

Evaluating the Public Space Transformation through Virtual Museum Practices

Ceren Doğan Dervişoğlu^a, İdil Ece Şener^b

^aMimarlık Bölümü, Mimarlık Fakültesi, İzmir Yüksek Teknoloji Enstitüsü, YÖK 100/2000 Doktora Bursiyeri, ceren.dogan1992@gmail.com

^bMimarlık Bölümü, Mimarlık Fakültesi, İzmir Demokrasi Üniversitesi, YÖK 100/2000 Doktora Bursiyeri, idilecesener@gmail.com

Abstract

With the Covid-19 pandemic, people's lives, working and living conditions, social relations are completely transformed, while social relations and public spaces are also changing. Before the pandemic, spaces such as parks, gardens, museums, cinemas and theaters were defined as public spaces, while publicity required people to be together physically. After the pandemic, communication between people shifts from physical space to virtual space, due to the limitation of the use of social space, and the concept of public space is reinterpreted. With the pandemic period, platforms are created where cities can be visited virtually, online access to events such as theaters, concerts and festivals is provided, and virtual visits are offered to museums all over the world. In this study, the concept of changing publicity and transformations in public space are evaluated through museums. A survey is conducted to reveal the differences between the physical museum and the virtual museum experience. Through the survey, four different types of experiences (social, cognitive, introspective and object experiences) are questioned, revealing the perception of space and how users interpret the change in public space. Examining the transformation of public space through museums allows for new inferences about people's perception and experience of space. The essence of a public space detached from the physical space is lost and the concept of publicity becomes shallower.

Keywords: Virtual Space, Public Space, Museum, Covid-19

Kamusal Alan Dönüşümünün Sanal Müze Pratikleri Üzerinden Değerlendirilmesi

Özet

Covid-19 pandemisi ile birlikte insanların hayatları, çalışma ve yaşama koşulları, sosyal ilişkileri tamamen dönüşüme uğrarken, toplumsal ilişkiler ve kamusal alanlar da değişim geçirmektedir. Pandemi öncesinde parklar, bahçeler, müzeler, sinemalar ve tiyatrolar gibi mekanlar kamusal alan olarak tanımlanırken, kamusal fiziksel olarak insanların bir arada olmasını gerektirmekteydi. Pandemi sonrası ise, sosyal alan kullanımının sınırlandırılması nedeniyle, insanlar arasındaki iletişim fiziksel mekândan sanal mekâna kaymakta ve kamusal alan kavramı da yeniden yorumlanmaktadır. Pandemi dönemi ile birlikte şehirlerin sanal olarak ziyaret edilebileceği platformlar oluşturulmakta, tiyatro, konser, festival gibi etkinliklere online erişim sağlanmakta ve dünyanın her yerindeki müzelere sanal ziyaret imkanı sunulmaktadır. Bu çalışmada değişen kamusal kavramı ve kamusal mekandaki dönüşümler müzeler üzerinden değerlendirilmektedir. Fiziksel müze ve sanal müze deneyimi arasındaki farkları ortaya çıkarmak amacıyla bir anket çalışması yürütülmektedir. Anket çalışması aracılığıyla dört farklı deneyim türü (sosyal, bilişsel, içgözlemsel ve nesne deneyimleri) sorgulanarak, mekan algısı ve kullanıcıların kamusal mekanın değişimini nasıl yorumladıkları açığa çıkarılmaktadır. Kamusal alanın dönüşümünün müzeler aracılığıyla incelenmesi, insanların mekan algısı ve

mekanın deneyimlenmesi hakkında yeni çıkarımlara olanak tanır. Fiziksel alandan kopuk bir kamusal alanın özü kaybolmakta ve kamusal kavramı daha sığ bir hale gelmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sanal Mekan, Kamusal Mekan, Müze, Covid-19

1.INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the most important factor in the emergence of epidemic diseases is human. With the development of agriculture, diseases transmitted from animals have increased. During the transition to settled life, the need to communicate with people living in different places emerged. As a result of this situation, with the development of city life, people started to live together and the incidence of epidemic diseases increased (Özden and Özmat, 2014, p.61). A global epidemic is a disease that spreads and affects many countries and continents that threaten human health around the world. The impact of the global epidemic at the community level varies depending on the contagiousness of the virus, its ability to cause disease, the immune status of individuals in the community, the characteristics of interpersonal contact and transportation, the presence of risk factors, the health services provided and the climate. In addition to global epidemics such as black plague, cholera, influenza (Spanish flu, Hong Kong flu, swine flu), typhoid in history, the Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) has also been added to this list today. Epidemics have always had an impact on urban planning and architectural design. Along with technological trends in these areas, effects have been seen at a level that will change the social order (Berg, 2020). The Covid-19 global pandemic has been exactly such a process. The epidemic, which was first seen in Wuhan, China in December 2019, affected the world in a short time. It was declared a 'pandemic' by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020 (WHO, 2020).

After pandemic, social life, social order and use of space have also changed. The public sphere, where individuals come together to share their ideas and is accessible to everyone, has changed shape according to the conditions of the period. While squares, bazaars and parks were frequently used public spaces before pandemic, restrictions were imposed on the use of these spaces. Countries closed schools and public spaces and declared a lockdown in order to reduce the number of cases and the spread of the virus with the pandemic. Due to the strict measures taken by countries, daily life, routines and social relations had to change and became technology-oriented. Many public spaces have become physically unusable due to restrictions.

