



Art museum visitors: how do they perform class distinction?

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies predominantly used sociodemographic factors to categorize art museum visitors, overlooking an in-depth exploration of the motivations guiding their museum experiences and relying heavily on aggregated data. Building upon Bourdieu's (1984, *Distinction: A Social Critique to the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press) theory of cultural consumption and Peterson's (2005a, "Problems in comparative research: The example of omnivorousness." *Poetics* 33:257–282. doi:10.1016/j.poetic.2005.10.002; 2005b, "Changing Arts Audiences: Capitalizing on Omnivorousness." <https://culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/sites/culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/files/peterson1005.pdf>) omnivore/univore theory, this study aims to investigate the distinct segments of art museum visitors, considering their experience expectations and cultural preferences. Specifically, utilizing two-step cluster analysis, we explore the experiences sought by art museum visitors, considering their cultural preferences. Analyzing 411 questionnaires from visitors to Lyon's premier fine arts museum, two distinct visitor groups emerge. Thus, the findings suggest that conventionally labeled 'museum-goers' represent diverse visitor types, emphasizing the holistic importance of considering a combination of factors. The results affirm Peterson's theory adding to the literature that these groups exhibit distinct cultural and culinary preferences, aligning with Bourdieu's social distinction theory. The study offers both theoretical and practical implications.

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Introduction

The Cultural and Creative Industries, notably museums, art galleries, and theaters – venues reliant upon human congregation – have faced significant consequences from the pandemic (UNESCO 2021). The implementation of social distancing measures led to a notable decline in their revenue streams and financial stability. In response, UNESCO advocates for prospective reforms, emphasizing the dissemination of diverse content to enhance the global reach and appeal of CCIs for sustained growth (Bateman 2022).

Accordingly, this research investigates various art museum visitors' segments to develop the right content and experiences for the right audiences. Nevertheless, research findings from museums and cultural attractions indicate that visitors seek various

experiences such as amusement, excitement, and learning (Black 2018; Morris Hargreaves McIntyre 2007). Some of those research findings also highlight the heterogeneity among visitor preferences, with different visitor types seeking distinct experiences (Gurel 2023; Gurel and Nielsen 2019; Morris Hargreaves McIntyre 2007; Sintas and Alvarez 2002; Taheri, Jafari, and O’Gorman 2014; Vries and Reeves 2022). Despite the substantial body of research in the area, previous studies have faced criticism for lacking a unified framework, which impedes comprehensive synthesis due to the absence of a solid theoretical foundation (Goulding, 2000; Gurel and Nielsen 2019).

As we progress, a noticeable shift in approach becomes apparent. Researchers (e.g., Barbieri and Mahoney 2010; Gurel 2017, 2023; Gurel and Nielsen 2019; Sintas and Alvarez 2002) are increasingly exploring the application of sociological theory, particularly cultural distinction, offering new insights to shed light on visitor motivations. This intriguing avenue of inquiry investigates the complexities of cultural preferences and identities, promising a deeper exploration of the multifaceted layers that influence visitor experiences.

Traditionally, sociologists have focused on socio-economic variables as drivers of museum attendance (Hanquinet 2013). Inspired by Bourdieu, Peterson’s (1992) omnivore hypothesis currently dominates academic literature on the social patterning of taste and cultural engagement. While Bourdieu’s (1984) elite-mass hypothesis (homology thesis) suggests that elites from high social classes have distinctive and hierarchical cultural tastes for high culture, Peterson’s omnivore hypothesis posits that elites engage with high culture without rejecting popular culture. On the other hand, consumers with lower socio-economic status are more likely to have restricted tastes and lean towards popular culture, leading to their classification as ‘univores’. Despite more than two decades of research into the omnivore hypothesis, ongoing debate persists, with no clear consensus on omnivorousness (Vries and Reeves 2022). This enduring debate may partly arise from a limitation in sociology research, which has focused primarily on *what* individuals consume rather than *why* they consume.

To address this gap in the literature, integrating Bourdieu’s (1984) theory of cultural consumption and Peterson’s (2005a, 2005b) omnivore-univore theory with the experience economy, we propose a holistic approach to investigate the distinct segments of museum visitors, considering their motivations and experience expectations. Following Gurel and Nielsen (2019), our approach aims to investigate distinct segments of museum visitors, considering their motivations guiding their expectations for cultural experiences.

Art museums offer an exciting opportunity to explore the distinctions between diverse audience segments, potentially including both omnivores and univores (Gurel 2023; Gurel and Nielsen 2019). As noted by Hanquinet (2013), art museums have progressively shifted away from their traditional role as guardians of high culture to embrace a more commercial stance in the leisure market. This transition, evident in the addition of features such as special exhibitions, shops, and restaurants, reflects the museum’s embrace of a more commercial stance in the leisure market. As Gurel and Nielsen (2019) noted, by investigating omnivorousness and other visitor categories in art museums, nuanced insights can be gathered, shedding light on the experiences sought by various visitors and their cultural and culinary preferences in light of Peterson and Bourdieu’s theories on cultural consumption and social class dynamics in sociology.

Bourdieu (1984) suggests that food is a significant marker in establishing social distinctions among individuals. People actively seek distinctive dining experiences, from dining at various types of restaurants to participating in cooking classes and exploring local cuisines and food markets (Lin et al. 2019). Expanding upon this idea, this research investigates various types of visitors based on their cultural preferences and the diverse experiences they seek within museums, utilizing the sociological theory of cultural distinction and the omnivores-univores dichotomy. More specifically, this study aims to explore the presence of cultural omnivores and univores among art museum visitors and examine how they manifest class distinctions through their cultural and culinary preferences. This study aims to address this question within the ongoing debate surrounding the concepts of distinction and omnivorousness in cultural sociology.

Besides the contributions to literature, this paper is important because it considers how all these insights can practically benefit art museums. If we understand what different groups of visitors exist and what they enjoy, art museums can use this understanding to cater to the preferences of these groups and continue to thrive in the future by creating engaging and meaningful experiences for a wide range of visitors.

Experience economy and museum experience

According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), customer experience is a multidimensional construct comprising two dimensions with four different experiences: entertainment, educational, escapist, and aesthetic. While the entertainment and aesthetic dimensions involve passive participation in which consumers do not affect or influence the experiential outcome, the educational and escapist dimensions involve active participation whereby consumers play a crucial role in their experiences. In the framework by Pine and Gilmore (1999), entertainment is seen as one of the oldest types of experiences. Companies aim to delight and entertain their customers. On the other hand, educational experiences involve people personally, make them think, and satisfy their curiosity to learn something new. Escapist experiences, which are very immersive, completely absorb people in what they are doing. Lastly, aesthetic experiences refer to how individuals perceive and interpret the physical environment around them. These researchers say a harmonious fusion of all dimensions results in a memorable ‘sweet spot’.

Batat’s (2019) insights further illuminate the immersive facet of experiential marketing, highlighting the role of a firm’s experiential atmosphere. According to Batat (2019), immersive spaces break away from ordinary and transport customers with the help of strong emotions. In such immersive settings, every sensory detail plays a role, shaping perceptions and evoking emotions that foster memorable experiences. This ‘servicescape’ concept, as coined by Bitner (1992), underscores the profound impact of the physical setting, both exterior and interior.

