



Motivation | Use | Value Study:

Summary of Key Findings

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About the Institute for Learning Innovation:

Established in 1986 as an independent non-governmental not-for-profit learning research and development organization, the Institute for Learning Innovation is dedicated to changing the world of education and learning by understanding, facilitating, advocating and communicating about free-choice learning across the life span. The Institute provides leadership in this area by collaborating with a variety of free-choice learning institutions such as museums, other cultural institutions, public television stations, libraries, community-based organizations such as scouts and the YWCA, scientific societies and humanities councils, as well as schools and universities. These collaborations strive to advance understanding, facilitate and improve the learning potential of these organizations by incorporating free-choice learning principles in their work.



Introduction

In 2007, ILI and Audience Focus, Inc. received funding from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to conduct a 3-year research study investigating the impact of dedicated, interactive family galleries in art museums. The study was conducted across three research sites, all with well-established interactive family galleries – the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville, TN; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; and the J.B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY.

Under the umbrella of this larger initiative, called Families Learning in Interactive Galleries (FLING), we conducted two complementary studies. The first study was quantitative in nature, called the Motivation/Use/Value Study, or MUV study for short, and was conducted by ILI. It focused on collecting large amounts of data to generalize the experience and meaning of interactive galleries across all three art museums. The second study was qualitative in nature, called the Longitudinal Case Study, and was conducted by Audience Focus, Inc. It involved gathering in-depth data from a small number of families at each site, not to generalize but rather to really understand what these galleries mean to specific families.

This summary presents top-line findings from the MUV Study, aggregated from the three, detailed research briefs on the FLING website.

Research Questions & Methods

The MUV study focused on bringing greater clarity to three key research questions:

1. **WHO** are the families who visit interactive spaces in art museums and **WHY** do they visit them?
2. **HOW** do families use interactive spaces within art museums?
3. **WHAT** do parents perceive is valuable about interactive spaces in art museums, and how do they perceive their family benefits from visiting them?

Two methods were used to answer these questions: 1) on-site interviews with visiting parents/caregivers, aimed at understanding demographics, psychographics, motivations, and engagement with the museum's interactive space; and 2) a follow-up questionnaire administered online to the same parents/caregivers, focused on understanding the value and benefits that adults ascribe to the museum's interactive space. All data were collected by one of three trained Research Assistants – Kim Jameson at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Gwen Kelly at the Speed Art Museum, and Sofia Broman at the High Museum of Art. Data were collected from April 2009 through May 2010, during randomly assigned blocks of time during each month.



Across all three research sites, a total of 2,408 people participated in the onsite exit interviews and 1,513 people completed the online questionnaire—a 62% conversion rate. We were able to match 1,503 sets of visitor data.

Key Findings

1) Who are the families who visit interactive spaces in art museums, and why do they visit them?

Who visits?

Study results suggest that the typical family using dedicated, interactive galleries in art museums have the following characteristics:

- Family groups comprised of 3-4 people on average, with most of them immediate family members;
- Usually moms, with multiple children in tow;
- Frequent museum-goers;
- Interested in art;
- Familiar with the interactive space, meaning they had either heard about it or been before.

Interestingly, both first-time and repeat visitors were equally likely to use these interactive spaces.

Why do they visit?

In general, families' motivations for visiting the art museum varied. Place-based motivations were the most frequently mentioned, indicative of the museum as a leisure, recreational, or cultural venue; museum as emblematic of a particular city or region; museum as a destination or attraction; and/or museum as a special place or a new, unique or special experience. The second most frequent motivation was the interactive space itself. Next were content-related motivations, related to aesthetic, informational, or cultural content of the museum, followed by practical issues including external factors such as weather, proximity to the museum, time availability, crowd conditions, or free passes. Also motivating families to visit the museum were social reasons, such as an outing with family and/or friends and entertainment motivations, those that express fun or play or enjoyment as a core motivation for the visit.

Motivations for visiting the museum were related to what families did in the museum:

- Groups motivated by place, content, and specific exhibitions made more stops overall and visited more galleries specifically;
- Groups motivated by entertainment, social reasons, and the interactive space made fewer stops overall and visited fewer galleries specifically.



2) How do families use interactive spaces within art museums?

We studied not what families did in interactive spaces in art museums, but how they positioned their visit to these spaces within their larger art museum experience. Data showed that overall, families typically went to 2-3 galleries during their museum visit. Families used very few programs and/or materials during their visit.

One of the most interesting study findings was related to the point at which families used the interactive space during their visit. Educators at all three art museums stated at the outset of the study that their spaces were designed as launching pads, ways to entice families into the museum and then move them out into the galleries. However, the data suggest that this is not how families use these spaces. Almost half of the sample used the space at the end of their visit; another quarter used it at some point in the middle of their visit; only 15% of families used the space at the start of their visit, suggesting that art museums might want to rethink their strategies for engaging families with the rest of the collection. For a small number of families, the interactive space was the only gallery they went to during their visit.

Families' use of the interactive space varied across the three art museum sites. At the Frist, families tended to use it more at the end of their visit. At the Speed, they tended to visit only the interactive space and then leave the museum. And at the High, their positioning of the interactive space was more varied. There is good reason to believe that these differences are related to the location of the interactive space within the museum. At the Frist, the interactive space is located on the second floor of the museum, meaning that families would naturally encounter it towards the end of their visit. At the Speed, the interactive space is highly marketed, and although it's located in the basement, families often perceive of it as a destination. At the High, the space is located off the main museum entrance, but there are multiple buildings as part of the museum meaning that families can encounter the space at various points in their visit.

