrimination, by the onlooker, between alternative 'explanations' of the past. For the archaeologist to afford the evidence to enable such public discrimination demands the highest level of archaeological skills.

Peter Ucko
Director
Institute of Archaeology, UCL
June 2000

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Introduction

Paulette McManus

In the four years since the first edition of *Archaeological Displays and the Public* was published I have witnessed heritage professionals moving towards an intense focus on matters related to the audience for heritage interpretations. People here in Europe, the Americas and in Australia have been asking questions such as 'Who is in my audience? What do they need or like? How can we create a new audience? What does our audience think of us?' Accordingly, this second edition has replaced five chapters with six new ones which reflect such current audience preoccupations more closely. A core of six chapters relating to perennial concerns is retained from the first edition.

   Preparing any museological interpretation, on any subject, for the public is a difficult task, made doubly difficult for archaeologists because of the added complications of dealing with the problematical concepts of time long past, of authenticity, of provisional professional interpretation, and, additionally, those of cultural identity and nationhood. Trying to employ visitor research based understandings of the audience when preparing communications for the people who make leisure visits to sites and museums while at the same time avoiding the pitfalls of trivialisation is a daunting assignment.

   Intellectual access to an informed sense of the past and the continuation and variety of human life lies at the heart of all archaeological interpretations for the public. This has particular relevance for the average visitor who will very likely use a mental framework of time past and lives led from which to interrogate communications prepared for them, whether or not they were intended to do so by those who prepared the communication.

   The papers gathered here are not intended to represent ideals of best practice – good practice is so dependent on context – nor are they intended to cover every aspect of the interface between archaeology and the public. Rather, they report on current, or recent, areas of high communicative activity in the field of heritage interpretation for the public in Britain and abroad. Collectively, they have in common evidence of enthusiasm for accommodating the communicative needs of the public while maintaining high levels of archaeological and anthropological integrity. Some of the projects reported on are long term, some could be adapted for use elsewhere in a few weeks, some are costly, some are distinctly low budget. The intention is that they should serve as a source of inspiration and information for those preparing archaeological communications about any period anywhere in the world.

The institutional setting

At the institutional level, most museums and heritage sites rely either on income from payments on entry or allocations of funding according to audience size and , increasingly, diversity, for financial independence or survival. Therefore, being able both to give a description and to demonstrate a deep understanding of an audience to a particular institution could be seen as a managerial obligation. Most museums and heritage sites, no matter what their size, welcome large numbers of domestic and foreign tourists, particularly during peak spring, summer and winter holiday periods. Tourists can commonly make up more than half of a visiting audience. However, strangely, very few institutions appear to see such cultural tourists as a, if not the, major part of their audience and

so do not attempt to describe them clearly as a segment. For example, in Britain, where institutions conduct audience surveys (and not all do), they are still likely to exclude those visitors who are non-English speaking from questionnaire samples. A new chapter should help reluctant investigators to frame appropriate questions to ask of their tourists. Greg Richards provides a well-researched view of heritage tourism from within the broader field of European cultural tourism that helps us to think more perceptively about responding to the background and experiences of those who visit from far away. Working with others in the European Association for Tourism and Leisure Education, he has studied cultural tourism in Europe for almost a decade and provides an expert view on the motivations which drive tourists to visit museums and sites.

The remaining chapters in this section are retained from the first edition. They describe successful adherence over many years to visions which required much attitudinal change within quite large institutions. Having the will to change something is important. Perceiving how to change the motivational atmosphere of an institution and its management structure so that change can be allowed to take proceed is a visionary process. Together, these three papers can be mined for a model for change processes.

Jordi Pardo is an unusual archaeologist in that he has also been to business school. He describes the centralised administrative context which had to be replaced with a more entrepreneurial management model in order to turn a somewhat moribund, but important, Mediterranean archaeological site into a very successful, almost self-financing, archaeological park in which high levels of archaeological research, preservation and dissemination are now enthusiastically conducted. In describing the organisational framework he devised, he gives an overview of the many activities that were developed in the four years after the vision of change was first enunciated. Furthermore, he articulates the driving force behind the project – the social dimension of archaeology.

Living history museums are very popular in the USA. David Simmons, another archaeologist, tells how the introduction, over twenty years ago, of archaeologists to a team of research historians at a New England living history museum was accepted because colleagues found that the contributions of the archaeologists were advantageous, compatible with their concerns and produced observable results in that they improved the quality of historical presentations to the public. He provides details of a recent excavation project that fed its findings directly into the living history interpretation provided for visitors. Interestingly, he describes how the interpreters take part in excavations and how the archaeologists often rely on the interpreters' expertise and experience (of using a similar location as a base for interpretation to the public) to locate or interpret patterns of former activity on an excavation site.

