MUSEUM MARKETING – CORRELATION BETWEEN THE VISITOR-ORIENTED APPROACH AND THE DETERMINANTS OF VISITING A MUSEUM

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of mankind equal access to culture has always been a basic need, which exist today as an evidential opportunity for all citizens in people’s mind. However, recent researches have shown, that among the visitors to cultural institutions the proportions of consumers described by different characteristics differ from each other. Therefore, properly serving the need mentioned above cannot be realized entirely. Naturally, due to the different supply conditions throughout Europe, different reasons lie behind the phenomenon. There is a very complex system of visitor’s motivation behind the museums visitation statistics alone. The study aims to present the relationship between the desirable visitor-centric approach and the most defining characteristics of visiting a museum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualization

Museums, as special cultural institutions [Piskóti-Nagy, 2003.], are connected to the major sector of social marketing along cultural activity. The connection can be interpreted from an institute-oriented point of view (cultural institutes) as well as from a problem-oriented point of view (protecting, developing cultural values).

The concept of cultural activity has been created by the network of experts called ESSnet-Culture (founded in 2009): Cultural activity is understood as any activity, which is based on cultural values and/or artistic expression. Cultural activities refer to market-oriented or not market-oriented activities with meaning of commerce or without it, which can be performed by any organization (individuals, companies, groups, institutions, amateurs or professionals) [Bina et al, 2012: 20].

Myerscough [1988] distinguished three types of activities related to arts and culture:
- Demonstration of artistic events and attractions (museums, galleries, theatres and concerts)
- Preparation and delivery of performances by mechanical means (broadcasting and cinema)
- Production of cultural goods with the purpose of sale (books, pictures, CD-s, videos, crafts).

Nowadays activity of museums covers two of these three types, besides presenting art events and attractions – in particular due to the increasing rate of market financing needs - the tasks of the institutions also include the production of cultural goods, with the purpose of sale.

A museum’s business scope is much wider than this, of course. According to the law (§42. CXL.1997.) its task is: continuous collection, registration, preservation and restoration, scientific processing and publishing, as well as presentation of cultural goods’ specified material.

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In addition, museums also perform teaching duties, engaged in communication activities, and provide cultural services, and during its operation it is also common to carry out other economic activities [Piskóti, 2004].

The law (5. §) includes the following findings about museums:
- stay in the service of society
- it is a public service for the community,
- it is in active communication with the communities, and the settlement
- among its basic activity it is created for purposes other than economic gain
- to provide a wide range of cultural goods and equal access.

According to the Hungarian literature through new technologies and the rapid advance of the ICT an important social issue has been resolved. Culture (as well as the so-called high culture) has become accessible to a wide audience, as a result of its democratization it has become a mass-produced article [Pavluska, 2014]. This finding partially contradicts international research results, those which define the level of education as the limit of equal access to culture (to certain areas of culture). Therefore, to ensure equal access, as stated in the law cannot be achieved in every case. However, it is true that museums have a very limited influence on level of education.

MUSEUM MARKETING

Museum marketing supports the effective implementation of practical tasks in the museum, and it facilitates the operation of museums on the following three level.

1. The marketing approach means that user-orientation is in the focus of all activities at the museum. This approach is striving to achieve the satisfaction of all those involved (visitors, customers, partners).
2. The requirement of the strategical marketing approach is such an operation that runs according to a long-term integrated strategic plan, in order to reach well predetermined goals.
3. The operational toolkit of marketing uses operational tools (marketing-mix) to achieve long-term objectives by a suitable supply-mix while taking strategic concerns into consideration [Piskóti et al., 2001].

In the last decade cultural industries in European countries and regions started to develop by having occupied fallow industrial areas of production, claiming the strategically important locations in city centers [Corijn and Monmaas, 1995]. These developments reflect a change compared to the era, in which production was driven by consumption. While nowadays in consumer society consumption controls production [Greg, 2005].

Pavluska (2014) calls this consumer-orientation one of the pillars of modern marketing: The demand for cultural goods ultimately depends on the decision of the audience, regardless of the cultural institution’s form (whether market-oriented, state or non-profit institutions). The offer is to be accepted, which is created by the cultural institutions based on the knowledge of consumer choices and the factors influencing these choices. Cultural institutions using modern marketing concept are able to offer a value for the audience, that is suitable for its attraction, retention, thus creating long-term public relations.

Keeping consumer-orientation in mind, it is worth to expand the scope of potential segments, those who do not only accept our offer, but consider it valuable, due to the fact that the design has been adapted to their needs. Meeting the needs in most cases depends on the proper
selection of the mode of transmission/communication. A complex service experience is a very important goal, so that the cultural product becomes more accessible, more enjoyable, more comfortable, and it is easier to adapt it to more consumers’ lifestyle [Pavluska, 2014].

To accomplish this, it is indispensable to follow the visitors needs continuously, to discover the latest costumer trends, and to know the related research statistics. The next chapter covers the relevant research results.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF MUSEUM VISITORS?

I have examined more researches having been conducted in foreign countries or internationally in order to explore and systematize motivations of museum visitors.

I have studied visitors’ activity of German museums, based on a panel research participating 31 randomly selected families. The sample was representative for the country’s regions. They categorized visitors and non-visitors along three factors [Volker, 1995].

The three distinct factors were:
1. social, economic,
2. demographical and
3. geographical factors.

Based on a UNESCO classification four types of museums were specified:
1. scientific,
2. historical,
3. art and
4. science-fiction.

Results has shown two distinct poles apart from the common features: Visitors of science and science-fiction museums are similar in many respects, as visitors of historical and art museums also have similar characteristics. The correlation map (Figure 1.) shows the characteristic variables of non-visitors as well.