As a result of all these changes and transformations, the concept of public space has shifted from physical space to virtual space. Social events such as concerts, festivals and theaters started to be held in virtual spaces. People started to socialize from their homes through the activities they participated in online platforms. Museums are also among the places affected by this process and undergoing compulsory change.

During the lockdown, museums found a way to stay connected with their visitors through the virtual environment. Museums in the world and in Turkey renewed their infrastructures to bring their collections to the audience on digital platforms. Museums, which had to be closed due to the pandemic, have opened their doors virtually to ensure continuity, to contribute to society, to inform, to maintain functions such as entertainment and communication. Museums organized virtual tours, exhibitions and conferences aiming to increase the number of visitors virtually. During the pandemic, cultural and social activities were continued with all these works, and museum visits were not interrupted. However, the effects of the physical museum and virtual

museum experience on the user, the similarities and differences between these experiences are worth investigating.

This study deals with the changing perception of public space after the pandemic and the differences between people's physical and virtual public space experiences. The aim of this study is to evaluate how the transformation of public space affects the perception and experience of space through museums. Within the scope of the study, a questionnaire is designed to evaluate the perception and experience differences between the physical and virtual experience of the museum. The differences between the physical and virtual museum experiences of the participants are measured through a questionnaire consisting of four question sets (social experience, cognitive experience, introspective experience, and object experience). It was tried to reveal how the pandemic changed public spaces through museums, the transformation of museum visits in positive and negative aspects, and how the experiences of visitors were affected.

2. TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC SPACE

While Covid-19 pandemic created a global public health crisis, it has radically changed social relations, work life and urban life. The changes in the individuals' social and work life practices have also reflected on their daily lives and attend to changes in the perception of public space.

Public spaces have been an indispensable element of the city throughout history, and even though it has undergone changes, it has continued to be one of the places where the people continue to come together and share ideas. Habermas (1991) defines the public sphere as 'private people come together as a public' and he states that the public sphere is a place where people share their thoughts, everyone has access and public opinion is created. Similarly, Arendt (1998, p.52) states that, the public space is a place open to all, where each individual comes together in a certain harmony.

According to Sennett (1977, p.17), the public sphere is a place where people have equal opportunities without having any differences between people. On the other hand, Taylor (2003, p.83) defines the public space as a common place for sharing ideas, and he claims that, this space can be recreated within the needs. The definitions of public space emphasize the physical aspect of this concept. In addition to its conceptual aspect, the public space is the point of physical gathering of people, performing activities and creating a common ground for the society. Jan Gehl (2004, p.97-102) also emphasizes that public spaces are intertwined with daily life uses and that activities change according to environmental conditions.

Similarly, Madanipour (2003, p.206) defines the public space as the place where individuals have physical access and where the ideas of the community are formed. However, the concept of space, which existed physically, has changed after the pandemic. Virtual public spaces have started to be used frequently instead of physical public spaces. Virtual public spaces create a new kind of space without physical boundaries (Arends & Hordijk, 2016, p.4). Virtual public space refers to a new online platform where people can share their ideas online, or be the audience of discussions (Li, 2010, p.63).

The digitalization of public space, which started before the Covid 19 pandemic, accelerated in this period. In recent years, studies have been carried out on the transfer of educational environments, working environments, cultural events, museum visits to online platforms (Ülkeryıldız, Vural, & Yıldız, 2020, p.201). However, the digitalization of all activities, meetings, courses, celebrations has led to the transformation of daily activities and routines

after the pandemic. The virtual space assuming the roles of the physical space causes damage to social life. Sensory and representative access beyond physical access to public space, as stated by Habermas (1991), disappears (Paköz, Sezer, & Doğan, 2021, p.3).

With the transformation of the public space, cultural and artistic activities are also maintained in online spaces, while working spaces and educational spaces transfer to online platforms. Virtual city tours, online concerts and theater events, and virtual museum visits are indicators of the transformation of people's social and cultural lives.

3. CHANGING MUSEUM CONCEPT

Museums, which have a much wider scope nowadays, first started with people collecting valuable items. However, museums in their present sense emerged in Europe in the seventeenth century. "The first use of term museum described the collection of strange, rare and exotic things" (Ambrose and Paine, 2018, p.8). At first, collectors opened the collected works to visitors, while private collections gradually turned into museums in the 17th and 18th centuries (Alexander and Alexander, 2008, p.27). Public museums started to be opened in the middle of the 19th century, and the number of museums increased during the 20th century (Hooper Greenhill, 1999, p.35). ICOM (International Council of Museums) was established in 1964 with the aim of researching, preserving and maintaining the natural, cultural, tangible and intangible heritage of the world (ICOM, 2007, p.2). Museum experts have started to develop new practices related to museology in cooperation with this institution. Museology has also transformed with the change in museum understanding and new museum types have emerged.

The term "museum" comes from the Greek mouseion, the temple of the muses (ICOM, 2010, p.56). Nowadays, the term museum is described as "*a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.*" (ICOM, 2007, p.3). This definition, which is the exact equivalent of the museum concept today, was adopted in 2007 and formalized in the "ICOM Statutes".

Today, the rapid development of technology has brought innovations that will revolutionize the understanding of museology. Traditionally formed collections have begun to be moved to virtual environments using digital technologies. The objective and aesthetic values of traditional collections have become open to question. Traditional collections have been reinterpreted within the framework of virtual museology.

