

# Families digest

*Empirical research into museums and galleries visiting by family audiences*

Revised June 2005

**Families digest**

□ 2005 MORRIS HARGREAVES MCINTYRE

50 Copperas Street, Manchester, UK M4 1HS

Telephone 0161 839 3311

Fax 0161 8393377

Email [inray@lateralthinkers.com](mailto:inray@lateralthinkers.com)

[www.lateralthinkers.com](http://www.lateralthinkers.com)

## Contents

- 1 Understanding the market 4
  - 1.1 The Audience Pyramid 4
  - 1.2 The family audience 5
- 2 Why people visit 7
  - 2.1 Hierarchy of motivation 7
  - 2.2 Morris Hargreaves McIntyre motivation norms 9
- 3 Understanding the needs of families 11
  - 3.1 Hierarchy of family needs 11
  - 3.2 Meeting the needs of families 12
- 4 Family learning in museums and galleries 19
  - 4.1 Modes of family behaviour 19
  - 4.2 Learning styles 21

# 1 Understanding the market

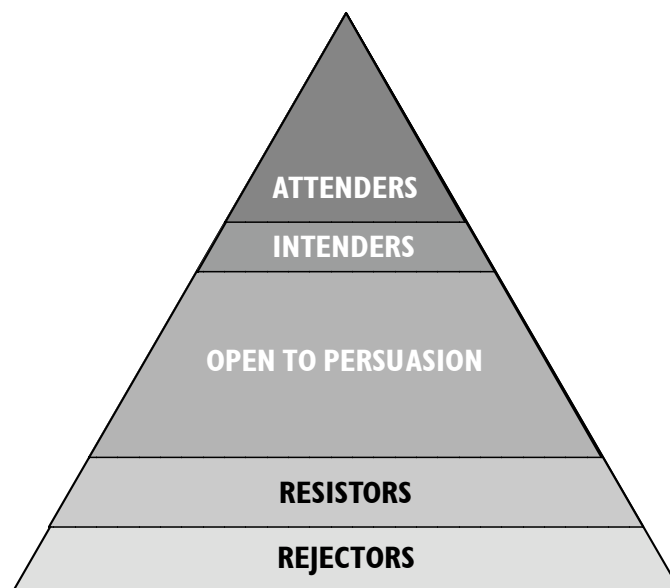
## 1.1 The Audience Pyramid

Segmenting the market by whether people attend or not is perhaps simplistic. Within current attenders there are clearly core attenders who attend frequently and more occasional attenders who attend less often, often only once a year or less. Similarly not all non-attenders are hostile to the idea of attending museums.

In selecting a leisure time activity, the decision to visit a museum or gallery is dependent upon a family's level of belief in the ability of these organisations to meet their needs. Many non-visitors choose not to attend museums and galleries because they do not believe that they will meet their specific needs.

The *Audience pyramid* model below segments the market into a hierarchy of intention or motivation to engage with any cultural activity, in this case, museums and galleries. The individual segments in the model reflect different levels of belief in the ability of museums and galleries to meet their needs.

### The Audience Pyramid Model



©Morris Hargreaves McIntyre

**Attenders** represent those who are currently in the market – they already attend and as such know that museums and galleries can meet their needs. These are typically a smaller number of people who account for a large number of current visits. These people attend with varying frequency as described above.

**Intenders** are those who already want to attend, but are waiting for the opportunity. These people too therefore believe that museums and galleries can and will meet their needs. For these people there may be some barriers but they are ones that can be relatively easily addressed.

**Open to persuasion** are people who might be described as not hostile to the proposition of attending. However they are not necessarily convinced that visiting a museum or gallery will meet their needs and as such will require active persuasion that a visit will do so.

**Resistors** are sceptical that a visit to a museum or gallery could meet their needs. This can be due to a lack of understanding of their own needs; to negative preconceptions, which may or may not be accurate, and can also be due to their recollections of previous, unsatisfactory visits often in organised schools groups. This segment is more likely to respond to outreach initiatives or being persuaded to attend as a member of party; they are unlikely to be proactive visitors.

