

# EMERGING AUDIENCE AND VISITORS TO THE MUSEUM OF ANTIOQUIA

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## SUMMARY

Museums are ones of the most media communicative cultural spaces of the contemporary social panorama, hence their interest in understanding the needs, values and expectations of their visitors, in order to carry out strategies about marketing, communication and innovation.

This paper introduces the findings of “Study of regular and non-regular visitors of museums in Antioquia”, conducted by Institución Universitaria Colegio Mayor de Antioquia and Politécnico Colombiano Jaime Isaza Cadavid. It was found that a new visitor profiled has emerged, such as housekeepers and retired men; on the contrary, the art experts’ attendance and the population ranked in 4, 5, and 6 socio economic strata have decreased. In regards to the foreign audiences, as they have a high level of education, they prefer a cognitive, introspective or artistic museum experience, in contrast to the local audience that prefer a social experience, attending sites where conversation, relaxation and leisure activities take place, instead of those in which silence is required.

**Keywords:** Public studies, museums, cultural tourism, Medellín, cultural consumption, training on museums, cultural studies.

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# PÚBLICO VISITANTE Y EMERGENTE DEL MUSEO DE ANTIOQUIA

## RESUMEN

Los museos son unos de los espacios culturales más mediáticos del panorama social contemporáneo de allí su interés por comprender las necesidades, valores y expectativas de sus visitantes para pensar estrategia de marketing, comunicación e innovación.

El artículo presenta resultados del “Estudio de público visitante y no visitante de Museos en Antioquia” realizado por la Institución Universitaria Colegio Mayor de Antioquia y el Politécnico Colombiano Jaime Isaza Cadavid. Se encuentra que emerge como nuevo perfil de visitante del museo la empleada doméstica y el jubilado; disminuye la asistencia del público experto así como de los de estratos 4, 5 y 6. El público extranjeros tienen alto nivel educativo, prefieren una experiencia museística cognitiva, introspectiva o artística, el nacional opta por la experiencia social, prefiere espacios en los que pueda conversar a aquellos en los que se requiera silencio, así como experiencias de ocio que permitan la relajación y el entretenimiento.

A los museos se les presentan oportunidades y retos que les implica cambios sustanciales de su concepción clásica.

**Palabras clave:** Estudio de públicos, museos, turismo cultural, Medellín, consumo cultural, educación en museos, estudios culturales.

# PÚBLICO VISITANTE E EMERGENTE DO MUSEU DE ANTIOQUIA

## RESUMO

Os museus são alguns dos espaços mediáticos mais cultural do panorama o contemporâneo social de lá o interesse deles/delas entender as necessidades, valores e as expectativas das visitas deles/delas para pensar estratégia de marketing, comunicação e inovação.

O artigo apresenta os resultados que correspondem ao perfil do público visitante e emergente do Museu de Antioquia, documento de síntese no qual figuram alguns dos trabalhos do Mestre Fernando Botero. Aparecem a empregada doméstica e o aposentado como novo perfil de visitantes; diminui a frequência do público especialista, como também os estratos 4, 5 e 6.

Enquanto o público estrangeiro prefere um experiência museística cognitiva introspectiva ou artística, o nacional opta pela experiência social, ele prefere esses espaços nos que eles podam bater-papo a esses onde é requerido silêncio como também experiências de lazer que permitam o relaxamento e o entretenimento. A este público o aborrece o silêncio, querem falar con a sua família e amigos, prefere a interação social mais do que a contemplação, a diversão mais do que o conhecimento.

Aos museus se lhes apresentam oportunidades e desafios que os insinua a mudanças significativas da sua concepção clássica.

**Palavras chaves:** Estudo de públicos, museus, turismo cultural, Medellín, consumo cultural, educação em museus, estudos culturais.

## INTRODUCTION

Museums in Antioquia (Colombia) have an increasingly significant role as dynamic centers of culture and service entities, either for local citizens and tourists. Their capability to identify and develop their potential is a good foundation for achieving their goals successfully [1].

In Colombia, national and cultural tourism policy recognizes as an essential element in the management of these sites, specific knowledge of their demand has been evident through some research that allows driving territorial management strategies and promotional activities (ECD, 2010). It is known that Colombian people do not use to visit museums; below the national average is the central region, in which Antioquia is located. In this region, the study of visitors and communication in museums, is being leading by the Faculty of Arts of the University of Antioquia, suggesting interdisciplinary approaches to the analysis of museums, such studies are mainly generated from the faculties of communication (Valle, 2014; 73).