The virtual museum is a related, logical collection of digital objects created in various environments. It goes beyond traditional communication and interaction methods, making it much more flexible to the needs and interests of visitors, with its connectivity and capacity to have a variety of entry points. It has no real place. It can spread objects and information about them all over the world (Andrews, 1998, p.24).

The presentation style of this information is also important. The virtual museum concept shows how the constraints imposed by traditional methods of organizing and presenting information in the context of museum visits can be overcome. The virtual museum presents different layers, perspectives and dimension of knowledge about a particular topic. It also provides information unfiltered by traditional methods apart from multimedia (print, photography, illustration or visual images via video and audio) (Hoptman, 1992, p.146).

With the widespread of virtual museum concept, the debates on this issue are also intensifying. There are claims that, the way the work of art is represented affects the experience. Baudrillard and Glaser's (1994, p.7) states that the copying of the space to pretext of preserving the original, makes both the original and the copy artificial. The virtual museum can be interpreted in a similar way. Seeing copies of works of art, in fact visiting the simulation of the museum, leads to both a separation from the experience of the original and the artificiality and worthlessness of both of them. Similarly, Benjamin (2008) claims that, the reproduction of the work of art leads to a break from time and space. Digitization of works of art in virtual museums causes the originality of the work to be lost and its aura to disappear.

At the present time, it is observed that the main purpose of the museum is to provide the visitor with a space and object experience, and within this framework, they are designed to appeal to the experience of the visitors. According to Doering (1999, p.82), the attitude of museums towards their visitors differs according to the content of the museum, space and time. It is one of the expectations about museum that, it can offer different experiences to everyone according to expectations and perspectives of the visitors. Doering (1999, p.83) states that museums should offer at least four types of experiences to their visitors. These are object experiences, cognitive experiences, introspective experiences, social experiences (Figure 1). The existence of such experiences and their integration into the space allows visitors to get the most out of the museum experience.



Figure 1: Four Types of Satisfying Museum Experiences (Doering, 1999, p.83)

4. METHODOLOGY

This study explores public space transformation after Covid 19 pandemic. A questionnaire is designed to evaluate the perception and experience differences between the physical experience and virtual experience of the museum. The survey consists of four sets of questions in areas of social experience, cognitive experience, introspective experience and object experience. These dimensions were created according to Doering's (1999, p.83) definition of the museum experience. A total of 16 questions consisting of four parts were asked to the participants. Whether the museum experience varies according to the environment, the differences between the physical environment and the virtual environment were evaluated.

The questionnaire was applied to randomly selected people from various age groups living in Turkey. A structured online questionnaire prepared via Google Forms was used because of its ease of data collection and access to large audiences. The survey was administered during the lockdown period, when museums were closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, it is aimed that the participants have also actively experienced the virtual museum. The survey, shared via the online platform, was completed in eight days.

Museum experience was measured using 5-point Likert scale questions, with answers ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Respondents were asked to rate each statement according to the museum and the virtual museum. Responses from 102 participants (63 women and 39 men) were taken and included in the analysis. It has been tried to reveal how the museum experience is affected after spatial transformations with these analyzes.

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

After the data obtained through the questionnaire were analyzed, they were examined under five parts. In addition to the first part, which includes personal information of visitors and general information about museum visits, four different museum experiences (social, cognitive, introspective and object experiences) were examined separately. By revealing the differences in experience between the physical museum and the virtual museum, it has been tried to reach which one satisfies the visitor more and how the museum experiences change according to different environments. In this way, an analysis of the transformation of public space through museums is made.

5.1. General Information

In the first part, age and gender information was gathered from the participants, and it was asked how often and for what purpose they visited the museum, and how much time they spent in their museum visits. A total of 102 people participated in the survey, of which 63 were female and 39 were male (Figure 2). When the survey findings are analyzed, it is seen that half of the sample group is between the ages of 24-34 and thirty percent are over 50 years old (Figure 3).

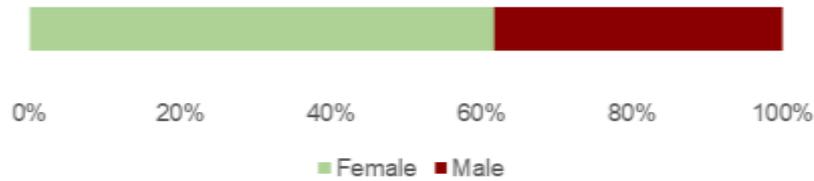


Figure 2: Survey Question (Gender?)

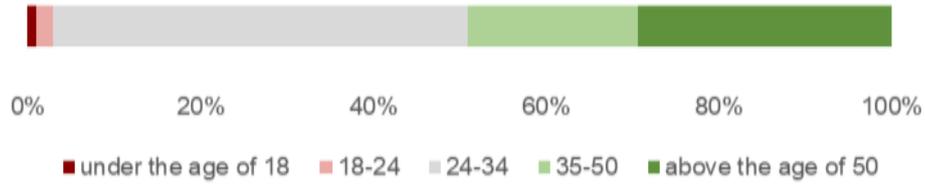


Figure 3: Survey Question (Age?)

The time spent in the museum and how often they visited the museum were evaluated separately for the museum and the virtual museum. While the majority of the sample group spends 1-3 hours in museums, it is observed that, the time spent in the virtual museum is generally less than 1 hour (Figure 4). In addition, the sample group visits the museum mostly once in 6 months or once in a year, while the frequency of visiting the virtual museum is 1 year or less than once a year (Figure 5).