Crucially, experiences must fulfill customer needs beyond functional and symbolic needs and ultimately leave a lasting impact. The most significant form of this is called a transformational experience, wherein a tailored encounter fundamentally alters an individual’s perspective and course by leaving a powerful impression (Batat 2019; Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

Kotler, Kotler, and Kotler (2008) state that great museum exhibitions provide visitors with transformative experiences. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997) further

elucidates these instances, defining them as ‘flow experiences’. In such moments, individuals become fully absorbed, simultaneously reshaping their perceptions and understanding. Similarly, psychologist Abraham Maslow (1954) characterizes great museum encounters as ‘peak experiences’.

However, studies showed that museum visitors do not always look for transformative or peak experiences. Research into aggregate museum visitors has extensively documented various motivations driving museum visits. These motivations encompass a broad spectrum of experiences, ranging from social interactions and family outings to satisfying curiosity, escaping from daily routines, and deriving enjoyment from exhibits and collections (Chen, Cheng, and Kim 2020; Gurel 2023; Gurel and Nielsen 2018; Gurel and Nielsen 2019).

While the primary goal of museum visits may be to engage with exhibitions, visitors actively seek other elements that enhance their experience, such as appealing shops, inviting cafes, and serene relaxation areas. Moreover, the scope extends to encompass educational and interactive opportunities, including museum art classes, which are particularly favored by those interested in learning. Families prioritize engaging and informative experiences to nurture the intellectual development of their children. Museum visits represent a harmonious blend of recreation and education for some individuals. In contrast, others aspire to immerse themselves fully, seeking to bridge the gap between museum content and their own life experiences (Kotler, Kotler, and Kotler 2008).

Distinction and omnivorousness in cultural consumption

Examining cultural consumption patterns has been a central focus of scholarly inquiry, shedding light on the intricate dynamics within societies. Bourdieu’s seminal work, ‘Distinction’ (1984), stands as a cornerstone, revealing the interplay between social class and cultural taste, particularly in contexts such as art museums. Bourdieu’s ‘cultural capital’ notion captures attributes like refined preferences, cognitive sophistication, and an affinity for legitimate cultural expressions (Gurel and Nielsen 2019; Van Eijck 1997).

Bourdieu’s far-reaching theory investigates the complex interrelationship between culture and social hierarchies. He posits that individuals of higher income and education differentiate themselves from their counterparts lower on the social strata by inclining towards more complex, prestigious, and refined forms of leisure (Bourdieu 1984). Building upon Bourdieu’s theory, Peterson (1992) examined the link between social distinction and preferences for high-culture musical taste in the United States. The study revealed that education has a larger statistical effect than social class on both participation in and attitudes towards not only high culture but also popular cultural endeavors (Gurel and Nielsen 2019).

Challenging conventional paradigms to Bourdieu’s homology thesis, contemporary research has revealed a shifting landscape where individuals in higher social classes extend their cultural tastes beyond traditional boundaries, encompassing a spectrum of cultural forms (Chan and Goldthorpe 2007; Lu 2017). The introduction of the omnivore-univore framework by Peterson (1992) enriches our understanding of cultural consumption. This framework suggests that individuals in higher social strata not only engage in highbrow culture but also manifest openness to a diverse array of popular cultural expressions (Chan 2013; Peterson and Simkus 1992). These individuals demonstrate an

expansive range of cultural preferences and participation and are classified as ‘cultural omnivores’ (Gurel 2023; Gurel and Nielsen 2019; Lu 2017; Peterson 2005a, 2005b).

In contrast, another facet of cultural consumption relates to individuals who intentionally constrain their preferences to a fixed set of choices. Peterson labels these individuals, characterized by limited tastes, as ‘univores’, a classification applicable to both lower and higher social strata. Lower-status univores tend to move toward popular aesthetic traditions, exhibiting little interest in the fine arts. Conversely, their higher-status counterparts reject popular culture, displaying an almost exclusive taste for the fine arts. Peterson labels this smaller minority within the upper social strata as ‘highbrow univores’ or ‘snobs’ (Gurel and Nielsen 2019; Lu 2017; Peterson 2005a, 2005b). Empirical inquiries operationalize the omnivore-univore distinction by quantifying participation in cultural activities (Peterson 2005a, 2005b), emphasizing the pivotal role of engagement volume as a distinguishing marker (Gurel 2023; Gurel and Nielsen 2019).

Exploring food as a cultural expression has gathered substantial scholarly attention within cultural studies. Cultural sociologists view food as a form of cultural expression that symbolizes the cultural preferences associated with different social classes (Beagan, Power, and Chapman 2015; Lin et al. 2019). The early concept of distinction developed by Bourdieu (1984) suggests that individuals from varying social classes exhibit unique and stratified culinary preferences. For instance, as stated by Lin et al. (2019), historically, French cuisine has been synonymous with refined tastes among the elite, while working-class individuals were associated with ethnic and fast food options.

However, the theory of cultural omnivorousness challenges this notion by highlighting that contemporary individuals of high social status are not confined to exclusive cultural pursuits (Peterson and Kern 1996; Peterson and Simkus 1992). In this evolving landscape, high-status individuals now embrace a wider range of cultural activities, including those previously considered less prestigious. A notable example is the growing trend among the upper social strata to explore diverse ethnic cuisines and fast food, which were once assigned to lower-social classes (Caldwell 2014; Johnston and Baumann 2007).

These two contrasting theories underscore divergent perspectives on culinary preferences: one emphasizes distinct and hierarchical tastes, and the other emphasizes an inclusive and expansive palate characterized by cultural omnivorousness. Thus, the changing cultural landscape is equally evident in culinary choices. While Bourdieu’s framework suggests that distinct culinary preferences reflect social hierarchies, the theory of cultural omnivorousness reveals a progressive shift toward inclusive and expansive culinary exploration, even among high-status individuals. The integration of diverse ethnic cuisines and previously devalued fast food options into the preferences of the elite exemplifies this transformative trend (Lin et al. 2019).

Omnivores and univores in museums

Examining cultural preferences in Spain, Sintas and Alvarez (2002) investigated the cultural inclinations of omnivorous and univorous consumers. Their study unveiled distinct segments within the consumer populace predicated on their cultural consumption

patterns. The identified segments were *the no-cultural activity class*, *the popular class*, *the highbrow class*, and *the omnivore class*. While many consumers exhibited minimal engagement in cultural activities, the omnivorous class exhibited an affinity for diverse cultural forms, spanning both highbrow and popular domains. Conversely, the highbrow and popular classes, classified as univores, displayed a propensity for a narrower spectrum of cultural choices. The high-class strata, namely the highbrow and omnivorous classes, demonstrated engagement in elevated cultural pursuits, including museum and art gallery visits (Gurel 2023; Gurel and Nielsen 2019).

Gurel and Nielsen (2019) investigated the segmentation of art museum visitors in Italy, employing a two-step cluster analysis. Their study supported Peterson's (2005a, 2005b) theorization on omnivore and highbrow univore thesis. Their cluster analysis identified two distinct visitor groups: 'Cultural Omnivores' and 'Art Museum Univores'. These groups exhibited contrasting behaviors regarding their degree of involvement and participation in cultural endeavors. Following Peterson's framework, Gurel and Nielsen (2019) characterized these groups based on their distinct participation in cultural activities and preferences for museum experiences.

