



## **Appropriate strategies for designing contemporary art museums with the aim of attracting more people in sociocultural spaces of the country**

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### **Abstract**

Museums that are brimful of precious cultural treasures and indicate the identity of a society reflect human thought and artistic creativity during different generations and can convey concepts to visitors through its public displays. With the assumption that the museums can enrich the culture of a country young community, this study has tried to target its research to investigate ways to improve the design of the contemporary art museum in Mazandaran. Therefore, using the SPSS software sample size was estimated 384 based on Morgan table, among which 55.7% were men and 44.3% were women. According to the significance level that was less than 0.05, the frequency difference between the two groups of responses turned out to be significant at 99%. So the assumption that qualitative factors such as (aesthetic style designed for the set, easy access to the collections and availability of educational facilities) compared to individual and social factors such as (users' cultural and social conditions, visitors' economic situation, the sense of peace created by the presence of people in the building, etc.) have a greater impact on the category of visiting a museum is accepted.

**Key words:** museum, contemporary art, cultural interaction, public places



## Introduction

As a new phenomenon in the world of art, museums have taken different roles and functions. Exhibition, conservation, education and research can be regarded as museums different functions that have increasingly changed them into cultural institutions that are affecting various aspects of today's societies (Mirzaie and Nadalian 2009, 93). Museums should not be considered as places where only ancient monuments are shown, but all art and scientific fairs, galleries, libraries, archives and most historical monuments can be museums.

All objects being displayed in museums have messages to send to their visitors and we can perceive these messages by contemplation and study them from different points of view (Kasiri, 2012, 70). One of the most important functions of a museum is the communication it makes between visitors and objects displayed. In fact, we must strive to transfer the connection and the feeling existed between the creator of a work and the work itself to the visitors, and this is not beyond reach (DabiriNejad 2004, 96). Statistics indicate that in 19<sup>th</sup> century only a specific group of people spent their time visiting museums (Dasam, 2008, 70-120) and countries with various free admission museums have a small number of visitors, in fact for every 200 people going to movie theaters, only one person is visiting a museum. There is no room for doubt that establishing museums is important for showing human achievements. Additionally, in economic and profitability aspects, the world famous museums have been successful in attracting domestic and foreign tourists (Nafisi, 2001, 30-43). Not only are museums an effective factor in cultural and educational fields, but also they affect countries process of gaining international identity. Today, almost all tourists know museums such as the Louvre Museum in Paris, the British Museum in London, and the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg. These museums are a part of the identity and civilization of the country holding them (Lotfi, 2007, 74-82). It is important for countries like Iran with young, educated and talented population to increase the number of their museums. This way the art status can affect the injection of new ideas through its evolution. Additionally, it should be noted that in today's world the museums have a comprehensive mission to conduct that is interpretation of covert concepts existing in artistic works and transferring their values to all groups of people especially ordinary people. This way people can enjoy their free time with their families as they are learning about educational and cultural values of the works. Actually, museums are presented to all people in a society disregarding their age, gender or cultural and social groups and it can be claimed that museums are appropriate for all groups (DabiriNejad 2004, 96). This mission is conducted through cultural interaction such as beliefs, attitudes, preferences and other personality aspects of individuals that have been considered as the most important factors for controlling human behaviors in behavioral science-related theories. In this regard, a public favorable space with the capability of gathering people together can lead to the development of cultural interaction (Yazdanfar et al, 2013, 7). Collective life is also an opportunity for youth to get away from the stresses of everyday life and spend their leisure time and have cultural interaction and is an opportunity for people of different groups to gather together and enjoy freedom of speech and express their ideas, thus increasing tolerance of different groups which is encouraged among them can create more socialization and an active and lively space (Behzadfar and Tahmasebi, 2013, 19). Regarding the importance of interaction between people and the fact that it has not been considered seriously in today's design in the country, The present study is to investigate the factors influencing the design of public places such as the contemporary art museum to provide strategies for increasing cultural interaction in the community.