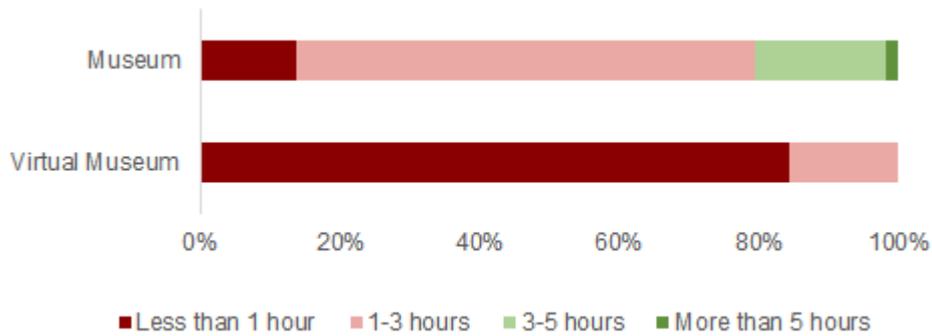


Figure 4: Survey Question (How much time do you spend at the museum?)

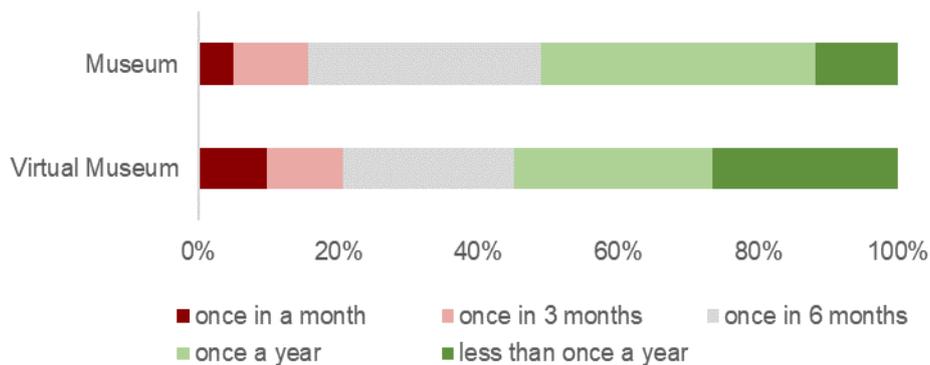


Figure 5: Survey Question (How often do you visit the museum?)

It is among the results that, the virtual museum is visited more frequently than the museum due to its ease of access. However, although the virtual museum is visited more frequently, the time spent in the virtual museum is considerably less than the time spent in the museum. While people visit the virtual museum just to see some work of arts or to get a general idea, they can also be part of unexpected exhibitions in the museum and gain different experiences.

The reasons for visiting the museum also differ in physical and virtual museums. While people visit the museum for gaining information, experience, socialization and for selected collections, a significant part of the reason for visiting the virtual museum is to gain information (Figure 6). According to the research findings, virtual museum visits are generally a solitary activity and aim to gain information rather than experience, while museum visits aim to socialize, have a pleasant time, and experience different things with other people.

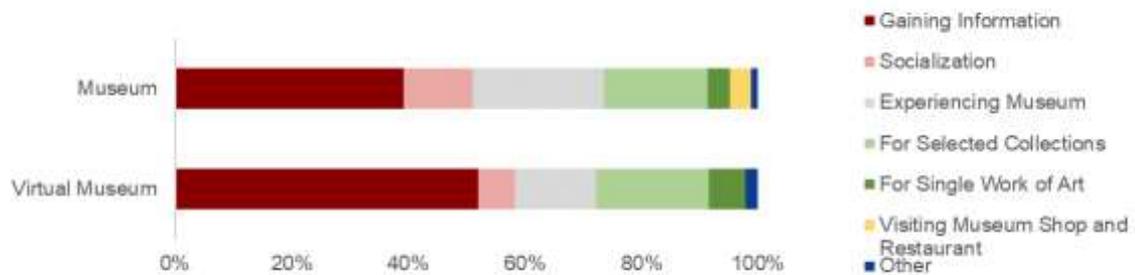


Figure 6: Survey Question (For what purpose would you visit the museum?)

5.2. Social Experience

In the social experience part, it was questioned how museum visits affected the social lives of the participants. Information was collected about whether they spent time with other people in the museum and whether they had fun while visiting the museum.

The sample group, who stated that they went to the museum to spend time with family and friends and socialize, stated that they did not agree with this statement for the virtual museum (Figure 7). While the majority expressed that, they have enjoyable time during both the museum and the virtual museum experience, this rate is higher in the museum than in the virtual museum (Figure 8).

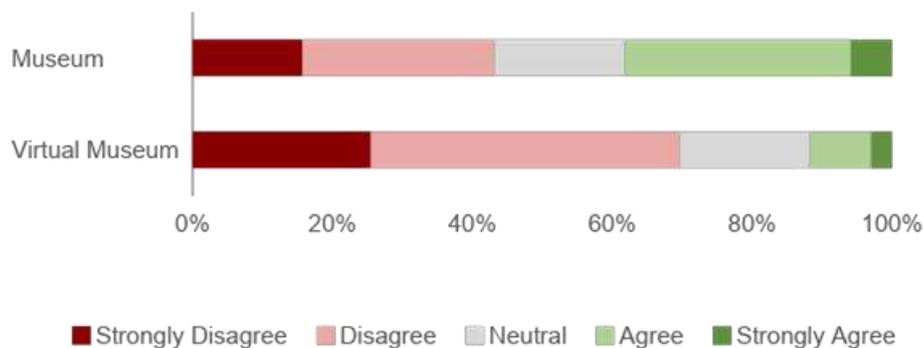


Figure 7: Survey Statement (I go to the museum to spend time with my friends / family)