**Rejectors** are actively hostile to the notion of engaging with museums and galleries – they are convinced it is not for them.

*Attenders* know through experience, that a visit to a museum or gallery will meet their needs. Understanding attitudes towards museums of the other segments of the *Audience pyramid* is essential in developing and broadening audiences for a venue. While *Attenders* may respond well to traditional marketing initiatives, other segments of the *Audience pyramid* will need alternative strategies if that are to be convinced that a visit will fulfil their needs.

## 1.2 The family audience

Potential family attenders at museums and galleries are likely to be segmented along the same criteria as general museum and gallery visitors, ranging from core attenders who are clearly committed to the concept and believe it will meet their needs, through people who might be described as open to persuasion and finally those who resist or reject the concept and are therefore less likely to attend.

Each of the segments will have different motivations for attending. Research that we have undertaken into current and potential family visitors has found that families are most likely to be motivated to visit museums and galleries by *Social* or *Intellectual* drivers.

## 2 Why people visit

### 2.1 Hierarchy of motivation

Based on extensive research, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre has identified and quantified the range of motivations that people have for visiting museums and galleries. This model is a useful way of segmenting visitors by their principal motivation, i.e. by the needs they are satisfying by visiting.

The motives listed in this Hierarchy have been painstakingly defined from dozens of focus groups in which visitors reported, articulated and discussed the benefits they were seeking from a visit to a museum or gallery.

The classifications have then been grouped into four key drivers: *Social*, *Intellectual*, *Emotional* and *Spiritual*:

#### **Spiritual = Church**

Visitors are looking for creative stimulation or quiet contemplation and see museums and galleries as an opportunity to escape and recharge their batteries. They want to have a transcendental or spiritual experience; they are looking for soul food. This is generally a small proportion of visitors

#### **Emotional = Spa**

Visitors want to experience what the past was like, or they may have a personal connection to the subject matter. They want to see fascinating and beautiful objects in an inspiring setting, to enjoy a feast for the eyes. These visitors are looking for rejuvenating therapy, an enriching experience.

#### **Intellectual = Archive**

Visitors are keen to encourage their children's or their own interest and knowledge. They may have a professional/academic/personal interest in the subject. These visitors are driven by self-development and knowledge acquisition, to become more informed and interesting people.

#### **Social = Attraction**

Visitors see the Museum as an enjoyable place to spend time with friends and family.

These drivers are hierarchical. In moving up the hierarchy visitors experience increasing levels of engagement with the museum or gallery and the objects on display. The further up the hierarchy visitors move, the more fulfilling and rewarding their visit. At each point on the hierarchy visitors have different

needs; they are only able to move up the hierarchy if their needs at the lower ends are met.

The model has striking parallels with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs<sup>1</sup>. We have therefore mapped Maslow’s categories onto our Hierarchy to show how the two models relate to each other.

**Hierarchy of Visitor Engagement**

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF HUMAN NEEDS		HIERARCHY OF ENGAGEMENT	
Self-actualisation		Spiritual	Escapism
			Contemplation
			Stimulate creativity
Aesthetic		Emotional	Aesthetic pleasure
			Awe and wonder
Cognitive	Esteem		Moving
			Personal relevance
			Experience the past
			Nostalgia
			Insight
			Sense of cultural identity
		Intellectual	Acad/prof interest
Hobby interest			
Self-improvement			
Stimulate children			
Social		Social	Social interaction
			Entertainment
			To see, to do
			Inclusion, welcome
			Access
Safety	Physiological		Comfort, security, warmth

