

A MUSEUM MANAGEMENT ISSUE: THE IMPLICATIONS OF BECOMING MORE CONSUMER ORIENTED BY FOLLOWING THE TRENDS

Tünde SZABÓ

„Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Email: tunde.szabo@econ.ubbcluj.ro

Mónika FOSZTÓ

„Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Email: monika.foszto@econ.ubbcluj.ro

Abstract:

Studies highlight the fact that museums are studied either from the point of view of preserving the exhibits or as units which boost tourist flow. Today's museum managers have to choose the exhibits and decide what they express on the one hand, on the other hand they have to cater to the visitors' expectations as well. It is a general belief that it is worth keeping up with the trends if an institution does not want to isolate itself from the society. In this case the main problem might be that the emphasis is put on entertainment, and due to this fact museums can lose their integrity, their original mission, which is to collect, preserve and study the artifacts. Since lately the role of the museums has changed, this has become a question that needs to be answered, so the main aim of our study is to analyze to what extent can the balance between these different pivots be kept. Whether to cater to the consumers' needs with catching up to the latest trends or to keep the original mission of the museums is the question on the one hand, on the other hand to what extent does closing up to the trends affect the number of visitors.

Keywords: museum management, visitor orientation, consumer satisfaction

1. Introduction

Museums appear as a part of the wide cultural and entertaining environment, led by the expectations of a more and more exigent group of visitors, who are seeking entertainment and experience (Komarac, 2014). This is what urged, but according to some actually made museums put the emphasis on the visitor, and not on the exhibit (Komarac, 2014). This manifests itself in recognizing that the visitor, from the point of view of the consumer demand, (Kotler, N., et. al. 2008), may seem to be attracted to different exhibits, thus this demand needs to be harmonized with the supply of the museums.

The activities of the museums are quite varied (Tóth, MúzeumCafe 47), because on one hand they have to choose the exhibits and decide their meaning, on the other hand they have to cater to the needs of the visitors. It is a general belief among the directors of the museums that it is worth keeping up with the trends that visitors are keen on, since innovation is needed, indeed, (Tóth, Múzeum Cafe 47) if a museum does not want to become isolated from the society. The main problem in

this case may be that the emphasis is put on recreation, so they might lose their integrity, (McPherson, 2006) and traditionally their aim is to gather, maintain and study the pieces of art/findings (Gilmore, et.al. 2002).

By default, the economic role of the museums is manifested as the emergence of tourist attractions, while their social role can be seen as the expression of the given community (Keene, 2002). The roles have broadened these days, and specialists firmly believe that museums ought to regard themselves as independent, self-reliant destinations, since they mean a lot more than just the room where exhibits are shown (Keene, 2002). Although, whether to put the emphasis on the exhibition or the visitor does not have to be a matter of choice (Komarac, 2014).

One criterion of functioning in the long run is the orientation to and preparation for the future, as well as taking into consideration the changes in behaviour of the consumers. Consumer behaviour and trends are related, since the changes in the trends have a direct effect on the consumer behaviour (Hsieh, et. al., 2018). Taking into consideration the changes occurring in the consumer behaviour is essential for the museums as well, if they want to live up to the customers' expectations. One solution for the museums to cater to the consumer is to keep up with the latest trends, which can mean education, social responsibility and economic growth at the same time (Hsieh, et. al., 2018).

Since the role of the museums has changed lately, raising this issue is topical, so the main aim of this research is to study (1) in what way have the museum functions changed, (2) is this a more consumer oriented change in which, considering trends could play a key role and (3) does considering trends have a direct effect on the number of visitors or it has to be measured in another way.

2. Literature Review

(a) The traditional functions of museums and the changes occurred

The starting point when studying the traditional functions of a museum could be represented by the typology of these. Although, museums cannot be put in strict/firm categories, because of their varied origins and social functions (Lewis, 2018) the categorisation can be based on variables such as (Amrose, and Paine, 2012): aims, exhibits, group of visitors. The biggest difference, however, lies in the functions they would fulfil – according to the literature.

Principally, we can differentiate between general and specialised museums but basically considering all the variables there can be named five main museum types (Lewis, 2018) which can give an overall picture of the traditional functions of the museums.