### Statement of the problem

The study of evolution, in the midst of all human phenomena is the most charismatic, and perhaps the history of culture and civilization can be counted as the most fascinating branch of history. Because culture and civilization is as expended as human life, all from scientists to readers are eager to delve into the history and the past of their job and thought especially the history of the time by which they can observe and evaluate achievements. Culture is comprised of art, literature, the science of creation, philosophy and religion. Public culture is defined as ethnic solidarity, Coexistence, assistance, cooperation, friendship, love, and finally, a factor of mutual understanding. Mutual understanding is a two-sided understanding which is a point where culture and art converge (architecture and culture, 1999). In other words, culture is a set of human valuable and spiritual dynamic achievements that are learnt over time and in different places (In the form of non-hereditary) and are transferred from one generation to another and therefore lead to excellence of mind and body and eventually to truth and human perfection. Thus, cultural globalization requires various cultural components and indicators to be considered. Culture in this sense, includes all valuable lessons and creativity of individuals and communities and includes all ideas and great, dynamic traditions, technical talks, cultural and artistic works and various methods of communication (Rezaianabard, 2012). In fact, the museum with rare and ancient objects, guard our cultural and artistic heritage. However, today function of museums has changed considerably. The museum should not be considered as a place where only the ancient and historical monuments are displayed. All objects being displayed in museums have messages to send to their visitors and we can perceive these messages by contemplation. One of the most important functions of a museum is the communication it makes between visitors and objects displayed. In fact, we must strive to transfer the connection and the feeling existed between the creator of a work and the work itself to the visitors, and this is not beyond reach because a work can make connections between the present and past time and thus people can observe their deep connection with ancestors who created our culture and recover their identity. By seeing historical objects in museums, people can observe the evolution of human thought in creation and innovation of works overtly and then can see the effects of last generation culture. It is because of the fact that human made objects are a reflection of every society culture and need. Therefore we could say that in today's world, museums as a cultural institution are passages where a generation's works are preserved for the next generation ,various cultures are reflected, traditions and customs are crystallized, and cultural heritage of different nations from old times to the present time are shown and visitors' passing from this passage can build their recognition. Due to the fact that Iran is rich in art and culture; moreover, this artistic and cultural originality could be evident, thus by organizing it through various ways such as establishing contemporary art museum we can achieve glory, pride and identity in contemporary art in today's young society. The aim of this study with a cultural interaction approach is to identify appropriate ways for designing contemporary art museums; moreover, in this study we are to answer the following questions:

- Is the design and construction of a contemporary art museum with the cultural interaction approach necessary in Sari – provincial capital city of Mazandaran, Iran?
- To what extent the citizens' personal characteristics (age, sex, education, etc.) can influence the design of a contemporary art museum with the cultural interaction approach?



- To what extent are social and cultural features effective in the design of a contemporary art museum with cultural interaction approach?
- Are the regional climatic conditions effective in the design of contemporary art museum with the cultural interaction approach?
- Is the quality of the designed space effective in the prosperity of contemporary art museum with the cultural interaction approach?

### Literature review

Table 1 A summary of conducted studies in the field of assessment of strategies for improving design of contemporary art museum

	researcher	Subject	Results
1	Behzad DefroTahmassebi(2013)	Identification and assessment of the factors affecting social interactions	The success of urban spaces is dependent on the use of that space and human presence in it. In fact, the architecture must increase social interactions and human solidarity and not encouraging differentiation and separation. However, what we are facing today in most urban areas is a decline in social participation of residents in such spaces
2	Jamali and Jamali (2013)	An analysis of the global cities and their relationship with urban culture	In their articles, they refer to the importance of globalization and its effect on cities. Even the use of urban services can be a subject for optimal designing and directing these cultures in a better way. Thus, any decisions to encounter different cultures can help the formation of a specific operation both socially and physically.
3	Shoaryan and Kazemi (2012)	Strategies to achieve sustainable architecture in contemporary art museums	In their article, these researchers showed that attention to sustainable development, sustainable patterns of architecture, using natural energy, using less fossil fuel and coexistence with natural conditions are essential for avoiding pollution growth of the environment
4	AvazZadeh and QolamaliZadeh (2012)	Globalization and preservation of cultural values and indigenous urban textures	In their article, these researchers showed that adherence to universal models, regardless of cultural and indigenous values can make the urban view alien for residents. Thus, In order to keep the cultural values and Iranian traditional beliefs alive, it is essential to determine and select an appropriate relationship that is proportional to the phenomenon of globalization rather than accepting the domination of foreign cultures.