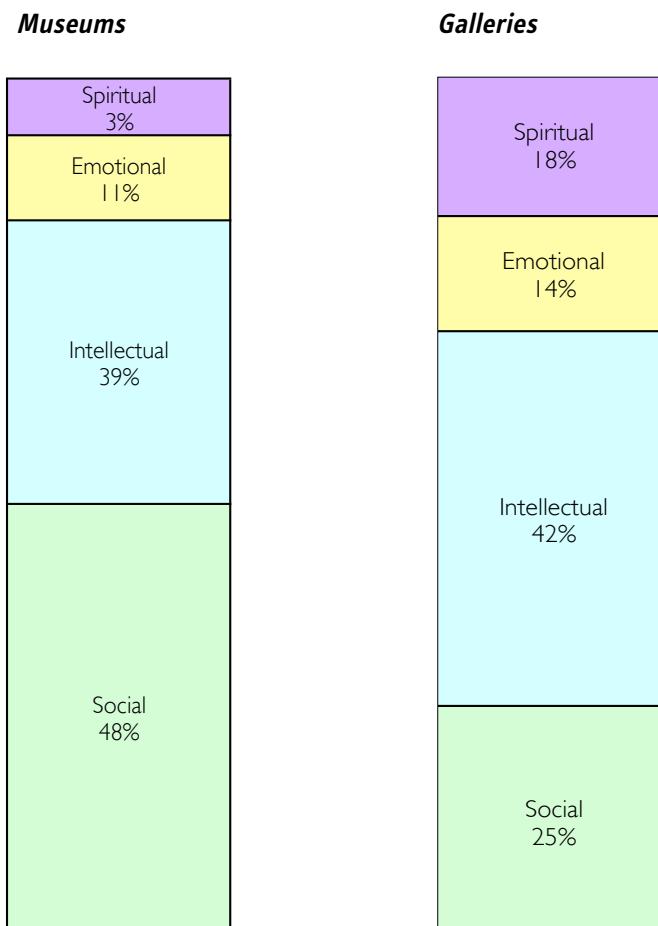
<sup>1</sup> Maslow, Abraham H. A Theory of Human Motivation, Psychological Review, 50, 370-396. (1943)



## 2.2 Morris Hargreaves McIntyre motivation norms

We have undertaken sophisticated quantitative analysis at over twenty-five museums and galleries including The British Museum; V&A; National Gallery; Royal Academy; Tate Modern; Tate Britain; National Portrait Gallery; Ironbridge; and National Galleries of Scotland to generate norms for visitor main motivation. The left hand column shows visitors' main motivations for visiting museums while the right hand column shows their main motivations for visiting art galleries.

### Motivation for visit norms



As the pillars illustrate, 48% of all museum visitors are driven by a *Social* motivation, for art galleries, this is only true 29% of visitors. For both

museums and galleries, just over a third of visitors are driven by *Intellectual* motives. It is at the top end of the Hierarchy that galleries achieve deeper engagement, 3% of museum visitors are driven by *Spiritual* motives such as escapism, contemplation or creativity. In art galleries this driver is six times higher at 18%.

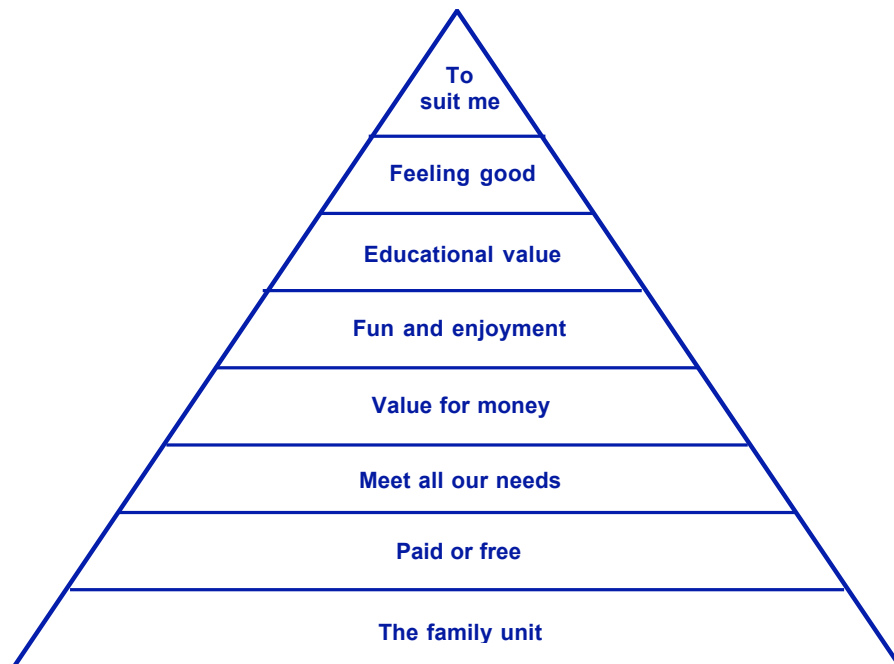
Museums and galleries need to consider the needs of groups of people with a range of different motivations for visiting. Qualitative and quantitative research undertaken by ourselves has consistently found that families are most likely to be motivated to visit museums and galleries by *Social* or *Intellectual* drivers. Their specific visiting needs must be considered alongside the needs of academics, tourists and those looking for escape and relaxation, for example.