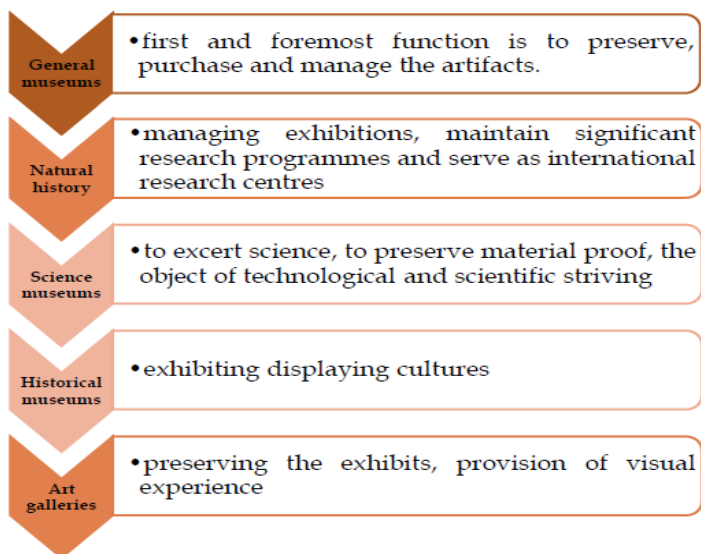


Figure 1. Types of museums and their functions

Source: Adapted from Lewis, 2018

The diversification of the functions of museums can be characterized by the expansion of the traditional role (Pop, and Borza, 2016). In a traditional way the role of museums is to preserve and study the cultural heritage, but nowadays this role is expanded in a direct or indirect way, thus museums become the place where experiences are shared, interactions happen, games are played, education takes place. Museums have become the means of communication for the mass culture. All these contribute to the improvement of the social life and the economic growth of their own communities. The rapport of these two functions (the traditional and the expanded one) is studied by few, since in most cases museums are studied either from the point of view of the preservation of the artefacts (Gilmore, and Rentschler, 2002) or as units which boost tourist flow (Pop, and Borza, 2016).

(b) the orientation of museums from a consumer point of view

Mission and identity play an important role in the way museums combine the functions mentioned above. Obviously, different orientations result in differing experiences and learning processes for the visitor (Kotler, et. al., 2008). Consumer orientation comes as a mean for museums to make their collection increasingly accessible to visitors. The significance of this is much deeper than bringing culture closer to the visitor, but rather understand visitors' demands and thereby adapt to their expectations. (Camarero, et.al., 2015). On this basis, it is crucial to understand the types of consumer demand and the mechanism in which these manifests themselves (Kotler, et. al., 2008). These types of consumer demand are (Figure 1):

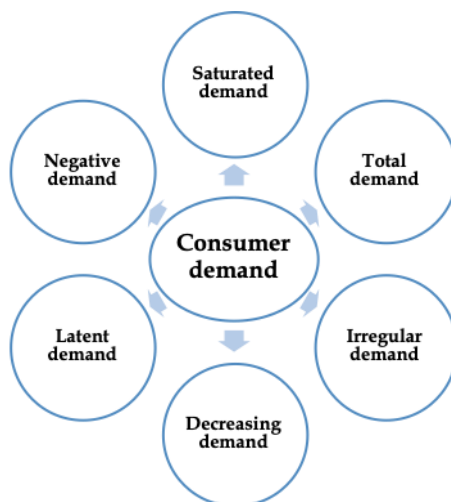


Figure 1. Types of consumer demands

Source: Adapted from Kotler, et. al., 2008

1. negative demand: the consumer does not like the supply of the museum, so they mostly avoid it

2. latent demand: the consumer shows a great interest in the programmes and exhibitions, but is not satisfied with them

3. decreasing demand: when visitors take part in various programmes more and more rarely

4. irregular demand: the number of visitors is varying depending on the season, month or days

5. total demand: the programmes and exhibitions of the museum are attended by the visitors on a regular basis

6. saturated demand: when the museum does not offer enough programmes and exhibitions so as to satisfy the demand

Balloffet (2014) highlights that while in past times the affluence of a museum was given by the value of its exhibits, today spreading information related to these exhibits are the real value. Nowadays museum administration means more than just taking responsibility for the objects that they own, it is essential to look at the objects as the means to attract visitors (Gilmore, and Rentschler, 2002). Therefore, knowing these types of demand and their manifestation can prove to be really worthwhile and rewarding.

