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Exploring the Fashion Visiting Experience: a Content Analysis about the “Boncompagni Ludovisi Museum”

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ABSTRACT

Fashion represents a multi-disciplinary and to some extent a cross-disciplinary field of research, spanning economic and industry studies, cultural, heritage and sociological research, geographical and tourism reflections.

Fashion is a hallmark of Italian exports: through the fashion products, Italy exports its outstanding sense of beauty and aesthetics, the artisanal manufacturing expertise and a certain artistic value. Furthermore, fashion characterizes the cultural and touristic image of Italy, affecting and/or enriching the tourists’ experience.

The aim of the work is exploring the experience of visitors of the “Boncompagni Ludovisi Decorative Art Museum” in Rome, through a content analysis of the posts published on the Facebook Official Page and the reviews shared on TripAdvisor.

More in details, after a literature review about the ‘museification’ trends in the fashion tourism, the work will deeply explore through a content analysis the several dimensions of post visiting experience, in order to understand the mutual roles of core attractions (collections and location’s architecture) and museum’s quality of welcome.

Tourism management and policy’s implications will be discussed.

Keywords: Fashion Tourism; Tourism Experience; Boncompagni Ludovisi; Content Analysis; Policies

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La moda rappresenta un campo di ricerca multidisciplinare e, in una certa misura, interdisciplinare, che abbraccia studi economici e industriali, ricerche culturali, storiche e sociologiche, riflessioni geografiche e turistiche.

La moda è un capitolo cruciale dell'*export* italiano: attraverso i prodotti della moda, l'Italia esporta il suo eccezionale senso di bellezza ed estetica, la competenza artigianale manifatturiera e un certo valore artistico. Inoltre, la moda caratterizza l'immagine culturale e turistica dell'Italia, influenzando e / o arricchendo l'esperienza turistica.

L'obiettivo del lavoro è quello di esplorare l'esperienza dei visitatori del "Museo delle arti decorative Boncompagni Ludovisi" a Roma, attraverso una “analisi del contenuto” dei post pubblicati sulla Pagina ufficiale di Facebook e delle recensioni condivise su TripAdvisor.

Più in dettaglio, dopo una revisione della letteratura sulle tendenze alla “museificazione” nel settore del fashion, il lavoro esplorerà profondamente le diverse dimensioni dell'esperienza di visita, al fine di comprendere il ruolo delle principali attrazioni (collezioni e *location*) e la qualità dell'accoglienza del museo.

Verranno inoltre discusse le principali implicazioni di gestione e *policy*.

Keywords: Turismo della moda; esperienza turistica; Museo Boncompagni Ludovisi; content analysis; policies

Introduction¹

The global apparel industry has undergone profound changes since the beginning of the 2000s, which entailed the entry into play on the international markets of many countries, especially in Asia (Gereffi & Frederick, 2010). Especially China, alongside other Eastern and Southern Asia Countries, gained relevant market share thanks to lowest cost suppliers so to force the decline of apparel enterprises in the traditional concentration regions, the so-called “Global Triad” (United States, European Union and Japan).

According to the last statistics given by WTO, from 2000 to 2017 China raised the share in world clothing exports from 18 to 35% and remarkable increases are also evidenced in Bangladesh, Viet Nam, India; on the other side, the most relevant countries in world clothing imports are still EU, US and Japan.

Therefore, these numbers highlight the asymmetries between the producers and global buyers of final apparel products; in the apparel industry, in fact, the most valuable activities are not correlated only to the manufacturing per se, but are deeply rooted with the power of design, branding, and the marketing of products. These activities are accomplished by well-known brand owners and large global retailers, which, in most cases, outsource the manufacturing process to a global network of suppliers.

The relocation of production has therefore involved the paradoxical effect of further reinforcing the brand, even beyond the quality of the product itself. Sometimes, in the global brands there is not a particular difference with other similar products. According

to Chevalier & Mazzalovo (2004, p. 275): “Snob appeal, fashion, or simply superb communication that strikes just the right chord with certain social classes, impeccable distribution, retailing and advertising presence: all these can create global success for a product”.

The possibility of production networks and the greater diffusion of mass media have led to an acceleration in the seasonal cycles of fashion and an imitative effect of new competitors with the possibility of producing and selling at lower prices (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010).

Fashion concept has changed deeply in its characteristics due to these processes, so to have a new structural approach commonly called “fast fashion”. There are at least two prominent features in a “fast fashion” system: short production and distribution lead times (quick response to markets); highly fashionable product design (Cachon & Swinney, 2011).

Joy et al. (2012) describe “fast fashion” in these terms: “The phrase “fast fashion” refers to low-cost clothing collections that mimic current luxury fashion trends. Fast fashion helps satisfy deeply held desires among young consumers in the industrialized world for luxury fashion, even as it embodies unsustainability. Trends run their course with lightning speed, with today’s latest styles swiftly trumping yesterday’s, which have already been consigned to the trash bin”.

The change in the modes of production and consumption of fashion favors an increase in shopping tourism; although having to distinguish between shopping tourism and tourist shopping (Timothy, 2014), it is necessary to observe how the shopping places have multiplied, also building their own very clear identities.

