

ROTTERDAM SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT  
ERASMUS UNIVERSITY

## WHY PEOPLE LOVE ART MUSEUMS

A REPUTATION STUDY ABOUT THE  
18 MOST FAMOUS ART MUSEUMS AMONG  
VISITORS IN 10 COUNTRIES

PROF. CEES B.M. VAN RIEL AND PATRICIA HEIJNDIJK







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## OBJECTS OF REPUTATION STUDY: 18 MOST FAMOUS ART MUSEUMS IN THE WORLD



Musée du Louvre



British Museum



Metropolitan Museum of Art



National Gallery



Vatican Museums



Tate Modern



National Gallery of Art



Musée National d'Art Moderne



State Hermitage Museum



Musée d'Orsay



Reina Sofia



Museum of Modern Art



Museo del Prado



Rijksmuseum



Van Gogh Museum



National Art Center



Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil



Shanghai Museum

## INTRODUCTION

Studying reputations of companies is a widespread phenomenon, but knowledge about the reputation of the cultural sector is very limited. [Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University \(RSM\)](#) joined forces with the [Reputation Institute](#) three years ago to measure the reputations of the largest art museums in the Netherlands annually. These studies revealed that the Dutch (visitors and non-visitors) love the country's art museums. In 2017, a new study – implemented by the same entities – was done in 10 countries and reveals a similar result. Museums are evaluated on average at 79 on a 0 to 100 scale, while companies worldwide only score 64.2.

The core questions we focused on in this study are:

- ▶ What is the magic behind this high degree of admiration?
- ▶ What can companies learn from museums when it comes to reputation management?

## WHICH ART MUSEUMS WERE STUDIED?

We selected 18 art museums partly based on their annual visitor numbers\*. The most visited art museums appear to be concentrated in the Western world, although Asia and Latin America are rapidly developing attractive museums too. That is why we have also added the top museums from Asia and Latin America. In addition, again to avoid an over focus on Europe and the USA, we decided to study a maximum of three art museums per country. All museums have been measured in their home country and in nine other countries in which we have selected one or more art museums. The following museums and countries were selected:

**TABLE 1.** *Overview of measured art museums in ten countries*

| List of measured art museums |   |   |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| 1                            | Musée du Louvre, Paris                          |  Brazil       |
| 2                            | British Museum, London                          |  China       |
| 3                            | Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York            |  France      |
| 4                            | National Gallery, London                        |  Italy       |
| 5                            | Vatican Museums, Vatican City                   |  Japan       |
| 6                            | Tate Modern, London                             |  Netherlands |
| 7                            | National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.        |  Russia      |
| 8                            | Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris             |  Spain       |
| 9                            | State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg          |  UK          |
| 10                           | Musée d'Orsay, Paris                            |  USA         |
| 11                           | Reina Sofia, Madrid                             |   |
| 12                           | Museum of Modern Art, New York                  |   |
| 13                           | Museo del Prado, Madrid                         |   |
| 14                           | Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam                          |   |
| 15                           | Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam                      |   |
| 16                           | National Art Center, Tokyo                      |   |
| 17                           | Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro |   |
| 18                           | Shanghai Museum, Shanghai                       |   |

\* Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_most\\_visited\\_art\\_museums](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_most_visited_art_museums)

## WHO DID WE ASK?

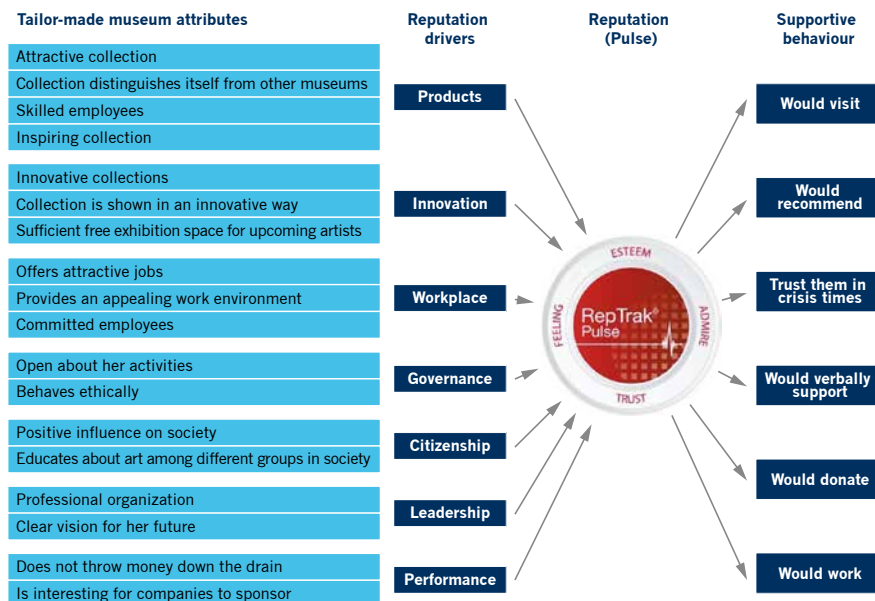
The survey was done online by approaching a sample of museum visitors and non-visitors in each of the 10 countries. The core of the questionnaire was aimed at the regular museum visitors. Nearly 12,000 people were interviewed: 5,065 non-museum visitors and 6,419 museum visitors participated. Each of the 18 art museums had to be rated by at least 150 respondents from its home country and by 50 respondents from any other country who are familiar with the museum.

Non-visitors differ from visitors as they are often 45 to 64 years old, with a low income and/or a medium degree of education. In contrast to what many may believe, museum visitors are not especially frequent among a certain age group, nor income category. However, the stereotype that museum visitors are predominantly higher educated is confirmed in this study and appears to be a global phenomenon.