It may be due to this fact that more and more experts are doing research on the habits of museum visitors. For example, the aim of the research Harrison and Shaw (2004) conducted was to find out if there is any interrelation between the experiences, satisfaction of the visitors and re-visiting the museum (loyalty). It turned out that there might be an interrelation between satisfaction and positive experience; however, the chance of re-visiting the museum is less than the degree of satisfaction. These types of “products” appear as “occasionally bought products”, and this is what makes the requisition of the marketing objects of the museum somewhat justifiable. Another research was studying what motivates young peoples' decisions to visit a museum or not (Mokhtar, and Kasim, 2011). From the results they reached the

conclusion that although most young people have a positive opinion about museums, they decide not to visit them due to lack of time, interest and information. In fact, museums are places where people gain experience, which generates emotional and cognitive stimuli at the same time, so it is indispensable to understand and analyse visitors and their experiences (Dirsehan, and Yalçın, 2011). The great exhibitions in museums grant the visitor with unforgettable experiences, which are able to distract them from the everyday routine (Komarac, 2014), so there is a big chance that they will become keen on museums.

Many “well-tried” and generally accepted method in the field of arts will lose its effectiveness soon, since there are changes in the behaviour and attitude of people in the broad environment. Museums are also part of this broad environment, so they are also influenced by changes and trends in the environment. The consumer-oriented museum will take the market as a strategic point of the planning, and not the museum as institution. However, many experts believe that this approach may lead to extremities, when museums do whatever it takes to cater to the consumer's needs, thus endangering the main mission of museums (Kotler, et. al., 2008). As a result, one of the main challenges of today's museum directors is to focus on being a curator in an appropriate way and deal with economic goals as well, in order for the museum to be marketable.

3. Research objectives

From the literature review we may reach to the conclusion that one opportunity to take into account the consumers' needs can be taking trends into consideration, since trends define not only the economic life, but consumers' everyday lives as well. So, keeping up with the latest trends may mean closing up to the consumers' needs. It is also punctuated that nowadays the traditional role of the museums is expanded as museums become the place where experiences are shared, interactions happen, games are played, education takes place. Museums turn to be the means of communication for the mass culture and all these contribute to the enhancement of the social life and the economic growth of their own communities. Regarded to all these elements, the aim of the paper is to study 4 main questions:

Q1. To what extent can the trends of the analysed period be grouped and what kind of management solutions can be suggested? Are these trends to promote the consumer orientation and help museums to fulfil their expanded roles?

Q2. What is more trend related (?) Organizing exhibitions or focusing on organizing more events?

Q3. To what extent does the emblematic British Museum keep up with the analysed trends and to what extent can this be shown during its exhibitions?

Q4. Does the number of organised exhibitions have an effect on the number of visitors in the British Museum?

4. Results and discussion

Q1. To what extent can the trends of the analysed period be grouped and what kind of management solutions can be suggested? Are these trends to promote the consumer orientation and help museums to fulfil their expanded roles?

The AAM Center for the Future of Museums analyses and list 5-6 trends that can be determining for museums every year. The first aim for us was to analyse to what extent can these trends be grouped, and what kind of similarities and

differences can be noticed within these groups. The primary point when grouping museums were the roles museums have, like the social and economic roles. Examining the trends, it turned out that these kinds of trends do exist, so they can be grouped alike. In the social group aspects related to society are emphasized, while in the economic group museums trend towards to the organizational functioning of the economic operators. Two more groups could be formed from the existing trends; in the first one those trends are listed where the usage of IT technology is essential, whereas in the second one the new consumer society came in the centre of attention. It is necessary to mention that these trends are called latest trends which in the definition of Törőcsik Mária *“The **latest trends** show the trends of the given year, draw the attention to the phenomenon that need to be taken into account, since they will shape the near future”*, (translated by us) so they can represent a completely useful mean for museums to choose from to fulfill their expanded roles too. Table 1. presents the categories and trends within these groups.