The traditional shopping streets of big cities, often characterized by the agglomeration of luxury products, inaccessible to many people, but still able to create a prestigious aura in those places, are complemented, in some cases replaced, by department stores, commercial malls, outlet villages, and other types of large spaces useful for displaying and buying “fast fashion” products (Teller, 2008).

Some contradictions in the way of production of “fast fashion” have been pointed out, like the over-production (and the consequent rapid over-consumption), the working conditions in factories (sometimes very deprived) and the poor quality of raw materials (paying more attention on environment by using the so-called “ecofashion”). In response to these critical aspects, it goes in recent years consolidating a movement, which reverses the current conditions of production and consumption, to focus on a concept of “slow fashion” (Fletcher, 2010).

According to Pookulangara & Shepard (2013, p. 201): “Slow fashion concept is based on sustainability within the fashion industry and design incorporating high quality, small lines, regional productions, and fair labor conditions”.

Jung & Jin (2014) identify five dimensions of the slow fashion orientation: equity, authenticity, localism, exclusivity and functionality. The rediscovery of the local dimension for fashion may help revitalize the local economy, possibly involving young designers and artisans and producing handmade quality products with rather high prices, but with unique features reflecting local history and tradition.

Starting from the definition of “slow fashion” the luxury returns to be a very important concept: it must be emphasized that, beyond the objective distinctions regarding the

quality of premium goods, there is a close correlation between luxury and social stratification.

Kapferer (2010, p. 43) observes the shift from absolute to relative luxury: "To summarize, in the aristocratic world, luxury was the son of an inherited social stratification. In our open societies, it is the signal of the latent social stratification. This is why it has gained so much importance. (...) What is typical in our modern world is that there is no more one single elite: in fact the evolution of luxury is a reflection of the fight between elites".

Despite the increase in sales in fashion, luxury goods must remain scarce and relatively inaccessible to be a dream for the majority of the population, taking on a symbolic value that goes beyond the mere materiality of the artifact (Olorenshaw, 2011).

In this new perspective, the return to artisanal methods of production can represent a rather relevant problem for the most important global brands, because it would not be possible to guarantee the current quantity of its products. In this sense, in order to recover the dimensions of uniqueness and exclusivity, luxury products become more and more objects of art, passing through a defined process of "artification" (Kapferer, 2014; Chailan, 2018).

The process of "artification" of luxury and fashion could strengthen and re-launch the role of fashion museums, accessible to visitors who want to observe objects that are otherwise inaccessible in their daily lives. Fashion museums can become such a necessary interface between the world of the most prestigious brands and the broadest social strata of the population, with a mutual exchange in the perspective of experiential enrichment.

1. Literature review

A fashion museum is undoubtedly a niche place of visit considering the global tourist flows, so the analysis to frame its characteristics can be schematically represented by three elements that make up the system: exhibits, visitors, experiences (i.e. all those subjective elements that stem from the interaction between exhibits and visitors).

Steele (1998) highlights how a fashion museum for some people is just an exhibition of ephemeral objects, not funny or educational and, above all, that fashion is a living and constantly changing phenomenon, so that an exhibition of clothes "kills" the spirit of fashion. Moreover, a fashion museum can often be influenced and economically closely linked to particular brands or designers, so to lose its objective connotations and become just a space at the service of commercial interests. Therefore, it is important to focus on the objects contained in the fashion museum and their possible interpretations for the visitors.

According to Preziosi (2006, p. 50): "Walking (through) a museum appears to resemble walking through history: we move in and among a succession of objects, pantomiming not only the passage of time but also appearing to exemplify evolutionary changes or even the progressive developments in form, style, invention, value, or mentality". The author highlights two characteristics of the objects contained in museums: the meaning of the object is referred to a network of associations of ideas (for example, in the case of fashion, the designer, someone famous who wore it, etc.); furthermore, the object is unique and irreplaceable (obviously in the case of high fashion garments and

luxury items).

Steele (2008) focus on the fact that for a long time most museum exhibitions consisted only in a temporal succession of upper-class women’s fashions, tending to be somewhat antiquarian. A “new” fashion point of view should consider not the objects per se, but their meaning and practices behind them.

The presentation of objects in a fashion museum is not a simple and objective operation; the curators have many responsibilities, compared to a traditional museum, to explore new ways to create intelligent and attractive exhibitions for a modern and sophisticated audience (Palmer, 2008).

The exhibitions in a fashion museum could also represent a tangible sign of the cultural progress of a society, showing the historical reconstruction of the development trajectory and the current trends of the so-called “made in”, to become a symbol of belonging and a national heritage (Neira Garcia, 2018).

A museum exhibition is made up of material, but also intangible elements and stimuli, which constitute the “atmosphere”, making the visit more or less welcome. Starting from the concept of servicescape, we can highlight some elements that influence the use for visitors (Forrest, 2013): color schemes; lighting; allocation of space to exhibitions; programs; spatial arrangement of exhibitions; interpretive signage and object labels; availability and perception of staff; interactions with other visitors; crowding.