Cultural Omnivores were typified by their multifaceted engagement in various leisure and cultural undertakings. This group frequently opted for social engagements during leisure time, embracing activities such as visiting historical landmarks, attending art exhibitions, and participating in cinema, theater, opera, and ballet performances, encompassing highbrow and popular culture. Primarily comprising individuals aged between 21 and 30, with graduate or post-graduate education and occupying managerial or professional roles, Cultural Omnivores exhibited a notable preference for museum visits, with over 50% attending museums five times or more annually (Gurel and Nielsen 2019).

Conversely, Art Museum Univores embodied a distinct taste. Characterized by a limited spectrum of leisure preferences and cultural pursuits, this group did not necessarily seek social interactions during their leisure time. Predominantly falling within the 41–60 age group, possessing university-level education, and coming from the upper social strata, Art Museum Univores also demonstrated a preference for museum visits, with over 35% attending museums five times or more annually. Notwithstanding their preference for museum visits, the Art Museum Univores did not share the same passion for diverse cultural pursuits as Peterson suggested for highbrow univores. Both groups, however, exhibited a common trait – a preference for museum visits for educational enrichment (Gurel and Nielsen 2019).

Gurel (2023) has recently contributed qualitative insights concerning the clusters above in art museums and their perspectives on the meaning of museums. Employing the push–pull framework, her investigation revealed contrasting attributes between Cultural Omnivores and Art Museum Univores in art museums. Specifically, Cultural Omnivores exhibited a greater propensity than their Art Museum Univore counterparts to characterize museums through intrinsic motivations, encompassing notions of discovery, enrichment, excitement, and reflection. Conversely, Art Museum Univores articulated their perceptions with a focus on extrinsic motivations, depicting museums as places for safeguarding and conserving cultural artifacts. Their descriptions underscored museums' purpose and utilitarian function in preserving objects and heritage.

Materials and methods

Sampling and data collection

This research investigates various types of art museum visitors based on their cultural preferences and the diverse experiences they seek within museums, utilizing the sociological theory of cultural distinction and the omnivore-univore dichotomy. Specifically, the study aims to explore the presence of cultural omnivores and univores among art museum visitors and examine how they express class distinctions through cultural and culinary tastes.

The study sample comprises current visitors to the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyon, France. The Fine Arts Museum in Lyon presents an interesting case study due to its rich cultural heritage and pivotal role in shaping the evolution of museums in France. Founded in 1803, it is one of the country's oldest and most esteemed fine arts museums. This museum claims to be France's second largest fine arts institution, following only the Louvre. Across a history spanning more than two centuries, the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon finds its home at the Palais Saint Pierre, a former seventeenth-century abbey. Encompassing an impressive area of 7,000 square meters and housing 70 rooms, its collection is a diverse tapestry that includes sculptures and paintings from the 14th to the twentieth century (Visitor Lyon 2023).

We collected 411 questionnaires from museum visitors who voluntarily and anonymously participated in the research, excluding individuals considered children, i.e., those under 18, as defined by the European Commission (European Commission 2024). Due to the absence of a sampling frame for the visitor population, we collected data through a convenience sample of visitors based on their time availability. The questionnaire was conducted on-site, covering various times of the day in April and May 2023, coinciding with the Easter holiday. This timing influenced the younger attendance, as families were more likely to visit the museum during this period. These questionnaires were administered at the main entry/exit of the museum by a trained graduate student under the close supervision of the authors. Researchers approached visitors, outlined the research project's purpose, and invited visitors to participate in the survey. Before participation, all respondents consented to participate in the research voluntarily and anonymously. After consenting, a self-administered questionnaire was presented to each respondent to complete. This approach aimed to ensure a comprehensive and representative sample.

The selection of the sample was validated by leveraging data collected in previous research studies conducted at the museum (Cipriani 2023). Although the Easter holiday resulted in a slightly higher proportion of younger visitors in our sample, our interviews with Agnés Cipriani and Isabelle Duflos from the Fine Arts Museum of Lyon, further confirmed the similarity between the demographic profile of our sample and those of museum visitors surveyed in other research studies carried out at the museum. This enhances our confidence that the sample size of our study is sufficiently extensive to represent all relevant population segments effectively. Additionally, as highlighted by Hood (1993), the seasonality of museum visitation, with varying visitor demographics during summer and winter, is a recognized factor. Summary statistics for the sample are presented in Table 1. Key findings and insights from the sample can also be seen in Table 2.

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	249	60.6
Male	137	33.3
Other	4	1.0
Prefer not to tell	7	1.7
Missing	14	3.4
Education level		
Middle School	5	1.2
High school	67	16.3
University Bachelor	135	32.8
Masters	136	33.1
Doctorate	48	11.7
Missing	20	4.9
Age		
18–20	66	16.1
21–30	135	12.8
31–40	41	10.0
41–50	51	12.4
51–60	28	6.8
61 and over	29	7.1
Missing	12	2.9
Socio-economic status		
Never worked, long-term unemployed ^a	93	21.6
Semi-routine and routine occupations	18	4.4
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	16	3.9
Small employers and own-account workers	6	1.5
Intermediate occupations	47	11.4
Managerial and professional occupations	162	39.4
Missing ^b	69	16.8
Place of residence		
France	299	72.7
Europe	35	8.5
Other	57	13.9
Missing	20	4.9
From Lyon or not		
From Lyon	128	31.1
Not from Lyon	244	59.4
Missing	39	9.5
Frequency of attendance		
None	17	4.1
Once or twice	98	23.8
Three or four times	124	30.2
Five times or more	172	41.8
Time spent or intention to spend in the museum		
Less than an hour	22	5.4
One or two hours	271	65.9
More than two hours	117	28.5
Type of Museums Visited		
Art	385	93.7
Archaeology	157	37.0
Etnography	38	9.2
National History	124	30.2
Science	111	27.0
Other	25	6.1

^aStudents are included.

^bMissing includes retired people without explanation for most recent occupation.

Research instrument

The questionnaire comprised five major parts. The first section assessed the experiences visitors look for in museums, drawing on previous studies (European Commission 2013;