## HOW DID WE MEASURE REPUTATION?

Reputation is measured in this study with an adjusted version of the RepTrak® model of the Reputation Institute. This validated instrument measures the health of an organisation's overall reputation. The model was adjusted to more closely match the museum sector. The beating heart of the model is the RepTrak® Pulse. The RepTrak® Pulse score is based on four statements regarding the esteem, good feeling, trust, and admiration that consumers feel towards an organisation. The RepTrak® Pulse (as a proxy for reputation) is a direct measurement based on the four just described and interconnected elements. The overall reputation (Pulse) is driven by seven elements

**FIG 1.** Adjusted RepTrak® Model for Art Museums





that people take into consideration when they assess an organisation regarding its past and expected future performance. These seven drivers of reputation are: products and services, innovative capacity, workplace, governance, citizenship, leadership and financial performance. Each driver is measured by several attributes that provide the assessments of respondents on a detailed level. Of course, we changed the typical business-focused attributes that measure each dimension in terminology that is relevant for the museum sector. For 'products and services' for example, we used the following attributes: attractive collection, collection distinguishes itself from other museums, skilled employees, and inspiring collection. A similar translation has been applied for all other drivers of reputation. Finally, the RepTrak® model measures behavioural intentions. The standard statements here were (again) translated into the context of the museum world. These behavioural intentions are shown on the right side of Pulse.

## PEOPLE LOVE ART MUSEUMS

Most people have a high degree of appreciation for museums. Even the majority of the people that did **not** visit a museum in the past three years have a favourable impression about museums. They classify them as reliable, honest and fun. Only 21 per cent of the non-visitors express negative associations about art museums.

As can be expected, visitors are extremely positive. Visitors rate an art museum on average at 79. Compared with the worldwide average score of 64.2 for corporations, this is a stellar high score. Yet, there are some critics too: 15 per cent of the respondents has given a museum a reputation score below 60. They are mostly from China and Brazil rather than from Western countries, but do not differ in other demographic characteristics. The average score for all museums in Brazil (74) and China (70.4) is substantially lower than the average score in France (84), the USA (83.2) and Italy (82.4). Please note that all scores have been culturally adjusted, implying that in countries that tend to be more positive on average, the scores are decreased and the other way around.

## THE WINNER IS ...

The French **Musée du Louvre** is leading the global ranking with a Pulse score of 10 points higher than the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, which was placed 18th but still has a score of 10 points higher than the average business firm worldwide. The 18 museums all have a score of far above 70 which indicates that all museums measured in this study are seen in a very positive way. Still, differences exist. The numbers 1 to 8 – all European – all score above 80. Millions and millions of data gathered by the Reputation Institute in the past 20 years indicate that a Pulse score above 80 implies being seen as excellent. 84.3 for the Musée du Louvre in a 10-country study is an achievement that the most reputed companies in the world can only dream about.

The same can be said about the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam (#2), Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (#3) and The State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg (#4) with scores between 81.9 and 81.4 as an average score in 10 countries. The gap of 10 points between the top five and the bottom two (Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, 74.4 and Shanghai Museum, 75) is remarkable and probably partly due to the lack of familiarity of these museums as will be explained in detail later.

**TABLE 2.** *Global Reputation Ranking Most Famous Art Museums*

| Reputation scores                                  | Average of 10 countries |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1 Musée du Louvre, Paris                           | 84.3                    |
| 2 Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam                       | 81.9                    |
| 3 Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam                           | 81.7                    |
| 4 State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg           | 81.4                    |
| 5 British Museum, London                           | 80.8                    |
| 6 Musée d'Orsay, Paris                             | 80.6                    |
| 7 Vatican Museums, Vatican City                    | 80.4                    |
| 8 Museo del Prado, Madrid                          | 80.0                    |
| 9 National Gallery, London                         | 79.5                    |
| 10 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York            | 79.3                    |
| 11 National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.        | 79.1                    |
| 12 Tate Modern, London                             | 78.9                    |
| 13 Museum of Modern Art, New York                  | 78.4                    |
| 14 Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris             | 78.4                    |
| 15 Reina Sofia, Madrid                             | 78.2                    |
| 16 National Art Center, Tokyo                      | 77.5                    |
| 17 Shanghai Museum, Shanghai                       | 75.0                    |
| 18 Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro | 74.4                    |

**TABLE 3.** *Reputation Ranking Most Famous Art Museums per Continent*

| Reputation ranking museums 2017 - Americas |   |      |
|--|---|------|
| 1  | Musée du Louvre, Paris                          | 85.2 |
| 2  | Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam                      | 81.4 |
| 3  | National Art Center, Tokyo                      | 81.1 |
| 4  | Museum of Modern Art, New York                  | 81.0 |
| 5  | Tate Modern, London                             | 79.5 |
| 6  | National Gallery, London                        | 79.2 |
| 7  | Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York            | 79.1 |
| 8  | State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg          | 78.9 |
| 9  | British Museum, London                          | 78.4 |
| 10   | National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.        | 77.9 |
| 11   | Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris             | 77.8 |
| 12   | Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam                          | 77.8 |
| 13   | Vatican Museums, Vatican City                   | 77.0 |
| 14   | Museo del Prado, Madrid                         | 76.8 |
| 15   | Musée d'Orsay, Paris                            | 76.6 |
| 16   | Reina Sofia, Madrid                             | 76.1 |
| 17   | Shanghai Museum, Shanghai                       | 75.7 |
| 18   | Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro | 75.6 |



#### Reputation ranking museums 2017 - Asia

|    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 1  | Musée du Louvre, Paris                          | 79.7 |
| 2  | National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.        | 77.8 |
| 3  | Vatican Museums, Vatican City                   | 77.0 |
| 4  | Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York            | 76.3 |
| 5  | British Museum, London                          | 75.2 |
| 6  | Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris             | 75.1 |
| 7  | Museo del Prado, Madrid                         | 74.9 |
| 8  | Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam                          | 74.8 |
| 9  | Musée d'Orsay, Paris                            | 74.5 |
| 10 | Reina Sofia, Madrid                             | 73.7 |
| 11 | State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg          | 73.7 |
| 12 | Museum of Modern Art, New York                  | 73.6 |
| 13 | Tate Modern, London                             | 71.9 |
| 14 | National Art Center, Tokyo                      | 71.9 |
| 15 | Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam                      | 70.9 |
| 16 | Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro | 70.3 |
| 17 | Shanghai Museum, Shanghai                       | 69.2 |
| 18 | National Gallery, London                        | 69.0 |