Archaeological activity can unearth objects which belonged to people. The descendants of those people, whether biological or cultural, naturally have an interest in such objects. When objects are collected by anthropologists, the same interest of 'cultural stakeholders' applies. Talking from a museum context and looking back over nearly three decades, Jim Specht and Carolyn MacLulich describe the manner in which exterior social and political forces initially impinged upon their institution causing it, first, to react to outside forces and, gradually, to adopt a proactive, leading stance in matters, including repatriation, related to working with indigenous peoples. They indicate that possession of artefacts from the cultural past of peoples involves the museum with present-day representatives of that culture. They also illustrate the manner in which acceptance of this philosophy has affected their museum's mission, exhibition and employment policies.

Archaeology Indoors: Museum Exhibitions

All the three chapters in this section are new. They illustrate the driving forces of the current audience focus since one describes positioning to create an additional, new audience, another the

desire to make collections accessible rather than remain in store while the last considers the fine grain of an appropriate language for written texts for a general audience.

University museums and collections have traditionally been under-funded, often neglected and one suspects, almost forgotten. Sally MacDonald has recently been appointed as the Manager of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College London, at a time of innovative development of the administration of UCL's very varied collections. She describes the changing relationship of the museum with its parent institution as she develops plans towards serving a general public as well the Petrie Museum's traditional specialist, scholarly audience. Her plans are based on audience research, marketing and outreach projects.

Jenny Hall and Hedley Swain describe a truly ambitious outreach project which will maximise public access to the Museum of London's Archaeological Archive while creating a new, off-site, audience for its nationally important Roman archaeological collection. The plan is to eventually provide a 'mini-museum' of Roman material to over two thousand schools – every state and special school in greater London. Naturally, such a project requires much thought and planning. We are given a full history of the project and its development up to the stage where two hundred 'mini-museum' boxes were distributed for an evaluated pilot scheme earlier this year.

My own paper considers written communications for museums and heritage sites. In it the concern is to influence the attitude of the text writer to the job in hand in a manner that will increase confidence and provide a sense of autonomy. A communications-based model for text writers is provided along with suggested guidelines for text writing. Importantly, the feasibility of testing and adjusting written texts, intended for a future audience, at the time of writing is illustrated with descriptions of three formative evaluations conducted in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Archaeology Outdoors: Site Interpretation and Education

Two chapters replace others in this section to join those on live interpretation, audio-tours and guidebooks. The new chapters are concerned with the public's perception of the identity of an institution and the role that conservation measures can play in site interpretation.

Site interpretation can be difficult for a myriad reasons ranging from the need to respect the sensitivity of a landscape setting, especially that of a large, ancient site with little in the way of ancient features remaining, to restrictions imposed by the conservation of an historic fabric which is, for the most part, complete. Site museums and visitor centres are not always a feasible interpretation solution for archaeological site managers because of their establishment and maintenance costs, their physical impact on the atmosphere of the site and an imperfect balance between what there is to see and what can be said about it. From the visitor's point of view, anything other than an overview given at a centre at the start of a visit is disadvantageous since a decontextualised memory task is imposed because the visitor must leave the source of information to contemplate its subject. For this reason, three chapters in this section describe 'portable' means of giving visitors a certain depth of information at appropriate places on site.

Before the visitor can enjoy such provisions he or she must be motivated to visit. Such motivation is very likely to be based on a perception of what the site is about and an impression of the nature of the people who run it. These factors contribute to an image of 'identity' for the site. In marketing parlance the 'identity' is the 'brand'. In Britain, the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside (NMGM), an umbrella organisation responsible for seven museums and galleries around Liverpool, has recently begun a branding investigation which involves surveys and interviews with a range of stakeholders from staff, at all levels, to members of the public. The intent is to describe the NMGM to itself and its public in a coherent way. Also, Sir Neil Cossons,

just prior to taking up his new position as chief executive of English Heritage, recently spoke at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, of the need to 'brand' that heritage organisation. Often nationally scheduled archaeological sites and heritage buildings are controlled by such centrally organised structures and it occurs to me that it is the individual site which requires to have an identity in the mind of potential visitors rather than the bureaucratic centre. The identity of a site can easily be swamped by that of the organisation or trust that controls it. Accordingly, I have included in this section Carol Scott's chapter on the branding investigations undertaken at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. She writes about a museum situation but she also writes about a single institution, a sole destination. Her explanations and descriptions of the survey work she undertook may inspire, and will inform, site managers and planners about a current trend in the heritage sector.

Elaine Sansom provides an invaluable taxonomy, and an exhaustive summary of the advantages and pitfalls, of the field of live interpretation at archaeological sites. Her report helps to put the work described by David Simmons (in the first section) into the broader context of a movement which, starting in the USA, has gained much acceptance in Britain. She points to the recent emergence of this form of rather costly site interpretation; the reasons, including ready public appreciation, behind its adoption; and the assumptions, untested by visitor study research, behind its acceptance as a justifiable and reliable form of site interpretation. Her chapter is also interesting in that it points to the difference between market research inspired 'promotion' and communicatively intended 'interpretation' and, hence, lays out an agenda for research on the impact of live interpretation on visitors. She also provides an example of 'best practice' that integrates various approaches to live site interpretation into a themed programme which varies over an annual period.