Table 1

Trend categories (2012-2018)

TECHNOLOGICAL (IT and virtual reality)	SOCIAL (Social Responsibility / Social Impact, issues)
- more than real (2012) - 3-d printing (2013) - when stuff talk back (2013) - robots (2014) - wearable tech (2015) - me/we/here/there (2016) - the rise of intelligent machine (2017) - our Bright Future: Idealists and pragmatists work together to build a sustainable world (2018)	- the changing shape of giving (2013) - disconnecting to reconnect (2013) - the urban renaissance (2013) - ethical everything: managing the moral marketplace (2015) - the Rising Tide: the changing landscape of risk (2015) - slow (2015) - more than human: extending the spectrum of ability (2016) -capture the flag: the struggle over representation (2016) - happiness: because you get what you measure (2016) - a mile in my shoes (2017) - let justice roll down (2017) - reshaping the world: migration (2017) - fragmentation: Underground activists fight for equity, privacy, and economic reform (2018)
ECONOMIC (Management and organizational issues)	CONSUMER in FOCUS New approach / new consumers / new needs
- for profit for good (2014) - geyser of information: tapping the big data oil boom (2014)	- creative aging (2012) - a new educational era (2012) - taking it to the street (2012) - the great unbundling (2013)

- privacy in a watchful world: what have you got to hide (2014) - what's mine is yours: the economy of collaborative consumption (2014) - the open economy: filling the data pipeline (2015) - it's personal, one size does not fit all (2015) - labor 3.0 (2016) - failing towards success (2017)	- synesthesia: multisensory experience for museums (2014) - A New Equilibrium: Making the best of a world that's a lot like today, only more so (2018)
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The analysis/interpretation of the trends within the groups lead to the following observations:

(1) The IT **technology** is the group where the emphasis is put on appliances, devices which help the visitors get a more profound experience and help the exhibits prevail. It can be noticed that a trend that needs the usage of technology is mentioned each year. It is important to highlight that in this case the managerial decision tend towards organizing a new exhibition, but to take into consideration those appliances which help the existing exhibits/activities prevail. Such are the devices to create augmented reality, a 3D printing, internet of things, Google Glass etc. (Figure 2.) The internet of things for example can be really useful when it comes to taking care of the artefacts, exhibiting them and in the education, but it even can provide a customized content about the behaviour and habits of the visitors.

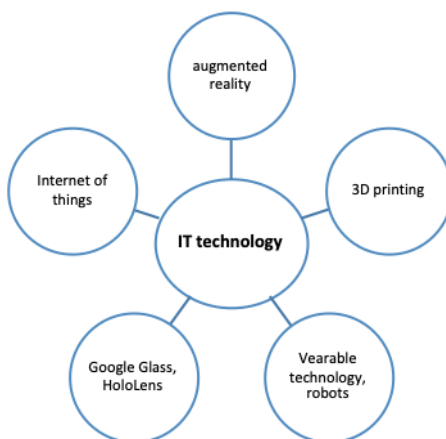


Figure 2. The means of IT technology group

Source: authors' own elaboration

(2) **Social responsibility** shows elements which are to be taken into account in order to sustain and improve social welfare. These elements are the empathy, justice, being generous, fear from failure, improving skills, happiness (Figure 3.). The aim is not to better show the exhibits, but to raise awareness (a good PR method) to certain problems, so they take place in museums as projects. In this case the decision of the managers has to be directed towards organising new events, which

raise awareness to social problems like the importance of life in the slow lane, or standing up for certain rights. At the same time, it can help to better understand the consumers, that is to raise the attention of museums that the visitors' group is not homogeneous, so they need to pay attention to them in a differentiated manner. The Pacific Science Centre, for example, organizes an event for those parents whose child is autistic.



Figure 3. The means of Social Responsibility group

Source: authors' own elaboration

(3) The trends which raise awareness to management or organizational issues are put in the **economic** group. These trends are the innovative approaches to directing an institution, the revaluation of the staff or the importance of the data-processing. The managerial decisions have to be directed inwards, towards the organization, the institution itself. Although these are non-profit organizations, they can take into account business models which are viable and can be adapted to non-profit organizations as well. Thus, there are new organizational solutions in the focus. The decisions have to be directed towards developing structures, partnerships and staff (gig economy) which guarantee the success of the museums. The data analysis (data mining) is essential because they are the basis of managerial decisions. The protection of personal data is of utmost importance, and can provide useful information about elements which influence attendance, and the kinds of personalized communication means they should use.

