

The Impact of Public Action on Creativity: Is There Life beyond Subsidies? A Critical Analysis in Italian museum sector

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Abstract

Italians' cultural consumption, particularly for museums and exhibitions, has sharply declined in recent years. Concurrently, new European policies and ICOM's new definition underscore a paradigm shift. Contemporary museums are now expected to become more participatory, accessible, and sustainable from cultural, economic, and environmental perspectives. But what do these concepts actually mean, and how are Italian museums addressing these challenges?

This article aims to clarify these concepts by surveying autonomous institutes and public-private foundations to understand the strategies behind museum and cultural programming for the coming years.

Keywords: Museum impact, cultural value, economic value, cultural sustainability

Introduction

Sociocultural events in recent years have profoundly changed the global context and the mechanisms of the cultural and creative supply chain. Consider the geopolitical imbalances caused by wars, the ongoing climate crisis, the Global Goals of Agenda 2030, and the advent of enabling technologies. These transformations are reshaping urban economies and their social capitals, affecting markets, institutions, lifestyles, and modes of operation. Consequently, organizations in both cultural and noncultural spheres need approaches and tools that help them manage the uncertainty of the current scenario and build more sustainable and competitive futures. Within this context, the following article focuses on the Italian museum sector, analyzing:

- the activities museums develop to enhance the cultural value of their mission and strengthen their connection with the community;
- how museums can be inclusive structures that attract local actors through collaborations and partnerships to consolidate their strategic profiles.

Interest in this topic is fueled by a growing series of international debates involving academics, practitioners, and policymakers. These debates highlight, from different perspectives, the new role museums are called to play in the economic, social, and cultural development of their territories (Loulansky, 2006; Benhamou, 2011; Bollo, 2013; Janes and Sandell, 2019; Bodo and Cimoli, 2023). Confirming this focus, particularly in the European context, are the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Faro Convention (2005).

These conventions promote a new model of cultural heritage management based on people-centred participatory governance, which involves citizens and policymakers in cultural definition and management processes.

This shift from a hierarchical-vertical to a communitarian-horizontal dynamic aims to enhance cultural heritage in its broadest sense, encompassing all practices and manifestations that characterize human life in society. It also seeks to bring communities closer to understanding their own cultural heritage

and identity, transforming these resources into tools for increasing local attractiveness (consider the tourism activities generated by the cultural sector) and developing individual and social empowerment paths.

While cultural heritage is the focus, museums were originally created to preserve and enhance the works within their local territories. Therefore, if conventions call for different management of cultural assets, they implicitly require a more participatory role for museums.

The new museum definition proposed by ICOM reflects this ontological and functional evolution. Approved in August 2022, it introduces several innovative elements compared to the previous definition. Firstly, terms such as 'accessibility, inclusiveness, and sustainability' have been introduced, emphasizing the constructive role museums are called to play through ethical and participatory planning in line with Agenda 2030 and European policies. Secondly, this definition requires museums to adopt a more multifaceted role, embracing new management forms that help them reposition within their environment to better meet the needs of today's cultural consumption market.

This marks a departure from the traditional concept of the museum as a 'temple,' associated with the 'passive' mission of protecting and preserving a civilization's symbols and historical memory (Santagata, 2001). Instead, the new definition promotes a more dynamic image, where museums act as vibrant and attractive spaces where creativity, social participation, and innovation converge. These elements, when properly managed, can foster systemic entrepreneurship.

Internationally, this openness of museums to the outside world is well-established (Raicovich, 2022). This is partly due to the private nature of many institutions, which operate with quicker decision-making and funding processes. However, in Italy, this openness faces several challenges, pointing to organizational deficiencies at the national level (Casini, 2011).

Over time, the services provided by museums have progressively evolved, responding to stimuli from the demand side. The general trend has been to combine heritage conservation with a series of services aimed at enhancing museum collections through new conceptual arrangements and/or linguistic codes (Montella, 2009). However, the Italian context presents specific challenges that complicate this progressive outsourcing:

- first, cultural heritage is extremely widespread throughout the country. According to 2019 ISTAT data, one in three municipalities has at least one museum. This widespread distribution entails significant conservation costs, preventing the realization of economies of scale. Consequently, most museums operate at a loss, relying almost exclusively on public funding (which has been steadily decreasing over the past two decades) to ensure proper functioning and visitor enjoyment (La Monica, 2008; Casini, 2011);
- second, there is a lack of diverse skills that hinders the development of effective organizational processes within museum institutions. The report "The Professional and Training Needs of Cultural Enterprises 2024" by Unioncamere and ANPAL (National Agency for Active Employment Policies) highlights that today's cultural market demands increasingly elastic and flexible skills related to planning, communication, reporting, and control. Without these skills, making an organization competitive in the market is complex. Moreover, due to these professional gaps, there is an almost total lack of economic and cultural impact assessments, an area urgently requiring the development of holistic methodological approaches that integrate qualitative and quantitative data;
- finally, compared to the total number of Italian museums (about 5,200 according to ISTAT 2021), only autonomous museums (60) and those belonging to the National Museum System (380) provide transparent and detailed information on their economic activities and organizational structures. Given this limited availability of data, a large portion of the sector remains unaccounted for, making the development of a systemic strategy at the national level highly complex;

In recent years, despite being regarded as one of the strengths of the Italian cultural system, museums have faced stagnation due to several factors. A significant factor is inflation and wage rigidity, which have led families to adjust their spending, often cutting back on non-essential activities like cultural consumption. However, the issue extends beyond financial constraints; cultural consumption now increasingly blends analog and digital dimensions.