I suspect that, for many members of the public, the identity of a national heritage service, be it similar to the British National Trust or to English Heritage, is tied in with the way such organisations require most of the buildings and sites in their care, and their facilities such as cafes and shops, to be conserved or presented in a particular manner or to a particular standard. A site can easily lose its individuality under such regimes. When this happens it becomes very difficult to provide a site-relevant communication which has impact for the visitors. What is seen and said seems very similar to what has been seen and said elsewhere. At the beginning of the 1990s focus groups were conducted with people who lived around Brodsworth Hall, Yorkshire, in order to gather information that would help English Heritage to plan its presentation. The furnishings and decoration of the house, which had just been taken into care, showed advanced stages of gentle decay. The local people were entranced by the 'time warp' quality of a tour through the grand rooms and abandoned Victorian kitchens. Their response helped to confirm a proposal to present the site 'as found' rather than restore it to the appearance it might have had when all inside was new. Presenting a site 'as found' is difficult but has the twin advantages of confirming the individuality of the site while powerfully evoking the visitor's imagination. Glyn Coppack has adjusted a paper he wrote for a differing audience to give an account of the recent conservation of Wigmore Castle, Herefordshire, 'as found' so that it is now presented evocatively to visitors as a 'proper ruined castle'. He reminds us that conservation initiatives can have a very powerful interpretive effect.

Brian Bath wrote from his considerable experience with audio-tours when head of Design and Interpretation at English Heritage, an organisation which looks after over 350 historic buildings and monuments throughout England that are open to the public. His detailed descriptions of specific projects make clear the interpretive concepts and principles behind the use of the recorded word in heritage communication. Detailed criteria – costs, demands on staffing, housing, reliability, user-friendliness, visitor volume, flexibility – to be used when considering the use of particular

systems are given. This chapter has not been updated to indicate the very latest technology for carrying audio-tours because the technology which can be used to do so is changing and diversifying so fast so an update would soon be out of date. Only yesterday I heard that the London Canal Museum has prepared a 'WAP-walk' guide for use along the canal that leads to the museum which visitors can access using their own WAP-enabled mobile phones.

Guidebooks, with their echoes of travellers' reports and the European 18th-century grand tour, are a taken for granted and much maligned form of site interpretation. However, it is still possible to visit sites of World Heritage Site quality, especially, I find, around the Mediterranean, which offer no site interpretation at all – not even an overview panel with a map in the car park. At such sites the visitor is heavily reliant on the pre-purchase of a guidebook since they are often, unforgivably, not available on site. My chapter reports on a survey of what guidebook users like to find in a guidebook and the manner in which they are used.

Increased archaeological activity, combined with local and national interest, and mass tourism, will ensure that many more archaeological exhibitions and sites will be opened to the public in the future. The audiences for these interpretations will be more educated in a general sense and, increasingly, more sophisticated in appreciating the use of communication media than former audiences for archaeological displays. This is a challenging situation. The papers gathered here indicate that an attitude which engenders a strong drive to provide high levels of public service to the recipients of archaeological interpretations will be likely to give satisfaction to professionals and public alike.

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Cultural Tourism

Greg Richards

To all intents and purposes, museums can be regarded as one of the cornerstones of cultural tourism. Museums have long played an important role in presenting the history and culture of nations or regions to visitors. In recent years cultural attractions have also come to be viewed as an essential means of attracting visitors to urban and rural destinations worldwide. In 1997, 17% of domestic tourists in the UK visited heritage sites of which museums are the largest category. For overseas tourists, the figure rises to 37%. In major European cities tourists can be even more important. In Amsterdam, for example, 75% of museum visitors are tourists (AUB, 1996).

However, the very word 'attraction' is laden with a major semantic problem – it tends to suggest that the museum can somehow act as a magnet for visitors. Just open the doors, and the visitors will flood in. However, as Leiper (1990) has pointed out, the idea of an attraction is misleading – tourists are in fact 'pushed' towards attractions by their own motivations, not magically drawn by some invisible force within the attraction.

Attracting more visitors therefore depends on knowing the visitor and their needs. Many museums know their local audience quite well, but many have little idea of the wider European visitor market. Recent research in the UK by the Museums and Galleries Commission revealed that 25% of museums do not know how many foreign tourists they receive. Only 20% of museums had participated in seminars and workshops on international customers during the past three years. More significantly, only 20% of UK museums outside London have a strategy for attracting foreign tourists. UK museums are not unusual in this respect – in fact they are probably more aware of tourism markets than many of their continental counterparts.

This chapter examines the cultural tourism market, and the position of museums as major suppliers of cultural tourism experiences.

Cultural tourism – hope or hype?

Cultural tourism has been adopted as an element of tourism policy by national and regional governments in all corners of the world. Cultural tourism is popular with policy-makers because it supposedly attracts high-quality, high-spending tourists and at the same time provides economic support for culture. Increasing interest in tourists on the part of cultural attractions is to some extent due to necessity, and also due to the fact that cultural tourism is seen as a major growth market. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) for example has quoted cultural tourism as accounting for 37% of global tourism, with growth rates of 15% per year. According to the European Heritage Group, attendance at museums, historical monuments and archaeological sites has doubled between 1977 and 1997 (European Commission, 1998). In the UK, it was estimated that cultural tourism accounted for 27% of tourism earnings, and in 1997, over 400 million visits to tourist attractions were culturally based (Leslie, forthcoming).