(4) As for the **new consumer groups** and their needs, they also have to be approached from a new angle, like the "multisensory experience" or the "takin' it to the streets" trends show. They are challenges and opportunities for museums at the same time. These are directed towards new programmes, taking advantage of the space in a new manner and advertising volunteering. Digital learning opportunities and partnerships with schools or universities can also be taken into consideration. Museums advertise a lot of online courses or provide room for practice for these.

All in all, it can be stated that trends do not put the emphasis on traditional functions, but on new ones, through which museums become the place where

people gain experience, share experiences or even become the means of communication of the mass culture.

Q2. What is more trend related (?) Organizing exhibitions or focusing on organizing more events?

Taking into consideration the above mentioned, we can conclude that museums cannot be oriented only towards organising exhibitions or only events, since, museums can decide whether to do this or that, based on its mission and philosophy. What can be highlighted is that while the IT group aims totally at the effectiveness of the existing exhibitions, the social group is keen on organising new events.

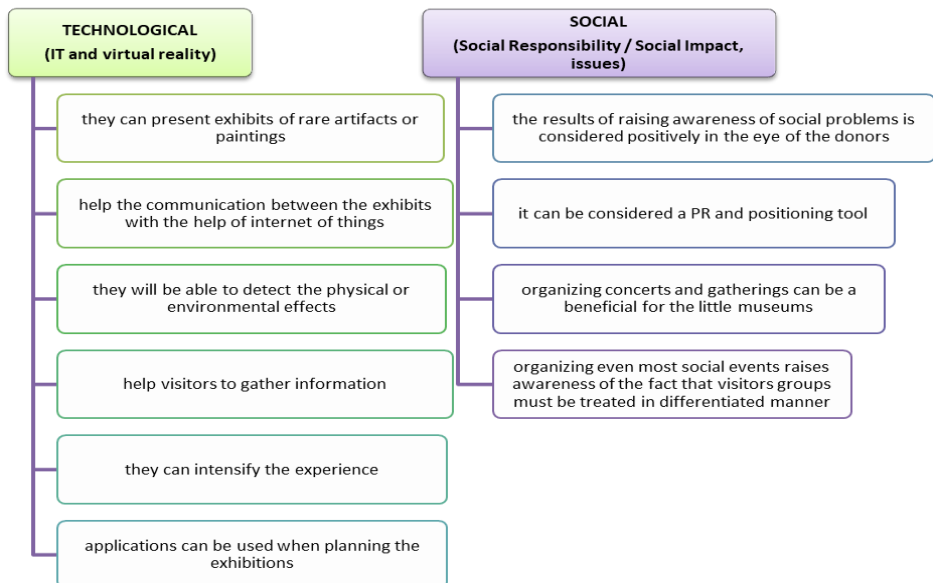


Figure 4. Reasons for considering trends from Technology and Social responsibility groups

Source: authors' own elaboration

As for the question what is it more trend related(?) the interpretation led to the conclusion that there is no one-way solution, however every group of trend has their own advantage and reason why they should be considered when developing the offering of the museum. Figure 4 and 5 presents the arguments/reasons of different group of trends.