Table 2. Specific characteristics of the sample.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Reasons for visiting museums		
To have a good (quality) time	265	64.5
To learn	320	77.8
To develop myself	167	40.6
To have fun	62	15.1
To see special exhibitions	184	44.8
Because of wonder	223	54.3
To see new/different things	211	51.3
To be with friends	79	19.2
To ensure my children/grandchildren learn	67	16.3
Because of the building, atmosphere or view	174	42.3
Because of the restaurant/café	10	2.4
Because I love museums	168	40.9
Because of a recommendation	47	11.4
Because of my occupation	40	9.7
Other	35	8.5
Missing	4	1.0
Highbrow and popular cultural activities attended in the last 12 months		
Cinema	334	81.3
Theatre/opera/ballet	293	71.3
Library	247	60.1
Historical places	307	74.7
Photograph/sculpture/painting Exhibition	225	54.7
Classical music concert	77	18.7
Festival	139	33.8
Sporting event	107	26.0
Jazz concert	58	14.1
Other live music performances	134	32.6
Dance shows	67	16.3
Museums	397	96.6
Art Galleries	200	48.7
Other	8	1.9
Missing	4	1.0
Restaurants visited in the last 12 months		
Michelin star restaurant	59	14.5
Bistronomic restaurant	140	34.1
Brasserie/Pub/Café	334	81.3
Other French restaurants (such as bouchon, regional cuisine, ...)	226	55.0
Ethnic restaurants (such as Korean, Chinese, Thai, Lebanese, Peruvian, ...)	287	69.8
Fast-food	243	59.1
Vegetarian	105	25.5
Food-court, in-store restaurant	99	24.1
Italian restaurant	264	64.2
Other	12	2.9
Missing	4	1.0
Frequency of going to restaurants (except for work)		
More than once a week	51	12.4
Two or three times a month	169	41.1
Once a month	96	23.4
5–11 times a year	48	11.7
1–4 times a year	38	9.2
Never	3	0.7
Missing	6	1.5
Willingness to pay (maximum including wine in any occasion)		
More than 200 €	12	2.9
150–200 €	13	3.2
100–149 €	30	7.3
50–99 €	86	20.9
30–49 €	127	30.9
20–29 €	101	24.6
Less than 20 €	33	8.0
Missing	9	2.2

Gurel 2017; Gurel and Nielsen, 2019; Hood 1983). These questions incorporated dimensions of personal, social, and physical experiences within galleries and museums, as Falk (2009) outlined. The second section measured cultural consumption behaviors across both higher and popular forms of cultural activities attended in the last 12 months, based on the work of Chan and Goldthorpe (2005, 2007), Gurel and Nielsen (2019), Hood (1983), Peterson (2005a; 2005b), and Sintas and Alvarez (2002). The queries in these two sections were framed using nominal scales. Marcussen (2014) pointed out that rating and categorical (nominal) scales are commonly employed in diverse disciplines, including psychology and psychometrics.

The third section of the questionnaire focused on the frequency of museum attendance. Consistent with the approach taken by the European Commission (2013) and Gurel and Nielsen (2019), the initial inquiry assessed the frequency of museum visits over the last 12 months, utilizing a four-point scale ranging from 'none' to 'five times or more'. Subsequently, this part aimed to classify the types of museums visited in the last 12 months.

The fourth section of the questionnaire explored respondents' dining experiences across various restaurant types, including Michelin-starred, bistronomic, brasserie/pub/café, other French restaurants, ethnic, fast-food, vegetarian, food-court, and Italian restaurants. Participants indicated whether they had visited these establishments in the last 12 months. Additionally, this section explored respondents' dining habits beyond restaurant choices, assessing how often they dined out (excluding work-related dining) and their willingness to pay the maximum amount, including wine, for a meal on any occasion. Response options for dining frequency ranged from 'more than once a week' to 'never', while options for maximum meal expenditure spanned from 'more than €200' to 'less than €20'. This section of the questionnaire was collaboratively developed with esteemed culinary educators from the Institut Lyfe (ex Institut Paul Bocuse) in Lyon, France.

The final section of the questionnaire examined respondents' demographic characteristics. Key demographic variables included age, gender, educational attainment, occupation, and country of residence. Occupational information was utilized to determine respondents' socio-economic status, consistent with previous studies (e.g., Chan and Goldthorpe 2005, 2007; Gurel and Nielsen 2019; Sullivan and Katz-Gerro, 2007). All dichotomous variables in the questionnaire, such as gender (male/female) and yes/no responses, were assigned values of either zero or one.

Two-step cluster analysis

Traditionally, cluster analysis has been employed to classify objects empirically. Specifically, it groups individuals and objects into clusters, ensuring that objects within the same cluster are more similar than those in other clusters. The goal is to maximize the homogeneity of objects within clusters while maximizing the heterogeneity between clusters (Hair et al. 2010; Lee et al. 2006). Cluster analysis has been widely utilized for segmentation and targeting, aiming to develop successful marketing strategies by identifying and defining homogeneous groups within a population (Tkaczynski 2017).

Several methods for conducting cluster analysis are available, including hierarchical methods, partitioning methods (such as k-means), and two-step clustering. Two-step clustering, which combines aspects of hierarchical and partitioning methods, has been

proposed as suitable for clustering groups with mixed attributes (Gurel and Nielsen 2019; Tkaczynski 2017). Developed by Chiu et al. (2001), it can handle both categorical and continuous variables simultaneously (Tkaczynski 2017).

As an exploratory data analysis tool, two-step clustering enables users to automatically determine the optimal number of clusters based on statistical evaluation criteria (Tkaczynski 2017). This determination is typically made using measures-of-fit such as Akaike's Information Criterion or the Bayes Information Criterion. Additionally, at the end of the clustering process, the importance of each variable for constructing a specific cluster is determined. Due to these desirable features, two-step clustering has emerged as a viable alternative to traditional methods (Chiu et al. 2001; Tkaczynski 2017).

The selection of variables for cluster analysis should be guided by theoretical and conceptual considerations (Cornish 2007). Following this principle, our cluster analysis included nine categorical and two continuous variables, which were informed by previous research (Chan and Goldthorpe 2005, 2007; DiMaggio and Mukhtar 2004; European Commission 2013; Gurel and Nielsen 2019; Peterson 2005a, 2005b).

Among the categorical variables, our focus was on the frequency of attendance and eight specific experiences sought by art museum visitors. From the 14 diverse experiences in Table 2, we identified the eight most frequently mentioned experiences for the final analysis. These included quality time, learning, personal development, engagement with special exhibitions, a sense of wonder, seeing new and different things, appreciation of the museum's architectural ambiance or view, and an inherent love for museums. Additionally, we combined the 'none' and 'once or twice' categories for attendance frequency due to their infrequent occurrences.

In terms of continuous variables, we assessed the number of highbrow and popular cultural activities individuals attended within the past 12 months, following the approach of Peterson and Kern (1996) and Gurel and Nielsen (2019). For our analysis, highbrow cultural activities included theatre, opera, ballet, libraries, historical sites, photography/sculpture/painting exhibitions, classical music concerts, museums, and art galleries. These activities closely align with Bourdieu's 'legitimate' culture concept and are recognized as high cultural elements. To maintain consistency in the number of categories, we consolidated theatre, opera, and ballet into a single high-cultural activity, aligning it with the count of popular cultural activities – each type numbering seven. As a result, activities such as going to the cinema, visiting famous parks or gardens, attending sports events, participating in festivals, enjoying jazz and live music concerts, and engaging in dance performances were categorized under popular culture (see Table 3).

Our two-step cluster analysis used auto-clustering based on the Bayesian Information Criterion to determine the best number of clusters.

Validating the cluster solution

The validation of cluster solutions is crucial in cluster analysis due to the subjectivity in selecting the optimal solution (Hair et al. 2010). As Müller and Hamm (2014, 70) stated, 'the internal stability or validity of a cluster solution describes the potential for replicating segmentation results within the same or similar dataset'. Hence, following

Table 3. Cluster profiles.