While direct experiences remain valuable, reproductions (like art books for museums or records for music) have long driven cultural consumption. The pandemic-induced isolation accelerated a shift towards mediated experiences via digital channels, which offer flexible schedules and in-depth insights not possible on-site. This change suggests that consumers may not revert to previous levels of direct cultural consumption automatically.

Therefore, rather than waiting for a natural return to past consumption levels, it might be more effective to redesign cultural offerings. This involves moving beyond a traditional, hierarchical approach and integrating various tools and languages. Museums should aim to create a narrative ubiquity that permeates urban and territorial spaces, acting as a cognitive attractor to the direct museum experience. Until museum and cultural managers adopt this new strategic approach, their understanding of demand—covering expectations, satisfaction, and willingness to pay—will remain limited. Additionally, the binary separation between museum management and the range of additional services complicates the analysis. The extent and spending on these services, known only to concessionaires under the Ronchey law, are challenging to assess as part of the overall cultural offering. Taking these premises into account, reflecting on these shortcomings and elaborating more sophisticated reasoning that can help Italian museums build replicable and scalable strategies at the territorial level can be particularly useful, bearing in mind also the substantial financial resources provided by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza, PNRR) for the cultural sector. In this context, the intention is to analyze museum activity as a productive endeavor capable of significantly influencing today's economic and social systems. The goal is to understand how the mechanisms of preservation, protection, and enhancement can converge to promote the proper management of these institutions.

Culture as a Meritorious Good

The concept of culture is complex and difficult to define, and assessing its value is even more challenging. In economic literature, culture is considered a meritorious (or merit) good, which satisfies essential community needs and justifies public intervention to prevent sub-optimal production levels. State intervention occurs regardless of demand expressed by potential beneficiaries or users. As R. Musgrave, who introduced the notion in the late 1950s, explains, some goods, like education, health care, and defense, are fundamental to community well-being and must be made available to all to combat inequality and ensure fair access. Public resources must be involved because market dynamics alone would lead to sub-optimal delivery levels, failing to guarantee the best outcomes or equitable access. Meritorious goods are essential to society, but the market, driven by consumer choices and profit maximization, cannot manage them effectively.

Given that public intervention is necessary, and the market only partially provides the necessary resources for cultural goods and activities (such as conservation, research, enhancement, or production), there is a heated debate about the appropriate form of payment, especially for publicly owned goods and activities.

If the operation of such activities is mainly funded by the state, what is the *ratio* behind asking citizens to contribute beyond their taxes, without income-based discrimination? This debate is not limited to the cultural sector but has intensified recently concerning the cost of entrance fees to Italian museums. Many autonomous institutes, which are public, have increased fees by 10 percent in 2023. There is also discussion about making access free for citizens or residents who already support these institutions through taxation. In light of these considerations, several issues emerge for discussion:

- the need for public support in cultural heritage management (as described above);
- the benefits visitors derive from cultural enjoyment and the associated costs, such as the development of physical and cognitive well-being through culture (Cicerchia and Seia, 2024);
- the evolving social role of museums in recent years;
- public perception.

The issue of museum admission fees versus free access involves the challenge of securing necessary resources while making culture accessible to all. This is compounded by several factors beyond the economic issue, such as:

- the reduction in household income, with a 4 percent decrease between 2019 and 2023, and a drop in average spending from 113 euros in December 2019 to 89 euros in December 2023. This influences choices away from cultural consumption;
- a lack of regular attendance at cultural venues and poor cultural education stemming from low average levels of education. According to French economists Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel (1966), "the love of art" depends less on natural inclination and more on inherited cultural capital and educated dispositions transmitted within the household. Thus, cultural consumption patterns derive partly from schooling and partly from a specific lifestyle;
- the scarcity of reliable and continuous public transportation connections to cultural venues.

These considerations raise at least two questions:

- Would removing the economic barrier to museum entry (limited to autonomous institutions and public-private foundations) be sufficient to increase the demand and frequency of museum visits by citizens and residents?
- If not, what additional human, technical, and financial resources would be needed, and what would their impact be?

Italians' cultural consumption

To delve deeper into these questions and understand how museums can foster cultural participation, we need to step back and examine the cultural context they fit into, particularly the trend of Italian cultural consumption over the past two decades. In line with key research sites, ISTAT data will be referenced due to its detailed elaboration and close connection with European databases, helping to understand the significance of the cultural sector within the total economy.

