

What will remain of the Days ?

Descrizione

Free entrance to museums on the first Sundays of each month seems to have been a great success till its launch in July 2014. It has seen the average increase of visitors throughout Italy of some 260 thousand units per month in 2016. More or less as half the yearly visitors in region Marche museums for the same year, following the data of the Mibact or as if the same number of population of the Greater Milan area visited museums or archaeological sites and parks during the twelve free Sundays. Surely it looks like a great success.

Overall, it demonstrates that museums arise interest and curiosity in a large number of population. But these numbers don't tell us anything about the people they represent or about the related "visitors' journey". What is the level of loyalty to these events? Are the same people traveling throughout the country planning a free visit to the Italian museums or is mainly a locally-based phenomenon? Can the visitors be profiled at least on the basis of the traditional demoscopic categories?

Above all, these numbers don't say anything about the kind of experience the visitors live and what remains of it, to both actors involved: visitors and museums.

It should be time for the national cultural policies to clarify the meaning of success pursued, since the investment required for running the Sundays free entrances or similar openings (i.e. last March 8th) on national or local level is significant for the public administrations and since lately it has been replicated in other sectors of the cultural production. In facts, the trade-off of this kind of operations is highly worthy if they can help defining further cultural strategies in audience development and in cultural production, and if they can collect valuable feedbacks and data on which cultural institutions can improve their cultural offer and develop new creativity.

But at the moment, there is no clear evidence of what this successful increase in number of visitors means in terms of social or economical impact. Nor in terms of change of attitude of museums towards their visitors.

After the first stage of facilitating the approach to cultural heritage, in case of museums, but more in general to culture (arts, cinema, music and theater), this kind of operations should move on to the following steps of creating a stricter relationship with the visitors, installing a reciprocal exchange of information and producing the conditions for a sustainable long-lasting interest. For doing so, a change in the model of management of cultural institution is required as well as a change of attitude.

And as for the former at the moment, we'll limit to refer to the long-needed professional overhaul of the museum personnel, let's spend few words about the need of a change of attitude of the Italian museums in particular, but in general in most of the Italian cultural sector at least the institutional one.

If the adopted policies of a more open access to culture want that something remains of these free (or discounted) entrance days, they must stop make the museums speak top-down, but they must create the conditions for museums start to listen to the needs and expectations of their public.

If numbers are wanted to increase more and more, museums must start finding a way of evaluating what their visitors like and what they learn from the visit experience, overcoming the traditional customer satisfaction questionnaires with something more empathic and fitting: the dialogue with the visitors.

If success must be long-lasting and incremented, the museum visit process chain must be studied in details and in doing so, apart from very few benchmarks to which we can refer on national level, it could be useful to start a comparison with the foreign

experiences in a practical and direct way, without deference but also without conceit.

The value of what Italy has inherited in millennia of history is incomparable with how she has learnt to communicate it and a open and patent comparison with other international realities (i.e. participating to the many international award schemes) can be a way of giving a richer meaning to numbers and to make something of the days to remain.

[lace hair replacement systems](#)

Campi meta