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Figure 1.
Correlation map based on the segment features of visitors and non-visitors
Based on the results educational level largely determines participation, and the biggest difference is between the visiting rates of those who have elementary level of education and those who are graduated (8%; 53%). The investigation time period covered the year prior to the survey. On the contrary, in the case of natural science museums the difference between the two segments is not that high (10%; 32%), but still meaningful.

The results do not show significant discrepancy based on gender. However, it was shown that the art museums are visited by women in a higher proportion (f: 28%; m: 24%), and museums of science-fiction are more popular among men (f: 18%; m: 22%).

Based on family relations visitors to science museums typically have large families, while art museums are visited more likely by singles and childless people.

Income differences were not so decisive for the visit, as in the case of education. However, the visitor willingness noticeably increases in parallel with the rising of the income regarding each type of museums.

The non-visitors’ characteristics:
- Lower levels of educational attainment,
- Mostly a 3-person family
- Inhabitants of settlements of less than 20 thousand people
- Often manual workers or unemployed.

Truthfully, these characteristics cannot be justified for all types of museums. Non-attendance concerning one type may still result a visit to another.

A similar survey has been conducted in the US in the 90’s in order to discover the visitors’ characteristics. Based on the results, level of education in the US is also more decisive regarding visiting museums than the amount of the income. For both countries, women prefer to visit the art museums, and regional differences are less decisive. Examination of age shows different characteristics. In Germany the elderly become visitors more likely, compared to the USA, where people aged 30-40 is considered a target group [Piskóti et al, 2006].

Another research has been conducted in The Netherlands in the same decade (Rotterdam, 1996), and as a result three main motivating factor group has been identified by factor analysis on the basis of the visitors’ replies. These are the followings: Learning; to make life more fulfilling; and relaxing.

**TOP FEATURES OF MUSEUM VISITORS**

It is important to be aware of the results of latest years’ researches regarding museum visits. It is necessary to take these results into account to be able to plan the suitable supply to the target audience. The database of EU-SILC (European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) and the cultural and social participation module (2006) of EUROSTAT is appropriate for this purpose. The database contains comparable data about the EU Member States (EU27 + Iceland and Norway) based on 350 thousand respondents (individuals aged 16 years or older) reply. Bulgaria, Romania and Malta are not included in the database.

The sample was representative for the countries’ households and also for individuals. The research based on this database also examined the defining characteristics of visitor’s willingness and frequencies for a visit, as the previous surveys described above. The study focused on the influencing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of visitors’ decision and number of visitors regarding museums, galleries, historical and archeological sites.
The advantage of the database is the possibility of international comparison, showing what kind of effect educational level, income, occupation and age have on cultural participation. During the analyzed time period (the previous 12 months prior to 2006) the frequency of visits was studied along five variables:
- There were no visits: 0
- 1-3 visits: 1
- 4-6 visits: 2
- 7-12 visits: 3
- 13+ visits: 4

A small proportion of the respondents replied that they visited a museum/archeological site more than seven times in the examined year (7–12 visits: 4 %; and 13+ visits: 3 %). Most of them paid 1-3 visits (27%), and 9% of them appears with 4-6 visits.

The rates of attendance are noticeably higher among women, 16-44 year olds, households with higher income, graduates, part-time workers, school-aged students, university students, and people living in urban agglomeration. On the contrary the unemployed, individuals 65 years of age or older and retired or disabled are less likely to become visitors or they visit a museum / historical site fewer times.

In most EU member states, the number of museum visits mostly depend on the level of education, age and two labor market status categories (disabled, school-aged students / college students). Figure 2. shows the proportions of visits along these demographic variables.

![Figure 2. Proportions of attendance according to labor market status (EU 24)](image)

Proportions of attendance in historical sites, museums, galleries or archeological sites
Source: Own edition based on the 2nd chart of Martin F.-Tally K. 2016.
CONCLUSION

Summary

Comparing these results to the general characteristics of the '90s, taking the variables of age into account we can find similar values in the US. As noted above, the age group of 30-40 covers the highest proportion of visitors in the USA. This age group is included in the aggregation of the above mentioned age group, that has been considered as the most frequent visitor of museums in the EU (Age: 16-44). The findings confirm the previous results about the determining factors (gender, level of education, income) regarding visits to museums. The close relationship between “no visits” and unemployment can also be found in many previous studies.

![Attendance rates regarding working time](image)

**Figure 3.**
Proportions of attendance in historical sites, museums, galleries or archeological sites

Source: Own edition based on the 2nd chart of Martin F.-Tally K. 2016.

It is worth emphasizing that the different lengths of working hours caused different numbers of visit only in the case of museums of science-fiction in Germany (longer working hours mean greater likelihood for a visit: more than 35 hours a week: 24%; vs. less than 35 hours a week: 17%). On the contrary, the studies based on the European data stated that the part-time workers have higher attendance rates in all type of museums (Figure 3-4.).
In this respect, therefore, I call attention to conflicting relationships. I wonder which one is the correct statement today, in which countries and to what extent affects working time the visitors’ propensity?

This is a very topical issue, among others because of the debate on the introduction of the 4-day working week. It has also got a great importance with respect to the advantage of part-time working among families with small children. State regulations on working hours may also affect the proportions of attendance, but the specification requires the continuation of this research.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Cultural participation across Europe is strongly influenced by the level of education, income and labor market status based on the latest scientific literature. This also means, that the countries’ aspirations in order to provide equal public access to culture, cannot be realized entirely. Based on the results, cultural participation is mostly determined by the acquired status compared to the innate characteristics, such as age or gender.

Answering the questions raised only possible with a more thorough analysis of the domestic results and trends. The goals include analysis of the impact of this framework, the implementation of institutional practice of social marketing objectives regarding the particular needs of families with children, as well as characteristics of available supply.
LITERATURE