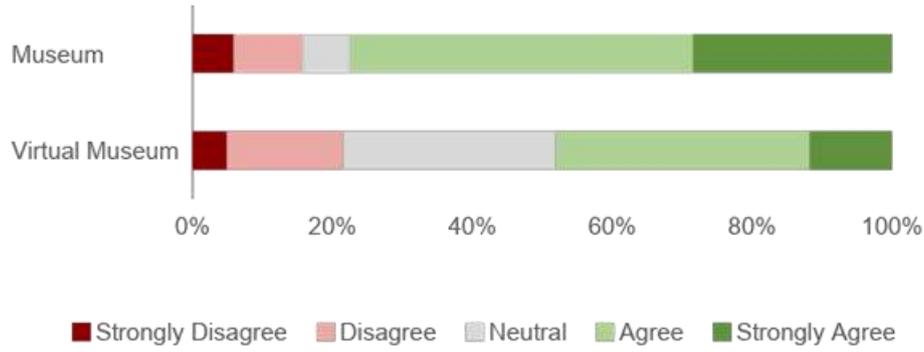


Figure 8: Survey Statement (I have enjoyable time during my museum experience)

According to the questionnaire, gaining social experience is a difficult process to happen in a virtual museum. A virtual museum visit does not allow for socialization and interaction with people, as it is an action performed by the person alone. Virtual museums are not an environment that enhances social experience as there is only a certain level of interaction with work of arts. The shift of the museum environment from physical to virtual has negatively affected people's social experiences.

5.3. Cognitive Experience

Cognitive experience includes topics such as acquiring knowledge, developing understanding, and providing cultural development. In this section, the level of knowledge and cultural development of the participants during their museum visits were measured.

It is observed that there is no significant difference between the rate of gaining information from the museum and the rate of gaining information from the virtual museum in the sample group, who stated that they gained information from both the museum and the virtual museum (Figure 9).

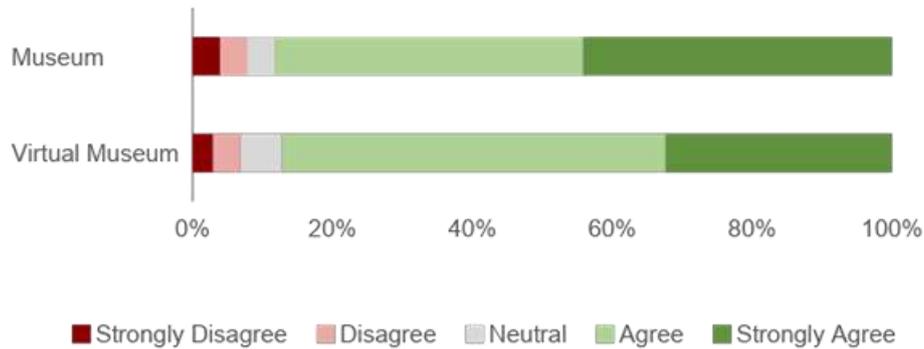


Figure 9: Survey Statement (I can gain information from the museum experience)

Although the museum is more effective than the virtual museum in terms of cultural development of person and gaining information about cultural and social life, it is observed that the results are very close to each other. It is seen that the museum contributes to gaining information about the cultural and social life of the region more than the virtual museum (Figure

10). However, this rate is quite high in the virtual museum as well. It is among the results that there are no significant differences between the museum and the virtual museum in terms of contribution to cultural development (Figure 11).

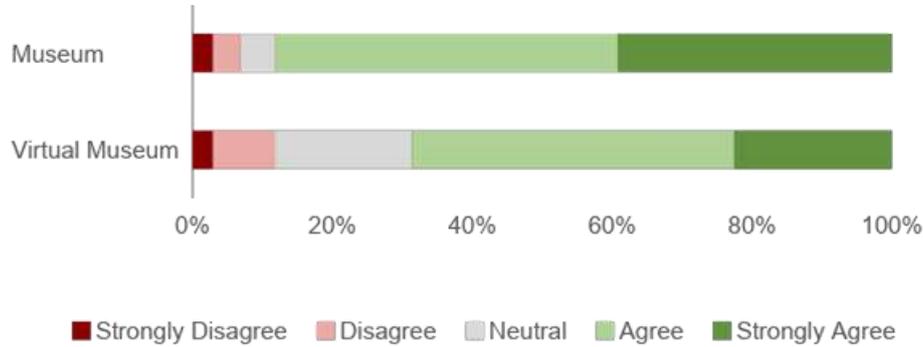


Figure 10: Survey Statement (The museum visit contributes me to learn about the cultural and social life of the region where it is located)

As a result of the survey, it is concluded that the acquisition of cognitive experience occurs independently of the environment. The transformation of the space and the transfer of the activities that take place in the physical space to the virtual space do not affect the cognitive experience much. Gaining information and cultural development can be achieved at least as much as physical spaces in virtual museums or in different virtual public spaces.