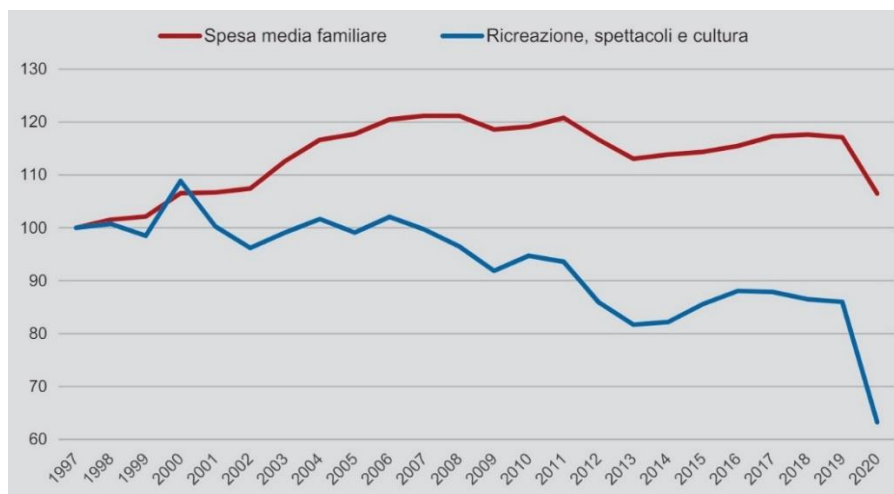


Fig. 1 - Average monthly total and per-chapter expenditure Recreation, entertainment and culture in current values. Years 1997- 2020. Source: ISTAT, Household Expenditure Survey.

As mentioned earlier, a steady decrease in cultural consumption has been observed over the past two decades (Fig.1). This decrease can be attributed to both internal causes (over the past 20 years, while total public spending has increased by an average of 68 percent, spending on culture and recreational services has decreased by 30 percent, Caramis, 2023) and external causes (including the economic crisis of 2008, which resulted in a reduction in average household spending).

The period after 2019 shows a sharp decline due to pandemic restrictions and the closure of most cultural institutions in the country. Overall, comparing cultural consumption levels in 2019 (pre-pandemic) with other forms of consumption, it is observed that cultural consumption accounts for a modest share of total consumer spending (ISTAT, Fig. 2).

Average monthly expenditure	2.095,58 (values in euros)	%incidence on total
Alcoholic beverages and tobacco	46,1	2,20%
Clothing and footwear	114,65	5,47%
Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels	896,05	42,77%
Furniture, household goods	109,97	5,25%
Health	118,33	5,65%
Transportation	288,39	13,77%
Information and communication	59,31	2,83%
Recreation, sports and culture	127,01 (including 55 in sports and 77 in culture) ¹	6,06%
Education	15,83	0,76%
Food and accommodation services	129,98	6,2%
Insurance and financial services	129,98	6,2%

Fig. 2: Average monthly household expenditure on non-food products and services (Year 2019). Source: ISTAT.

To understand the reasons behind this decrease, we can consider three key elements:

- uneven Public Policy: despite recognizing the strategic value of the cultural sector in public debates, a conservative perspective that focuses mainly on heritage protection or an economic perspective that treats heritage as an economic good still prevails. This is to the detriment of a broader vision of culture, whose processes and languages promote participation, inclusion, and well-being (Cicerchia, 2024). Walter Santagata (2014) highlights that cultural heritage and enterprises should respond to a demand for quality by strengthening interactive society and defining an ideal social sphere. This perspective views culture not just in its aesthetic or recreational dimensions, but as essential for developing social policies aimed at innovation and improving individual and collective well-being;
- increasing complexity of the Public Sector: institutions and policymakers require integrated policies that incorporate multiple viewpoints (Klijin, 2008). However, the growing presence of private actors has led to an imbalance in various regions. These actors, due to their status, can operate with significantly shorter timeframes than public agents, resulting in a more competitive environment. This is evident in the museum consumption data for 2022, where the north of Italy, with 13,004 museum, exhibition, and monument visitors, leads compared to the central and southern regions (Fig. 3). This can be attributed to the high percentage of private and nonprofit businesses in the north, despite the center and south having more museums and historical monuments (ISTAT, 2022). Additionally, the north's cultural participation is bolstered by banking foundations, particularly active in Lombardy and Piedmont, which promote network projects and encourage cultural engagement through memberships and subscriptions (Fig. 4);
- finally, the lack of Financial Resources: the scarcity of financial resources has forced many museum institutions to comply with public funding guidelines to obtain economic support, effectively reducing museums to static structures. This situation has distorted the cultural labor

¹ The recreational services involved are: Audiovisual, photographic and information processing equipment; Other major durable goods for recreation and culture; Recreational and cultural services; Books; Newspapers and periodicals; Printing of various types; Stationery and drawing materials.

market. For instance, the number of projects funded by the Ministry of Culture decreased from 1,909 in 2018-19 to 1,236 in 2022-23, a reduction of 673 projects despite the PNRR (Ministry of Culture, 2023). Additionally, employment in Italy's cultural sector in 2022 accounted for about 3 percent of the workforce, 28 percentage points below the European average (Fondazione dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali, 2023).