#### Reputation ranking museums 2017 - Europe

|    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 1  | Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam                      | 85.8 |
| 2  | Musée du Louvre, Paris                          | 85.6 |
| 3  | Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam                          | 85.2 |
| 4  | State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg          | 84.8 |
| 5  | Musée d'Orsay, Paris                            | 84.0 |
| 6  | British Museum, London                          | 83.4 |
| 7  | National Gallery, London                        | 83.1 |
| 8  | Museo del Prado, Madrid                         | 82.7 |
| 9  | Vatican Museums, Vatican City                   | 82.7 |
| 10 | Tate Modern, London                             | 81.1 |
| 11 | Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York            | 80.4 |
| 12 | Reina Sofia, Madrid                             | 80.4 |
| 13 | National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.        | 80.0 |
| 14 | Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris             | 79.7 |
| 15 | Museum of Modern Art, New York                  | 79.2 |
| 16 | National Art Center, Tokyo                      | 78.2 |
| 17 | Shanghai Museum, Shanghai                       | 76.7 |
| 18 | Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro | 75.4 |

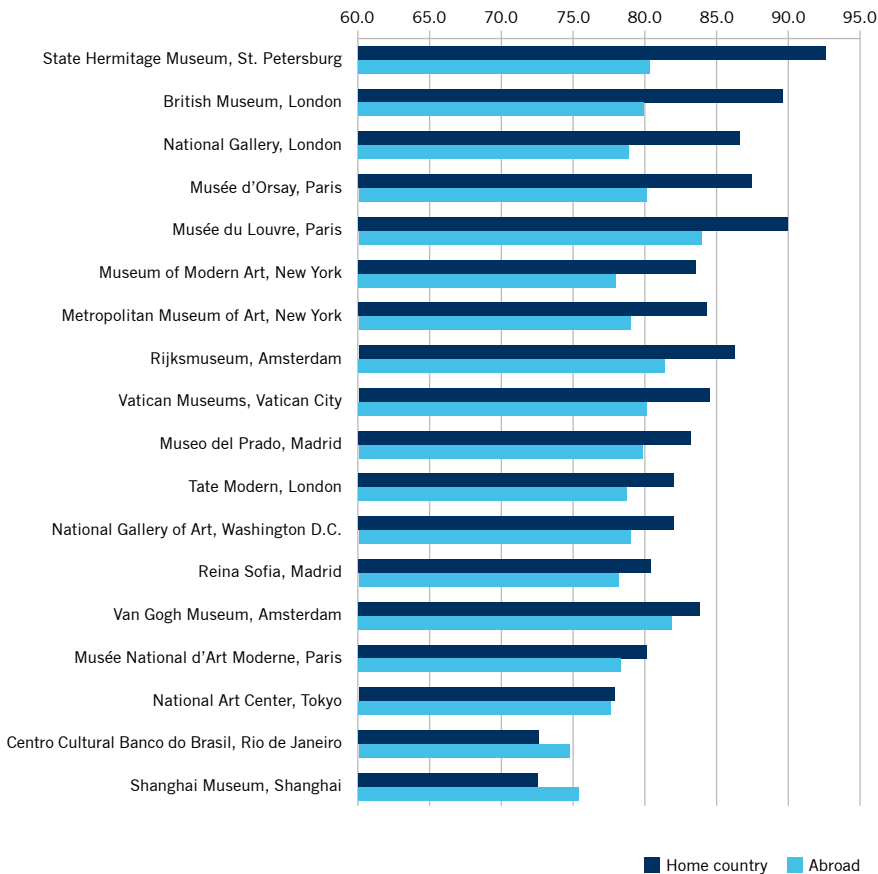


The evaluation of the Musée du Louvre is consistent all over the world. The museum is number 1 in both the Americas and Asia, while being second in Europe. Only the Van Gogh Museum (number 1 in Europe and number 2 in the Americas) is showing a more or less similar pattern, with the exception of a low ranking in Asia. However, all other museums show a broad variety in their overall reputation in the three continents. Remarkable are the substantially lower scores for museums by Asian respondents compared to the sky-high average score for art museums in Europe and North America.

## GAP BETWEEN APPRECIATION AT HOME AND ABROAD

The reputation of museums differs not only from continent to continent. As can be expected, museums have a higher reputation among people from their own country than from other countries, due to feelings of patriotism. This is certainly true for the Russian Hermitage and the British Museum which are evaluated much higher in their own country than in the nine countries abroad. However, this is not true for all museums in our study. For example, the Shanghai Museum and the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil receive higher evaluations abroad than within their own country.

**TABLE 4.** *Gap between home country and global reputation of art museums*



## THE WINNER TAKES IT ALL ...

The top three museums are not only leading at Pulse level, but also in the drivers of reputation. The **Musée du Louvre** is showing its reputation leadership by being present in being the number 1 in three of the seven drivers of reputation. But also the **Van Gogh Museum** and **Rijksmuseum** (#2 and #3 respectively in the overall ranking) are both present in the top 3 in four drivers. Remarkable is the strong position of the

**Tate Modern** in London, which is only #12 in the Pulse ranking but appears five times in the top 3 of the seven drivers of reputation.