The other fundamental element for a museum are the visitors, that is the potential users of the museum exhibition once it has been cured in all its physical and immaterial aspects. Perry (1993) highlights the psychological needs of visitors to be satisfied in a museum: curiosity; confidence; challenge; control; play; communication. When arrived on place, visitors want in some way to have a degree of participation in the museum, not to be passive subjects; so, they want some kind of physical, social or intellectual interaction. After the visit, we expect some outcomes, maybe those stimulated by the curators of the exhibition, although the individual personalities still prevail: ranging from negative outcomes, like boring, to positive, such as learning something like an increase in knowledge, attitudes and skills.

Hanquinet (2013) classifies some kinds of museum visitors:

- “classically cultured visitors” (older highly educated population);
- “passive cultured visitors” (pensioners and other older people characterized by an inclination to inactivity);
- “cultured progressists” (highly educated people aged less than 35 who have an artistic background are over-represented);
- “hedonists” (people aged between 25 and 44 with a higher education, to whom the art museum visit does not reflect an important involvement into high-culture and arts);
- “distant” (people with the lowest artistic knowledge, so visiting the art museum seems to be an unusual part of their lifestyle);
- “art lovers” (people middle-aged, they are regular visitors of art and culture places and, although having highbrow tastes, they show broader taste patterns).

When a visitor enters a museum, there is an immediate interaction between the exhibited objects and the observer; obviously, the experience in museums, the link

between physical elements and the souls of visitors, appears the most relevant and strategic study focus.

The museum experience is widely accepted as multidimensional, in that it is the simultaneous interaction between the visitor’s personal, sociocultural and physical contexts.

“Experience involves acting and being acted upon, sensing and feeling both, and transforming them into something emotionally and intellectually meaningful. (...) As sensory and affective experience becomes transformed in thought and story, a museum (or any other environment) can become a significant place for people and contributes in some meaningful way to transforming the people themselves” (McCarthy & Ciolfi, 2008, p. 250).

Soren (2009) highlights how some museum experiences profoundly change individuals’ attitudes, interests, appreciation, beliefs, or values, and then lists some triggers for museum transformational experiences (tab. 1).

Table 1: Main triggers for transformational experiences

Trigger	Description
Attitudinal	Shift in perspective (immersion in the narrative of the museum)
Authentic	Seeing the authentic object
Behavioral	Explanation reinforcing the level of knowing or experiencing alternative views on some topic.
Being witness	Survivors’ personal objects and memorabilia
Cultural	Understanding cultural changes
Emotional	Powerfully emotive
Motivational	Experiential (being an active part of the story of the museum)
Sublimation	An esthetic experience involving imagination, reason, vast magnitude
Traumatic	Traumatic Events in history (Dark Tourism, etc.).
Unexpected	A shocking and unexpected surprise

Source: adapted from Soren (2009)

A museum experience has a different impact on individuals, but it also evolves over time, being able to mark precise moments in which there are different phases of interaction between the exhibited objects and the visitors.

In general, the visitor chooses to go to a museum having a first mental image of what expected, then there is a phase in which there is a comparison between the exhibition and the pre-formed image, and finally a review opinion based on the feelings solicited during the visit once outside the museum.

Roppola (2012) deconstructs visitors experience in four moments: framing; resonating; channeling; broadening. Framing is the mental process prior to enter the museum, due to individual and social frames of each visitor. Resonating is the mix of initial feelings coming into the museum, the connections establishing between the exhibition and the visitors. Channelling is the process of merging of two simultaneous actions that influences visitor’s behaviors: from the institutional point of view, channels are conduits by which visitors are assisted through the museum; from the personal point of view, channels are pathways visitors construct using their own agency. Broadening is

the process to widen the visitor knowledge in some way, for example in experiential, conceptual, affective and/or discursive mode.

Pine & Gilmore (1999) in their interpretative scheme of people's experience during the events, focus on the degree of guest participation (from *passive* to *active*) and the kind of environmental relationship (between visitors and exhibitions in this case), spanning from *absorption* (occupying a person's attention) to *immersion* (becoming part of the experience itself). The coupling of these dimensions defines the four “realms” of an experience: entertainment; education; escape; estheticism.

Kotler *et al.* (2008) proposed a scheme of application of museum experiences, starting from the four "realms" of experience. The six types of museum-going experiences, in many cases are similar to what proposed by Pine & Gilmore. Thus, there are: the recreation that corresponds to the realm of entertainment; the learning experience namely the education realm; the aesthetic experience that is the estheticism experience. More immersive participation typical in museum, according to Kotler *et al.* (2008), are the social interaction or sociability between the different actors inside the exhibition and the celebrative experience. Finally, there is the issue-oriented experience, similar in some ways to the learning experience, but with a more passive and partial vision on a topic of debate in particular.