Many of the cultural issues listed are closely linked to disadvantaged social conditions or contexts, such as low educational attainment or poor infrastructure. It is not surprising to see increasing attention on community welfare policies in urban and inner-city areas.

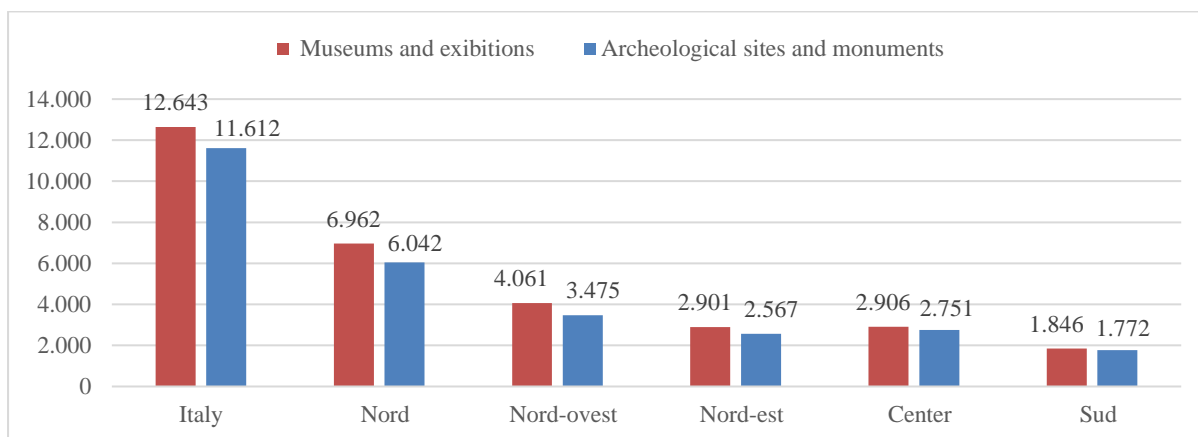


Fig. 3: Change in museum consumption by area (Year 2022). Compiled from ISTAT data.

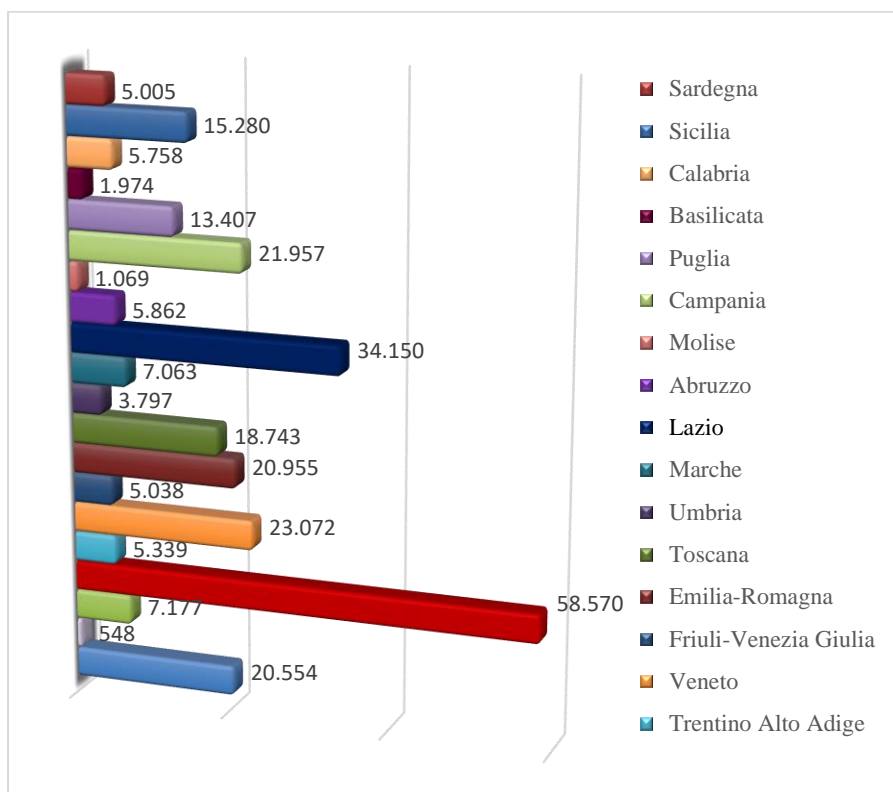


Fig. 4: Cultural and Creative Production System enterprises divided by region (absolute values. Year 2022). Source: Centro Studi Tagliacarne-Unioncamere, Symbola Foundation, 2023.

Given the above, it is important to understand whether the museum is able to communicate its cultural value and initiate a communication process that can be gradually transformed into a dialogue with its

audience. Building a strategy to build loyalty and expand its partnerships and target audiences involves an analysis of the current socioeconomic context and a set of quantitative data that help interpret the external landscape and the motivations that incentivize and hinder consumers.

Based on this reasoning, it is understood that spreading value culture means thinking about culture not only as one of the possible ways of using leisure time, but also as a decisive activity for a social policy of innovation.