5	PurAhmad et al (2012)	Investigation and analysis of the role of museums in the development of cultural tourism	In their article, with this assumption that Museum as an attraction can add to tourism development especially cultural tourism in destination, these researchers tried to investigate the effect of museum attraction on cultural tourism status in the east of Mazandaran.
6	SaberiNajafabadi (2011)	Teaching philosophy to children in interactive museums of science	Besides studying the proportion and its relationship with the program of teaching philosophy, also objectives and values contained in it, this article introduces the interactive museums, where visitors are supposed to be learners who can contribute to build their knowledge systems through their interaction with objects displayed in the museums. Form researcher's point of view, in today changing world, learners themselves are interested in exploration and recreation.
7	Ashrafi (2010)	Comparison of the concept of ecomuseum with traditional museum	Different perspectives in the field of museums, compare indicators and distinguishing activities of eco-museums with traditional museums and discuss challenges from different aspects such as structure and formation and different patterns of performance. Survey results showed that if these museums are affected by major tourist objectives, In long term, it can lead to consumption of the heritage in question and then they are disvalued

(Source: the author, 2015)

### Theoretical foundations

#### Museum definition

The word museum in Persian is the pronunciation of the French word "Museum" which has a Greek root "Museum" and is the name of all nine Greek goddess of art, poetry and music in Ancient Greece. In English, Italian, etc. the word museum has been used to mean "gazing, contemplating, and thinking" (Falahi, Ali 1966). Residents of the West defines this term as a place where the ancient works are kept and is considered to be a source of precious and delicate objects.... It can be said that museum is the scale of wisdom, degree of perception and reflection of orders. There, unsolvable problems are solved and historical knowledge of visitors is increased (Shirazi, 1992, 2)

The root of this word is taken from Greek word "Museum" meaning the domicile of Museum, the Goddess of art and imagery in ancient Greek mythology. This Greek term is pronounced "Museum" in English and "Museum" in French. Around 1873, the word "Museum" entered Persian from French. International Council of Museums ICOM says "The museum is a permanent and nonfinancial institution whose doors are open to everyone and serve the community. The aim of establishing museums is to provide conditions for conducting research on evidence and works inherited from human generations and environments, and to collect, conserve, produce, and create a relationship between these works and specifically,



display them in order to exploit them spiritually (Rahimi and Hosseini, 2009, 79). TO put it simply, the museum can be defined as a permanent non-profit organization that serves the community and is open to the public. This organization collects and protects and displays material evidence related to humans and their environment so that it can be studied and taught, and can be a source of enjoyment (Zahedi et al. 2008, 13).

### **Classification of Museums**

Museums can be classified the best way by the collections they hold. Collection or the way museums' objects are considered is the basis of this collection. It is because of the fact the nature of the works and ideas is associated with it and determine the goals and activities of the museum. Thus, in general, museums can be placed in three groups:

- a) History (museum of archeology, anthropology)
- b) Artistic ( museum of contemporary art)
- c) Scientific (Museum of geology, botany, natural science and science and technology) (Nafisi, 2001, 34)

In modern world of today, the concept of objects and the way their values are displayed and transferred to visitors have changed. Museums are communicative tools of objects, and they are ineffective unless they are in connection with humans.