In other cases, however, actual growth has lagged behind the high-blown expectations. Recent data indicate that cultural attractions have not increased their attendances as a

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proportion of all visits to tourist attractions. Figures on attraction attendance in the UK, for example, show an average growth in attraction visits of 15% between 1989 and 1997, compared with a 9% increase for historic properties and 14% for museums and galleries (Table 1). As a proportion of total visits, museums and galleries slipped from 23.1% in 1991 to 19% in 1997, and historic properties grew slightly from 19.1% to 20% over the same period. Longer term trends for England indicate a slower growth rate for cultural attractions between 1976 and 1991, with historic properties (+24%) and museums and galleries (+23%) lagging behind the growth for all attractions (+35%).

Why do the attendances at individual museums not seem to match up to the apparent high rate of total market growth? One explanation might be that many museums either do not consider themselves to be in the tourism market, or even if they do, they do not promote themselves effectively to that market. Another potential explanation is, however, that the growing supply of cultural attractions in recent years means that there is growing competition for cultural visitors. This is certainly true for the European market as a whole, as Figure 1 indicates.

Attraction type	Constant sample	Total market
Farms	+65	+71
Visitor centres	+17	+55
Gardens	+26	+28
Country parks	+22	+23
Workplaces	+15	+15
Museums and galleries	+11	+14
Leisure parks	+6	+12
Historic properties	+8	+9
Steam railways	+7	+9
Wildlife attractions	-8	-1
Total	+11	+15

Table 1. Visitor trends at UK attractions 1989 to 1997 – % change.

Growing competition is a particular problem for museums, since the supply of museums has grown faster than that of most other cultural attractions. In Spain, for example, the number of museums has doubled in the last twenty years, largely thanks to a flourishing of regional museums in the post-Franco era. In Catalonia in particular the revival of national identity has had a strong influence on the development of new museums (Dodd, 1999). In the Netherlands, the supply of museums also doubled between 1975 and 1993 (de Haan, 1997). In the UK the supply of museums has also been strongly stimulated by regional development initiatives and more recently National Lottery funding. Some observers have even been prompted to ask if there are not already enough museums in the UK (Glancey, 1999).

In a period of increasing competition for visitors, the 'build it and they will come' philosophy (Richards, 1999a) is not enough – you need to be able to anticipate and meet the needs of the visitor. This in turn entails an understanding of the cultural tourism market and the different visitor segments it contains. The rest of this chapter examines the nature of cultural tourism, and goes on to look at the profile, motivations and behaviour of the cultural tourists.
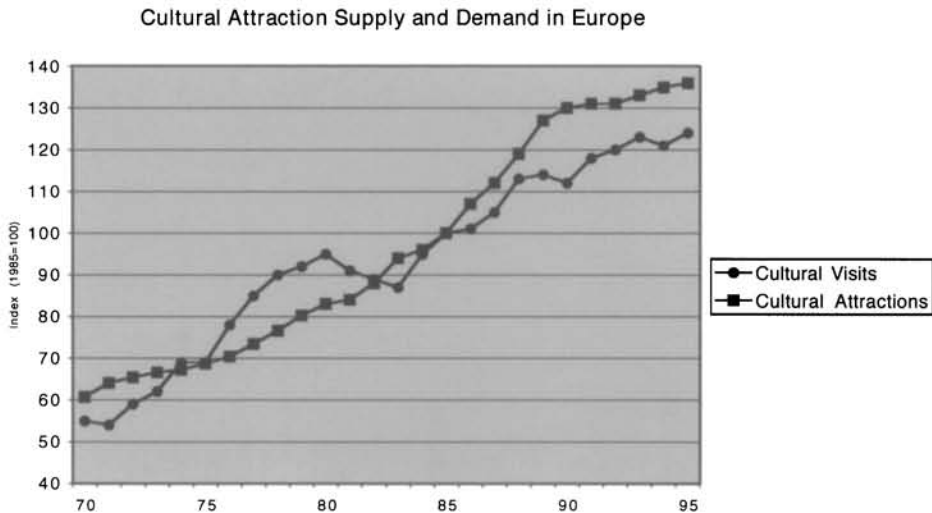
Cultural Attraction Supply and Demand in Europe

Fig.1. Growth of supply and demand for cultural attractions in Europe.

What is cultural tourism?

Cultural tourism is extremely difficult to define. There are over 300 different definitions of 'culture' in circulation, which indicates why no widely accepted definition of 'cultural tourism' has been produced in the past. This is not just a problem for tourism academics – policy documents across Europe tend to duck the issue of definition as well, tending to make the assumption that everybody knows what cultural tourism is. This explains the heterogeneous assortment of terms which have arisen in the literature and in policy statements in recent years. Cultural tourism, heritage tourism, arts tourism, ethnic tourism and a host of other terms seem to be almost interchangeable in their usage, but it is rarely clear whether people are talking about the same thing.