Variable	Cluster 1 'Cultural Omnivores' <i>n</i> = 237 (58.4%)	Cluster 2 'Art Museum Univores' <i>n</i> = 169 (41.6%)	Test statistic	Significance
Average number of highbrow cultural activities	4.83	3.09	<i>t</i> = 12.575	.000
Frequency of attendance	None and once or twice combined: 9.3% Three or four times: 26.6% Five times or more: 64.1%	None and once or twice combined: 53.3% Three or four times: 35.5% Five times or more: 11.2%	$\chi^2 = 137.265$	.000
Seeing new/different things	yes: 72.2% no: 27.8%	no: 76.3% yes: 23.7%	$\chi^2 = 92.903$	.000
Special exhibitions	yes: 62.4% no: 37.6%	no: 78.7% yes: 21.3%	$\chi^2 = 67.396$	.000
Building, atmosphere or view	yes: 59.1% no: 40.9%	no: 79.9% yes: 20.1%	$\chi^2 = 61.124$	.000
Average number of popular cultural activities	3.17	2.29	<i>t</i> = 6.392	.000
Learning	yes: 89.0% no: 11.0%	yes: 63.9% no: 36.1%	$\chi^2 = 36.986$	.000
Love	yes: 52.3% no: 47.7%	no: 74.6% yes: 25.4%	$\chi^2 = 29.431$	.000
Wonder	yes: 65.4% no: 34.6%	no: 60.4% yes: 39.6%	$\chi^2 = 26.408$	.000
Personel development	yes: 51.5% no: 48.5%	no: 73.4% yes: 26.6%	$\chi^2 = 25.158$	.000
Having good time	yes: 74.7% no: 25.3%	yes: 51.5% no: 48.5%	$\chi^2 = 23.356$	.000

Bold text = indicates factors that caused differences between the clusters.

recommendations from scholars such as Hair et al. (2010), Norusis (2008), and Tkaczynski (2017), the stability and validity of the solution were thoroughly evaluated. First, while the number of clusters was automatically determined based on the Bayesian Information Criterion for statistical inference in our two-step cluster analysis, the silhouette measure of cohesion and separation exceeded the required level of 0.0. Second, we repeated the process using the Akaike Information Criterion. Remarkably, the Akaike Information Criterion results did not diverge from those obtained with the Bayesian Information Criterion.

Third, we verified the statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) of all variables within the solution, as depicted in Table 3. Fourth, in assessing the importance of the input (predictor) in determining the significance of variables in the cluster solution, we noted that all variables exhibited predictive importance exceeding 0.02, indicating variability across different clusters. Fifth, to ensure the robustness of the solution, a cross-validation approach was employed, entailing the creation of two subsamples through random splitting of the dataset into two groups. This process aimed to assess the consistency of the solution in terms of both the number of clusters and cluster profiles, in line with recommendations from Hair et al. (2010), Norusis (2008), and Tkaczynski (2017). Stability was assessed by examining the number of cases consistently assigned to the same cluster across various cluster solutions. Following the guidance of Hair et al. (2010), this study achieved a stable solution, with only 10 percent of observations being assigned to a different group, indicating consistent outcomes.

Results

Cluster characteristics

In our two-step cluster analysis, the automated clustering algorithm identified a two-cluster solution as the most appropriate model, defined by minimized the Bayesian Information Criterion values and subtle variations in consecutive cluster assignments. In assessing cluster quality, the silhouette measure – a metric assessing the cohesion and distinction of clusters – revealed a fair solution, as Tkaczynski (2017) indicated.

The resultant clusters (Cluster 1 and Cluster 2 in Table 3), comprised 237 and 169 cases, corresponding to proportions of 58.4% and 41.6%, respectively. As seen in prior studies (e.g., Peterson and Kern 1996), our comprehensive analysis of the cluster arrangement and variable importance highlighted the significance of the number of highbrow cultural activities attended within the past 12 months as the primary distinguishing variable for the identified clusters.

Based on the predictor importance of variables in the cluster solution, we found that the frequency of museum attendance followed the number of highbrow cultural activities important for explaining the differences between the groups. This was followed by the other variables, as seen in Table 3.

These findings underscore that both highbrow and popular cultural activities are vital in distinguishing between these visitor segments. As Peterson (2005a, 2005b) and Warde, Wright, and Gayo-Cal (2007) suggest, individuals who exhibit omnivorous cultural consumption patterns, termed as *volume*, tend to enjoy a broader range of activities and interests. Moreover, they cross the boundaries between elite and non-elite cultural forms, a phenomenon called *composition*. Importantly, this research identifies visitors' sought experiences and motivations as pivotal factors in differentiating them, marking it as a significant finding from the study.

Indeed, the results of the chi-square and t-tests highlight significant disparities between the two clusters concerning the eight distinct experiences sought by museum visitors. Building upon these findings, like Gurel and Nielsen (2019), Cluster 1, labeled 'Cultural Omnivores', is characterized by individuals actively engaging in highbrow cultural activities, averaging approximately 4.83 choices. In contrast, Cluster 2, named 'Art Museum Univores', consists of individuals with fewer highbrow cultural participation (3.09 different choices on average). Notably, this group strongly prefers Arts Museums, with 88.8% having visited one in the last 12 months, significantly exceeding the second most preferred category, Natural History Museums, at only 24.3%. They are labeled Art Museum Univores due to their pronounced preference for art museums, demonstrating the highest level of interest in this category. Cultural Omnivores also show a greater level of engagement in low-brow cultural activities, with an average attendance rate of 3.17, in contrast to Art Museum Univores, which averages 2.29.

In addition, the majority of Cultural Omnivores visited museums with a notable frequency, primarily five times or more (64.1%), while Art Museum Univores predominantly consisted of individuals who visited museums infrequently, typically once or twice or not at all (53.3%). The significance of the frequency of museum attendance was first underscored by Hood in 1983, who introduced a novel classification system for art museum visitors. Hood's pioneering work classified art museum visitors as *frequent participants*,

occasional participants, and *nonparticipants*, a departure from conventional thinking that segmented visitors into 'museum goers' and 'non-museum goers'. While Hood's innovative approach challenged the traditional categorization at the time, it appears that her perspective may not have had a lasting influence, and contemporary research has often taken different paths in understanding museum visitor behavior.

Besides the frequency of attendance, Hood's (1983) research also looked into differences between visitors based on the leisure experiences they sought. In line with Hood's observations that visitors differ based on their leisure experiences, our findings reveal that Cultural Omnivores, characterized by their active participation in highbrow cultural activities, demonstrate strong motivations to visit museums. These motivations are driven by the desire to see new and different experiences (72.2%), engage with special exhibitions (62.4%), appreciate the museum's architecture, ambiance, or view (59.1%), feel an affinity for museums (52.3%), experience wonder (65.4%), and personal development (51.5%). Conversely, these motivating factors did not hold as much sway over Art Museum Univores. However, both clusters share motivations for learning and having a good time. However, it is worth noting that Cultural Omnivores exhibited significantly stronger motivations in both of these aspects, with figures indicating 89.0% for learning and 74.7% for having a good time, compared to 63.9% for learning and 51.5% for having a good time for Art Museum Univores. These observations echo previous research findings reported by Bonazzi, Cancellieri, and Casarin (2023), Gurel (2023), and Gurel and Nielsen (2019).

Cluster differences by art museum visitors' characteristics

To gain a deeper understanding of the distinctions within the profiles of the two clusters, we conducted cross-tabulations involving various variables. These variables included demographics, participation in cultural activities, food preferences, and consumption behavior. The *t*- and chi-square test results are presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6, respectively.