## 3 Understanding the needs of families

### 3.1 Hierarchy of family needs

The family unit is governed by a number of factors. They may have time on their hands but their budget dictates what they can do as a family, transport may also be a consideration. The needs of families are diverse, from the babies in pushchairs, to grandparents with mobility problems, to self-conscious teenagers. In deciding whether to visit a museum or gallery as a family, they will ask themselves a series of questions to determine whether a visit will fulfil all of their needs. These considerations are hierarchical: a visit will only occur if the venue is perceived as able to fulfil each of the levels on the hierarchy.

#### Hierarchy of family needs



© Morris Hargreaves McIntyre

#### 1 The family unit

##### *Are we looking for a family activity?*

Dependent on a functional family unit, having time on their hands and looking to go out together as a family

**2 Paid or free**

***Is the museum / gallery / attraction paid or free?***

Budget concerns: how far is it to travel – will it be worth the journey in terms of time and money?

Familiarity with location and venue – will it be worth the cost of entry and travel?

**3 Meet all our needs**

***Will it meet all of our needs?***

The needs of the family unit can be incredibly diverse: the family unit may be made up of grandparents, single parents, one of more children, different age ranges

**4 Value for money**

***Will it offer value for money?***

Duration of visit – full or half day, quality of service, quality of product, value-added

**5 Fun and enjoyment**

***Will it provide fun and enjoyment?***

Strong play element, interactivity, sensational or thrill element

**6 Educational value**

***Will the visit offer any educational value?***

Learning while playing, educational for parents and children

**7 Feeling good**

***Will the experience make the family feel good?***

Quality of presentation, high quality customer care, friendly, welcoming, ease of orientation

**8 To suit me**

***Will the museum/attraction suit the family – self image?***

Reward / fulfilment for main decision maker, incentives to return, strong brand identity, easy to communicate message to others

Museums and galleries need to be able to provide the facilities and services that families need as well as persuading them that these needs will be met.