In order to try to clarify the meaning of cultural tourism, a conceptual definition was proposed by Richards (1996), based on the way in which tourists (people travelling away from home) consume culture. Culture can be viewed as comprising what people think (attitudes, beliefs, ideas and values), what people do (their 'way of life') and what people make (artworks, artifacts, cultural products). Culture is therefore composed of cultural processes and the products of those processes. Looking at culture in this way, cultural tourism is not just about visiting museums and monuments, which has tended to be the 'traditional' view of cultural tourism, but it also involves consuming the way of life of the areas visited. Both of these activities involve the collection of new knowledge and experiences. Cultural tourism can therefore be defined as: 'The movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs' (Richards, 1996). According to this conceptual definition, cultural tourism covers not just the consumption of the cultural products of the past, but also of contemporary culture or the 'way of life' of a people or region. Cultural tourism can therefore be seen as covering both the material culture found in museums and the 'living culture' of everyday life.

Although in the past most emphasis in the development of cultural tourism was placed on the

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development of museums and other heritage products, tourism based on 'popular culture' is now becoming an increasingly important part of the cultural tourism product. This partly reflects the broadening concept of culture being used by policy makers, which is increasingly encompassing 'popular' as well as traditional 'high culture'. Some artforms are also becoming more important because arts institutions are beginning to recognise the potential of tourism as a source of income, and partly because of the improved communications and distribution channels available through new technology, which are making arts events more accessible to tourists. Another important factor is the 'experience hunger' that increasingly characterises modern society (Shulze, 1992). People are increasingly looking for an 'experience' when they visit museums and other attractions. Museums have until recently not paid much attention to the visitor experience, and in consequence are losing out to 'new' heritage attractions designed to generate easily consumable experiences.

In order to study the development of cultural tourism, the European Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) launched its Cultural Tourism Research Project in 1992. Initially funded by DGXXIII of the European Commission, the project set out to analyse the cultural tourism market in Europe, and to develop a profile of the European cultural tourist. Reports of the initial phase of the research have been published elsewhere (Richards, 1996). A major feature of the research programme was a survey of visitors to cultural sites across Europe. Almost 6,500 visitors to 26 sites in 9 countries were interviewed in 1992, and the survey was repeated with over 8,000 visitors in 10 European countries in 1997 (Richards, 1998). A total of over 70 cultural sites across Europe has been surveyed, allowing a profile of cultural tourists to be constructed. Further research has been conducted in 1999/2000, expanding the scope to cover key marketing variables. The ATLAS research provides a valuable tool for assessing the cultural visitors market in Europe and examining the way in which cultural visitors experience museums and other cultural attractions.

Who are the cultural tourists?

The pressure on many museums to increase their visitor numbers and/or broaden their visitor profile means that it is important to know who their visitors are. Although many museums undertake surveys of their own visitors, these are very rarely comparable with research undertaken at other museums in the same country, let alone on a European basis. Museums therefore rarely have a clear picture of their own position in the national or international tourism market. The ATLAS research has helped to address this problem to some extent, by using the same research methodology at cultural institutions across Europe. Using these data a reasonable picture of the relationship between cultural tourists and museums can be developed.

One of the first findings to emerge from the ATLAS research was that there are significant differences between 'heritage tourism' and 'arts tourism', both of which are usually lumped together under the label of 'cultural tourism'. In general, heritage attractions such as museums and monuments tend to be more easily accessible and attract a broader audience than arts attractions. This reflects the higher level of 'cultural capital' required for visitors to understand or appreciate certain art forms, such as ballet or opera. Museums and monuments are therefore among the most accessible forms of cultural attraction, in spite of their reputation for lack of visitor-friendliness.

Comparing museums with other cultural attractions, clear differences in the visitor profile emerge. Museums tend to have a much broader appeal as far as tourists are concerned. Over a third of tourists visiting museums surveyed in Europe came from outside Europe, compared with 15% of tourists visiting other cultural attractions. Local residents accounted for only 16% of visitors to surveyed museums, although it should be noted that this high level of tourist visitation is typical of large museums in major cities, and not of museums in general.

Visitors to museums tended to be older than visitors to other sites. Over a third of museum visitors were aged 50 or over, compared with 22% of visitors to other cultural sites. This tends to support the argument that the growth of nostalgia is a particularly important factor in the expansion of demand for heritage tourism. Arts attractions in particular tend to appeal to a younger audience, with a particularly high proportion of student visitors.

The older age profile for museum visitors explains why museums have more visitors with a secondary or further education than other cultural sites. The expansion of higher education in recent decades means that younger visitors generally have higher educational qualifications. This also accounts to some extent for their higher level of cultural capital and their subsequent ability to consume arts attractions. In spite of these differences, the proportion of museum visitors with a higher education qualification is still almost double the European Union average, and the proportion of visitors with a postgraduate education is just as high as for other sites. This underlines the fact that museum visitors are better educated than the population as a whole.