In this scenario it is necessary that museums “develop audience” [2], which in words of Walts, (2006) means to understand better the visitors’ needs. Margaret Hart Robertson, coordinator of the ULPGC Project of the Metropolitan University of London, suggests that it is necessary the museum becomes in a ‘live’ space that provides new ways of looking at things, a meeting place for new communities, rather than a ‘dead’ space, in charge of protecting the past.

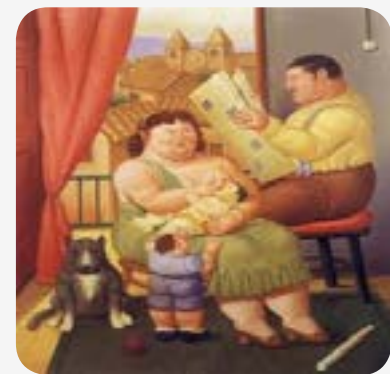


The Museum of Antioquia, was founded in November of 1881 as a “commitment to education and culture” in the region, “... in the late 90s, had an institutional renewal of administrative, financial, museological and museographic type ... it houses part of the paintings and some sculptures by Fernando Botero... Since October 2001, it consolidated and strengthened its position after The Plaza de las Esculturas Fernando Botero’s launch, which today is a key urban landmark in the city center of Medellín ... “( Museum of Antioquia, 2015).

The Museum strives to attract its public, and does not hesitate to be known in every opportunity; in this regard, it is required to get knowledge about the

type of public who visit it, to impact in their attitude, knowledge, valuation and appreciation for the pieces they are contemplating. This study aimed at determining the museum visitor profile, attempting to identify their origin, the means the visitors used to get knowledge about the museum programs, and the use of their leisure time, among others.

In the VI Ibero-American meeting on Museums, it was agreed on the relevance of carrying out studies of public aiming to reach a two-way communication that involves the citizens in the museum processes, it was also proposed to encourage implementation of evaluation systems and research tools on audience that help in decision-making in museum planning [3].



## 1. Methodology

It was used a mixed methodology, of quantitative and qualitative type. From the quantitative approach, it was designed and administered a questionnaire to both visitors and non-visitors. From the qualitative approach two focus groups were created, one with experts and potential users. The survey population consisted of visitors to the Museum of Antioquia in the months of July and August 2014 (400 visitors), students from schools in Medellín from socio economic class ranks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (400 students).



## 2. Results

After systematizing and analyzing data, it is determined the following visitor profile:

### 2.1 Local Public

**Profile 1:** Student. Women and men, between 18 and 34 years old, with secondary and higher education level [4]. The high school students are in 1, 2 and 3 socio economic class rank. Unlike the undergraduates who are ranked in 4, 5 and 6. Primary school children in socio economic class 1, 2 and 3 make part of this profile. **Profile 2:** Women and men between 35 and 54,

technicians and technologists, ranked socio economic class 1, 2, and 3.

The attendance of students and general audiences ranked in socio economic class 1, 2 and 3 may be due to the support the government policies provide for visiting museums, so that they can visit for free, just submitting the utility bill which certifies their socio-economic strata. It should be noted that the museum where this study was conducted is of private type and requires an admission fee.



**Profile 3: emerging local public:** Emerging occupations in terms of visitors include house keepers and retired people. Potential local audience. Students, executives and professionals ranked in 4, 5 and 6 socio economic strata. Artists, teachers and culture sector staff. It is found that 66% of those who visit the Museum are single.

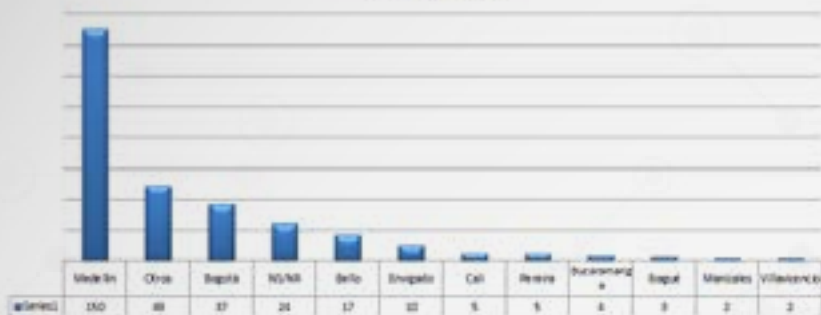


### 1.2 National audience profile

**Profile 1:** Men and women who come from Bogotá, the capital city of the country. They attend the Museum by appealing their sense of curiosity, because it is famous, for knowing the works on display. They are usually in the region for holidays or work. This group is between 18 and 34 years old.