Methodology and case studies - Construction of the questionnaire

In order to understand in detail the range of activities carried out by the museum to increase its cultural value and consolidate its strategic profile, a survey was conducted between April and May 2024. This survey targeted directors (and their close associates) of autonomous institutes and public-private foundations affiliated with the Museums Directorate. The choice of this sample is justified by the fact that most of these entities possess transparent information regarding their statutes and financial statements, which are essential elements for framing the organization from a management perspective and making the research question legitimate.

Considering the question that prompted this research, the questionnaire was addressed to the 40 museums that became autonomous in 2014 under the Franceschini reform. The remaining institutes (20, which became autonomous in July 2023) were excluded because they have recently started the path of management autonomy, thus resulting 'immature' from a strategic perspective. Overall, the questionnaire, consisting of 20 questions, had the following objectives:

- collect a large amount of quantifiable and comparable information;
- assess the degree of relationship and innovation of the institution;
- investigate the various forms of impact felt by the director or their staff;
- identify any correlations between the activities carried out and the structural characteristics of the museums.

The process of constructing the questionnaire followed several basic steps. First, the survey questions were defined with the specific aim of gathering the views of directors, who possess a broad, cross-sectional view of the museum operations. After setting a series of structural questions aimed at acquiring the biographical information of the identified museums, another 17 questions were formulated using primary and secondary sources. These sources included academic papers, ISTAT reports, EUROSTAT data, and research published by international entities such as UNESCO (UNESCO Thematic Indicators for Culture) and the NEMO-Network of European Museums organizations (CHARTER, the European cultural heritage skills alliance) in order to structure a practical and intuitive list of actions, definitions, and skills with which museum staff could identify.

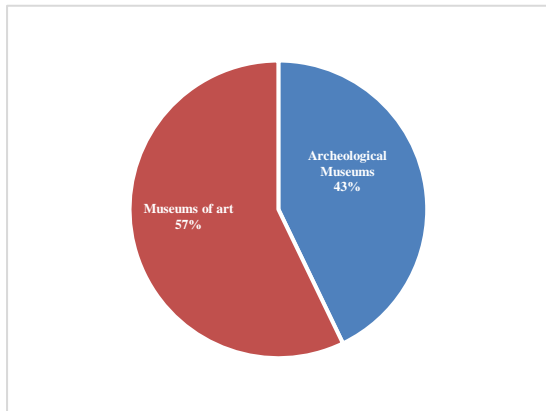
The first section collected biographical and quantitative information about the museum organization, focusing on changes in visitor attendance, participation in educational activities, and exhibition production. The second section investigated the issue of formal and informal collaborations that the museum establishes with actors in its environment, assessing the importance of these relationships for the development of its strategic goals. Additionally, each institution was asked what the museum could do currently and in the next five years to be more innovative and competitive. Finally, the third section focused on the multidisciplinary skills of the institution's internal staff, with a specific emphasis on environmental and social sustainability. The questionnaire concluded with a reflection on the future skills and professionalism needed to implement the organizational chart of the museum institution. In the following paragraphs, the results of each section will be reported.

Biographical information

There were 16 responding museums, out of a total of 43 subjects. This is due to the fact that the survey appears to be ongoing. But while this is provisional data, some homogeneous evidence emerges that seems to outline some trends, which may be confirmed as the survey closes.

To ensure the privacy of respondents, data will be presented in aggregate form, considering that among the 16 respondents, 4 are public-private foundations and the remaining autonomous institutions (12).

Of these, 57 percent are art museums and 43 percent archaeological museums; most are located in northern Italy (50 percent), followed by the Center (36 percent) and the South and Islands at 7 percent, respectively. In terms of staffing, facilities have an average of 84 employees, considering both external and internal workers.



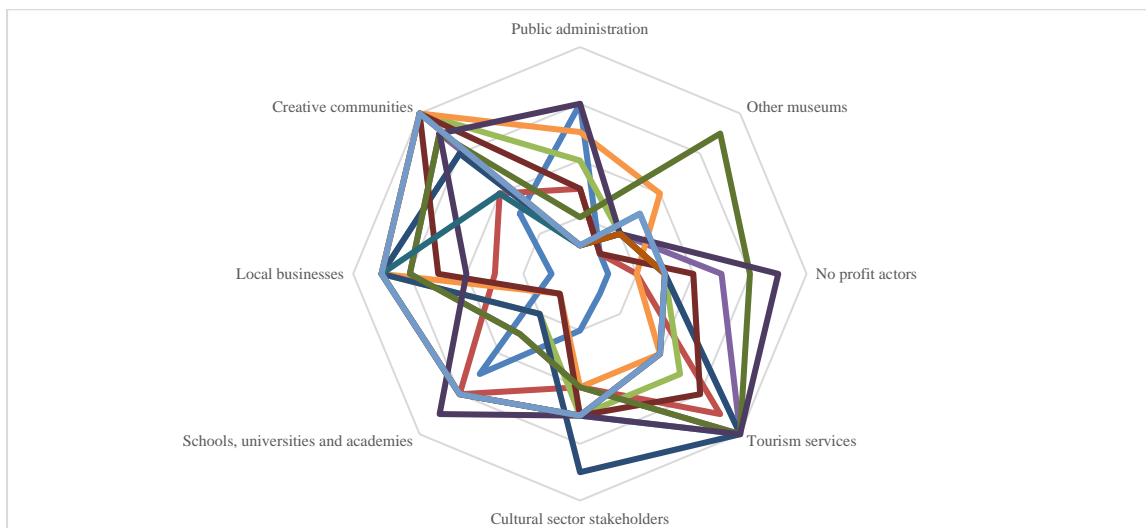
With respect to visitor participation, most museums saw significant growth from 2022 to 2023, with increases ranging between 10 percent and 20 percent. Similarly, participation in workshops and laboratories also saw substantial growth, with particularly marked increases for archaeological museums, all of which experienced growth peaks of more than 20 percent. Finally, with the exception of two cases, most respondents reported producing between 4 and 5 exhibitions per year.