**TABLE 4. Top 3 Art Museums per Driver of Reputation**

| Products & Services            | Citizenship               |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Musée du Louvre              | 1 Musée du Louvre         |
| 2 State Hermitage Museum       | 2 Van Gogh Museum         |
| 3 Van Gogh Museum              | 3 Rijksmuseum             |
| Innovation                     | Leadership                |
| 1 Tate Modern                  | 1 Musée du Louvre         |
| 2 Museum of Modern Art         | 2 Tate Modern             |
| 3 Musée National d'Art Moderne | 3 Rijksmuseum             |
| Workplace                      | Performance               |
| 1 Rijksmuseum                  | 1 Rijksmuseum             |
| 2 Tate Modern                  | 2 Tate Modern             |
| 3 Van Gogh Museum              | 3 National Gallery of Art |
| Governance                     |                           |
| 1 Van Gogh Museum              |                           |
| 2 National Art Center          |                           |
| 3 Tate Modern                  |                           |

## MUSEUMS ARE LOVED, BUT DO THEY GET SUPPORT?

People can support museums in two ways: by helping to stimulate visits and by supporting them in general, for example through donations. Our results show that relatively large museums are often supported in terms of more visits, but when it comes to supporting a museum in general, people are more willing to help the relatively smaller museums.

## HISTORY *SOMETIMES* MATTERS ...

European museums on average score more positively than USA and especially Asian and Latin-American museums. This is partly because of the heritage that these museums can boost on. The largest and most-visited museum in the world, the Musée du Louvre in France, started in the 17th century, the Russian Hermitage in the 18th century and the Dutch Rijksmuseum in the early 19th century. The Shanghai Museum opened its doors only in 1952 and Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil even only in 1986. The top American art museum were created in between the starting phase of art museums in Europe and in Asia. The New York Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met) started in 1872, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 1929, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC only in 1941.

Having had centuries to build a track record in collecting, protecting and showing an impressive collection naturally does impact your reputation, even outside of the country you're based in. Still, some new entrants appear to be evaluated sky high in 10 countries. This is especially true for the Van Gogh Museum (opened in 1973), which is number 2 worldwide. The same can be said about the Musée d'Orsay (1986) with 80.6 and also Tate Modern (2000) that appear to be evaluated very high on the drivers of reputation.

In other words, a long-lasting track record matters, but a new kid on the block can move up swiftly if you have an appealing collection that is well-managed, and if you are seen as contributing to society in a relevant way.

## COUNTRY REPORTS

### THE FRENCH MUSEUMS

The three French museums that have been measured in this 10-country study show very positive results. The absolute leader on a worldwide scale is the Musée du Louvre, but also the Musée d'Orsay, that only started in 1986, has a high ranking globally and in Europe. The Musée national d'art modern in Paris is evaluated substantially lower, even in France. The Musée du Louvre is especially highly regarded for the quality of its collection, its contribution to society and its leadership in the museum world. Logically, the majority of the respondents sees the Musée du Louvre as an ideal object to be sponsored by the business world. The two other French museums score a little lower on all these dimensions but are evaluated higher on innovation.

**TABLE 5.** *Ranking Art museums in France*

| Museum           | Global     | France | Americas   | Asia      | Europe     |
|------------------|------------|--------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Musée du Louvre  | 84.3 (#1)  | 89.8   | 85.2 (#1)  | 79.1 (#1) | 85.6 (#2)  |
| Musée d'Orsay    | 80.6 (#6)  | 87.3   | 76.6 (#15) | 74.5 (#9) | 84.0 (#5)  |
| Musée Art Modern | 78.4 (#14) | 80.1   | 77.8 (#11) | 75.1 (#6) | 79.7 (#14) |

### USA MUSEUMS

As said before, the three leading art museums in the USA have started relatively late compared to their European 'competitors'. In their home country all three get a very high reputation score, but in the rest of the world – except in Asia – the appreciation for the American museums is not in the bandwidth of the top-ranked art museums in the rest of the world. Criticasters are especially sceptical about how the art museums in the USA spend their money wisely and the degree in which they are assumed to pay attention to various groups in society in art education. These negative perceptions are especially uttered by respondents in Brazil, China and Russia. The French, Italian, Japanese and of course American citizens are far more positive on all drivers of reputation, specifically about the attractiveness of the collection.

**TABLE 6.** *Ranking art museums in the USA*

| Museum           | Global     | USA  | Americas   | Asia       | Europe     |
|------------------|------------|------|------------|------------|------------|
| Metropolitan     | 79.3 (#10) | 84.2 | 79.1 (#7)  | 76.3 (#4)  | 80.4 (#11) |
| National Gallery | 79.1 (#11) | 81.8 | 77.9 (#10) | 77.8 (#2)  | 80.0 (#13) |
| MoMa             | 78.4 (#13) | 83.4 | 81.0 (#4)  | 73.6 (#12) | 79.2 (#15) |

## UK MUSEUMS

Due to the rule we imposed on ourselves, we only selected three out of the many potential art museums we could have included in this global study. The prestigious British Museum, (founded in 1753) is very comparable to the other national museums such as the Hermitage (Russia), Rijksmuseum (the Netherlands), Museo del Prado (Spain) and of course the Musée du Louvre (France). The British Museum is not only popular among the Brits (90 points for the overall reputation, nearly 8 points above Tate Modern) but also worldwide. In the overall global ranking it has position 5 with a score of 80.8 points. In Europe it is number 6, in Asia number 5 and in the Americas 9. The key driver of the high reputation for the British Museum is managing the museum in a professional way and having an attractive collection. Improvements can be made on one specific point: having a clear vision for the future. The National Gallery is at overall level clearly number two of the three British art museums. Their reputation (at global level only number 9 but with a sky high average of 79.5 points) is less appreciated in Asia compared to the Americas and especially Europe. Their key reputation driver is the distinguishing and inspiring nature of the collection. Tate Modern seems to be evaluated less positively of all three selected UK art museums. This is true at overall level, but when we look at the ranking of Tate Modern in the context of the seven drivers of reputation, a totally different perspective comes forward. Tate Modern appears five times in the top three of the seven drivers of reputation. Unfortunately, not in products (quality of the collection) but in less impactful drivers of reputation (innovation, workplace, performance, leadership and governance). Nevertheless, insights gained in other reputation studies indicate that such a high position in the drivers of reputation is an important predictor of a potential increase in the overall reputation.