In Table 4, it is evident that there are no statistically significant differences between the clusters. The data reveals a remarkable uniformity across the demographic and contextual variables within the identified clusters. These findings align with the expectations outlined in Peterson's *omnivore* and *highbrow univore (snob)* theory, which pertain to individuals from higher social strata.

Table 5 presents the comparisons related to participation in cultural activities. Notably, there are statistically significant differences in attendance in most cultural activities between Cultural Omnivores and Art Museum Univores. However, when it comes to sports events and jazz concerts, no significant differences were found ($p > 0.05$). As expected, Cultural Omnivores and Art Museum Univores do not exhibit significant differences in attendance at sporting events, a crucial indicator of low-brow or popular culture (Gurel and Nielsen 2019; Peterson 2005a, 2005b), and jazz concerts. It is worth noting that members of both clusters show the lowest attendance at jazz music concerts. This finding also aligns with the results of Gurel and Nielsen (2019).

Table 6 offers a comprehensive analysis of food preferences and restaurant-related behaviors. Remarkably, no significant differences were observed between the two groups regarding their willingness to pay at restaurants. This finding may also suggest

Table 4. Cluster profiles for demographics and socio-economic factors.

Variable	Cluster 1 'Cultural Omnivores' <i>n</i> = 237 (58.4%)	Cluster 2 'Art Museum Univores' <i>n</i> = 169 (41.6%)	Test statistic	Significance
Gender	female: 64.9% male: 32.0% other: 1.3% prefer not to tell: 1.7%	female: 58.9% male: 38.7% other: 0.6% prefer not to tell: 1.8%	$\chi^2 = 2.210$	.530
Age	18–20: 18.1% 21–30: 37.1% 31–40: 9.9% 41–50: 11.2% 51–60: 10.8% 61–65: 7.3% 66 and over: 5.6%	18–20: 14.6% 21–30: 29.9% 31–40: 11.0% 41–50: 14.0% 51–60: 15.9% 61–65: 6.1% 66 and over: 8.5%	$\chi^2 = 6.221$	.399
Education	Middle school: 2.2% High school: 17.9% University bachelor: 31.0% Masters: 36.7% Doctorate: 11.4% Other: 0.9%	Middle school: 0.0% High school: 15.3% University bachelor: 39.3% Masters: 30.7% Doctorate: 13.5% Other: 1.2%	$\chi^2 = 7.297$	.200
Socio-economic status	Never worked, unemployed, student: 28.0% Semi-routine and routine operations: 6.0% Lower supervisory and technical occupations: 3.0% Small employers and self- employed workers: 1.5% Intermediate occupations: 13.5% Managerial and professional occupations: 48.0%	Never worked, unemployed, student: 26.4% Semi-routine and routine operations: 4.3% Lower supervisory and technical occupations: 7.1% Small employers and self- employed workers: 2.1% Intermediate occupations: 14.3% Managerial and professional occupations: 45.7%	$\chi^2 = 3.856$	.570
Country of residence	France: 73.5% Other: 26.5%	France: 80.4% Other: 19.6%	$\chi^2 = 2.466$	.073
From Lyon or not	Lyonnais: 33.3% Not Lyonnais: 66.7%	Lyonnais: 36.1% Not Lyonnais: 63.9%	$\chi^2 = .290$	.334

that both groups originate from similar social strata. However, statistically significant differences emerge when examining the frequency of dining out. Cultural Omnivores stand out, with a higher percentage of participants reporting dining out 'two or three times a month', indicating their more frequent restaurant visits.

Exploring dining experiences further by the restaurant types, statistically significant differences are observed in attendance at brasseries/pubs/cafes, ethnic restaurants, food court/in-store restaurants, and Italian restaurants. In each of these categories, Cultural Omnivores display higher attendance percentages when compared to Art Museum Univores, highlighting varied culinary interests and explorations. This suggests a distinction in food preferences and where these groups prefer to dine, potentially indicating distinct restaurant preferences.

Discussion

Art museums must understand their diverse visitors to engage a broader audience and ensure their sustainability. This involves identifying and characterizing various visitor groups, each with their unique attributes, to tailor content and experiences accordingly. Our two-step cluster analysis, conducted using data collected from a selected art museum

Table 5. Cluster differences in high - and low-brow cultural activities.

Variable	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Test statistic	Significance
	'Cultural Omnivores' n = 237 (58.4%)	'Art Museum Univores' n = 169 (41.6%)		
Theatre	yes: 57.0% no: 43.0%	yes: 33.7% no: 66.3%	$\chi^2 = 21.365$	.000
Opera	yes: 19.4% no: 80.6%	yes: 8.3% no: 91.7%	$\chi^2 = 9.695$	.001
Ballet	yes: 13.1% no: 86.9%	yes: 5.9% no: 94.1%	$\chi^2 = 5.575$	.013
Museums	yes: 100% no: 0.0%	yes: 94.7% no: 5.3%	$\chi^2 = 12.907$	.000
Art Galleries	yes: 61.2% no: 38.8%	yes: 32.5% no: 67.5%	$\chi^2 = 32.368$	.000
Library	yes: 70.0% no: 30.0%	yes: 47.9% no: 52.1%	$\chi^2 = 20.247$	.000
Historical Places	yes: 87.3% no: 12.7%	yes: 59.2% no: 40.8%	$\chi^2 = 42.459$	.000
Photograph/sculpture/painting exhibition	yes: 76.4% no: 23.6%	yes: 26.0% no: 74.0%	$\chi^2 = 101.171$	.000
Classical music concert	yes: 24.9% no: 75.1%	yes: 10.7% no: 89.3%	$\chi^2 = 13.023$	.000
Cinema	yes: 89.0% no: 11.0%	yes: 72.8% no: 27.2%	$\chi^2 = 17.853$	.000
Festival	yes: 39.2% no: 60.8%	yes: 27.2% no: 72.8%	$\chi^2 = 6.322$	.008
Sports events	yes: 25.7% no: 74.3%	yes: 27.2% no: 72.8%	$\chi^2 = .111$	.412
Jazz concert	yes: 16.9% no: 83.1%	yes: 10.7% no: 89.3%	$\chi^2 = 3.124$	.051
Live music concert	yes: 39.7% no: 60.3%	yes: 23.7% no: 76.3%	$\chi^2 = 11.413$	.000
Dance Performance	yes: 22.8% no: 80.6%	yes: 7.7% no: 92.3%	$\chi^2 = 16.308$	.000
Famous parks	yes: 77.6% no: 22.4%	yes: 56.2% no: 43.8%	$\chi^2 = 21.065$	.000

Bold text = indicates factors that caused differences between the clusters.

in Lyon, France, revealed that art museum visitors are heterogeneous and can be categorized into two distinct groups, similar to the omnivores and highbrow univores proposed by Peterson (2005a, 2005b). These groups, labeled as Cultural Omnivores and Art Museum Univores in this study, following the approach of Gurel and Nielsen (2019) and Gurel (2023), demonstrate variations in cultural preferences, expectations of museum experiences, and frequency of attendance. Thus, the distinction between Cultural Omnivores and Art Museum Univores appears multifaceted, influenced by factors such as the volume and composition of activities attended, in addition to museum visitation frequency and various experiential and preference-based factors, such as specific interests and motivations.