**3.2 Meeting the needs of families**

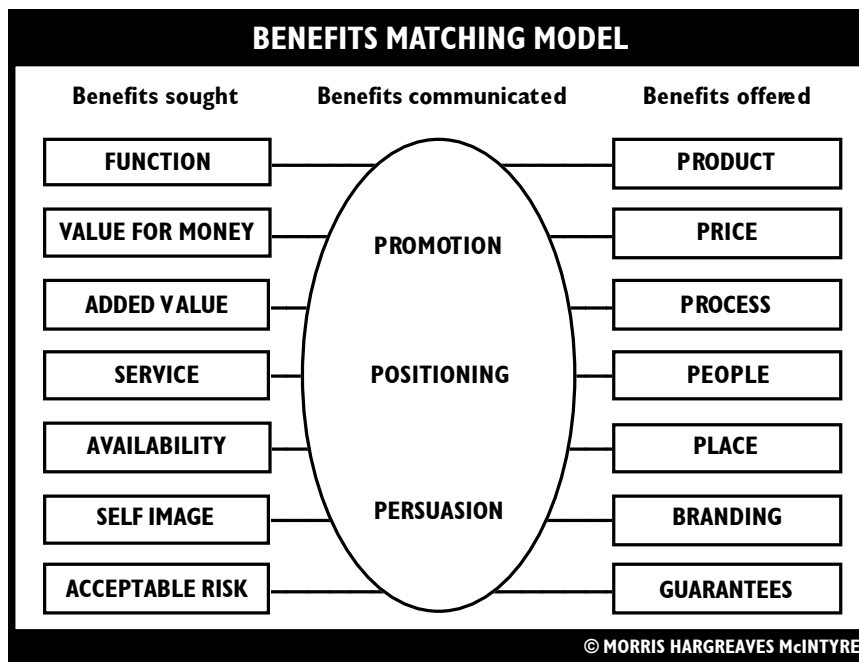
We have shown that people will only be motivated to visit museums if they perceive that these institutions will meet their specific needs.

The findings and implications can be grouped by what is known as the 'Marketing Mix'. These are the factors, controlled by organisations themselves, which can influence the decision to visit by offering benefits that meet the needs of the market segment. In developing new family audiences it

is necessary to review the whole marketing mix and to establish what are perceived as benefits to families.

The *Benefits matching model* below illustrates the process of matching the benefits *sought* by families to the benefits *offered* by the museum and how those matched benefits are communicated.

### Benefits matching model



© Morris Hargreaves McIntyre

The table below demonstrates how this works in practice for museums and galleries.

**Benefits matching – Families**

<b>Benefits sought</b>	<b>Benefits offered</b>
<b>Function</b>	<b>Product</b>
Motivated by overall concept of a good day out	A visit offers enough elements to fill full / half day
Most likely to opt for outings involving outdoor activities – children can run off energy	Time-out activities. Venue offers both indoor space and outdoor activities
Concern over age range within family and whether content will be relevant/interesting for all	Activities for visitors of different age ranges – play area for young children, informal activities for 6-9 year olds, 'cool' for teenagers, seating for adults
Some families want to participate in family activities	Consistent / sustained provision of family activities
Some want children to be occupied / entertained – less interested in 'family' activities	Area for parents / carers to leave children unsupervised, occupied in activities
Education function – help children's understanding of history / art / the world around them / support for school projects	Educational role delivered in a fun way – not too formal / school-like
Children want exploration and a strong play element	Interactive / hands-on activities, information delivered in a non-didactic manner
Sensation / thrill element, uniqueness, awe, wonder	'Wow' elements, fascinating, possibly large-scale
Older children like to show-off knowledge	Links to curriculum, space to make / display work
Parents don't have the same level of interest in the displays and activities as children	Enable children to be self-sufficient – child-friendly instructions, diagrams and pictures
Want to feel they have made a contribution to the museum / gallery	Local projects with activities families can join in with

<p>All school levels motivated by curriculum links</p> <p>Children like something to remind them of their visit</p>	<p>Pre-visit guidance on links with curriculum</p> <p>Inexpensive mementos available in gift shop, opportunity to make something to keep</p>
<p><b>Value for money</b></p> <p>Value for money based on a whole day out – expensive if visit only lasts a couple of hours</p> <p>Often choose leisure activities if no / little cost involved</p> <p>Cost of travel deters families</p> <p>Additional activities put financial pressure on families – cafes, merchandise, events</p> <p>Expectation that museums are free</p> <p>Paid entry reduces repeat visits</p>	<p><b>Price</b></p> <p>Offer enough elements to fill a whole day to warrant costs</p> <p>Family packages and discounts, no charge for under-age children, some activities free</p> <p>Provide free transport</p> <p>Cheap food option or provide place to eat own food, cheap gifts for children, free events</p> <p>Must provide high value for money for families to consider paying</p> <p>Incentives to return – discounts for return visit, family season ticket</p>
<p><b>Added value</b></p> <p>Children want another level of information parents not always able to provide; some children like to guide the visit</p> <p>Children want to be given specific tasks with rewards</p> <p>Children used to sophisticated multi-media approach – computer games, TV animatronics, interactive centres, simulators</p> <p>Families still enjoy practical creative activities</p> <p>Children like first person interpretation</p>	<p><b>Process</b></p> <p>Offer multi-level approach to interpretation, chronologies and resonant themes, human interest stories, provide supporting materials to take away</p> <p>Develop treasure hunts / prize schemes, activities where they create something they can take away</p> <p>Offer at least one truly intuitive interactive based on multi-media technology</p> <p>Plenty of ‘low-tech’ activities – dressing up, arts / crafts, handling objects etc</p> <p>First person interpretation / animateur</p>