**TABLE 7.** *Ranking art museums in the UK*

| Museum           | Global     | UK   | Americas  | Asia       | Europe     |
|------------------|------------|------|-----------|------------|------------|
| British Museum   | 80.8 (#5)  | 89.5 | 78.4 (#9) | 75.2 (#5)  | 83.4 (#6)  |
| National Gallery | 79.5 (#9)  | 86.5 | 79.2 (#6) | 69.0 (#18) | 83.1 (#7)  |
| Tate Modern      | 78.9 (#12) | 81.8 | 79.5 (#5) | 71.9 (#13) | 81.1 (#10) |

## DUTCH MUSEUMS

The two Dutch art museums included in this study, the national heritage museum Rijksmuseum and the specialised Van Gogh Museum, both attract more than two million visitors each year. The Rijksmuseum is by far the most popular museum in the Netherlands (three times number one in our Dutch reputation study). However, in a global context the Van Gogh Museum appears to get a higher evaluation. This is especially the case in Europe, where the Van Gogh Museum even outperforms the Musée du Louvre. In the Americas, Van Gogh Museum is number 2, while Rijksmuseum is 12. Both Dutch museums get a low ranking in Asia (Van Gogh Museum even # 15). The highest reputation scores are given by the French and visitors from the UK and the USA, while Japanese and Chinese people are less positive about the Van Gogh Museum. Both museums score high on the three reputation drivers that evaluate the attractiveness of the collection, but the Van Gogh Museum gets even higher ratings than the Rijksmuseum. They also score high on the other key drivers of reputation: societal relevance and managing the museum professionally. In addition, both museums score high on workplace, innovation and performance. Last but not least, they benefit from the spill over effect of having the highest country image among the 10 selected countries. All mentioned factors in combination, explain the towering position of both Dutch museums in the global ranking.

**TABLE 8. Ranking art museums The Netherlands**

| Museum      | Global    | Netherlands | Americas   | Asia       | Europe    |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Rijksmuseum | 81.7 (#3) | 86.1        | 77.8 (#12) | 74.8 (#8)  | 85.2 (#3) |
| Van Gogh    | 81.9 (#2) | 83.6        | 81.4 (#2)  | 70.9 (#15) | 85.8 (#1) |

## SPANISH MUSEUMS

The Museo del Prado in Madrid is in many ways comparable with other European national museums such as the British Museum, the Musée du Louvre in Paris and the Rijksmuseum in the Netherlands. ‘Prado’ is one of the oldest national museums with a starting date of 1819. National art museum Reina Sofia, also in Madrid, is much younger as it started in 1986. That may already explain the higher score of Prado in Spain and in Europe. The gap in the Americas and in Asia is smaller and the evaluations in those parts of the world are lower, resulting in a medium ranking of Prado on a global scale and a relative low position in the global reputation ranking for Reina Sofia. Reina Sofia especially scores low on the degree to which they pay attention to different stakeholder groups in their education task, plus low on citizenship. Prado scores especially high on the quality of their collection.

**TABLE 9. Ranking art museums in Spain**

| Museum      | Global     | Spain | Americas   | Asia       | Europe     |
|-------------|------------|-------|------------|------------|------------|
| Prado       | 80.0 (#8)  | 83.1  | 76.8 (#14) | 74.9 (#7)  | 82.7 (#8)  |
| Reina Sofia | 78.2 (#15) | 80.3  | 76.1 (#16) | 73.7 (#10) | 80.4 (#11) |

## THE NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

We have added three relatively new art museums that are already seen by international museum experts as outstanding museums. The majority of museum visitors around the world do not see that yet as we can see in the numbers presented in the table below. Partly, this can be explained by the lower number of visitors at these museums, and the very low degree of familiarity (between 19-23 per cent). Their scores on the quality of the collection, citizenship and the way they are perceived to contribute to society by educating several stakeholder groups with the art they expose, are relatively low. They are all above 70 but compared to the other art museums that is still quite a gap. Most striking in our view is the low degree of admiration (numbers have been culturally adjusted as explained previously) in the own country, especially for the Shanghai Museum and the Rio de Janeiro-based Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil.

**TABLE 10. Global position of most famous art museum in Japan, China and Brazil**

| Museum                          | Global     | Country-of-Origin | Americas   | Asia       | Europe     |
|---------------------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| National Art Centre Tokyo       | 77.5 (#16) | 77.7              | 81.1 (#3)  | 71.9 (#9)  | 78.2 (#16) |
| Shanghai Museum                 | 75 (#17)   | 72.4              | 75.7 (#17) | 69.2 (#17) | 76.6 (#17) |
| Centro Cultural Banco de Brasil | 74.4 (#18) | 72.5              | 75.7 (#18) | 70.3 (#16) | 75.4 (#18) |