High education levels mean that museum visitors also tend to have high status occupations, with almost 60% having managerial or professional jobs. Museum visitors are almost exclusively 'white collar' workers, with less than 20% in manual or unskilled jobs. The indications are that the museum audience is dominated by what Urry (1995) refers to as the 'new middle class', for whom cultural and heritage consumption is an important element in their identity formation. Previous research by ATLAS has also indicated that cultural attractions tend to be visited by a relatively high proportion of people with cultural occupations, many of whom are using their trips as a way of increasing their cultural capital relative to their area of work.

The predominantly white collar profile of museum visitors combined with the older age profile means that the average incomes are also high. Over 30% of museum visitors have a household income of over 40,000 Euro per year, which is significantly higher than the European average.

Holiday characteristics

Museum visitors are by no means all cultural tourists. Only 16% of tourists interviewed at museums classified their holiday as being 'cultural'. A large proportion of tourists interviewed were on a touring holiday (30%) or a city break (10%). Many visitors were therefore just 'passing through', with over 50% of respondents staying in the area of the interview for three nights or less. The museum market tends to be more of a 'short break' market than other forms of cultural holidays.

The role of the travel trade in selling cultural products is still relatively weak. As with European tourism in general, the vast majority of visitors are travelling independently, and just over 40% of museum visitors had booked some element of their journey through travel intermediaries before departure. The proportion of tour group participants is even lower, at 22%. The typical cultural tourist visiting a museum tends to be travelling with their partner, and staying in relatively upmarket hotels.

What are their motivations?

The basic motivation for cultural tourism is learning and experiencing new things. Almost 70% of visitors interviewed in 1999 indicated that learning was an important motivation for their visit. Not surprisingly, new experiences were particularly important for tourists (75% indicated this was important). However, relaxation (important for 62% of visitors) and entertainment (60%) are also motivating factors, indicating that 'edutainment' is becoming almost as much a part of the museum experience for visitors as in a theme park.

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We also need to be aware that not everybody who visits a cultural attraction is motivated by culture. In general the visitors can be divided into three groups on the basis of their cultural orientation. The 'culturally motivated' tourists, for whom culture is a primary motive for travel accounted for less than 20% of visitors, the 'culturally inspired' tourists for whom culture is an important but not primary motivation made up 30% of the visitors, but the 'culturally attracted' tourists for whom culture was simply one element among many in their holiday product accounted for 50% of visitors. As Davies and Prentice (1995) point out, some visitors do not even enter the galleries, being satisfied with the signs of status conferred by a purchase from the museum shop.

This makes the point that the basic cultural product is not the sole benefit sought by most cultural tourists. Museums intending to attract tourists therefore need to pay more attention to the needs of many tourists to combine cultural and pleasure motivations in their visit.

What do they do?

The research indicates that museums form an important element of tourism consumption, with over 50% of cultural visitors having visited a museum at some stage during their holiday. The role of museums is also underlined by the fact that over 40% of all visitors agreed with the statement 'I always visit a museum on holiday'.

There are also indications that some people are shifting their museum visits from the weekend to day trips and holidays. About 40% of cultural visits made by respondents during the year were taken during holiday time. As people's daily lives become more time-pressured, the holiday is taking over many of the functions of the weekend. Attracting tourists will become even more essential for museums in the future, as the normal leisure time visits will suffer even more competition from other leisure experiences. This is underlined by the fact that although museums remain the most important cultural attractions, the proportion of survey respondents visiting museums has fallen over the years (see Figure 3). Museums were visited
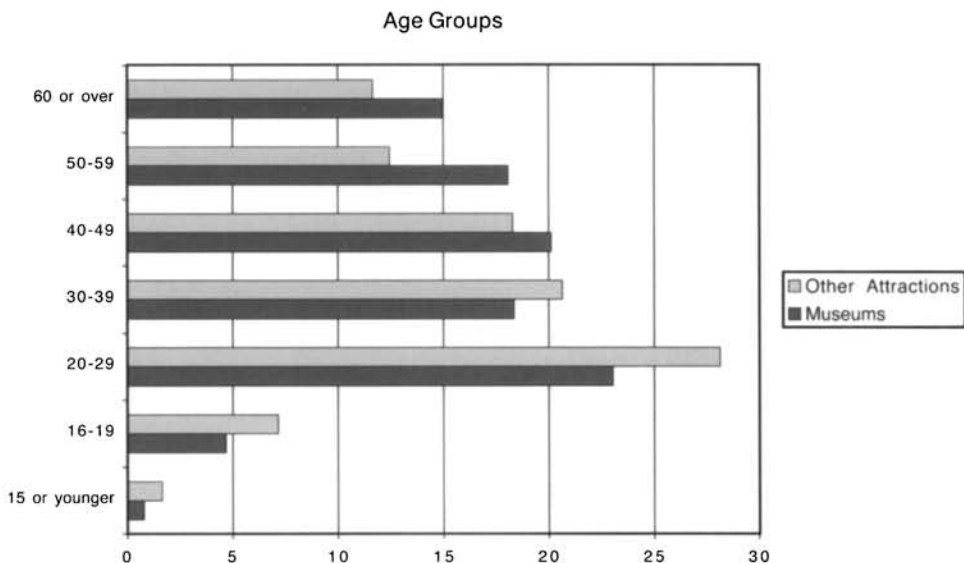

Fig.2. Age distribution of ATLAS survey respondents.

by 58% of all respondents in 1992, but by 1999 this had fallen to 54%. Festivals in particular seem to be gaining ground, seeming to confirm the importance of experience consumption among cultural visitors.