<p>Quality of presentation</p> <p>Maintain interest and attention</p>	<p>Working exhibits, labels clear and easy to read, articulate what happens and why it happens</p> <p>Alternate forms of presentation – interactives, audio-visual displays</p>
<p><b>Service</b></p> <p>Welcoming and friendly atmosphere – looking to relax and enjoy themselves</p> <p>Staff that are welcoming and available</p> <p>Staff that are child friendly and experienced in dealing with children</p> <p>Culturally aware and sensitive staff</p> <p>High quality customer care</p> <p>Parents under pressure – multiple children, wide age range, fearful of children’s behaviour</p> <p>Adults cannot always explain / interpret displays</p> <p>Schools want external expert input</p>	<p><b>People</b></p> <p>Avoid ‘library-like’ silence, encourage staff to interact with visitors</p> <p>Proactive in offering welcome and assistance</p> <p>Child friendly staff</p> <p>Socially and culturally representative staff</p> <p>Staff trained in customer service</p> <p>Aided supervision when visiting with more than one child, allowances for children’s behaviour</p> <p>Approachable and knowledgeable staff to answer questions, animated personality to explain to families</p> <p>Dedicated education staff positioned as ‘external experts’</p>
<p><b>Availability</b></p> <p>Opening times convenient to families</p> <p>Need to plan ahead, particularly working parents</p> <p>Access by public and private transport</p> <p>Physical access for prams / buggies</p>	<p><b>Place</b></p> <p>Consistent opening hours, open weekends, bank holidays, school holidays</p> <p>Make holiday events schedule available to parents in advance, visiting information easily available – internet, telephone, library etc</p> <p>Parking, shuttles from local underground / rail stations, full transport detail available</p> <p>Access and storage for prams / buggies, bags etc</p>



<p>Good, clean facilities for families</p> <p>Ease of orientation to give a sense of control</p>	<p>Well maintained toilets and baby changing</p> <p>Clear directional signage, maps, orientation points</p>
<p><b>Self-image</b></p> <p>Families and children have wide range of interests and primarily social motivations for visiting</p> <p>Parents main focus is on their children's needs – little comment on their own needs</p> <p>Seeking 'family friendly' day out</p>	<p><b>Branding</b></p> <p>Challenge old-fashioned image – illustrate with live activities and contemporary relevance</p> <p>Target the brand at children as well as adults – they are key decision influencers for families</p> <p>'Family friendly' must permeate the brand</p>
<p><b>Acceptable risk</b></p> <p>Need to be reassured that a visit offers a 'good family day out' – versus other leisure options</p> <p>Parents do not want to feel intellectually exposed</p> <p>To be worth it, a repeat visit must offer something different to previous visits</p>	<p><b>Guarantees</b></p> <p>Advocacy via schools, local media, word of mouth in the local community</p> <p>Reduce parental exposure and increase quality of the experience: parents helped to facilitate visit for children – 'just in time' information, family guides</p> <p>Ensure visitors have a new experience each visit – activities, events, changing exhibitions / displays</p>