Transfer of interest, information and values are the basis of education and museums enjoy a special place in cultural, educational, and research practices in community level (Yavari, 1999, 66).

### **Cultural interaction in a public space (The museum of contemporary art)**

Cultural interaction is a relationship between two or more people which leads to a reaction between them and this type of reaction is known to both sides. "Actually, there are other definitions for example, cultural and social interaction and communication, can be a physical issue, a look, a conversation or communication between people, which requires the definition of appropriate events and activities and the role of people in a space and their participation in cultural groups and social networks. " (Daneshpur and Charkian, 2007, 22). What we are witnessing in today's society is a reduction in people's communication with each other, although these spaces are considerably effective in the formation of meetings, chats and doing sociocultural activities (Yazdani and Teymuri, 2013, 84).

Today, One of the approaches that has been considered for reviving the society, is attention to its public spaces, and it is believed to have significant impact on determination of the identity of the city and eventually, promotion of citizens' culture (Rafeyan, 2013, 16), because these places are convenient for people. Hence, they can be places for local citizens to visit constantly. Different spaces in a public place such as (museum of contemporary art with the cultural interactions approach) make it possible for people to visit different generations (Behzadfar and Tahmasebi, 2013, 18).

### **Objective**

- Recognizing the necessity of designing and constructing contemporary art museum with the cultural interaction approach in Sari- provincial capital city of Mazandaran.
- Recognizing the effect of residents' personal characteristics on the necessity of designing.





- Identifying Mazandaran climate and climatic factors affecting constant architecture and presenting the bases of designing museums.
- Identifying the effect of qualitative indicators (light, green space, semi-open spaces etc.) on design desirability.
- Recognizing residents' cultural and social conditions in the necessity of design.

### Research methodology

According to the nature, subject and objective predicted for this research, we could say it is a descriptive-analytical research and can be categorized as applied research studies. Since questionnaire and interview were used for collecting required data, this research can be survey research. Required data were collected through both libraries and surveys. Statistical population in this research is all citizens living in Sari- provincial capital city of Mazandaran. Systematic random sampling was conducted according to Morgan table and questions were given to 384 respondents. After collecting survey data through completed questionnaires, and by using SPSS software, Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and binominal test, variables and their relationships were studied.

### Hypothesis and discussion

Results are the most important part of research that lead to the development of hypotheses and add new information to past knowledge with the help of research theories (Hafeznia, 2003).

Table 2 qualitative characteristics of the research samples

variable		frequency	percentage	variable		frequency	percentage
sex	female	212	55.7	Occupation status	governmental	49	13.3
	male	168	44.3		Self-employed	113	30.5
education	Under diploma	56	14.89		retired	31	8.25
	diploma	36	9.47		University student	39	10.37
	associate degree	48	12.77		housewife	78	20.74
	Bachelor's degree	135	46.64		jobless	20	5.32
	Master's degree	49	13.03		student	46	12.24
	PhD	12		total	380	100	

Source: the author (2015)

### The normality of data distribution (Kolmogorov–Smirnov test)

Most statistical tests including parametric tests are based upon the normality of data distribution and they are applied with this presumption that data distribution in a community or in samples selected from the community follows a normal distribution. Thus, before conducting any statistical analyses on variables, analyzers need to know variables type of distribution. Applying Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, we can achieve this objective. In Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, null hypothesis is that data follow a normal distribution; on the



other hand, the alternative hypothesis is that data don't follow a normal distribution. According to the table presented below, as it can be seen in this test, the probability level and P value is more than error level in all variables (0.05). Given the P value, Null hypothesis is not rejected and so data distribution is considered to follow a normal distribution. Consequently, parametric tests have been used for testing research hypotheses.

Table 3 Kolmogorov–Smirnov test results for evaluating the normal data distribution

variable	Statistical indicator	number	Z	Significance level	Test result
Factors affecting promotion of museum design quality		380	0.797	0.549	Data are normal

Source: the author (2015)

According to the statistical value in Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for variables, significance level was  $P > 0.05$ . Thus it can be concluded that above variables enjoy normal distribution and so we can apply Pearson test.

