

Issues involved in attracting visitors to museums tourism essay



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In addition to its collection, preservation and educational role museums must also attract the largest possible audience to survive. Discuss this statement with reference to Heritage Tourism and a major London museum.

Heritage tourism is a sector inside the tourism industry that has strong historical importance. It covers an area or object that can symbolize a culture, nature or just a specific environment that is important to remember and preserve throughout history. Widely mentioned in the 1990s the importance of heritage tourism grew becoming one of the most important sectors in the tourism industry, Palmer (1999)

Heritage tourism is a very broad and multifaceted. It attempts to preserve the past for the benefit and interest of future generations. It can be represented through many forms such as literature, culture and traditions, architecture, landscapes and a variety of other objects. Heritage tourism is quite a new concept in tourism and it is complex because it differs from person to person depending on their beliefs, culture, traditions and/or nationality.

It is easy to understand that heritage tourism is related to museums.

Museums have a strong link with heritage tourism. Museums are meant to preserve all kinds of things that are relevant to history and make them available throughout the years. The main purpose of a museum is to sell history through an exhibition, preservation and storage of symbolic objects. Museums attempt to explain the importance of these objects and make it a enjoyable experience to its visitors. Most of the facts and events that we know about our history are because of the role that museums have in

preserving history as well as explaining it Marstine (2006). Museums can be owned by the public and private sector and this can influence the way they operate and interact with the public and what they exhibit. Museums focus on many specific areas of history and, as they are business and they are managed in order to make profit, many exhibitions are prioritized according to the visitor's interests, Garrod, (2008.)

Museums focus primarily on visitors who are interested and are receptive to changes on their views and opinions about the world Langer (1993) Visitors of museums should understand the topic that the museum is trying to cover by questioning and reasoning. There can be two types of museum visitors defined by Langer (1993) and Moscardo (1996): the mindful and the mindless.

A mindful visitor accepts information through various interpretations and is able to contextualize them. Being a mindful visitor means that one is able to accept that there is no single correct way to interpret a single historical situation.

A mindless visitor finds other interpretations besides the one he or she possesses irrelevant as these visitors are not receptive as the mindful ones. They are not receptive to other interpretations or viewpoints because they are unable to question the information they already possess. Usually they are subject to believe and follow a single definition and/or stereotype. They are usually not interested, do not really know about the exhibition and do not care much about it.

A good museum has to be entertaining for both types of visitors. A museum has to consider different morals, cultures, ideologies, traditions and political views from its visitors in order to offer them a good experience and make their visit interesting and worth their time and money spent.

The Natural History Museum

The Natural History Museum is located in London, England on Exhibition Road, in South Kensington, together with the science museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. The museum is sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and has charitable purposes. It has been called The Natural History Museum since 1992 due to the Museums and Galleries Act.

The museum has five specific collections related to botany, entomology, mineralogy, palaeontology and zoology. These five collections have around 70 million objects in total. The Natural History Museum is famous worldwide for its dinosaur exhibition that includes a large diplodocus dinosaur skeleton.

The Natural History Museum is referred to in many research projects, focusing on areas such taxonomy, identification and preservation. Some of the items are as important scientifically as they are historically since Charles Darwin has worked with them directly.

The museum has a large library that holds many scientific research books, articles, hand written documents and art collections. However this library is only accessible by appointment.

Geological Museum

The Natural History Museum joined the Geological Museum in 1986 from the British Geological Survey. The museum is internationally known for its James Gardiner exhibitions of the active volcano and earthquake devices. The museum has also hosted the first electronically generated exhibition called “ Treasures of the Earth”. The galleries in the museum were redeveloped in 1996 and renamed “ The Earth Galleries”. The galleries in the Waterhouse building were also renamed as “ The Life Galleries”

The Geological Museum shows examples from the 19th century of display techniques used in the Waterhouse building. Neal Potter designed the central atrium, where visitors are transported to this area through an escalator made out of plates that symbolize earth. The walls were made out of recycled materials with representations of the major stars and planets. The background has six imagines that demonstrate how older generations viewed earth.