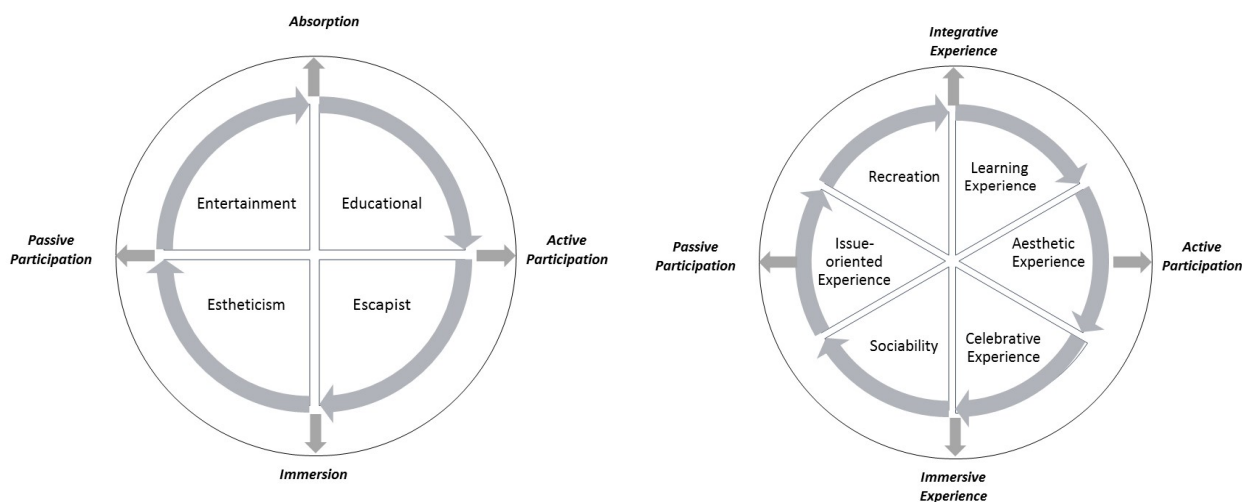


Figure 1: The realms of experience

Source: adapted from Pine & Gilmore (1999) and Kotler *et al.*(2008)

2. The case study

As previously highlighted, the work aims to explore the dimensions of post visiting experience in fashion museum through the case study of the “Boncompagni Ludovisi Museum for the Decorative Arts, Costume and Fashion of the XIX and XX Centuries”. In order to achieve this goal, the section is organized as follows: after a brief note about the history of the museum and visitors’ trend, data and methodology will be described before presenting the empirical results.

2.1. *The “Boncompagni Ludovisi Museum for the Decorative Arts, Costume and Fashion of the XIX and XX Centuries”*

According to Calanca (2012), there are more than 70 fashion museums in Italy, scattered in all regions. Among them, authors chose the “Boncompagni Ludovisi Museum for the Decorative Arts, Costume and Fashion of the XIX and XX Centuries”. The Museum, located in Rome between Porta Pinciana and Porta Salaria and housed in the villa of the aristocratic family “Boncompagni Ludovisi”, is an example of eclectic architecture with Liberty influences. Built in 1901 and then expanded in 1932, since 1995 it held the villa’s original furnishings, decorative art objects, paintings by leading artists of the Italian twentieth century (among others, De Chirico and Balla) as well as a precious collection of Flemish tapestries (Amaturo, 2018).

As Amaturo (2018, p. 196) observes, “great importance is given to the history of costume and fashion through numerous dresses by famous designers and important tailor's that illustrate the evolution of Italian fashion from the late nineteenth century to the last decades of the twentieth century”.

Among the most outstanding brands are those of Gattinoni, Valentino, Curiel, Riva and Balestra. The fashion collection has been enriched by the important donation of Palma Bucarelli, famous director of the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome.

Since its foundation, the Museum has shown a fluctuating but substantially growing interest in terms of visitors: in the last year (2017) the “Boncompagni Ludovisi” attracted more than 9.700 visitors, tripling the starting appeal.

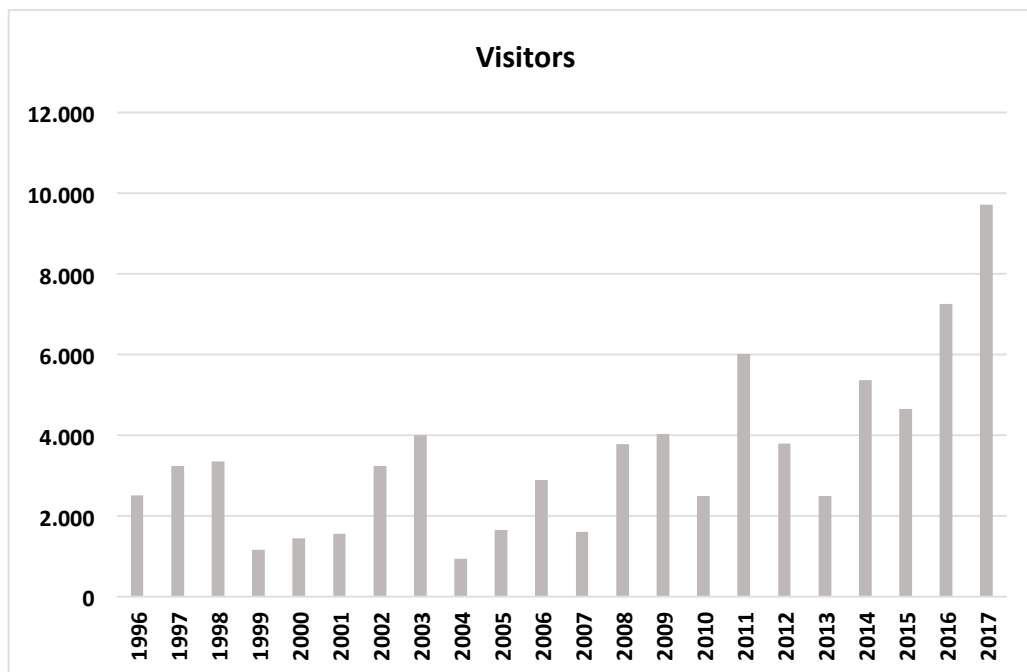


Figure 2: The visitors' trend of the 'Boncompagni Ludovisi Museum'