### Evaluation of the research main hypothesis

H0: Seemingly, in comparison with personal and social factors ( personal features such as religious beliefs, culture etc.) qualitative factors (the quality of spaces designed for museums) are more effective for contemporary art museum to be welcomed.

H1: In comparison with personal and social factors (personal features such as religious beliefs, culture etc.) qualitative factors (the quality of spaces designed for museums) don't seem to be more effective for contemporary art museum to be welcomed.

Table 4 "Results of Binominal test for the comparison of frequency of responses less than average with responses in average and above average, regarding the effect of qualitative factors compared to social factors"

Binomial Test						
	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Exact (2-tailed)	Sig.
Hypotheses	Group 1	KHEIR	183	.48	.50	.826
	Group 2	OBALE	197	.52		
	Total		380	1.00		

Source: the author (2015)

Results of table 2 show that the frequency of responses more than average was 384(52%) and the frequency of responses less than average was 48%. Given the fact that P value is less than 0.05, the distribution difference in 2 groups turned out to be significant at 99%. Therefore, H0 that stated in comparison with personal and social factors ( personal features such as religious beliefs, culture etc.) qualitative factors (the quality of spaces designed for museums) are more effective for contemporary art museum to be welcomed, is accepted.



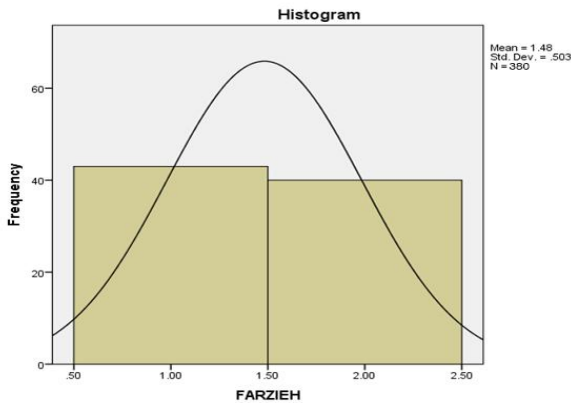


Fig 1 responses items - source: the author (2015)

**Frequency distribution of samples' responses number and percentage**

In the survey, citizens were asked questions about factors affecting the promotion of contemporary art museum design. It should be noted that qualitative and social factors were tested separately. The survey results indicate user's sociocultural conditions, economical status of visitors, the sense of peace felt by people due to their attendance are the most effective factors in the category of social factors and aesthetic style designed for the set, easy access to the collections and availability of educational facilities are the most effective factors in the category of qualitative factors.

Tables 5 and 6 provide the percentage frequency of responses.

Table 5 scoring social factors affecting people to welcome contemporary art museum

Responses items			Very low	low	Medium	high	Very high
scoring social factors affecting people to welcome contemporary art museum							
1	Visitors' sociocultural conditions ( people's cultural believing in	number	0	0	0	190	194
		percentage	0	0	0	49.5	50.5



	the effect of art in everyday life)						
2	Visitors' economic status (people's income level	number	18	41	46	141	138
		percentage	4.7	10.7	12.0	36.7	35.9
3	the sense of peace in people visiting an artistic space	number	0	0	9	43	332
		percentage	0	0	2.3	11.2	86.5
4	People's spiritual and mental needs (especially young adults' needs for learning visual arts etc.	number	217	107	28	13	19
		percentage	56.2	27.7	7.3	3.4	4.9
5	Personal characteristics (age, education, sex etc.)	number	0	3	22	171	188
		percentage	56.2	27.7	7.3	3.4	4.9
6	The effect of limitations existing in spaces allocated for teaching contemporary art in different cities of Iran	Number	0	0	2	57	325
		percentage	0	0	0.5	14.8	84.2
7	Citizens' interest in history of art and attending artistic spaces to spend their leisure time	number	0	0	0	203	181
		percentage	0	0	0	52.6	46.9