<b>Awareness and perceptions</b>	<b>Positioning and promotion</b>
Historic / stereotypical perceptions of museums – despite having experience to contradict this	Challenge perceptions to appeal to families – position as a modern venue
Static, unchanging collections in glass cases – boring	Promote events, activities, interactive elements, changing exhibitions / displays etc
'Museum' in itself off putting – a good museum is often not thought of as an attraction	Promote to families as an attraction not a museum
Lack of awareness of local venues and what they offer a major factor in non-visiting	Target communications at families
Perception that museums are not 'family friendly'	Position as family friendly with information and exhibits that will appeal to all ages
Easy to communicate message to others	Strong brand identity

## 4 Family learning in museums and galleries

### 4.1 Modes of family behaviour

As well as a range of different family needs there are also different modes of family behaviour.

Based on extensive research with museum and gallery visitors we have identified eight modes of family behaviour. These are focused on how families respond to family learning. The first five are all potentially valid ways of achieving 'Family Learning'. The last three are not conducive to Family Learning. Unfortunately, it is these three modes of behaviour that are prevalent when families visit museums and galleries. To overcome this, museums and galleries must intervene, pre-emptively in its conceptual design of exhibits and interpretation and pro-actively in the way it relates to visitors on-site and parents will still be expected to play a facilitating and constructive role in family learning.

The *Family behaviour model* below summarises how families behave in museums and the ways in which organisations can meet the needs of families in terms of the need for pre-visit knowledge; provision of information and interpretation and the resource implications.

The implications for the range of interpretation provided is that it should encompass a combination of:

- intuitive exhibits
- simple / pictorial instructions for people who have limited experience and may not have observed others
- child-friendly instructions, diagrams and pictures
- open-ended talking points and questions to encourage discussion
- staff to demonstrate, engage and support visitors
- avoidance of didactic, single valid responses
- avoidance of long explanatory text
- design some activities that require adults and children to learn together

**Family behaviour model**

Managing family behaviour	Description How do families behave in museums?	Pre-knowledge How much reliance on pre-visit knowledge?	Information What use is made of information provided?	Museum strategy How can museums intervene to modify behaviour?	Resources What are the resource implications for the museum?
Intuitive	Families immediately engage with confidence because the immediate familiarity, recognition and physical appearance of exhibits requires no explanation or interpretation	Low	None	Little intervention is required, but only a few exhibits are truly intuitive	Capital only - having at least one truly intuitive interactive is an ideal focal point for access and confidence
Modeling	Families copy others in museums who effectively demonstrate ways of interacting. This can also lead to interaction and discussion <i>between</i> groups of visitors	Low	Limited use, mainly when museum is empty and possible interactions cannot be observed	Provide simple (or pictorial) instructions to reassure visitors who may not have observed others	Capital as above and minimal signage
Self-sufficient	Children digest succinct information and interpretation on their own and either have a fulfilling solo experience or ideally explain the exhibit to accompanying adults	Low	Strong reliance on child-friendly directions and interpretation	Provide child-friendly instructions, diagrams and pictures	Investment in careful differentiation and 'usability' for children of different ages
Empowered	Adults who are not totally confident are provided with just the right amount of information and guidance in an immediate format to facilitate family discussion	Low	Strong reliance on short, pithy copy displayed clearly at point of interaction to keep adults 'one sentence ahead'	Provide open-ended 'talking points' and questions to encourage creative group responses and discussion	Investment in testing, trialing and correcting the content and design of signage, print and panels
Facilitated	Staff intervene by demonstrating exhibits, supporting visitor interactions with questions and suggestions or by answering questions	Low	None initially, but once interest is aroused, visitors may follow up experience with more interpretation	Provide staff to demonstrate, engage and support visitors. Concentrate on key exhibits or key objectives	Expensive, labour intensive, specialist training, must be regular not ad-hoc to give consistent experience
Directive	Confident (but not always knowledgeable) adults 'direct' children's interaction usually in a purposeful way, suggesting a single valid learning outcome	High	Low reliance but some use of background information to identify or support 'learning outcome'	Foil 'dominant Dad' - avoid didactic single valid exhibit responses and confront with open questions	Invest in conceptual design to ensure non-prescriptive framework. Testing and trialing crucial
Leading - Following	Children experiment with hands-on whilst adults digest background information, then attempt to modify children's actions. Often children have moved on to next exhibit	Moderate	Time spent reading rather than interacting	Avoid long explanatory text, provide orientation guide, simple suggestions, talking points and open questions	Investment in testing, trialing and correcting the content and design of signage, print and panels
Supervisory	Adults don't engage with their children, and usually not with the exhibits. They intervene to check 'bad behaviour' or to prevent accidents. Children left to own devices	None	None	Encourage adults to take responsibility and get involved. Design activities requiring adults to join in	Capital for family friendly environment. Staff time / training in orientation and to encourage participation