## EXPLAINING THE LOVE....

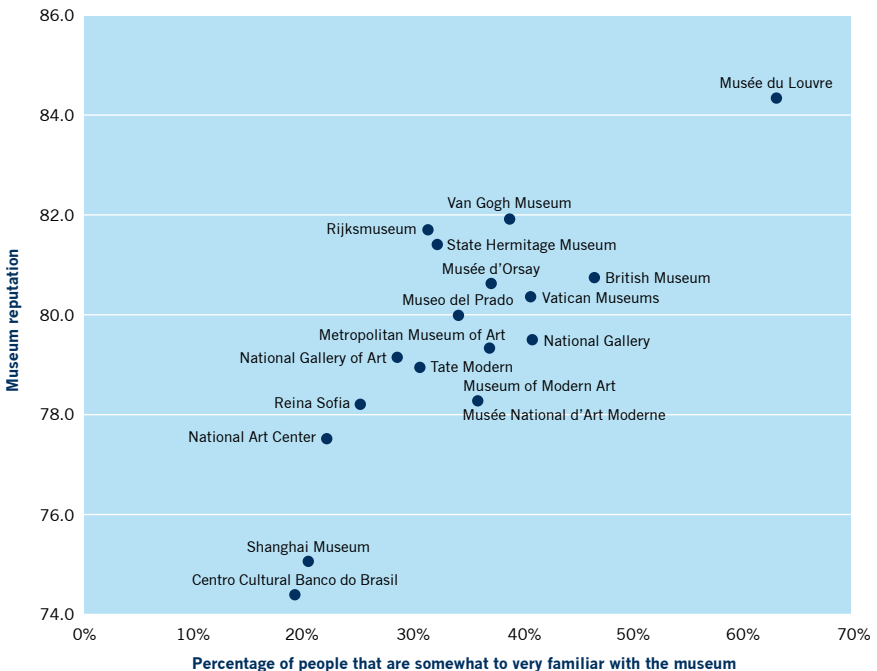
“Museums elevate the visitor,” is a statement often made by directors of museums in interviews. The role of an art museum is to collect, maintain and expose art aimed at educating the public. No doubt, entertainment is, in the perception of the visitor, an important value people attach to museums too. Finally, museums are more and more seen as key magnets in catalysing the economic development of cities.

In this study we have found interesting confirmations, but also findings that contradict the above summarised functions and roles of museums. Based on our data we assume that the following five factors are key in explaining the stellar reputation of art museums.

### #1 PEOPLE HAVE TO KNOW YOU

Organisations can only become highly reputed when they are known among a large segment of the stakeholders they depend upon. In other words, awareness is the first explanation of the differences in reputation between the 18 museums. And indeed, the number one in the reputation ranking, the **Musée du Louvre**, is by far the most familiar museum in the study – 63 per cent of the people indicates being somewhat familiar or very familiar with this museum. The number 18 in our ranking – the **Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil** – is least familiar (19 per cent is somewhat or very familiar with this museum). A higher degree of familiarity has a positive effect on reputation, as can be seen with almost all other art museums. Most likely, this is due to the historical heritage of the European and USA giants, compared to relatively new kids on the block in especially Asia and Brazil.

FIG 2. Relation between Familiarity and Reputation of Art Museums



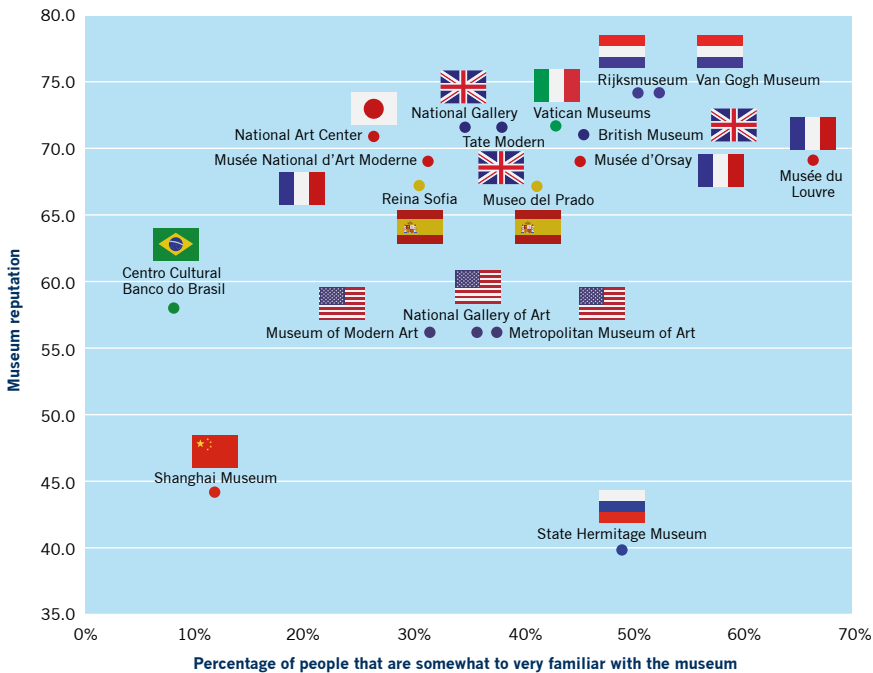
## #2 HIGHLY REPUTED CITY/COUNTRY: HIGHLY REPUTED MUSEUMS

There appears to be an interesting interaction between the appreciation for a museum and the reputation of the country and especially the **city** it is located in. The higher the country's and city's reputation, the higher the appreciation for a museum there.

Country and city reputation studies by the Reputation Institute show that the same countries are almost always in the top 10. Australia, Canada and Switzerland are annually shifting positions in the top 3. The rest of the top 10 consists of small countries, such as Scandinavian countries, Belgium and the Netherlands. Larger and politically more influential countries such as the USA, Russia and China are substantially lower in these ranking. In other words, the high ranking of the two prominent Dutch museums (Van Gogh Museum and Rijksmuseum) can partly be explained by the high appreciation of the Netherlands and the city of Amsterdam.

Having a less positive country reputation – which is unfortunately true for Russia's reputation (39.8) – still can evoke highly positive associations, for example Russia's national pride the Hermitage, with a global average of 81.4. Most probably, this has a positive impact on the reputation of the city where the museum is located, Saint Petersburg (67.8) that scores 28 points higher than Russia as a whole. If a museum does not yet have the stellar type of reputation as the Hermitage, the magic doesn't appear to work the same in creating a positive image. Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil scores a positive 74.4 but unfortunately this does not impact sufficiently positive the reputation of Rio de Janeiro which has a score of 54.6.