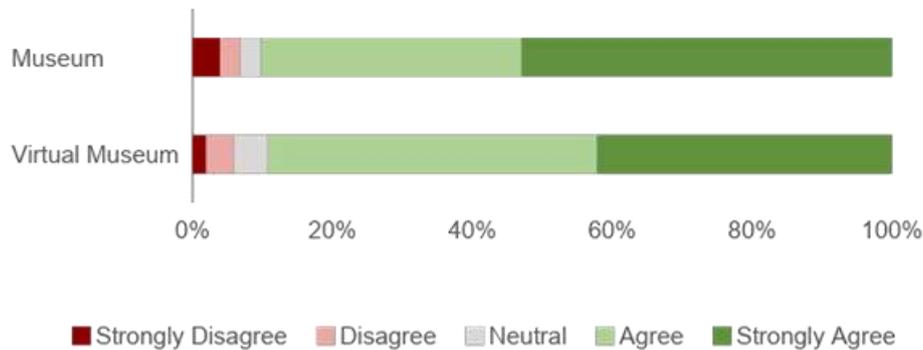


Figure 11: Survey Statement (Museum experience contributes to my cultural development)

5.4. Introspective Experience

Introspective experiences include topics such as belonging, relatedness, reflection, relating with different experiences and memories. In order to measure introspective experiences in the survey, physical museum and virtual museum comparisons were made over categories such as experiencing the works of art without being disturbed, relating to the works of art, presenting a different and unique atmosphere, reflecting while experiencing the museum.

When analyzed in terms of introspective experience, it is observed that, the virtual museum offers a better experience in some cases, while the physical museum offers a more satisfying experience for a particular situation. The sample group stated that they preferred the virtual museum for experiencing the works of art without being disturbed (Figure 12). On the contrary, it is observed that there is a stronger connection with works of art in museums, while this rate is quite low in virtual museums (Figure 13).

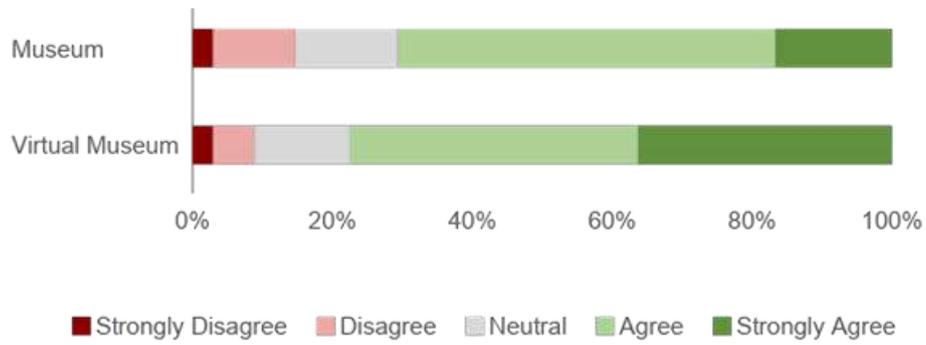


Figure 12: Survey Statement (I can experience works of art without being disturbed)

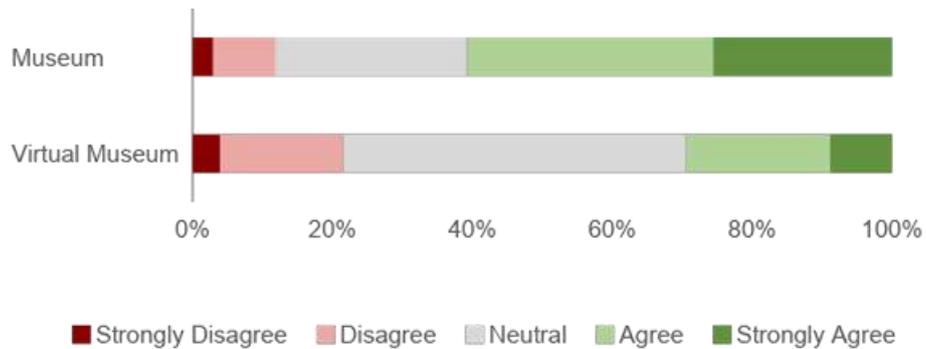


Figure 13: Survey Statement (I can make strong contact with works of art)

It is important to relate to works of art, to thinking deeply during a museum visit, and to experience a unique museum atmosphere in order to fully experience the museum. Although it is possible to visit the virtual museum without being disturbed, it is unlikely that the other elements required for the museum experience to be fully experienced are met in the virtual museum.

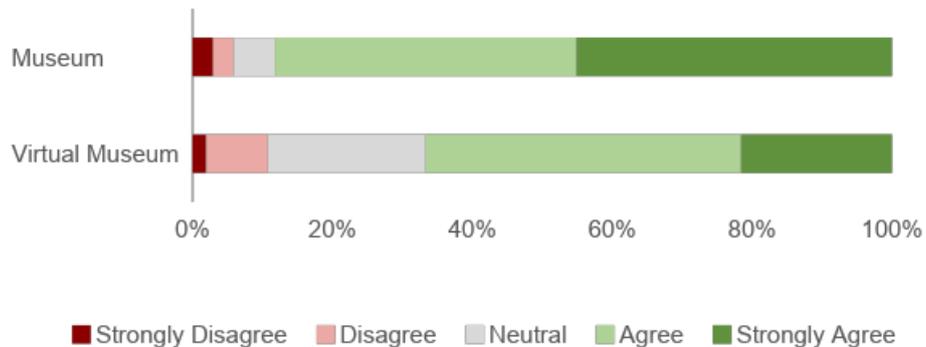


Figure 14: Survey Statement (Each museum experience offers a different and unique atmosphere)