Source: own elaboration from ISTAT data

2.2. Data and methodology

In order to understand the dimensions of the visitors' experience of the “Boncompagni Ludovisi Museum”, it was decided to consider the online contents generated by the users on the Facebook Official Page of the Museum and on the related TripAdvisor website.

As is well known, the Internet revolution 2.0 has radically transformed the way of traveling, from the choice of destination, to the travel experience, until the *ex post* evaluation. With the advent of social networks, in fact, travelers have become *prosumer* of information: in addition to search on Internet useful information for the organization of the trip, the current tourists share online photos, videos, reviews and comments, opinions and perceptions. In this vein, tourists have progressively turned from mere *users* into *producers* of relevant information for tourism. This caused a spread of online platforms where it is possible finding raw data about the experience of the tourist/visitor who leaves - knowingly or unknowingly - an own trace, sharing an evaluation of the experience. On the other hand, from the supply side, the 2.0 revolution opened new competition scenarios: the availability and accessibility of information and the opportunity of users to easy generate content caused new challenges in terms of management, branding and media reputation.

TripAdvisor is one of the landmark sites for tourists worldwide. Founded in 2000, the site is “part social network, part virtual community and part blog [...]. However, it is clear that its primary function is the collection and dissemination of user-generated content - reviews, ratings, photos and videos - on a highly specific domain, i.e. travel” (O'Connor, 2008, p. 51). According to the company data, TripAdvisor collects more than

half a billion reviews worldwide about accommodations, airlines, attractions and restaurants.

TripAdvisor’s users, upon registration, can provide for each experience a quantitative assessment (through a scale from 1 to 5) and a qualitative evaluation through explicit comments.

Facebook, online since 2004, is simultaneously a social network and a social media tendentially “generalist”. With over 2 billion users, today it is a further important platform for media marketing activities as well for sharing of user-generated contents. As with TripAdvisor, users can review places, attractions, accomodation structures, etc., through a synthetic quantitative vote (assigning a number of stars from 1 to 5) and an extended evaluation by comments.

In the case study were considered only the qualitative reviews leaving out the other purely quantitative reviews on the official pages (on TripAdvisor and Facebook) of the Museum. In summary, the database consists of 94 reviews (of which 58 on TripAdvisor and 36 generated on Facebook), shared online from December 2013 to June 2018. The length of reviews varies from a minimum of one word to a maximum of 548 words.

Methodologically, different approaches of qualitative and quantitative analysis could be implemented for exploring these raw data. Being a substantially explorative study, it was decided to adopt the basic tools of the content analysis, whose definition is flexible and controversial. According to Weber (1990, p. 9), the content analysis “is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text. These are inferences are about the sender (s) of the message, the message itself, or the audience of the message. The rules of this inferential process vary with the theoretical and substantive interests of the investigator”. For Berelson (1952, p. 18) the content analysis is a “research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifestation of a communication” while for Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278) it could be defined as a research method “for the subjective interpretation of the content of text”.

The content analysis procedure could be schematized in some general phases: in the first phase the researcher identifies the so-called recording units or the unit of analysis, defined by Krippendorff (2003: p. 101) as “units of textual matter that set the limits on the information to be considered” (word, Word sense, sentence, theme, paragraph, whole text). Once the unit of analysis is defined, the researcher chooses the categories through which to select the units of text. After a coding test has been carried out on a part of the available database and the categorization rules have been validated, the researcher performs the coding procedure, ensuring accuracy and reliability.

The coding phase could generate variables for quantitative analysis or be functional to qualitative approaches.

Among the qualitative approaches, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) distinguish between conventional, direct and summative content analysis.

The conventional content analysis is “generally used with a study design whose aim is to describe a phenomenon” (*ibidem*, p. 1279): the researcher defines *ex post* the coding categories.

The direct content analysis has a more structured process: “using existing theory or prior research, researchers begin by identifying key concepts or variables as initial

coding categories” (*ibidem*, p. 1281) the researcher can identify *ex ante* the coding categories.

The summative content analysis starts with identifying and quantifying certain words or content in text with the purpose of understanding the contextual use of the words or content” (*ibidem*, p. 1282) also considering the latent meaning of words.

In this case study, considering the objectives of the analysis and the characteristics of the database, the authors opted for a mainly direct qualitative approach with particular attention to the latent meaning of the words. The coding units are words while different coding categories are adopted in the two steps of analysis. A first step describes the factual elements and the subjective evaluations that visitors attribute to the coding categories of building, collections, staff and the museum as a whole. In a second step, authors tried to further systematize these evaluations, attributing the subjective part of the evaluations about the whole museum to one of the experience realms identified by Pine & Gilmore (1999), adopted as coding categories.