Table 6 scoring qualitative factors affecting people to welcome contemporary art museum

Responses items		Very low	low	Medium	high	Very high	
scoring qualitative factors affecting people to welcome contemporary art museum							
1	Aesthetic style (integration of architecture and visual art in shape and	number	0	0	0	190	194
		percentage	0	0	0	49.5	50.5

	style of museum						
2	The existence of educational facilities in museums needed for holding visual arts competitions and public visiting of artists' works	number	18	41	46	141	138
		percentage	4.7	10.7	12.0	36.7	35.9
3	The existence of visual attractions and desirable views such as green spaces, fountains and architectural elements formaking interaction and dialogue and playing music in the space	number	0	0	9	43	332
		percentage	0	0	2.3	11.2	86.5
4	Making the space dynamic and attractive by providing adequate lighting both inside and outside the building	number	217	107	28	13	19
		percentage	56.2	27.7	7.3	3.4	4.9
5	The effect of colors used in design of museum building (inside and outside the building such as happy and exciting colors)	number	0	3	22	171	188
		percentage	0	8.0	5.7	44.3.7	48.7
6	the existence of an appropriate place for inviting great artists of contemporary art and promoting the activities (by holding lectures and teaching modern methods in visual arts	Number	0	0	2	57	325
		percentage	0	0	0.5	14.8	84.2
7	The effect of	number	0	0	0	203	181





	commercial spaces in the set (sales of visual art- related objects such as posters, CD, etc.)	percentage	0	0	0	52.6	46.9
8		number	0	0	0	185	199
		percentage	0	0	0	47.9	51.6
9	Appropriate facilities making the space more comfortable and enjoyable in different climatic conditions (rain, humid, wind, etc.)	Number	0	4	17	37	326
		percentage	0	1.0	4.4	9.6	84.5

Source: the author (2015)

### Results and recommendations

Today with technological advances and the change has occurred in people's life, interests have changed a lot in the society. The study conducted on the extent to which people in Tehran welcomed the museum of contemporary art shows that this construction and all works displayed there are highly welcomed by the public. This type of museum not only encourages people to visit them but also provide a place for interaction between culture and art in Iran and in international level. With the development of societies in recent decades, the need for these spaces in cities other than the capital city has become more important than ever. In this case, by studying effective factors, the responses made by samples were examined. The results indicated that although the social and individual factors such as age, religion and economic status of the families can affect people's attendance at such places, using appropriate strategies in designing it is possible to encourage all groups of the society to visit these spaces. According to the analytical findings and recommendation made by Sari residents, the following are suggested:

#### 1. Attention to exquisite design that is commensurate with the museum applicability:

The results from questionnaires show that appearance plays an important role and can attract more visitors. Due to existing needs in Sari as the provincial capital of Mazandaran, exquisite design and the use of structural systems can attract more people, even from other cities.

#### 2. The availability of space and familiarity with that:

According to the daily traffic in the city and more use of private vehicles, the availability and location of the building in an area with facilities for parking and space security, and not imposing more traffic to the city are among the most important factors in designing. The results achieved from the samples emphasize this issue.

#### 3. Designing a space that induces a sense of relaxation to visitors:

Creating a sense of relaxation and alleviating everyday stress and tension in people are among the most important factors that should be considered. Using special lighting, selecting the



correct tones in interior design and exterior body of the building as well as designing green spaces according to the methods of environmental psychology can help achieve this factor.

#### 14. Considering an appropriate place for inviting adept instructors:

Cities in Iran are suffering from the paucity of cultural and social facilities. The lack of an appropriate place for inviting well-known instructors and taking advantage of their experience has always been artists' concern in this city. By designing such places (contemporary art museum) not only it is possible to remove this need but also we can change this exhibition to an applicable space.

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