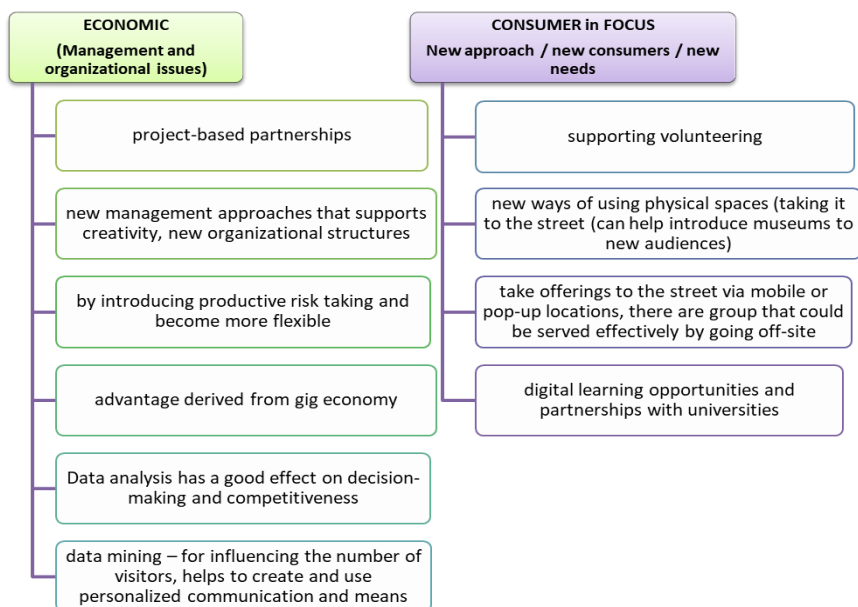


Figure 5. Reasons for considering trends from Economic and Consumer in focus groups

Source: authors' own elaboration

It has to be conceded that for an overall smooth functioning of museums we have to pay attention to trends from the technology group in order to create a better tailored offering for the changing consumer needs. Furthermore, taking into account the trends of the social group can prevent the museum from social isolation and trends within the economic group can help shape an organisational structure which is more likely to be able to adapt to the changing environmental conditions.

Q3. To what extent does the emblematic British Museum keep up with the analysed trends and to what extent can this be shown during its exhibitions?

The British Museum, without a doubt, is the emblematic museum of London. The reason for choosing British Museum, was its historical background and reputation. If we consider these, we might think that this type of museum has no need to keep up with the latest trends, but if they do, the question is to what extent. As far as its attendance is concerned, it is listed among the most frequented museums. For more than 250 years, this museum collected treasures from all over the world and it is considered to be the oldest national museum that was opened to the public in 1753 (Stoica, 2006). The artefacts of the museum range from objects from the earliest ages to modern objects, almost from everywhere in the world. Apart from the exhibits, about two million artifacts can be seen online, can be studied from all parts of the world. The ArtNewspaper does surveys related to the activities of museums worldwide. Analysing the 2013-2018 period (Table 2), it can be seen that

while in 2013 it was the second most visited museum in the world, by 2018 it fell back to the sixth place.

Table 2**Number of visitors of the British Museum**

Year	Number of visitors	Place
2013	6701036	2
2014	6695213	2
2015	6820686	2
2016	6420395	3
2017	5906000	5
2018	5820000	6

After analysing their exhibitions and events, related to the question can be stated that the museum takes into account a considerable amount of trends, mostly from the technology, and consumer in focus groups. It can be stressed that these all are directed to enhance the visitors' experience and to broaden/widen the supply of the museum. There can be listed a few as examples (Table 3):

Table 3**The existence of trends in the British Museum**

Technology	
- 3D – printing - augmented reality - internet of things - robots, wearable technology - Google glass	- provides 3D models and printable files for anyone on the Sketchfab platform, - introduces a platform that allows visitors to easily replicate some of the 8 million works on display - is working with Google to help to explore the galleries with Google Street View, also to learn about objects' stories in Google Arts and Culture, and discover connections through The Museum of the World, a new WebGL (Web Graphics Library) desktop experience. - in 2015 launched new audio guides - uses IT technology in reconstructing the original architectural scheme with the help of the 3D models created from the scans - over 700 sensors which is now web-based, communicates changes of condition immediately to staff (internet of things). - from 2017 introduced Digital workshop Innovation lab: get your tech on - new ways using wearable technology.
Social	
- empathy - fear from failure - justice - general beliefs that shapes peoples' lives	- Living with gods: peoples, places and worlds beyond examined how human beings have tried to make sense of a life beyond their material existence. The exhibition was supported by the Genesis Foundation