Networks and systems

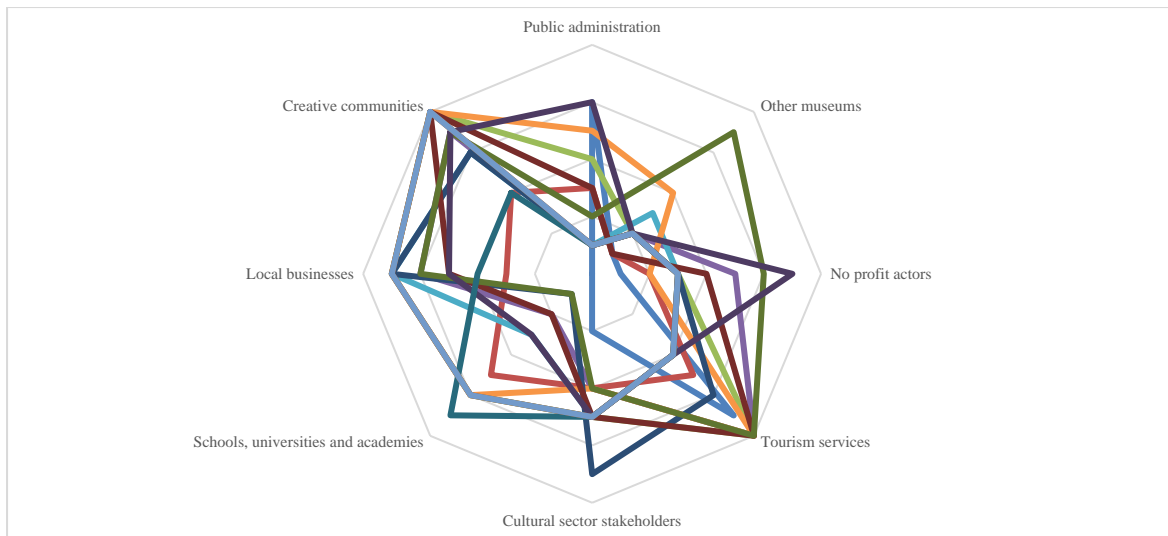
With regard to the network revolving around the museum, this question was posed following a series of interviews with practitioners to understand what typical types of actors might characterize the environment in which a museum institution operates.

The categories identified were: public administrations, other cultural institutions (e.g., museums), creative communities, local businesses, third sector actors, tourism services, schools, universities and academies, and third sector practitioners.

In response to the question "with which type of actors it most frequently collaborates?" the graph below shows a may relationship with creative communities and tourism services. This highlights institutions' attention to cultural creation processes (which can amplify the cultural and communicative value of their collections) and the synergy between heritage and the tourism sector as a driver of the national economy. This is followed, with particularly dense relationships, by collaborations with local businesses and the school system. On the other hand, relations with public administration, other museums and third sector actors are less frequent.



The next chart highlights another crucial aspect of the relationships: which of these actors are strategic to the museum in the pursuit of its goals? Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each actor based on a scale of 1 (very relevant) to 7 (not very relevant).



In this case, it is important to note the less highlighted circumferences in the radar graph. Unlike the first graph, public administrations, other museums, and third sector actors were identified as strategic actors. This raises a question: if museums believe that these collaborations can be particularly fruitful, what might be the factors preventing these relationships, given that they do not coincide with the assessments in the previous graph?

Some hypotheses can be proposed. First, the complexity of the public system, which has already been recognized as one of the critical issues in fostering cultural consumption, may play a significant role. Although an alliance with actors belonging to municipal, regional, and national governments may raise the strategic profile of the institution, in practice, such a procedure requires a commitment of human resources and time that may be excessive for the museum's operations.

Compared to other museums, it should be emphasized that autonomous museums and public-private foundations enjoy a privileged position due to their managerial, economic, legal, and scientific autonomy. While alliances with actors in the same domain can be a good strategy, mechanisms defined as coepetitive (a mix of "cooperation" and "competition") - dynamics in which different entities in the same domain collaborate on some aspects and compete on others - are to be created within the same system. These hypotheses will need to be confirmed by further research, but the consistency in the responses highlights this scenario.

Moving to the link between the museum and its stakeholders, their influence on the museum's innovativeness is found to be low in cases where economic resources are deemed insufficient for the development of its services (65 percent of respondents). Conversely, their influence is found to be significant in cases where resources are judged satisfactory.