**FIG 3.** Relation between Country Reputation and Art Museum Reputation (source Reputation Institute, 2017)



### #3 APPEALING COLLECTIONS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Museums are seen as experts who are sincere and sophisticated and exhibit appealing collections. But they are also rated highly for citizenship, the positive influence they have on society, and professionalism. These findings fit with the three traditional purposes of museums: making art accessible, education, and heritage preservation. We have found that five drivers impact reputation of a museum most. The largest impact on the museum reputation comes from:

1. the attractiveness of the collection
2. how inspiring the collection is
3. how different the collection is from the collection of other museums
4. the positive impact the museum has on society
5. the professional way the museum is managed using public funding wisely

The Musée du Louvre appears to be the highest-ranked museum in all five key determining reputation drivers, which no doubt explains its number one position in the overall ranking of the 18 most-visited art museums.

**TABLE 11.** *Most Impactful Drivers of Art Museum Drivers*

| Key attributes                                     | Impact | Highest ranked museum |
|--|--------|-----------------------|
| Attractive collection                              | 8.1%   | Musée du Louvre       |
| Inspiring collection                               | 6.9%   | Musée du Louvre       |
| Collection distinguishes itself from other museums | 6.4%   | Musée du Louvre       |
| Positive influence on society                      | 6.4%   | Musée du Louvre       |
| Professional organization                          | 6.3%   | Musée du Louvre       |

The high impact of the nature of a museum's collection is indeed an argument mentioned in many studies about why people pay a visit to a museum. However, in one of the studies in which we analysed the reputation of the Dutch museums in the last three years, we discovered that – even with experienced museum visitors – their factual knowledge about the kind of collections they claim to admire so much, is less elaborated. In an internet-based survey, we provided a list with pictures of the most well-known paintings or sculptures in each of the 10 selected Dutch art museums. With the exception of the very well-known works of Rembrandt and Van Gogh, only a very small group of respondents was able to make a correct link between the top painting of a specific museum and the name of that museum. This gives the impression that the admiration for a museum is a combination of feeling elevated by going to a high-status event in combination with the relaxed atmosphere a museum appears to have on the majority of its visitors.

#### #4 BIG IS NOT ALWAYS BEAUTIFUL

Despite the enormous amounts of visitors of the top 5 art museums, 'bigger' appears not to be a sound predictor of being seen as better. Only two of the most-visited museums are in the top 5 of our overall reputation ranking: Musée du Louvre and British Museum.

FIG 4. Most well-known Art work in the Top 10 Dutch Art Museums

#### Do people know which art works are in which museum...?

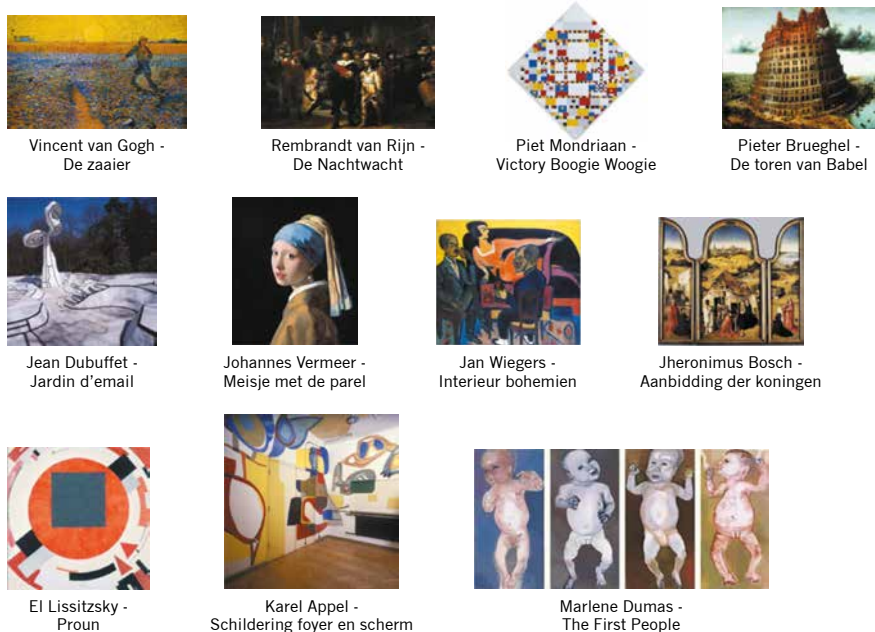
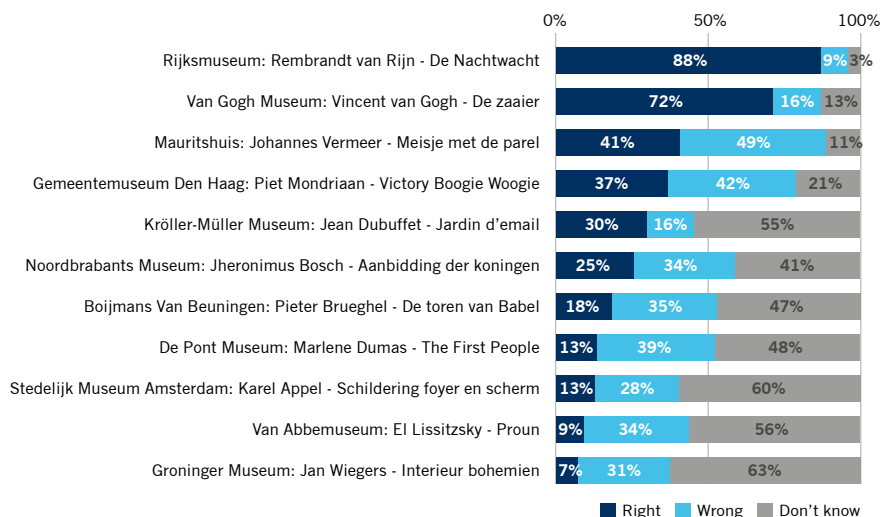