2.3. Results

The results of the first step of the coding are briefly presented in Figure 3. As is known, the visitor's experience, crystallized through the reviews, is a complex set of perceptions, elaborations and evaluations that simultaneously concern the observation of factual elements and the subjectivity of one's own experience. So, despite they are “mediated” by the subjective filter of the visitor, the analysis distinguishes the factual elements from the personal judgments related to the museum as a whole and to the three key components (coding categories) identified *ex ante* (building, collections and staff).

At first glance, in the case of the “Boncompagni Ludovisi Museum”, the building seems to take a decisive part in the visitor's perception: 60 reviews explicitly refer to the villa where the exhibits are hosted. In particular, among the factual elements that 2.0 web users consider as distinctive features of the building, there are the neighborhood, the proximity to Via Veneto considered a street “symbol” of Italian style and the “green” in which it the villa is immersed. Together with the eclectic style, those factual elements seem to produce an imagery of charm and elegance and a certain amazement even before the exploration of the collections, increasing the visitor's expectations.

The collections, as a whole, seem to capture the attention of about a third of web reviewers. However, in the richness of the exhibition - a succession of jewels, paints, furniture, ceramics and chinaware, tapestries, artifacts and sculpures - emerge a number of comments about clothes, emblem of haute couture, made in Italy, tailoring skills and inspiration of Italian stylists. Among the most continuous references is that in Palma Bucarelli. The global perception of these collections is mainly positive: the exhibition is considered interesting, wonderful, well maintained, well described, unique and fascinating. However, there are some negative impressions related to the feeling of chaos and disorder and the lack of expectations gained outside.

The staff is an important part of the visitor's experience: as many as 23 reviews refer to it. Visitors recognize particularly, appreciating it, the voluntary work, the kindness, the education and descriptive skills. Even in this case, the category is not without critical issues: some users report poor competence and poor courtesy.

It is however on the museum as a whole that visitors focus their online evaluation. The museum is described as a treasure trove, a gem, a surprising revelation, discovered in some cases quite casually. In addition to the size (24 comments define the "small" museum) and gratuitousness (30 comments), visitors appreciate the originality and uniqueness, the timeless atmosphere, the tranquility and the silence compared to the most popular museums of the Roman tourist circuit. According to web reviewers, the "Boncompagni Ludovisi Museum" is highly recommended museum, a "must" to see, culturally relevant and educational while its greatest criticality is considered the lacking valorization.

Fig. 4 summarizes the results of the second step of the analysis. The overall experience of the visitor oscillates mainly between escapism and esthetic, while the education and entertainment dimensions are more marginal. On closer observation, in the case of "Boncompagni Ludovisi Museum", the perception of being away from the tourist chaos and immersed in a quiet and calm atmosphere, strongly enriches the traditional aesthetic dimension of the visit (Rosenstein, 2012). The educational dimension emerges from the interest perceived by visitors. The educational realm is also partially permeated by the aesthetic one where the museum is recognized as having the ability to evoke Italian style.

In short, the connection between the visitor/tourist and the place/museum seems to characterize the visitor's experience far more than his/her active participation: therefore, the overall experience that the visitor reports online can be assimilated to the Pine & Gilmore's immersion.