**Graphic N1.**

**National audience visitor  
Place of origin.**

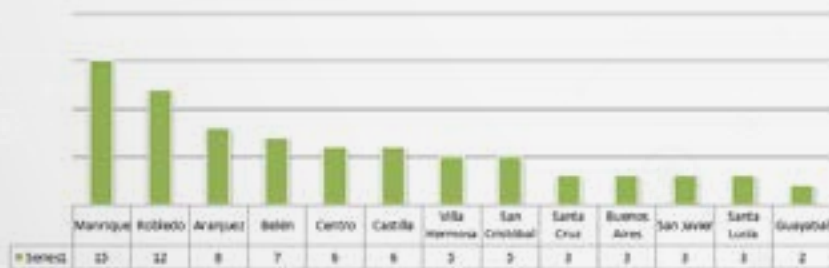


49% of the visitors are from Medellín, followed by those coming from Bogotá (12%). Visitors from the Municipality of Bello (Antioquia), are frequent visitors (6%), it should be noted that these data match those reported in the 2013 report [5], where it was found that the Museum was visited mainly by Colombians (89 %) and (50%) of them were from Medellín and the remaining (14.25%) from Bogota. The data suggest strategies to engage visitors from other areas of the country and especially from other municipalities of Antioquia, as it is indicated in the 2013 report [6], there is a very low presence of visitors from the Metropolitan area and other regions of the Department.

Regarding to the museum visitors who came from Medellín, there is a high percentage 49% that is not recorded in the data, and 25% that indicates others. 5% of the visitors are from Manrique, 4% from Robledo, 3% from Aranjuez, 2% from Belen., all of those mentioned places are well known neighborhoods in Medellín city, ranked in 1, 2, and 3 socio economic strata. This is the evidence of the attendance to the museum of these social groups.

**Graphic N2.**

**Audience from Medellín.  
Place of origin.**



Those students who do not visit to museums prefer sportive activities. Generally, eleventh graders regardless the social strata, do not include attending museums as a leisure-time activity. They tend to be engaged in activities that imply social interaction with different people. Although they expressed to have been motivated to visit museums by their school (social strata 1, 2 and 3) and by their family group

(social strata 4, 5, and 6), it is not a choice among their preferences. Those who have visited museum have gone with friends. A significant percentage stated no intention to come again because they did not find museums as attractive places.

Half of the students ranked in social strata 1, 2, and 3 do not provide any description about the experience of visiting museums, the other half considers that museums are for people with a lot of training, that are static and quiet sites, similar to a church or a library, a boring experience and an activity for older people, and that is for high social strata, they said. Students ranked in social strata 4, 5 and 6 consider that visiting a museum allows them to learn, and refer to the experience as something interesting and enriching, suitable for all type of audience.

**2.3 Foreign Audience**

**Profile 1.** Women and men between 18 and 34 years old, with college, Master or PhD degree, mostly employees, or university students, single, coming from Mexico, USA and Canada.



**Graphic N3.**

**Foreign visitor.  
Place of origin.**



Comparing the report provided in 2013 [7], It was a growth in relation to the north American and Central American visitors, as well as South Americans and Europeans. It should be noted the American and Mexican citizens are the most regular visitors.

**Potential foreign audience.** South Americans, retired foreigners: Those over 55 are the least frequent visitors to the Museum, a hypothesis of this could be that it is not the type of foreigner who uses to travel to Colombia. It is known that in Europe those over 50 are the most frequent audience for museums. The foreigners that are living in Medellín- Colombia are **another potential audience.**



The majority of foreign visitors to the Museum attend there as a consequence of a friend's recommendation. The information provided in the city tourist guides, or by the guide / tourist book do not have great influence on the visitors. Surveys state that social networks, e-mails and the museum web page are effective means to get knowledge of the different cultural events in the city (12%). This public prefers leisure activities, in which they have the opportunity to learn. National audience prefers social interaction.

In the building of the psychographic profile of museum visitors, Kotler and Kotler (2001) & Slater (2006) mention that the main motivations when visiting museums are escapism, learning and social interaction [8]. For Yellis (1985) the hierarchy of Maslow's 5 needs: psychological, security, social, self-esteem and self-updating, influence the decisions related to leisure. For young audiences with a high educational level, visits to modern art galleries are a leisure experience, fostered by a relaxation and entertainment desire [9].

Regular visitors are another visitor type; they represent (57%) as well as the "new" visitors that represent (43%).

## Conclusions

The study and observation of museum visitors is an important strategy in "audience development", an expression that refers to improving services for visitors: multiple experiences, self-development, communication improvement, access, interaction and segmentation of audiences. Museums need to implement effective strategies in order to carry out their mission, and compete with the entertainment industry, and leisure; today, this goal can turn out harder due to the limited economic resources assigned for culture, as well as multiple expectations and motivations of the new audiences around these venues.