TABLE 12. Familiarity of Museum visitors with collection Dutch Art Museums



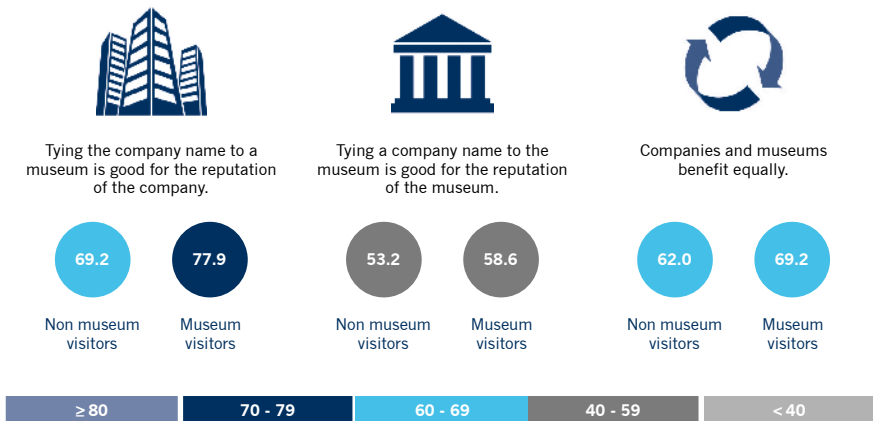
## #5 SPONSORING IS UNDERUSED

Museums cannot operate well without financial support from either the government or from the business world. Overall, people see the added value of sponsoring by companies, but they believe that the company benefits more from this investment than the museum. In Russia, non-museum visitors are most convinced that companies benefit from corporate sponsoring. But they are also least convinced that the museums will gain reputational benefits from this sponsoring. Italian museum visitors are most positive about the effects for companies. US museum visitors are most positive about the reputation benefits for museums.

The majority of the respondents believe that the best a company can do in sponsoring a museum is simply transferring money. This is quite in contrast with the way in which companies and museums are nowadays joining forces in mutually rewarding relationships, for example by exchanging knowledge. Apparently, the general public is simply not aware of this at all.

FIG 5. Evaluation of Sponsoring Art Museums by the Business World

**“We would like to know your opinion about who benefits from companies sponsoring museums.”**



## CONCLUSIONS

### WHILE MOST MUSEUMS ARE FAMOUS ...

1. The average reputation of all 18 included art museums is sky high and far above the world average of corporations.
2. Nevertheless, some score relatively low, like the new kids on the block in China, Japan and Brazil. The oldest, largest, most familiar and most-visited museum, the French Musée du Louvre, is the absolute leader of all studied art museums. Three other museums with a similar set of characteristics are also logically in the top 5: Rijksmuseum (Dutch national museum), the Hermitage (similar but much bigger in Russia) and last but not least the British Museum in the UK. Remarkable is the number 2 position in the top 5 – the Dutch Van Gogh Museum – as this art museum is the opposite of the four other museums: only 40 years ‘old’ and solely focused on one painter.

3. When we look at the evaluation of the individual museums in more detail, the Musée du Louvre is still the leader in the most vital drivers of reputation; quality of the collection, societal relevance, and managing the museum well. However, the UK's Tate Modern museum appears to stand out of the crowd in the evaluation on innovation, leadership and performance. The only recently created Tate Modern has the potential to increase its reputation without a doubt, if they stress the emotional appeal of the museum more. The relative low score for the Vatican Museums is quite remarkable given the high number of people that visit this museum on an annual base.

### WHAT IS THE MAGIC BEHIND THIS HIGH DEGREE OF ADMIRATION?

In this study we have found **five explanations** for the stellar reputation of museums in general and for the top 5 specifically:

1. *Familiarity matters* and is strongly linked with *heritage*. That is why US museums and above all European museums get a more positive evaluation.
2. *The following key drivers of reputation matter most*: attractive collections, positive influence on society, and well-managed institutions specifically spending public money wisely.
3. A positive *image* at *country/city* level interacts strongly with high-reputed museums.
4. *Big is not automatically being seen as best*. Big means, many visitors. However, too many people at the same time in a museum does not evoke the feeling of elevation. Maybe, large numbers of visitors evoke arrogance and lack of customer focus that the relative smaller museums still do provide to their visitors.
5. *Sponsoring* can be *highly helpful* in getting a better reputation. Professional sponsoring is based on a win-win situation. Unfortunately, museums do not always sufficiently express the added value of the sponsor in their communication with visitors. This results – as we have seen in this study – in an assessment by the majority of museum visitors that business benefits more from sponsoring than the museums.

### WHAT CAN COMPANIES LEARN FROM MUSEUMS IN THE AREA OF REPUTATION MANAGEMENT?

1. Museums have already applied **purpose-driven strategies** before the word was even discovered in the business world. Museums are rooted in a tradition of serving the public by protecting the national heritage and enthusiastically promoting the enjoyment of seeing these treasures. The authentic way in which museums express their role in society in combination with taking the **educational and protection of national heritage** role seriously should be a source of inspiration for the business world.
2. Joining forces with a museum is a typical win-win situation which can add tremendous value to a company as it opens up two types of opportunities. First, it enables a firm to **share knowledge** (both in sharing experiences and in giving products that create a more attractive museum) that can be showcased in internal (enhancing **organisational pride**) and **external platforms**. This way a firm can illustrate the relevance of its products and underlying knowledge in a non-commercial context. Second, it enables a firm to **test the application of insights and products** in a market that opens up avenues in **other market segments**. This is not only relevant from a **PR perspective**. It also acts as an important catalyser in learning processes, and helps to prepare employees to deal with the different market demands they experience in the museum context. This will enable them to be better prepared for new challenges they will have to handle in the near future in an eternally changing market environment their company is in.



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