Thus, our study reveals significant variations in visitor characteristics within art museums, enriching theoretical frameworks on audience segmentation, experiential marketing, and the omnivore-univore dichotomy. These insights deepen understanding and enable the development of targeted cultural and culinary experiences for scholars and practitioners. Integrating a holistic approach drawing from theories in cultural sociology and experiential marketing, our analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of visitor motivation and behavior.

Table 6. Cluster differences in food consumption preferences.

Variable	Cluster 1 'Cultural Omnivores' n = 237 (58.4%)	Cluster 2 'Art Museum Univores' n = 169 (41.6%)	Test statistic	Significance
Frequency of going to restaurants	Never: 0.0% 1–4 times a year: 4.2% 5–11 times a year: 14.3% Once a month: 23.2% Two or three times a month: 46.0% More than once a week: 12.2%	Never: 1.8% 1–4 times a year: 16.2% 5–11 times a year: 8.4% Once a month: 24.6% Two or three times a month: 35.9% More than once a week: 13.2%	$\chi^2 = 24.975$	.000
Readiness to pay in a restaurant	Less than €20: 10.3% €20–29: 23.5% €30–49: 33.3% €50–99: 13.0% €100–149: 4.7% €150–200: 2.6% More than €200: 3.4%	Less than €20: 5.4% €20–29: 26.9% €30–49: 29.3% €50–99: 8.5% €100–149: 11.4% €150–200: 4.2% More than €200: 2.4%	$\chi^2 = 10.860$	.093
Type of Restaurant Visited				
Michelin star restaurants	yes: 14.6% no: 85.4%	yes: 14.8% no: 85.2%	$\chi^2 = .003$	.532
Bistronomic restaurants	yes: 33.3% no: 66.7%	yes: 36.1% no: 63.9%	$\chi^2 = .333$	.318
Brasserie/Pub/Café	yes: 89.0% no: 11.0%	yes: 72.8% no: 27.2%	$\chi^2 = 17.853$	.000
Other French restaurants	yes: 57.4% no: 42.6%	yes: 52.7% no: 47.3%	$\chi^2 = .890$	.200
Ethnic restaurants	yes: 74.3% no: 25.7%	yes: 65.7% no: 34.3%	$\chi^2 = 3.506$	.039
Fast-food restaurants	yes: 62.9% no: 37.1%	yes: 55.6% no: 44.4%	$\chi^2 = 2.157$	.086
Vegetarian restaurants	yes: 27.8% no: 72.2%	yes: 23.1% no: 76.9%	$\chi^2 = 1.171$	.167
Food-court, in-store restaurants	yes: 29.5% no: 70.5%	yes: 17.2% no: 82.8%	$\chi^2 = 8.195$	.003
Italian restaurants	yes: 71.3% no: 28.7%	yes: 56.2% no: 43.8%	$\chi^2 = 9.884$	.001

Bold text = indicates factors that caused differences between the clusters.

Theoretical implications

This study makes significant theoretical contributions by recognizing the diversity among art museum visitors based on their behavior and motivations. First, this study aligns with the findings of Taheri, Jafari, and O’Gorman (2014), highlighting the relevance of cultural consumption theory and the omnivore-univore dichotomy within art museums. Our research underscores the importance of acknowledging the heterogeneity among art museum visitors rather than treating them as a uniform group. A one-size-fits-all approach overlooks the nuanced differences between different visitor segments, challenging the conventional portrayal of ‘museum-goers’. As proposed by Gurel (2023), research in cultural tourism should adopt a comprehensive approach and integrate cultural theories to recognize and comprehend the diverse groups within this field.

Second, following the methodology of Gurel and Nielsen (2019), our analysis provided insights to understand not only omnivores but also highbrow univores. In particular, our study revealed that cultural omnivores and highbrow univores demonstrate disparities in the volume and composition of their restaurant choices, reflecting divergent food

preferences alongside their cultural activity participation. This observation contributes valuable insights to the existing literature, shedding light on the intricate relationship between food diversity, cultural engagement, and the distinctions between omnivores and highbrow univores.

The contrasting theories of cultural omnivorousness and Bourdieu's framework are reinforced by our findings, highlighting the dynamic nature of culinary preferences among individuals. Supporting Lin et al. (2019), our study revealed that cultural omnivores and highbrow univores indeed demonstrate disparities in their restaurant choices, echoing the inclusive and expansive palate advocated by the theory of cultural omnivorousness. This aligns with the progressive shift toward diverse culinary exploration observed even among highbrow univores, as evidenced by their attendance at brasseries/pubs/café and ethnic restaurants in this study. However, statistically significant disparities still exist between omnivores and highbrow univores attending these restaurants, suggesting further distinctions between them beyond their cultural participation in high and popular activities. Such findings underscore the evolving cultural landscape, where culinary experiences intersect with cultural engagement to shape individual preferences and societal dynamics.

Third, transitioning from analyzing culinary preferences, our research also constitutes a significant methodological contribution. Following Gurel and Nielsen (2019), Lee et al. (2006), and Müller and Hamm (2014), our utilization of cluster analysis represents a significant advancement in existing theories. As Vries and Reeves (2022) noted, traditionally, researchers have relied on quantitative data from large-scale surveys. Some employed indexes focused solely on attendance in high and popular cultural activities to distinguish omnivores from other groups (e.g., Barbieri and Mahoney 2010; Taheri, Jafari, and O'Gorman 2014). However, we contend that exploring the behavioral and motivational differences concurrently among art museum visitors provided valuable insights into the diverse behaviors and preferences of omnivores and highbrow univores. In this regard, employing a two-step cluster analysis proves more accurate.

Two-step cluster analysis can integrate diverse datasets and determine the predictor importance of these variables within a cluster solution. As such, it facilitated a comprehensive examination of the distinctions between Cultural Omnivores and Art Museum Univores in this study, incorporating both quantitative factors, such as the number of activities attended, and qualitative elements, such as specific motivations guiding their museum experiences. Our findings suggest that beyond cultural preferences, motivations guiding cultural experiences play a significant role in explaining differences between these groups. Furthermore, this approach allows us to capture the diverse preferences of art museum consumers, encompassing both omnivores and univores. Nonetheless, previous methodologies, relying on simplistic categorizations based on indexes (e.g., Barbieri and Mahoney 2010), lack the nuance required to capture varied univores. For instance, individuals with specific tastes for ballet or opera, who may be called 'ballet univores' or 'opera univores', risk being overlooked or incorrectly classified using these approaches.

Fourth, our study advocates for a contextualized understanding of omnivorousness, highlighting the importance of defining omnivores relative to other potential groups, such as highbrow univores, within specific cultural settings. While traditional approaches may rely solely on census data and focus on omnivores (such as Vries and Reeves 2022;

Warde, Wright, and Gayo-Cal 2007), we argue that the unique context of an art museum provides an ideal setting for distinguishing omnivores relative to highbrow univores. The rich array of cultural experiences and stimuli art museums offer provides a nuanced lens to explore and delineate diverse cultural consumption patterns (Gurel 2023; Gurel and Nielsen 2019). Thus, by harnessing the power of two-step cluster analysis within the context of art museum visitors, we argue that our study contributes to advancing scholarly understanding of omnivorous behavior and its implications for cultural stratification and consumption dynamics.