A more worrying sign for museums, however, is the extent to which museums are able to stimulate visitors to come to a particular destination. Museums were seen as having an important role as a trip motivator by only 40% of museum visitors, compared with over 50% of visitors to other cultural attractions. However, this emphasises the fact that for tourists, museums function as just one element of the tourism product. Museums will be visited in combination with other museums, other cultural attractions and leisure facilities as well. This gives ample opportunities for joint marketing, as one attraction alone will seldom provide enough impulse to attract visitors to the destination. The most popular cultural destinations in Europe are those cities that have significant clusters of cultural attractions, providing tourists with ample opportunities to fill their schedules (Figure 4).

Another issue is the extent to which museums can develop new visitor markets. As already mentioned, in general, museums tend to attract older tourists and those with higher educational attainment and incomes – 13% of museum visitors had jobs connected with museums, compared with 7% of cultural visitors overall. This indicates that museums are finding it hard to attract new audiences among the tourists. Perhaps this is not surprising given the low level of co-operation between museums and the tourism industry, and the relative paucity of research carried out by museums on their tourist visitors.

The ATLAS research indicates that museums can indeed be a very important element of the tourism product, although they often do not see themselves in this role. In an increasingly competitive leisure market, however, if museums wish to attract increasing numbers of visitors, they will need to pay more attention to the motivations and needs of tourists.

How do visitors find out about museums?

The 1999 ATLAS research has for the first time asked questions on the sources of information used by visitors to cultural attractions. The most important source of information for museum
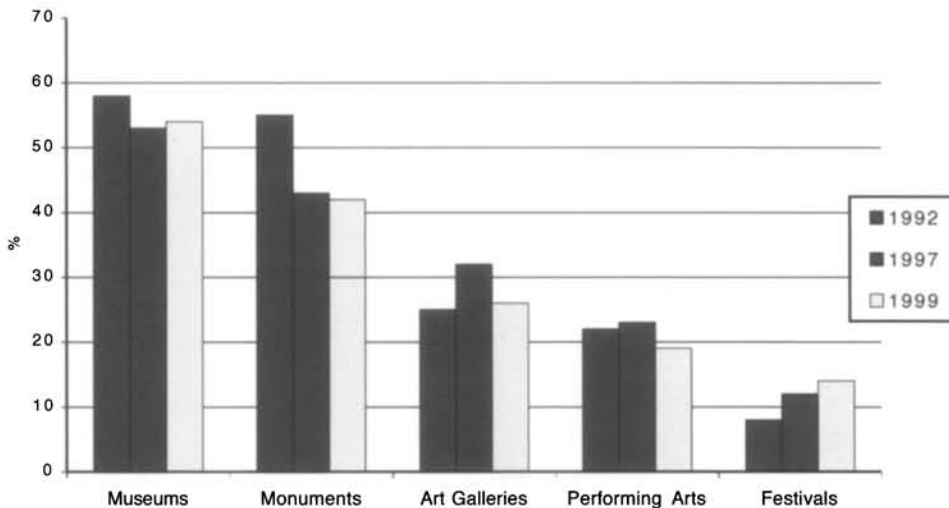

Fig.3. Cultural attractions visited by tourists in the ATLAS surveys, 1992–1999.

visitors was word of mouth, with almost half the respondents having gathered information from friends and relatives. The influence of the Internet is already very strong among museum visitors. Over 26% had used the Internet to gather information about the attraction. This compares with the very low level of Internet use found among cultural visitors in the Netherlands (2.3%) just two years previously (de Jong and Paulissen, 1998). Guidebooks are the most important source of printed information for the museum visitors interviewed (31%). The tourist industry (tourist boards and tour operators) is consulted by about 20% of visitors, which is a higher proportion than those gaining information from the media (7%). In comparison with other cultural attractions, museums have a higher level of Internet use and more use of the tourist industry and guidebooks than other cultural attractions. This may indicate that some headway is being made, at least by the larger museums, in forging links with the tourism sector.

When do visitors decide to come to a museum?
Over half the tourists visiting a museum decide which attractions they are going to visit after they have left home. Foreign tourists are particularly likely to make their decision on the spot. Two-thirds of domestic tourists decide before leaving home. Foreign tourists tend to pick up information en route, as in the case of the many tourists on a touring holiday, or they gather information once in the destination itself. Guidebooks become particularly important in determining where tourists go once they arrive. Only 31% indicated that they had consulted a guidebook before they left home, but this had risen to 43% once they had arrived in the destination. Tourist boards were particularly important for those making the decision to visit the attraction before they left home (57%). This underlines the importance of ensuring that information about the museum is available through different channels in order to reach all segments of the visitor market.