## 4.2 Learning styles

All people, families and children included respond and learn in different ways.

A recent learning theory worth considering in the context of people learn, is the VAK theory.<sup>2</sup> This theory suggests that the three main sensory receivers – *Visual, Auditory* and *Kinesthetic* determine dominant learning styles. Learners use all three to receive information but one or more of these receiving styles are normally dominant. The dominant style defines the best way for a person to learn new information by filtering what is to be learned. Use of a balance of styles has the greatest impact. This is also at the forefront of the ALPS system currently being developed in primary schools. As with other theories, this has many practical implications for delivery of services in museums.

Each of the three learning styles should be taken into account when designing interpretation and activities in the museum environment.

The table below describes the characteristics exhibited by people using these different learning styles and effective methods of delivery.

---

<sup>2</sup> Kolb, D. A. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (Prentice Hall, 1984)

**VAK learning styles**

<b>Engagement Type</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Effective Methods of Delivery</b>
<b>Auditory</b>	<p>Talk to themselves a lot                      May move lips or read out loud                      May have difficulty with reading and writing tasks                      Do better talking in person / to tape</p>	<p>Music as relaxant                      Stripped down language - avoid adult codes                      Verbal description                      Discussion                      Auditory reference: 'It sounded like'                      Auditory recall: 'What did it sound like?'                      Explanations to others</p>
<b>Visual</b>	<p><b>Linguistic</b>                      Learn through written language such as reading and writing                      Remember what is written down                      Like to write down directions                      Listen better if watching</p>	<p>Visual stimuli - cue cards, poster, prompt sheets                      Mapping                      Visual prompts / props                      Visual recall: 'What did it look like?'                      Visualisation: 'What would it look like?'</p>
	<p><b>Spatial</b>                      Difficulty with written language                      Better with visual materials: charts, demonstrations, videos                      Easily visualise faces and places                      Seldom get lost in new surroundings</p>	
<b>Kinesthetic Movement / Touch</b>	<p>Do best while moving / touching                      Lose concentration if no external stimulation or movement                      Like to take notes                      Like to get the big picture first - scan material before reading                      Use colour highlighters                      Take notes by pictures / diagrams</p>	<p>Regular, planned, physical breaks                      Brain breaks                      Move around space                      Physical activity: acting out / doing                      Speak slowly                      Toys and Props                      Kinesthetic recall: 'It felt like'                      Kinesthetic imagination "What would you do?'</p>



**Morris Hargreaves McIntyre** is a creative and intelligent arts management consultancy working in the interests of audience and organisational development.

The company combines thorough project planning with incisive, deep analysis, lateral thinking and detailed, intelligent strategic planning to produce relevant, helpful and high quality reports with practical recommendations.

**Our services include:**

- strategic analysis, planning, and development
- product and service development
- feasibility studies
- market appraisals
- marketing audits, strategies and plans
- audience development strategies and implementation
- access strategies
- in-service training
- training needs analysis
- training programmes
- organisational development
- change management.

Most of our projects are research-based.

We have a fully integrated market research service that undertakes:

- quantitative research
- qualitative research
- telephone marketing
- community consultation