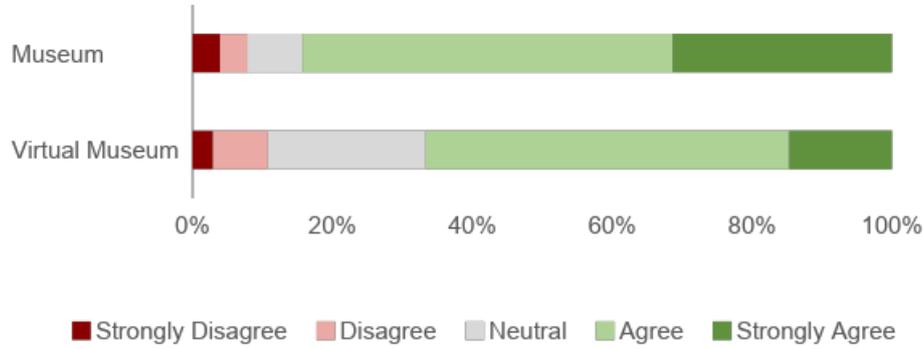


Figure 15: Survey Statement (I can use my imagination effectively and think on it deeply while experiencing the museum)

While the sample group stated that each museum experience in museums offers a different and unique atmosphere, it is observed that this rate is quite low in virtual museums (Figure 14). Similarly, it is among the results that the use imagination and think on it deeply while experiencing museum is more intense in the museum than in the virtual museum (Figure 15). When examined in terms of introspective experience, it is revealed that being in a physical museum has more positive effects than virtual museum. The introspective experience of the visitors is directly related to the space they are in and the relationship they establish with the space.

5.5. Object Experience

Object experience is related with the relationship of the visitor with the works of art, the traces left by the objects exhibited in the museum, and the effect of seeing rare and valuable pieces on the person. museum experience and object experience are very intertwined concepts, since the first emergence of museums was the exhibition of collections and special objects. In order to measure the object experience, the participants were asked whether they preferred to experience the objects physically or visually, and it was also measured whether they perceived the works of art as a whole experience in the space.

While it is possible to perceive the works of art as a whole in a certain order in the museum, it is seen that this is not possible in the virtual museum and the rates in the virtual museum are much lower than museums (Figure 16). Since the main purpose of the museum is to provide a general experience rather than presenting a single work of art, it can be said that the virtual museum cannot fully meet the museum requirement.

According to the results of the survey, it is observed that the participants clearly expressed their expectations from museum visits and clearly demonstrated their satisfaction with physical or virtual museums. Eighty percent of the sample group stated that they prefer physical experience works of art rather than virtual experience (Figure 17). Similarly, sixty percent of the sample group stated that experiencing works of art as photography is not as satisfying as the originals (Figure 18). Participants preferred the physical museum experience to the virtual museum experience and they stated that they were more satisfied with being in the physical space.

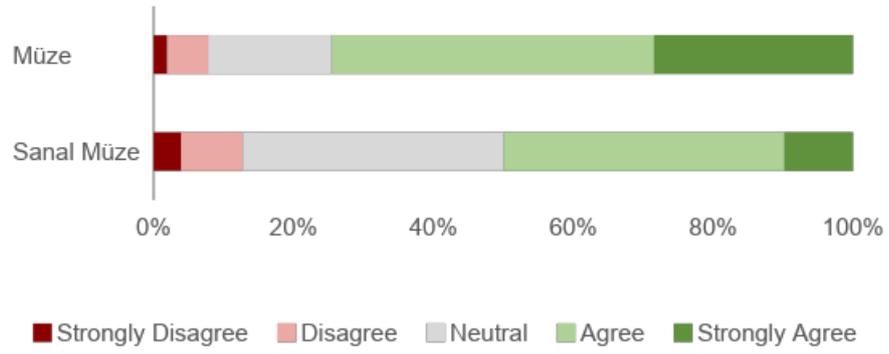


Figure 16: Survey Statement (I can perceive the works of art as a whole in a certain order in the space)

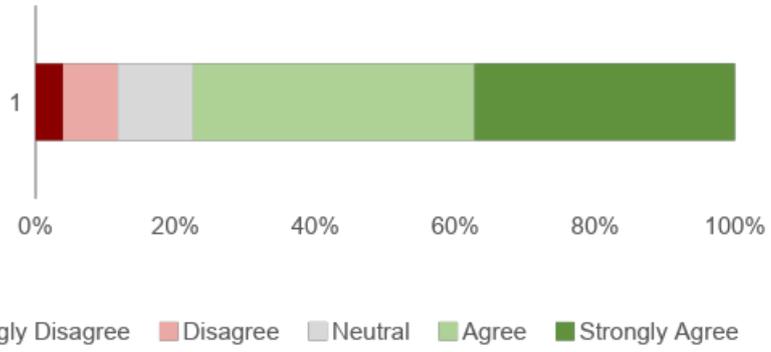


Figure 17: Survey Statement (I prefer to physical experience works of art rather than virtual experience)

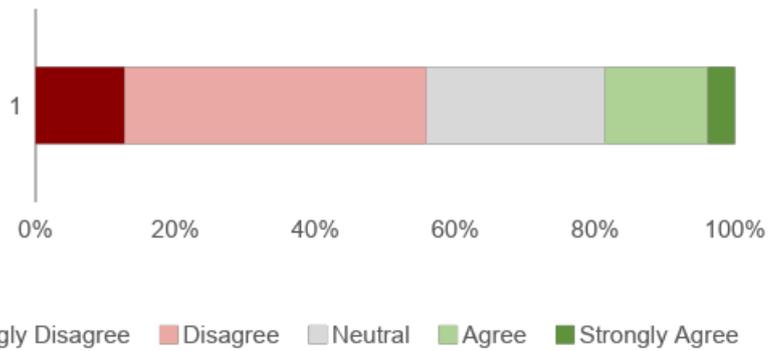


Figure 18: Survey Statement (Experiencing works of art as photography is as satisfying as the originals)