- <i>being generous</i>	- An exhibition was linked to a 30-part radio series, to explore the human need for belief and how shared creeds help to build social groups around the world.
Economic	
- <i>innovative approaches to directing institutions</i> - <i>reevaluation of staff (gig economy)</i> - <i>data processing</i> - <i>collaboration with other institutions, partnerships</i>	- a partnership with the University of Reading to provide improved access to the collection for scholars, students and the public through study rooms and a loans centre. - collaboration around the globe, and helps shape the collection's future meanings for audiences. Working with the Australian National University, University of Western Australia and Deakin University, Consumer in focus
Consumer in focus	
- <i>new spaces</i> - <i>new segments</i> - <i>volunteering</i> - <i>digital learning</i>	- as for 2020 the British Museum wants to transform the physical experience of visiting the Museum, navigation within the Museum and exploration of the collection will depend increasingly on mobile technology and will be personalised. - The museum arranges object-handling, multisensory activities and tailored digital sessions for an increasing number of schools that teach children and young people with special needs. - Volunteers run the BM's popular Hands On desks, at which thousands of children and adults handle objects from the collection and discuss their history and meanings. - Object in Focus exhibitions and regular displays of light sensitive material will require prominent and appropriate spaces.

The Museum needs to rethink completely how it transmits information about the collection, and how it engages its visitors with the objects. New technology allows new ways of visiting the galleries: stories and images, enquiries and interactions, individual and group explorations all need to be crafted and promoted. And those who can never visit may now be enabled to experience, learn and enjoy.

Q4. Does the number of organised exhibitions have an effect on the number of visitors in the British Museum?

A key indicator for every museum is the number of visitors and their variance in time. Our presumption was that if a museum takes into account a considerable number of trends, these will be reflected in their exhibitions (numerically and physically) and it can increase the number of visitors, so the main question was if we can predict the standardized number of audience when we know the standardized number of exhibitions? For answering this question, we used the regression analysis.

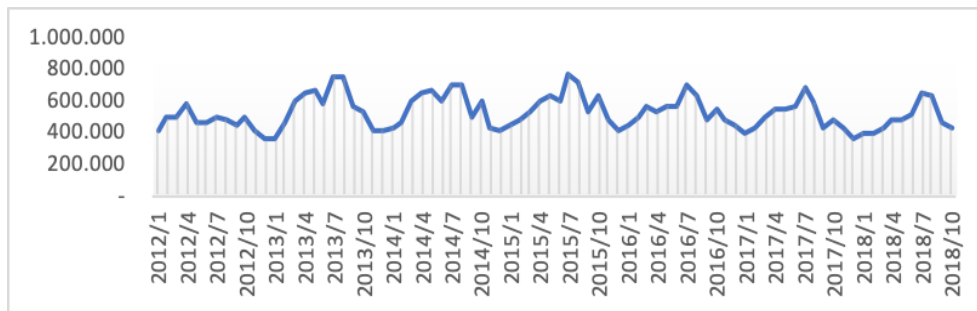


Figure 6. Visitor attendance at the British Museum 2012-2018

Figure 6. shows the number of visitors over a 6-year period from 2012 to 2018. If we look at their variance over time it can be noticed that there is no striking increases and dramatic decreases. July and August are the months in every year, where the number of visitors reaches their highest peaks and January and February are the months with the lowest number of visitors.

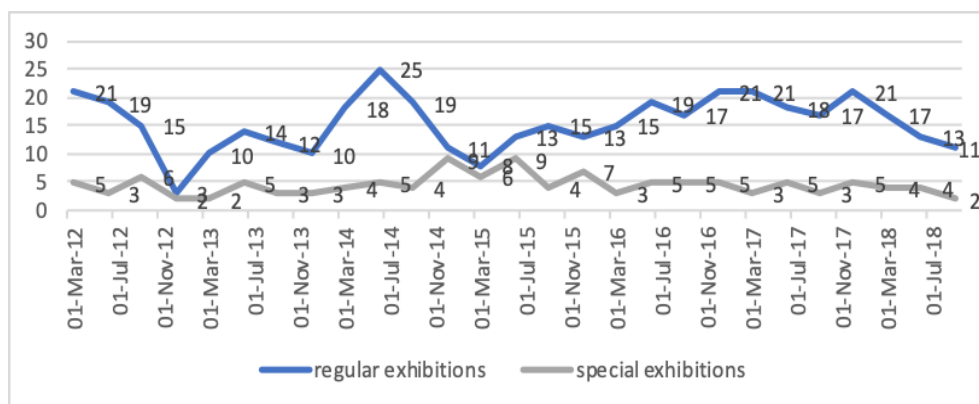


Figure 7. Number of exhibitions, British Museum, 2012-2018

As far as the number of exhibitions are concerned (Figure 7), these contain both special and regular temporary exhibitions.