This suggests that the more effectively the museum operates through good management of its financial resources, the more its reputation grows, making stakeholders more likely to cooperate and create synergies.

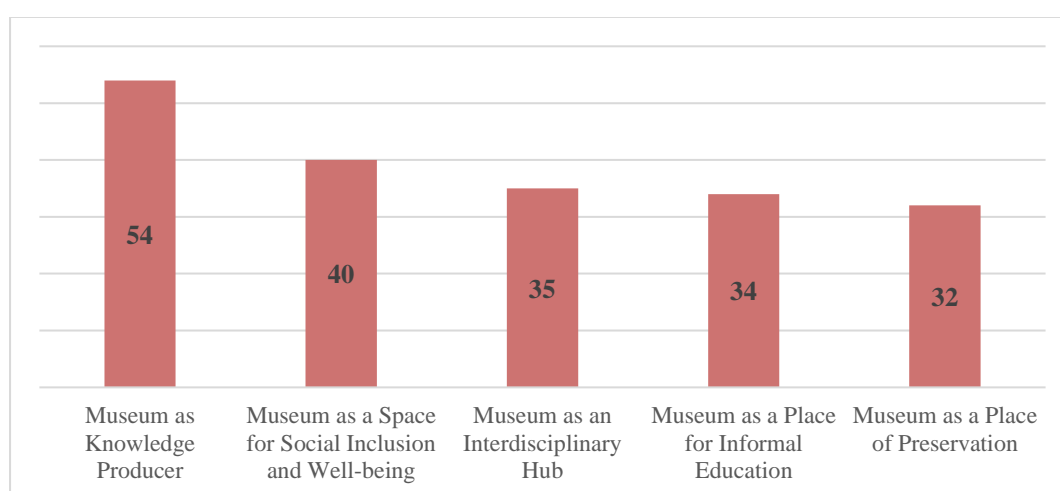
Activities carried out to create innovation

From the perspective of activities that the museum can do to create innovation, the following options were asked to be ordered from 1 to 5, where 1 represents the least relevant and 5 the most relevant:

1. **Museum as Knowledge Producer:** The museum serves as an active creator of knowledge by designing research activities and exhibitions/workshops that address contemporary issues (e.g., climate change, immigration, gender gap);

2. **Museum as a Space for Social Inclusion and Well-being:** The museum is conceived as a welcoming and recreational space; it offers a break from work rhythms, promoting social inclusion;
3. **Museum as an Interdisciplinary Hub:** The museum is configured as a collaborative space. It interacts with cultural institutions, arts organizations, universities, and technology companies to develop cross-disciplinary projects that can generate innovative synergies at the local level;
4. **Museum as a Place for Informal Education:** The museum promotes cross-curricular forms of education through educational programs aimed at students, teachers, and the general public. These programs can inspire creativity and stimulate new ideas;
5. **Museum as a Place of Preservation:** The museum is a place for experts to develop new conservation strategies for the sustainability of tangible and intangible heritage for future generations.

The following options emphasize the role that the museum, according to its mission, should fill today and underlie the idea of the museum-plaza described above.



Analysis of the results clearly shows that most participants believe the "museum as knowledge producer" perspective is the most innovative, as it aligns with the activities that museums can undertake to address the challenges of today's sociocultural environment. This result is corroborated by the subsequent question about which aspect of sustainability should be prioritized for development within museums: cultural sustainability emerges as the area of greatest interest. Indeed, the museum is perceived as a catalyst for cultural content.

Second, the aspect of social sustainability is emphasized, highlighting the role of the museum as a space for well-being. This suggests a vision of the museum not only as a place of preservation but also as an active space for social interaction and involvement.

Another significant element that emerges is the shift away from the traditional image of the museum as a temple. Most participants see the museum as a dynamic and proactive institution, engaged in the production and dissemination of knowledge and cultural content through concrete actions such as workshops and laboratories.

1. **Economic Sustainability:** Strengthening fundraising offices and enhancing brand value; developing crowdfunding activities; retaining visitors through membership programs and donations;
2. **Environmental Sustainability:** Monitoring the carbon footprint and developing a green strategy, such as implementing recycling programs, using low-impact materials, practicing circular economy principles, and organizing exhibitions with themes related to climate change;
3. **Social Sustainability:** Creating cultural environments that promote diversity, equity, and accessibility; initiating initiatives that generate social benefits, supporting improved conditions

