

POST-PANDEMIC DESIGN, SOCIAL INCLUSION + SUSTAINABILITY: MUSEUM VISITOR PREFERENCES

Ivy Branden, Briana Humphrey,
& Elizabeth Goebel

Advisor: Susan Ray-Degges, Ph.D., ASID, MN-CID

Department of Apparel, Merchandising,
Interior Design, & Hospitality Management

NDSU NORTH DAKOTA
STATE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand post-pandemic policies within museums, features the public perceives as inclusive design, and whether the public prefers sustainable practices. These specific focuses were selected to generate an environment that will enhance visitor experience within a museum. Research was conducted with a mixed-method approach using a content analysis of assorted museums and an online survey. Results indicate that participants value social inclusion and pandemic safety measures but are indifferent about sustainability within museums. Although the study may have presented results with a gender bias and a lack of diversity, the gathered results can inform design strategies applicable for a sustainable, socially inclusive museum in a post-pandemic world.

REVIEW OF LIT

POST-PANDEMIC - Museums can benefit from the integration of technologies such as Mobile Augmented Reality (MAR) to create more engaging exhibits that allow for social distancing (Kunjir & Patil, 2020).

SOCIAL INCLUSION - A multi-sensory approach is best for creating accessibility for all (Chick, 2019). Incorporating a community's culture into the design helps all to feel represented (Mortensen, Rudloff, & Vestergaard, 2014).

VISITOR ATTRACTION - Museums offer restorative experiences which can positively impact visitors' well-being (Packer & Bond, 2010). Pleasant ambient conditions, rest areas, simple layouts, controlled noise, and openness create comfort (Packer, 2008).

SUSTAINABILITY - Sustainable design can benefit visitors' perceptions of a space (Sorrento, 2012). Careful material selection is important for sustainability (Battle, Yuen, Zanchetta, & D'Cruz, 2006). Furthermore, Increasing Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) can improve productivity and conserve energy (Sorrento, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

MEASURES

This survey proposed a series of 28 questions about social inclusion, sustainability, and post-pandemic safety in the form of multiple choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended responses.

SUBJECTS

A total of 430 respondents completed the survey. A majority of the respondents were 18-24 years old (50%), female (66%), and Caucasian (88%).

PROCEDURE

This online survey was distributed through the North Dakota State University faculty and student email listserv system; it was also distributed on various social media platforms.

RESULTS

POST-PANDEMIC DESIGN - 72% of respondents are concerned about COVID-19. Masks, sanitation stations, capacity limits, socially distanced seating, Plexi-glass shields, hourly sanitation, and contactless payments are considered the most important safety features as seen in Figure 2.

SOCIAL INCLUSION - About 26% of people have left a building due to its lack of social inclusion. Accessibility, cultural art, classes, special hours, discounts, and community platforms are considered important inclusive museum features as seen in Figure 1.

VISITOR ATTRACTION - Crowding, lack of accessibility, and confusing layouts were noted as the greatest detractors from a pleasant museum experience. These results are exhibited in Figure 3.

SUSTAINABILITY - 97% of respondents apply sustainable practices at home; however, most feel neutral about sustainability within museums (40%).

DISCUSSION

MEANING - Results of this study suggest that respondents desire social inclusivity and post-pandemic safety measures within museums. While sustainability is valued by respondents, it does not impact their decision to visit a museum. Furthermore, respondents' distaste for crowding, noise, and confusing layouts underscores Packer's (2008) findings.

APPLICATIONS - These results indicate that flexible furniture, accessible features, community inclusion, simple wayfinding, openness, and acoustical balance can support a successful museum design solution.

WEAKNESSES - The respondent sample lacks diversity, is predominantly young, and has a gender bias. The survey was also only available for about two weeks.

RECOMMENDED - In the future, we recommend that the survey be distributed to a larger, more diverse sample. This will help create a greater picture about how to create a socially inclusive museum.

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