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The public space has existed throughout history as spaces where individuals come together and share ideas and accessible to everyone in the society. Its feature of being the common place of the public, where the public opinion was created, has never changed although it changed shape according to the conditions of the period. Coffeehouses took on this role in some periods, while squares, bazaars and passages were the most important public spaces in some periods. Besides, in some societies, museums and art exhibitions have been among the most visited public spaces. Nowadays, the concept of public space has shifted from physical space to virtual space with the advancement of technology and the changing requirements of the age. The frequent use of public spaces in the virtual environment, the ability of people to express their opinions online platform is one of the things brought by today. Reducing physical contact with the effect of Covid-19 pandemic has increased the intensity of use of virtual public spaces. In this article, it is very important to examine museums, which are one of the most important public spaces, and to evaluate the museum experience, in terms of giving information about the change of public space. It is evaluated how the understanding of public space has changed by evaluating the museum and virtual museum experience in terms of users.

According to the research, it is seen that the time spent in the museum and the virtual museum is different, and the purposes of visit vary. The purpose of visiting the physical museum is to socialize and gain experience while visitors visit the virtual museum mostly for gaining information. It is seen that people aim to reach certain information directly while using virtual museums and they finish the visit by reaching the information in a short time. However, it was concluded that there is no specific purpose in the physical museum visit and they prefer to do their social activities while gaining information and spend long hours in museums. It is clearly observed that, the museum offers a better-quality museum experience than the virtual museum, and the purpose of visit is more diverse.

Spatial changes in museums negatively affect people's social experiences and social relations. Virtual museums do not offer users the opportunity to social experience, while physical museums give visitors the opportunity to social experience and spend productive time with their friends or family during the museum tour. Because, a virtual museum visit is an activity that is mostly done alone on the online platform. Virtual environments in most public spaces as in museums, provide a negative environment in terms of interpersonal communication, interaction and social experience.

On the other hand, cognitive experience, which includes topics such as acquiring knowledge, enriching understanding, and developing cultural and social issues, exists independently of space. There is no big difference between the museum and the virtual museum in terms of cognitive experiences. This study shows that the transformation of space does not greatly affect cognitive experiences.

The museum experience cannot be considered apart from the space. The relationship with works of art and the interpretation of the works of art gain meaning in the space. For this reason, each museum visit provides a unique atmosphere to the visitor, while providing a different experience each time. It is possible for the visitor to make a focused museum tour, to think deeply about the works of art, and to be more satisfied with the museum visit than the virtual museum since the works of art are presented in the physical museum as a whole with that environment. It is aimed to make the space a part of the experience while the museum designs are being made. Similarly, the curators make the best use of the space when designing the exhibits. It is not possible to experience work of art and museum experience independent of the

place. Therefore, virtual museums are not as effective as museums in terms of introspective experience.

The object experience is an integral part of the museum experience, since purpose of the first emergence of museums was to display rare items. When examined in terms of object experience, the difference between a museum and a virtual museum is striking. Experiencing a work of art through photography or physically makes a big difference in the perception of the object. The transformation of space, that is, the physical or virtual museum experience, directly affects the object experience. It is seen that people are more satisfied with being physically in the museum and making contact with work of art. Spending more time in the museum than in the virtual museum is an indicator of this.

As a result, although the accessibility of the virtual museum is high, it does not fully meet the museum experience. It is observed that the dimensions of museum experience defined by Doering are more effective in the physical space. The ambiguity of the space and time in the virtual museum also brings isolation from the work of art (Bozkuş, 2014, p.331). According to Benjamin (2008), works of art are intertwined with space and time. The reproduction of the work of art leads to the loss of its aura and uniqueness. Since the virtual museum experience is realized as disconnected from the physical space, this situation can be considered as the reproduction of the work of art. While virtual museums provide ease of access and richness, on the other hand, not being in physical space causes detachment from the context and the museum experience becomes shallow.

In fact, virtual museums are a replica of existing museums, a simulation of a museum. Baudrillard and Glaser's (1994, p.7) assertion that the copying of space brings artificiality is clearly seen in virtual museums. There is a new representation of representation in virtual museums. Copies of works of art are experienced rather than originals with this new form of representation. This situation causes the virtual museum experience to become artificial. Because the way the works of art are represented directly affects the experience. This study reveals that the virtual museum experience is not satisfactory compared to the physical experience and the virtual museum experience is not preferred.

Museums are public spaces where individuals can socialize and gain information. The museum experience has been transformed into a virtual public space through virtual museums. Works of art can meet with more visitors through this interactive environment. This situation is similar to other public spaces as well as museums. Through virtual environments, the experience of public space is differentiated and negatively affected. The change of spaces leads to the transformation of the notion of publicness although it reaches more people,. This transformation follows a similar process not only in museums, but also in cultural and social activities, political debates and artistic activities. A public space, that is isolated from the physical space, brings a new framework. Communication and sharing are reduced and public opinion cannot be formed because of this framework. This situation causes the notion of publicity to be damaged and to become a shallower concept.

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