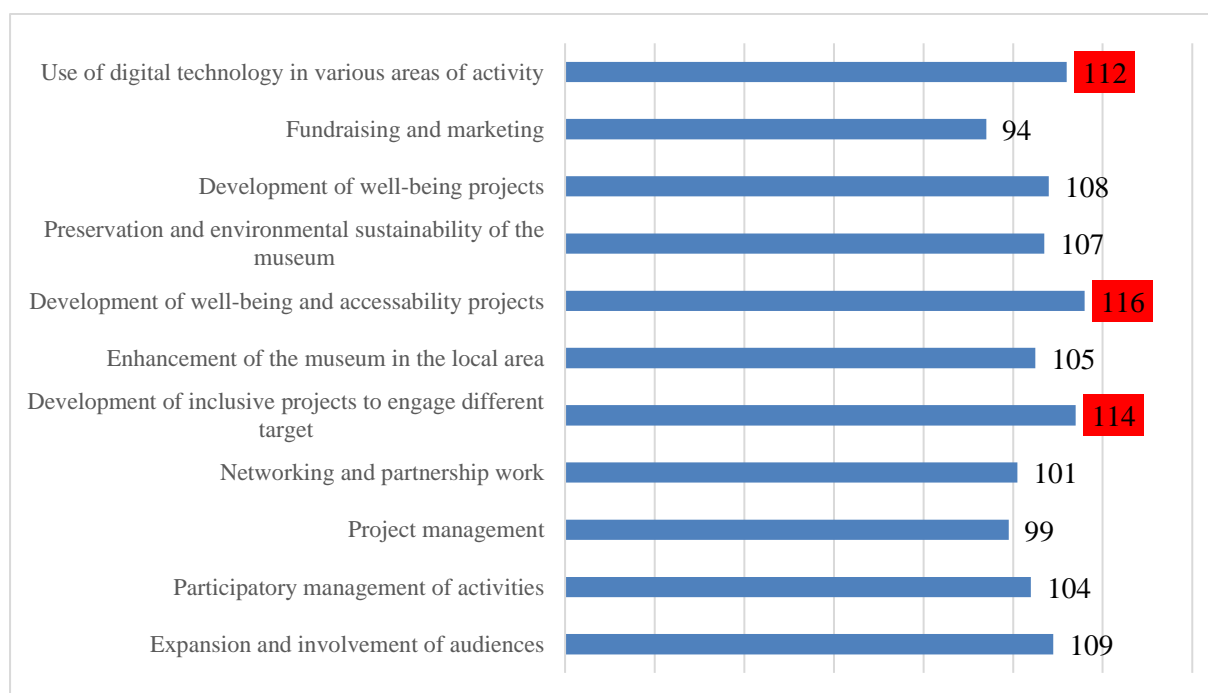
and quality of life. This may include offering free educational programs for local schools and workshops on topics such as the circular economy, gender equality, or LGBT culture;

4. **Cultural Sustainability:** Developing practices aimed at preserving, enhancing, and sharing local and national cultural heritage. This involves responsibly managing cultural resources, from preventive preservation to digital communication, and adopting strategies to ensure the enjoyment and participation of different generations.

A sore point concerns environmental sustainability: in fact, most of the responding museums are housed in listed historic buildings. It appears evident that there are complexities in structurally managing these spaces. Despite the high level of attention from practitioners and researchers on these issues, almost all of the responding museums indicate that they still lack the appropriate skills to address current energy and environmental challenges.

Future Prospects and Skills Needed

Finally, concerning future skills, broadening audiences and engagement practices have been identified as priorities. Additionally, there is a recognition of the importance of developing digital strategies, especially for reaching new target audiences. This trend is also reflected in the demand for professionals in the coming years, including figures such as the project manager, the fundraiser, experts in digital strategies and digital humanities, and finally the registrar.



Conclusions

Following this examination, we can outline some conclusions. Although the data were provisional, the analysis conducted highlights a number of significant challenges that Italian museums face in achieving greater eco-systematicity. Although museums are seen as open systems, capable of materializing external input into goods and services for society, they currently appear isolated from their territorial context.

The lack of collaborations with administrations and other cultural institutions, along with bureaucratic and operational complexities, hinders the full integration of museums into the local social and cultural fabric. This situation is also evident in the discrepancy between the importance Italians attach to cultural heritage and the low number of actual visitors to museums and exhibitions. According to Eurobarometer results (2023), 86 percent of Italians said they attach great importance to cultural heritage; yet, only 19 percent of them regularly visit sites, monuments and museums.

To address these challenges, museums need to revise their strategies to foster greater territorial integration and collaborate more actively with both public and private actors. This collaboration is essential for acquiring the necessary skills and economic resources to enable autonomous and vibrant cultural production within the local context. They also need to invest more in digital skills to adapt to transformations in the consumption and production of cultural goods and services.

This sample of museums, which is more organized than the national total, indicates that there is still a lack of knowledge and skills on the operational, communication, engagement and digitization side.

In this sense, cultural heritage enhancement can play a key role in attracting resources for preservation and increasing awareness of heritage value among the public. In addition, this virtuous circle would ensure greater economic sustainability: on the one hand through increased direct resources for asset preservation (through donations, tickets, and subscriptions), and on the other hand through increased public and private spending. Indeed, policymakers, sponsors, and stakeholders would be more likely to invest in cultural heritage if it is able to create value for a broad audience

In conclusion, in order to fully realize the potential of museums as engines of territorial and culturally sustainable development, it is necessary to adopt more collaborative approaches, invest in digital skills, and actively promote cultural heritage appreciation among the public. Only then can the museum effectively talk about economic sustainability and create a cultural proposition in line with its cultural values and current needs.

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