Table 4

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.145 ^a	.021	-.061	247216.373	1.489
a. Predictors: (Constant), number of total exhibitions, number of special exhibitions					
b. Dependent Variable: number of visitors					

The output's first table shows the model summary and overall fit statistics (Table 4). We find that the $R^2 = .021$. This means that the linear regression explains 2.1% of the variance in the data.

Table 5

		Coefficients			t	Sig.
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1441323.033	193110.410		7.464	.000
	number of special exhibitions	4230.242	29197.942	.032	.145	.886
	number of total exhibitions	5774.817	10005.518	.128	.577	.569
a. Dependent Variable: number of visitors						

We investigated the relationship between the number of visitors and number of exhibition scores achieved on our standardized test (Table 5). We then conducted a simple regression analysis and found a low positive correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.145$). Because of this we cannot estimate a regression model so we cannot conclude that the number of visitors are influenced by the number of organized exhibitions

5. Conclusions

The literature review brought to our attention the fact that the broadening of the museum functions are more likely to promote and support the consumer orientation. Regarding to the analysis of the trends and correlating these with the typology of consumer demand it can be stressed, that the trends represents a vast opportunity to succeed in harmonising/balancing the supply of the museums. As for example, in the case of negative and latent demand, the trends from the technology group can prove to be really useful and constructive, as it was pointed out these are to enhance the efficiency of the organised exhibitions and events. As for the irregular and saturated types of consumer demands the trends from the social group can prove to be suitable, convenient and user-oriented.

The analysis of the questions led to the following interpretations:

(1) The categorization of the trends it was important in terms of giving a guidance for managers whether to direct their attention. There can be outlined four main directions: usage of technology, raising awareness to social problems, making the organisational structure more flexible and seek for new consumer groups. Ultimately, the trends within the analysed period can be grouped and these could be used as tools for making museums more flexible as organisational structures more receptive and more consumer oriented.

(2) Considering and integrating trends in the museums' activities requires a multidirectional pursuit, there is no one-way solution, since it cannot be narrowed to for example "organising more exhibitions". Though within the groups can be detected and remarked some solutions, which prove to be dominant and are applicable for the vast majority of them.

(3) With its historical background and reputation one should think, that there is no need for the British Museum to catch up with the latest trends nonetheless BM is a consumer oriented museum which doesn't want to get isolated from the society and focus only (have their attention oriented towards) on the traditional functions,

they are willing to become an open-minded and receptive for the new. So, as it is widely accepted, the most successful museums like the Louvre, Smithsonian or the British Museum for example have proved that the combination of the two orientations can lead to success, without having to change the basic values and aims of the museums (Komarac, T., 2014).

(4) The variance of the number of visitors is a key indicator and in many cases the aim is to increase the number of these. Hence, in the light of this assumption we examined the relationship between the number of organised exhibitions and number of visitors. Perhaps it is our accelerated world's result the "over" aspiration, that, in the case of museums, materializes in the growth of the number of events, hoping that more exhibitions will attract even more visitors. However, the analysis showed that, in this case, it could be more important and relevant to analyze for example the tourist flow, rather than to follow the above-mentioned assumption. It also might be necessary to analyze the process of consumption. There is a need for a deeper investigation in the question of what influences more museum attendance. As far as the trends are concerned, these are unlikely to be shown in the visitor number, it is more likely to be measured in the consumer satisfaction.

In many cases museums create trends, follow trends, or are swallowed by a dominant trend. Nevertheless, it is generally believed that in most cases trends are related to external factors which museums can influence to little extent. Regardless of whether they follow trends consciously or not, it can have an effect on the museum itself and the community also. Studying these trends can have a determining role when outlining the future (Vergeront, J., 2017). In many cases it can be the basis of planning, especially strategic planning, since museums decide to catch up with a trend in order to be up to date, inspiring and more attractive.

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