

# Museum Marketing-A Pragmatic Approach in Modern Context

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Museum, today are considered as public and social institutions, hence they have to work for the benefit of the public and society. Today the greatest challenge for museums are Entertaining Industry, new entrants<sup>1</sup> in the field of informal education and leisure time activities like amusement parks and audio-visual media, that make all the needed informations and entertainment available by just pressing the remote and computer keys. Being a public institution museums have to work in an environment which is always changing. It has become mandatory for the museums to evolve new ways and strategies to ensure their survival and also to attract and enhance visitors traffic. This is possible only when the museums know their visitors and their needs and aspirations intimately. This can be achieved through a change in management process which is now called museum marketing.

Marketing simply denotes selling, advertising and promotion of a product.<sup>2</sup> But in the context of museum, museum marketing has different meaning. Museum marketing means to sell the idea and concept of museum, and convert non-visitors into visitors and also to cater to the needs, expectations and aspirations of visitors as client.<sup>3</sup> In other words marketing a museum is the process of identifying the needs and aspirations of the visitors and delivering benefits that will satisfy their expectations.

The main objective of museum marketing is to bring the museum to the notice of the people<sup>4</sup> so that they can use it more and more and take advantages of its services. It is to build up long term community relationship. Marketing also maximizes the performance of the museum; the most important objective of which is to become self supporting and generate its resources through a variety of programmes.

Now the question is how to implement marketing in museums. In order to have a good museum marketing museum must have clear cut strategies because marketing is a large planning and analytical process with a considerable input from the research and development.

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The paper will deal with some pragmatic ways of the marketing of the museums, especially their services and programmes in modern context.

The facilities, amenities and services which a museum provides to community determine not only the success of museum but also boost the museum image. The community members should feel welcome, comfortable and encouraged throughout their museum visit and should return with an idea to come again. To cater to the needs of various types of visitors museum must have a responsibility to know the profile and heterogeneous nature of the visitors. Thus visitor survey,<sup>5</sup> becomes essential and integral part of the museum marketing. It can help a museum to become more community oriented. Visitors also play a more direct part in the regular marketing process and hence form a vital platform for museums' publicity. Therefore visitors' satisfaction is the most important marketing tool for a museum. The museum needs to find out how best the relevant informations can be provided to the visitors, so that they can perceive it intellectually, emotionally, sensually and retain maximum informations. One of the primary services provided by a museum is an exhibition, whether permanent, temporary, special or mobile. The topic covered and the objects displayed must be related to the lives and the needs of the community so that they can feel at home in the museum. For example, placement and positioning of important household and ritual objects in such exhibitions would make a point of interest for all the sections of society. By doing this message will go that museum objects should not be taken as deadly objects but those could be presented in their present utility in social contexts. However such exhibitions may be organized with the help of corporate world and private sponsors which would also help indirectly to generate funds for the museum.

The most popular service found in many museums is museo-shop. The museum shop has picture post-cards, photographs, metal and fibre cast sculptures, stationary and gift items such as calender, diary, pen and key-rings embossed with museum name and address which help to make publicity resulting in increase in number of onlookers as well as money. Besides, designs of traditional sarees and jewellery may also be copied from museum collections by art lovers and textile and jewellery based business community, after making some payments. The patent of designs of museum objects can also be sold to different commercial firms. It is noteworthy that the articles on sale and their promotion should always be in good taste and be consistent with the museums academic standpoint. Besides, museum publications reflect how museum project itself in society. In fact publication is also an effective tool to capture peoples' attention from nearby as well as distant places. Variety of museum publications i.e. catalogue, brochere, newsbulletin, calendar of events and calender having rare objects of interest and antiquity will act as supplement to the visitors

interface with the museum. The publication should be mailed regularly to all those who are having membership or place their name in mailing list.