Darwin Centre

Named after Charles Darwin, the Darwin Centre holds a collection of preserved animals, a work place for scientific researchers and recent educational visitor experiences. It was built in two phases and it is one of the most important ventures in the Natural History Museum.

Phase one hosted the zoological items, mainly preserved in alcohol. Phase two holds the botanical exhibits. Phased two opened in 2009 and it is in a shape of a giant cocoon.

The Darwin Centre became famous for ' Archie' an eight meter long giant squid that hangs in the middle of the centre.

The Attenborough Studio

Named after Sir David Attenborough, a prestigious broadcaster and presenter, the Attenborough Studio holds the most important footages on natural History. In collaboration with the British Broadcast Corporation (BBC) the Attenborough Studio has as its main goal to share science education and preservation efforts through multimedia material, becoming a vital part of Darwin Centre.

The West side of the building also keeps a wildlife garden, where various types of plants are on display and a possibly new type of insect species similar to the ant was discovered in 2007.

The Museum also holds four different galleries that are differentiated by colour and contain different things, they are as follows:

Red Zone: Earth Lab, Earth's Treasury, Lasting Impressions, Restless Surface, Earth Today and Tomorrow, From the Beginning, The Power Within, Visions of Earth.

Green zone: Birds, Creepy Crawlies, Ecology, Fossil Marine Reptiles, Giant Sequoia and Central Hall, Minerals, The Vault, Our Place in Evolution, Plant Power, Primates, Investigate.

Blue zone: Dinosaurs, Fishes, Amphibians and Reptiles, Human Biology, Marine Invertebrates, Mammals (Blue Whale), Nature Live.

Orange zone: Wildlife Garden, Darwin Centre.

The Natural History Museum has become incredibly popular with its visitors over the years, because of its range of diverse things to see. It is not only popular for educational school trips but all kinds of people can come and find something they will be interested in.

Politics

The issue of politics in Museums can show in a clear way the attitude a certain nation may feel toward an issue in history, or how people have different ideas about what happened. For example, visiting a museum that has exhibits and galleries regarding past conflicts, these museums will portray their countries military objectives and assets as positive, this aides in the nation's patriotism and makes nationals of the country proud when they visit. The recreation for some galleries and exhibits in the Natural History Museum rely mainly on the accuracy of the way that certain things are shown, as not many exhibits depict conflict in the past but are more focused on science, astrology and the earth as well as its living plants and animals. Dallen and Boyd (2003) say that ' One persons landmark may be an object of hostility to another' Individuals may disagree the way that certain things are explained in the Museum, however the museum has had input from many reliable scientists and professors over the years whose opinion on some exhibits and galleries cannot be argued.

It is important to listen and understand the views that all individuals have regarding how things were in the past. For example issues that revolve around how the Earth came to be formed, some organizations disagree with

the well known theory of the Big-Bang. Although not all organizations agree with each other, these are the kind of politics that are relevant to The Natural History Museum.

Authenticity

Authenticity is very important for museum visitors. According to Halewood and Hannom (2001) museums are appreciated by their visitors due to some of their characteristics, such as:

Originality;

Workmanship;

Cultural and historical accuracy;

Aesthetics

Functions and use.

In order to grant authenticity and organization academic expertise is essential for the success of any museum Shenhav-Keller (1993). The study of authenticity is a critical success factor for museum visitor management. The feeling of being in front of something that has been preserved since its creation is what most museums expect to offer to their visitors Marstine (2006). Visitors expect to see the objects on the museum as they were originally, this provides authenticity and should be prioritized in order to get full satisfaction from the museum visitors. Sometimes authenticity cannot be achieved because objects might not be in their original state and museums should try to restore them or create similar pieces to the originals (replicas).

The Natural History Museum contains a number of authentic objects both old and new in its galleries and exhibits. For example the River Thames Whale that managed to get stuck in the River Thames in 2006, this whales bones have been arranged together and are now temporarily on display. The Darwin Centre also holds tens of millions of specimens that were once alive, most famously is the giant squid named ' Archie' that hangs in the middle of the centre. The Museum also contains many authentic ancient fossils that have been found over the years, they are on display in the Green Zone area, as well as a completely authentic wildlife garden in the Orange Zone.