Several other factors influenced families' museum visit patterns; salient influences are described below:¹

- Group composition
 - Non-nuclear families visited fewer galleries ;
 - Non-family groups tended to make the interactive space their only stop;
 - Non-parental familial groups tended to use the interactive space first compared with other groups.

- Membership
 - Member families visited fewer galleries than did non-members;
 - Members did more family programs than non-member families;

¹ At the time of writing this summary, ILLI researchers were engaged in cluster analysis to determine if the data clustered around a valid set of predictable variables.



- Members of other museums were more likely to only visit the interactive space.
- Previous museum visitation
 - Families who frequently visited the study museum, zoos/aquaria, science centers did fewer things in the museum and went to fewer galleries;
 - Families who frequently visited art museums and history museums tended to do more things in the museum and go to more galleries;
 - Families who frequently went to children’s museums went to more family programs in the art museum;
 - Frequent study museum goers, and zoo/aquaria goers, were more likely to only visit the interactive space;
 - Art museum goers and history museum goers were least likely to make the interactive space their only stop.
- Interest in art
 - Parents/caregivers who said they were more interested in art tended to do more things in the art museum and visit more galleries;
 - High interest in art=interactive space was middle or last stop;
 - Low interest in art=interactive space was the only stop.
- Motivations
 - Groups motivated by place, content, and specific exhibitions did more things in the museum overall and visited more galleries specifically;
 - Groups motivated by entertainment, social reasons, and the interactive space did fewer things in the museum and visited fewer galleries specifically.

3) What do parents perceive is valuable about interactive spaces in art museums, and how do they perceive their family benefits from visiting them?

Overall Benefits

What parents think is most beneficial about interactive spaces in art museums is well-aligned with the goals and purposes of these spaces. Several findings illustrate this claim. First, parents perceived that these spaces are beneficial in a whole host of ways; they rated the space positively on almost all of the dimensions. Second, parents² believe that these spaces are beneficial not just for children, but for their relationships with their children and for themselves as parents.

Looking specifically at children, parents believe that what these spaces do best for them is enhance their attitudes towards art and art museums, and enhance their art-making skills. Looking to themselves, parents said that what these spaces do for them is make them feel

² We use the term parent broadly, to refer to a significant adult in a child’s life who was visiting the museum with them that day.



more positive about art museums; more comfortable in art museums; more confident about/capable of facilitating art experiences for children in art museums; and to provide them with meaningful experiences for learning more about their children.

Almost three-quarters of the study sample reported talking with someone about the benefits of their experience in the interactive space in the days and/or weeks following their visit. This finding confirms the saliency of families' visits to the interactive space, and represents a substantial word-of-mouth marketing opportunity to reach new visitors for these spaces.

Influence of Design

There were differences in the perceived benefit of the spaces across the three study museums. For the most part, these differences point to a potential influence of design and pedagogy inherent within each space:

- At the Frist, parents reportedly valued more highly the chance for them and their children to gain knowledge about art and enhance their art-making skills. The space was seen as less beneficial for the development of children's social skills. This aligns with the Frist's emphasis on the elements of art and the multiple opportunities they provide for structured art-making activities.
- At the High, parents saw the space as less beneficial for children's art-making skills and as less complementary of what children do at school or at home. Parents were less likely to say the space helped them to learn about their children. This aligns well with the High's focus on providing opportunities for children to engage in unstructured play.
- At the Speed, parents were less likely to feel capable of facilitating art experiences for their children, but more likely to feel that the space gave them a chance to be a good parent. This finding may relate to the fact that the Speed had a large number of families who only used the interactive space, not visiting any other galleries in the museum.

Influence of Participant Characteristics

Several trends emerged pointing to the relationship between perceived benefits of interactive spaces in art museums and who the families are who use them:

- Spaces were seen as most beneficial for non-members in non-family groups who are highly interested in art;
- Membership made a difference, both membership in the study museum and in other museums. Specifically, non-members rated many of the benefits more highly, suggesting that for them, the value of interactive spaces in art museums may be more broad;
- Museum visitation also made a difference:



- More visits to children’s museums=higher ratings for interactive space benefits relative to social skills development;
- More visits to the study museum=higher ratings for benefit of facilitating art experiences for others;
- More visits to history museums=lower ratings for benefits relating to learning about your child and successful parenting;
- Interest in art made a difference. Specifically, the more interested parents said they were in art, the greater they perceived the benefits of the interactive space across almost all of the scales;
- Group composition made a difference. Adults from non-family groups rated the benefits of interactive spaces more highly;
- Motivation for coming to the museum made a difference. Parents motivated by entertainment rated the benefits of the space highly; parents motivated to see a specific exhibition rated the benefits of the space much lower.

Influence of Museum Visit

The nature of families’ museum visit also influenced their perception of the benefits of the interactive space:

- The more galleries they went to and/or the more family programs they attended, the higher they rated the parent benefit of feeling like they could facilitate art experiences for others;
- If they went to the interactive space multiple times, they were more likely to rate the overall benefits higher than if they went to it first or last.

Overall, the MUV study findings provide much-needed insight into who visits dedicated, interactive family galleries in art museums; why they visit; how they position their visit within their overall museum experience; and what they value about their visit. For more detailed findings relative to these questions, see the Research Briefs posted on the FLING website.