The museum visitors are also affected by the provision of basic visitor facility such as cloakroom, reception, comfortable seating arrangements, natural surrounding, toilets, café and voluntary support and so on. The museum must learn from their competitors, who provide above facilities in a better way so that they are capable not only of satisfying their clientage but also attracting visitor traffic at large. Museum visit should not be an isolated activity but its connectivity with other places of visit around and some sort of live activity should also be available through audio-visuals. Akshardham in Delhi is living example in this context. The museum should encourage active participation of the community in museum activities and its management and seek their option for its betterment keeping in view the area of interest of the community.

For example, in Varanasi in the months of *Shravana* and *Karttika* festival oriented exhibitions in museums would definitely have a special impact on the masses.

The programmes are most important aspect of edutainment as well as of marketing. Most museums, specially the bigger ones, are evolving and coming out with new concept of infotainment programmes. Art workshop on traditional and folk paintings of different regions of India such as Tanjavur, Pahari, Madhubani and local living arts in collaboration with folk art centers and the actual people doing these living arts may be organized for the benefit of art lovers, students, researchers and different professionals.

The programmes like painting competitions, summer camps and some kind of short term courses and training pertaining to the care and sustenance of art objects and heritage awareness and slogan writing, puzzles, games may gain good response. Such activities and programmes will expose museum to many sections of society. The prize winners of these competitions should be invited and honored with felicitations. Further, prizes like replica of museum objects may be awarded, so that they become their life time attachment and whenever they and their family members look at them they will remember the museum. Besides, a trip of the historical sites may also be arranged for winners to make their experience unforgettable.

Many intended visitors even though like to visit the museums but fail due to distance, conveyance facility and other resources. By arranging mobile exhibition, museo-bus and loan-kit, the museum also can reach at the visitor's doorsteps.

Museum could do a smart service by promoting formation of museum-club. The western countries are already offering packages of benefits and privileges to their members. These packages of benefits may be designed for the specific category of membership, entitled for free entry, free newsletter, discount at museum shop, invitation to special events and even

small gifts for any occasion etc. Museum should now be prepared to offer heritage gifts to the people on different occasions of religious and social gatherings like Durgapuja and Diwali festivals, marriage etc. For this the museum should find out the ways to publicize the offering of such gifts available on sale. For example as suggested by Prof. Maruti Nandan Tiwari, if the beautiful wedding image of Siva-Parvati (Kalyāṇasundara-mūrti) in Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi is made available in different range of cost many people on the occasion of wedding of their sons and daughters would love to offer this gift to the guests attending the wedding. This as rightly suggested by Prof. Tiwari, would not merely bring money to the museum but would create a sense of inclination to the museum visit to see the image in the museum itself. This will quantitatively promote the number of visitors, which will amount to long term futuristic marketing of the museum. Such association acts as a bridge between museum and common people. Unfortunately, our museums are lagging behind in applying new concepts. It is high time now to think and realize the significance of marketing and its implication in museum management keeping in view functional role of these important institutions.

### References

1. Indian public now have so many options especially outdoor leisure. They have great varieties like Arts culture and education (theatre, museum, cinema, theme park etc.) Entertainment and socializing (eating out, shopping malls etc) Travel and Tourism ( resorts, weekend visits, hotels etc).
2. Telling and selling for the financial gain were the initial stages in the evolution of marketing concept. Now the concept and purpose of marketing is expanded. The new concept of marketing rests on the needs and expectations of the customers.  
Hepner. H.W. *Modern Marketing Dynamics and Management*, New York.
3. Many terms have been used while referring to the people who go to museums : public, visitor, community, clientele and customer.
4. When we say that the museum must be useful to the people what kind of people do we mean? They might be children, ladies under the veil, lower socio-economic group. Dr. Saroj Ghosh has suggested that we seek to discover and define needs of those who do not visit museum 'People's participation in science museums.' *Museums* London, 2000.
5. Visitor's study has been emerging to become a separate thrust area of museum studies. A number of organizations and associations all over the world like ILVS (International laboratory for Visitor Studies, ICOM), VSIG (visitor studies interest group) are working upon the evaluation of the visitors in the museums and the similar institutions. Hood. M.G. 'Staying away; who do people choose not to visit museum' *Museum News*, 61 (4), 1983'.