A lot of the things to be seen in the Natural History Museum have also been manufactured or been made from originals so they are not entirely authentic. However the fact that they are replicated gives the visitor an idea of what an authentic original would have been like.

Visitor Management

The Natural History Museum received over 832, 000 visitors during the year of 1958, and in 2009 visitor arrivals reached four million. Of course the museum was not so advanced in 1958 and has expanded dramatically since then, but the opening of such areas of the museum as the Darwin Centre and the Geological Museum have increased the amount of visitors over the years. The museum did not allow free entry until 2001, during the year 2000 visitor arrivals were only 1. 7million but rose 42% during the month October, 2009, thanks to the help of the new and exciting Darwin Centre, this was the Museums busiest ever month. The following months even more visitors came to visit the National History Museum, this unusually high attendance of visitors was known within the museum as the ' Darwin effect'.

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Hall & McArthur (1996) stated that visitor management is the “ Management of visitors in a manner which maximises the quality of the visitor experience whilst assisting the achievement of an area’s overall objectives

The Natural History Museum has a dedicated Visitor Services team that makes sure that the needs of all visitors are adequately met during their visit. It is possible to call the customer services team before you arrive at the museum to find out when a good time to visit might be. For example elderly or disabled individuals may wish to visit the Museum when it is not so busy. The fact that the staff at the Museum can provide information on a good time for the individual calling to visit maximises their experience. The Museum also contains a cafe and other areas where visitors can refresh themselves with a drink or something to eat, as well as numerous bathroom facilities should they need to use them. Most exhibits and galleries are interactive and allow the visitor to get involved with what they are learning making it a more enjoyable experience. Should the visitor speak another language other than English there are also translations in other languages for many of the Museums descriptions and galleries.

It is essential for Museum directors to take into account not only the comfort of the visitors who are being welcomed to the museum, but of course the valuable artefacts that are inside the museum as well as the condition of the museum itself. It is important that these museum directors manage their museum so that it remains in a good condition, and does not get damaged by an overflow of too many visitors at a particular time. Enough money must also be spent on restoring any damage that may have occurred due to too many visitors or lack of respect from individuals towards the museum site <https://assignbuster.com/issues-involved-in-attracting-visitors-to-museums-tourism-essay/>

and its content. For this reason museums must limit the amount of visitors that are inside at any one time, or a daily limit in order to preserve the building for future use. Garrod and Fyall (2000) say that ' Conceivably, the higher weighting that is generally accorded to conservation might be the result of the particularly strong notion of futurity that is often associated with heritage assets.'

It is easy for this Museum in particular to become a victim of over-use as the admission is free, so managers must look carefully into the methods they use to control the flow of visitors coming in and out. The Visitor Services team at the National History Museum has many stewards both inside and outside that make sure everyone who is waiting in line is comfortable and aware of the time they must wait. The Museum directors make sure that they let the same proportion of people in the Museum that are also leaving the Museum.

Conclusion

We can see from this report the issues that are involved when attempting to attract the most visitors possible to a Museum. These issues revolve around Politics, Visitor Management and Authenticity of the contents of the Museum.

We have seen that it is very important to control visitor management, not only for the comfort and safety of the visitors but also in order to uphold the quality of the Museum, its galleries and exhibitions. If a Museum becomes too crowded it is not a pleasant experience at all and will deter the visitor from returning. Authenticity is another issue that some visitors find of great importance if they feel that what they are seeing is not genuine, or has not

been replicated to look genuine they will feel cheated and not return to the <https://assignbuster.com/issues-involved-in-attracting-visitors-to-museums-tourism-essay/>

Museum again. Finally the politics involved are something that attracts visitors depending on the nature of the Museum as there are not much politics involved with The Natural History Museum.

The Natural History Museum has had a good plan to accommodate visitors when they arrive at the Museum, they have had a very long time over the years to perfect their visitor management plans. The general management of this Museum has made it one of the most popular in the United Kingdom, attracting four million visitors in 2009 and has been very successful in attracting maximum amount of visitors whilst preserving and sustaining the contents of the Museum and the building itself.