Practical implications

This study's findings significantly contribute to our understanding of the conclusions drawn from prior research. In particular, in alignment with the observations made by scholars such as Gurel (2023) and Gurel and Nielsen (2019), it is evident that Cultural Omnivores and Art Museum Univores constitute two distinct visitor groups. These groups exhibit significant differences in their cultural and culinary activity participation patterns and the experiences they seek in museums. As a result, art museums should customize their offerings to better cater to the unique preferences of these distinct groups.

As Gurel and Nielsen (2019) pointed out, our results underscore that sociodemographic characteristics may not be sufficient for art museums to differentiate between their visitor groups and effectively tailor their offerings. It highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of visitor motivations and preferences to foster broader and more engaging museum experiences. In this context, a holistic approach that incorporates cultural theories is essential. In contemporary experiential marketing, organizations craft not just transactions but narratives that captivate, transform, and endure. As consumers increasingly seek emotional and meaningful engagements with cultural experiences, the power of experiential marketing emerges as a catalyst for building profound, lasting, and unforgettable connections. Our holistic approach, infused with cultural theories, enables institutions to understand and respond to their visitor segments' diverse motivations and preferences, enriching the overall museum experience and fostering a more profound and enduring connection between the museum and its audience.

More specifically, for Cultural Omnivores, art museums should continuously offer new and diverse experiences to keep them engaged. In addition, they may be drawn to museums that can provide various experiences, including special exhibitions, aesthetic architecture, and atmosphere, as well as opportunities for learning, wonder, personal development, and enjoyment. To reach this group, art museums can harness the power of digital communication and information technologies, such as websites, podcasts, and social media, to promote a wide array of experiences. Additionally, incorporating participative exhibits, as Black (2018) suggested, can enhance engagement by allowing Cultural Omnivores to interact more actively with the displays and fulfill their desire for a wide array of experiences, including wonder, learning, personal development, and having a good time. Virtual galleries can also offer accessible and diverse experiences, including special exhibitions, which Cultural Omnivores are particularly interested in. Through virtual galleries, they can explore art from anywhere at any time, further

attracting them by providing the variety they seek. Artificial Intelligence can play a vital role in generating customized content, occasionally introducing elements of positive surprise. Efforts to encourage repeat visits, such as contests that offer new experiences each time, should also be explored. Artificial Intelligence can also be invaluable in creating dynamic and engaging games that provide visitors with fresh and unique experiences on each visit. As art museums often aim to surprise and expose visitors to new ideas and artworks, these strategies may benefit Cultural Omnivores.

Furthermore, as Bataat (2019) has argued, the experiential atmosphere, particularly the museum building, appears significant to Cultural Omnivores. Therefore, museum practitioners can also leverage the unique characteristics of the museum's building to engage their visitors, especially targeting Cultural Omnivores rather than Art Museum Univores.

Creating cultural packages and programs that include various cultural events like cinema, theater, opera, and more can also incentivize Cultural Omnivores. Therefore, art museums should also explore collaboration between different cultural forms and art museums. The edutainment approach, which combines education and entertainment, could be an effective strategy for Cultural Omnivores in particular, as Gurel and Nielsen (2019) suggested. Night events, such as 'Museum Lates', can also provide unique and engaging experiences, further attracting this visitor segment.

In contrast to the other segment, Art Museum Univores appear to have little interest in various cultural activities but exhibit a particular affinity for art museums. Their primary focus seems to revolve around visiting art museums, and they are relatively self-motivated. Nevertheless, this group is primarily motivated by a desire for learning and, to some extent, seeking to have a good time. Art museums can develop targeted strategies and programs to enhance their visits by deeply understanding this segment. While Art Museum Univores may not require as much encouragement to visit art museums compared to Cultural Omnivores, Artificial Intelligence can still be a valuable tool to enhance their museum experiences. Artificial Intelligence can offer personalized guided tours and in-depth interpretations of artworks that allow Univores to explore art collections. It can provide advanced search and discovery features to help them discover new artists and artworks that align with their interests and offer educational programs to enhance their learning experience. Furthermore, Artificial Intelligence can curate content specifically for Univores, ensuring they receive the most relevant updates and exhibition information. Additionally, incorporating participative exhibits, as Black (2018) suggested, can enrich the experiences of Art Museum Univores, enabling them to interact more deeply with the exhibits and provide a more engaging and educational visit.

In addition to their distinctive cultural engagement patterns, it is worth noting that Cultural Omnivores and Art Museum Univores also exhibit notable disparities in their dining preferences and behavior. These distinctions further underscore the multifaceted nature of these visitor segments and suggest the potential for tailored culinary experiences to complement their museum visits. For Cultural Omnivores, museums could offer diverse dining experiences that cater to their interests and tastes. This could include rotating pop-up restaurants featuring various cuisines and local chefs to keep the dining experience new each time. Additionally, themed dining events, such as pairing meals with special exhibitions or cultural events, could provide a cohesive cultural and culinary journey. Cooking classes and workshops focused on cuisines related to

current exhibitions could also offer an educational and interactive experience, engaging this group further. Incorporating night events that combine special exhibitions, culinary experiences, and live performances could attract this segment by providing unique experiences beyond regular museum hours.

In contrast, Art Museum Univores, who show a particular affinity for art museums and are motivated by learning and personal development, might prefer different culinary strategies. Art-inspired cafes offering menus based on the museum's collections or specific art movements could integrate art and dining. Quiet dining spaces might cater to their preference for a more focused visit, allowing them to enjoy a meal while reflecting on the art. Moreover, educational culinary programs, such as talks or demonstrations by chefs discussing different cuisines' historical and cultural contexts, might align well with their desire for learning.

By understanding and catering to these differences, art museums can enhance the visitor experience and create more personalized and engaging offerings. These findings collectively contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the studied groups and will inform future research, emphasizing the importance of considering diverse visitor needs in art museums.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

Several limitations require consideration in interpreting the findings of this study. The reliance on cross-sectional data collected from current museum visitors in a specific art museum in Lyon, France, limits the generalizability of the findings. While our research aligns with the approach Gurel and Nielsen (2019) took in Italy, a more extensive and diverse longitudinal sample would have strengthened the robustness of our conclusions.

The findings presented in this research offer valuable insights into the demographic, socio-economic, cultural, and culinary characteristics of the identified clusters, Cultural Omnivores and Art Museum Univores. Specifically, our research highlights their distinctions in attendance patterns for cultural activities and restaurant preferences. Nonetheless, these findings should be qualified and further explored in future research. Further investigation, especially qualitative, is warranted to explore these differences.

Our findings also suggest that the distinction between Cultural Omnivores and Art Museum Univores is multifaceted, influenced by both quantitative factors, such as the number of activities attended, and qualitative elements, such as specific interests, motivations, and culinary preferences. Future research has the potential to explore the interplay of these factors further, providing a deeper understanding of their role in the segmentation of art museum visitors. Moreover, transformative and immersive experiences would be investigated based on these identified clusters, shedding light on how these distinct visitor groups engage with and are enriched by art and cultural offerings.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data availability statement

Data set associated with the paper will be available on request.

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