Conclusions
It is clear that some of the assumptions made about cultural tourists are grounded in fact. Cultural tourists are upmarket, well educated, and tend to be highly motivated by culture. The market has basically grown as education levels have increased, but the growing supply of attractions means that more attractions are vying for the same market.

In order to compete effectively in this market museums have to be even more aware of the needs of their visitors and potential visitors. The ATLAS research indicates that the cultural product itself is not enough to satisfy most visitors. It is increasingly important to provide a total visitor experience that satisfies not just the passive tourist gaze (Urry, 1990), but that engages all the senses. In any increasingly competitive market, it is important for museums to make a link with cultural tourists by tapping their own experience and cultural backgrounds. Many leisure attractions have begun to use theming as a means of achieving this, packaging their products in easily absorbable cultural messages. Museums, of course, cannot use all-embracing themes in the same way as leisure attractions, but they can link their collections and their interpretation more clearly to the cultural needs of the tourist.

As museums and other traditional cultural institutions begin to lose the automatic legitimacy they enjoyed as 'factories of meaning' (Rooijakkers, 1999), they will increasingly need to be creative in developing narratives around their collections that appeal to the visitor. These narratives should not just provide a coherent context for the objects being displayed, but they will also increasingly need to leave room for the visitor to develop their own interpretations.

In this respect we are arguably seeing a shift away from the traditional forms of cultural consumption. As de Haan (1997) has noted in the Netherlands, passive forms of cultural consumption now account for less than 1% of leisure time use. Unless museums can engage

with the need of time-pressured cultural visitors for a satisfying, engaging experience, they will lose out in the race to attract larger numbers of consumers. We are now witnessing a shift towards more proactive forms of cultural consumption by tourists, which has been termed 'creative tourism' (Figure 5). Creative tourism is essentially a form of tourism that allows visitors to acquire knowledge and also to develop their own skills and capabilities. Our research indicates that there is a growing demand from tourists for more active involvement in the cultural forms that they come across in their travels (Richards, 1999b). There is no reason why museums should not be able to play a role in providing such experiences. As Rooijakkers (1999) points out, one of the most effective ways of doing this is by using 'shifted
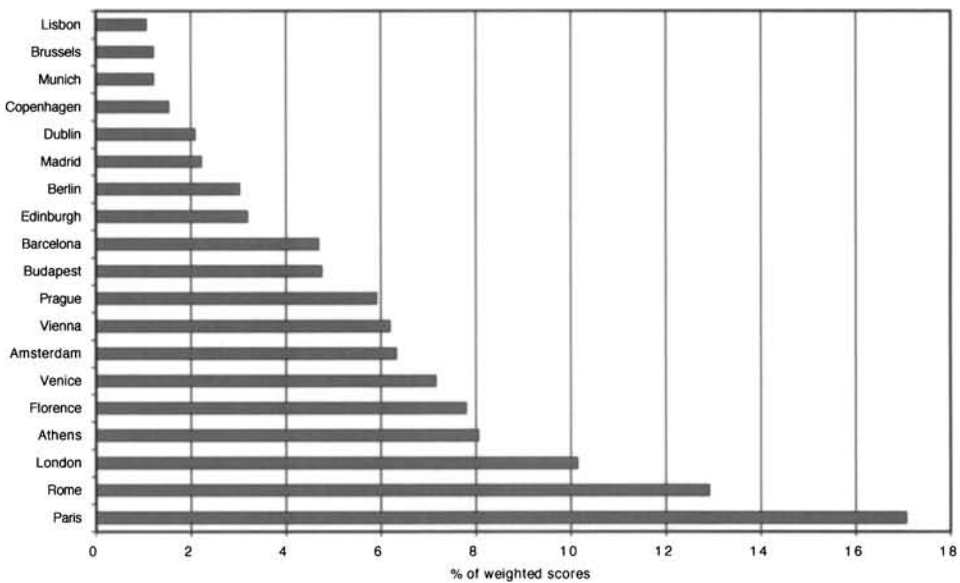
Fig.4. Most popular cultural destinations among ATLAS survey respondents, 1997.

Form of Tourism	Time Focus	Cultural Focus	Form of Consumption
Heritage Tourism	Past	High Culture	Products
Cultural Tourism	Past and Present	High and Popular Culture	Products and Processes
Creative Tourism	Past, Present and Future	High, Popular and Mass Culture	Experiences

Fig.5. The evolution of cultural and creative tourism.

perspectives'. Narratives can be presented from the perspectives of different actors in the narrative, and also from the perspective of the people constructing the narrative and the perspective of the visitor. By allowing the visitor to choose between perspectives, and to compare and contrast these perspectives with one another, the tourist can link the narrative being presented, the location of the narrative and its 'way of life'. In this way the essential link can be made between cultural products and cultural processes and the local culture of the destination and the museum, and the global culture of the tourist.

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