The reverential and educational motivation to visit to museums, with which Falk and Dierking (1992) characterized audiences in the United Kingdom in the 70s and 80s, seems to be a thing of the past, social recreation, referring to entertainment and leisure activities in a safe environment with family and friends. On the other hand, this study found that curiosity is a key fact to engage new audiences for museums. Audience who is disturbed by silence, and prefers to talk to family and friends, chooses interaction rather than contemplation, fun rather than knowledge.

In this context the so-called classic museum will not last a long time. They must change its strategies to engage audiences. Is it necessary to change the museum according to the audience's expectations? each museum will answer it. Results from this study show that other audiences are visiting museums today, and this constitutes a considerable challenge for cultural development. Students, employees, and in general people ranked in 1, 2 and 3 social strata in Medellín are increasing attendance to the museum, not as much as the statistics would expect, but these venues are being visited more than in the past. It is important to point that this behaviour might be a response to the new entrance policy, which allows people of those social strata 1, 2, and 3 to visit the museum for free, just presenting their utility bill.

It is interesting for this study to find that housekeepers as well as retirees become an emerging public of the museum studied. It is a must keep them loyal and attract more of this type of audience. Among the next challenges could be to attract the expert visitor to the museum, they are of great interest for the museum staff due to the high cultural content they have in relation to museums. As well as the community ranked in social strata 4, 5, and 6.

Also, it is important to mention that local and national audiences are in charge to develop the foreign audience, they are the ideal audience as they are who buy entrance ticket. A good point to highlight is that visitors do not tend to any gender, as well women as men visit it, talking from the classical gender classification. Would we have to ask about gay, lesbian and minority groups who attend the museum? And additionally, do people have to visit these venues or to take them outdoors?

It was shown that single people attend to the museum more often than married. Additionally, it is evident the attendance of high education students ranked in social strata 4, 5 and 6. What happen with the ones in strata 1, 2, and 3 that rarely attend? This question was posed among some undergraduates, they reply "I prefer to have some beer at Lleras" [Zona Rosa in Medellín]. It would be a good idea to create strategies to approach this type of public to the museum.

This study identified potential audiences in each profile such as South American foreigners, local executives, and local professionals, and art teachers as well. Also, potential audiences are profile such as the benefactor and the one who participates in social service in the museum. The key is to determine which audiences? Why? What for? Strategy is required to develop the virtual audience. The website and all the strategies of the digital world must be applied, introducing new possibilities and improving existing ones, because nowadays the audiences that are approaching the museum by electronic means and also like activities that require the use of these.

It is concluded that the studied museum plays an important social and cultural role in the region of Antioquia, and its educational, communicative and management strategies have allowed access to social groups such as strata 1, 2 and 3. These strategies are being supported directly by the government entities of the region, but it is not enough sustain this place, so it is a must develop new audiences, and strategies that allow it to broaden the profile of its public and its income.

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## Notes

[1] This article is a product of the “Visiting and non-visiting public study of the Museum of Antioquia”, sponsored by the high education institution Colegio Mayor de Antioquia and Politécnico Colombiano Jaime Isaza Cadavid.

[2] This refers to improve and facilitate communication with visitors, to achieve a frequent audience, to turn non-visitors into visitors, visitors to frequent visitors and regular museum attendees in followers, to improve access, to offer multiple experiences, to involve Visitors (hands and minds), establish an active network with special target groups. . Idem.

[3] VI Encuentro Iberoamericano de Museos. Montevideo, Uruguay. Del 22 al 24 de octubre de 2012.

[4] This data has a positive response taking into account that in 2013 high percentage of undergraduates in Medellín, did not visit the Museum) Report “Analysis undergraduate Audience for the Museum of Antioquia” (2013). PhD. Mónica Valle Flórez- Colombian-Politécnico Colombiano Jaime Isaza Cadavid. PhD Claudia Giraldo Velasquez. PhD. Sandra Zapata Aguirre. Higher education Institution Colegio Mayor de Antioquia..

[5] “Analysis of undergraduate Audience for the Museum of Antioquia” ( 2013 ). PhD. Mónica Valle Flórez- Colombian-Politécnico Colombiano Jaime Isaza Cadavid. PhD Claudia Giraldo Velasquez. PhD. Sandra Zapata Aguirre. Higher education Institution Colegio Mayor de Antioquia.

[6] The report “Analysis undergraduate Audience for the Museum of Antioquia” ( 2013 ), found that the origin of the museum visitors were Colombian (89%) and just (2%) from the United and (1%) were from Venezuela, Ecuador , Spain. PhD. Mónica Valle Flórez- Colombian-Politécnico Colombiano Jaime Isaza Cadavid. PhD Claudia Giraldo Velásquez. PhD. Sandra Zapata Aguirre. Higher education Institution Colegio Mayor de Antioquia.

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