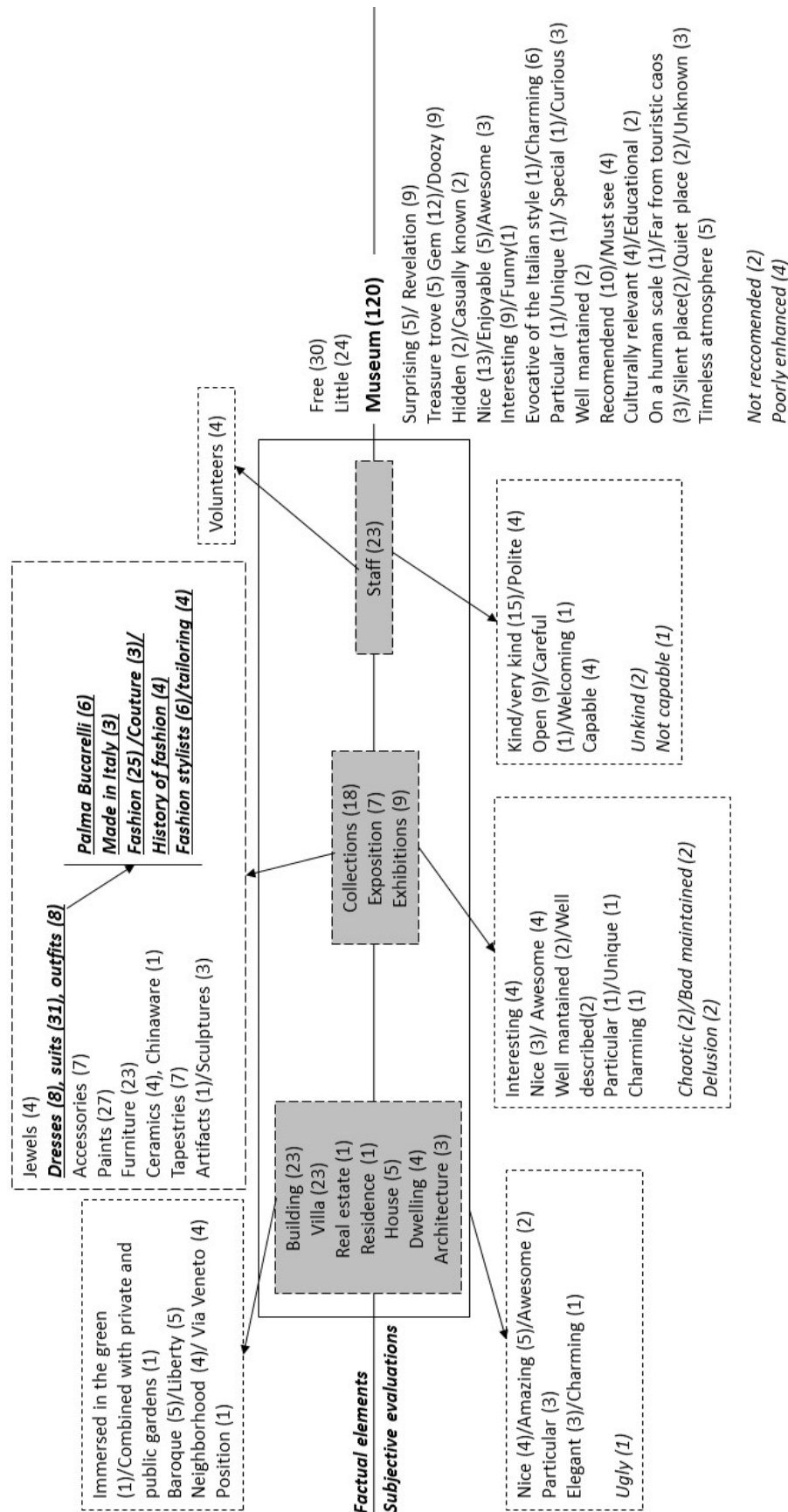


Figure 3: Results of the first step of coding.

Source: authors' own elaboration

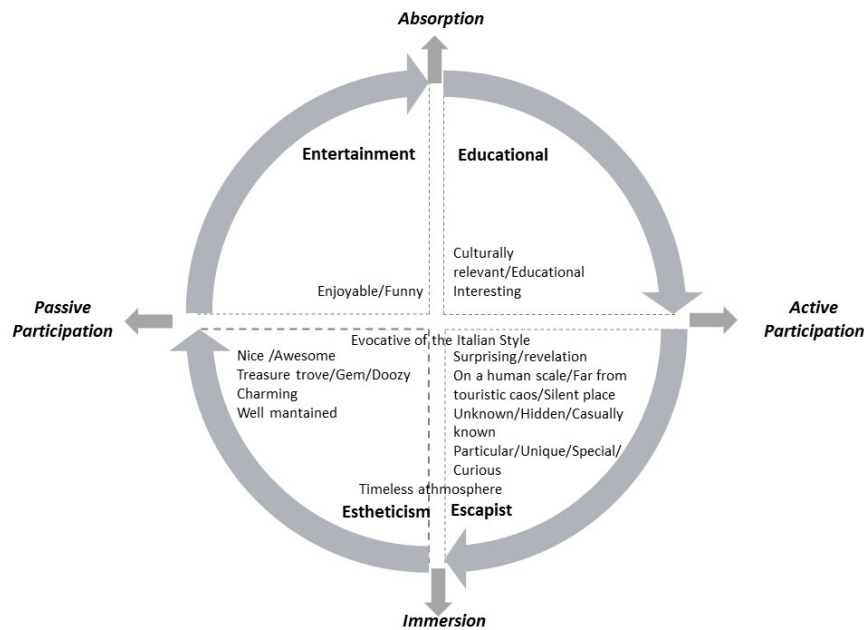


Figure 4: The second step of analysis.

Source: authors' own elaboration

3. Discussion

Fashion tourism is a relatively recent form of tourism that is rapidly evolving and growing, expressing increasingly heterogeneous and particularly dynamics. To the fashion tourism can be conceptually connected the renewed appreciation of the visitors for the fashion museums, in Italy and abroad. Among the Italian fashion museums, the “Boncompagni Ludovisi Museum for the Decorative Arts, Costume and Fashion” in Rome is unique because the exhibition alternates clothes, fashion accessories, and jewels, tapestries, art pieces, precious furniture, paintings. Therefore, the Museum cannot be considered exclusively a fashion museum but an eclectic place that combines fashion attractions with more traditional art forms. This alternation of artistic products can undoubtedly provoke a certain chaos in the visitor, but from the empirical analysis, the overall perception of the visitors appears a positive surprise.

The attention to the collections of art and fashion well dialogues with the appreciation of the original building in which the museum is housed, generating precise expectations in the visitor from the outside but also a certain aesthetic coherence between the exterior and the interior. The visitor seems to be accompanied from outside to the inside in an experience of escape from the major landmarks of the most popular tourist circuit of Rome, in a timeless atmosphere.

Applying the Pine and Gilmore (1999) interpretative model, it can be said that the visitors of the “Boncompagni Ludovisi Museum” live - with heterogeneous intensity and frequency - all the realms of experience but the aesthetic component and that of escapism are nevertheless the most explored ones. As Rosenstein (2012, p. 28) observes, “in its materiality only insofar as we remain captivated by the corporeal

structures of its medium and at the same time, are continuously attuned by it is the only work of the world that has been developed as a result of its own values and interpretations. This is the illusion of the art object - that opens up its own space and time. Now certainly not all art objects are antiques and not all antiques are *art objects* as normally understood (i.e., as *fine art*). But each is an object of aesthetic experience”. Thus, the aestheticism appears traditionally linked to the experience of each museum visit: what emerges is that in this case study the aesthetic dimension does not concern only the objects collected but the museum as a whole.

In terms of escapism, the Museum offers a collection but more generally an atmosphere that not only allows the visitor to get away from everyday life but also to escape from the mass tourism destinations widely explored in Rome. Escapism, understood as the desire and the need of “escape from a perceived mundane environment” (Crompton, 1979, p. 416) is among the best known push factors (Cohen, 2010) that motivate travelers to move away from the monotony of daily routine. In addition, in this case, visitors perceive a positive estrangement from the tourist chaos, exploring a museum dimension closer to their needs and the desire to enjoy original moments of pleasure. Consequently, in the case of “Boncompagni Ludovisi”, the escapism assumes an intrinsic value that differentiates it among the Roman museum offer.

The discussion of the empirical results suggests various policy and management considerations.

The visitors of the “Boncompagni Ludovisi Museum” consider as a weakness the lack of advertising: a possible strategy to enhance its visibility would be to link the unique offer of “Boncompagni Ludovisi” through thematic routes with other cultural and entertainment proposals that could exploit the relative centrality of the location and its proximity to Via Veneto.

On the other hand, a greater exposure could compromise the *aura* of serenity that characterizes the visiting experience. Therefore, if a greater valorization could result in a growth of attention from tourists and visitors, the same could compromise the uniqueness of the museum atmosphere.

This uniqueness could also be increased by improving the vertical axis of the taxonomized experience of Pine & Gilmore (1999): through temporary exhibitions and the use of virtual technologies the visitor could improve his/her participatory level, becoming an actor of the tourist experience, and completing his/her experience especially in terms of entertainment.

Clearly, the activation of promotional and valorisation strategies would entail a serious evaluation of the necessary investments: in this sense, the museum's gratuitousness and its voluntary management have so far produced good results in terms of attractiveness but perhaps they do not allow a full exploitation of the museum.

Conclusion

As previously highlighted, the works aimed to explore the dimensions of the visiting experience in fashion museum thought the case study of the “Boncompagni Ludovisi

Museum for the Decorative Arts, Costume and Fashion of the XIX and XX Centuries". Generally speaking, the case studies allow to understand the key dimensions of a phenomenon especially when theoretical reflection is still scarce or in progress (VanMaanen, 1998).

Despite the interest of scientific literature, fashion tourism remains essentially a form of unexplored tourism from a theoretical and empirical point of view. The aim of this contribution is to provide a first reading of the evaluation of the visit experience of a particular fashion museum.

To analyze the case study, a two-stage content analysis was implemented. In the first stage, through independent coding procedures by the authors, the objective elements and subjective evaluations relating to the museum as a whole and to the components of the building, collections and staff were identified. In the second step, the subjective evaluations were traced back to the interpretative model of Pine and Gilmore's experience economy in order to understand which of the realms was preponderant.

From the analysis, it is clear that the visitors' experience can be considered complex: before the inner visit, the building surprises the visitor for the beauty and originality of the style, the position and the view. Once inside, the visitor seems overwhelmed by pieces of fashion alternate with other artifacts. The aestheticism together with that of "escapism", are the preponderant realms of the experience.

From the policy point of view, these results suggest the need to enrich the tourist experience along the axis of participation: a greater appreciation of the active presence of the museum visitor could transform him/her from a simple observer into an "actor" of the experience.

The work is not without limits and therefore remains substantially open towards further reflections and closer examinations.

The case study presents so many peculiarities to make the empirical results potentially not extensible to other fashion museums. Subsequent analyses may compare the evaluations expressed on the social media by visitors of "Boncompagni Ludovisi" and those ones of other fashion museums in order to obtain a more precise picture of the overall visiting experience, its components and its dynamics. These results are nevertheless functional for political and managerial reflections that could improve the overall museum offer of the "Boncompagni Ludovisi" and its perception.

A second limit concerns the nature of the database: from several parts (Ayeh et al., 2013) a certain criticism is emerging towards the creditability of the contents generated online and therefore on their use for scientific purposes.

A third problem concerns the methodological choices: the semantic coding activity is deeply influenced by the chosen interpretative model as well as the interpretative skills of the encoder.

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¹ Whilst the common framework is shared, Fabrizio Ferrari wrote the Introduction and the section 1 while Valentina Evangelista wrote the sections 2, 3 and the Conclusion.