

MUSEUM MARKETING. TENDENCIES AND PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT: Marketing as a discipline, knows a great rise in the years 1950-1960. If initially it applied only to the economic sector, the outstanding results have recommended it to other areas, including the museum. Even if the museum is a non-profit organization, current transformations in society require rethinking museum activities in financial terms as well. Some of the techniques and methods used in marketing have become useful tools in museum work. They are used as means for achieving goals and fulfilling the mission of the museum. Today, marketing has focused increasingly on visitors, orientation of activities taking particular account of tastes, needs and desires of their culture, which is why the forefront research is the most efficient of all museum audiences, both existing and potential.

KEY WORDS: museum, marketing, public, cultural product, goals, mission.

Introduction

Like postmodernism, marketing is an invention of the 50s, it was inaugurated in the United States and applied to the economic sector with a view to boosting production, distribution and sale. In 1954, Peter Drucker watched marketing as a function including the management of an institution, thus the key to success in business. In 1960, Kotler and Levy, in his *Broadening the concept of Marketing*, stated that marketing was considered as an activity present everywhere, applying to both services, people, non-profit organizations and products. In 1997, there is a certain specialization of the term, Fiona McLean considering marketing as a process that brings together the organization and the people, be it for profit or to satisfy their needs or wants either to increase the number of visitors. The scope of marketing has experienced continuous expansion and its definition suffered new contextualization.

Marketing has expanded its deployment in the museum area. Joining the culture concept with marketing seemed impossible a few decades ago, nay, even sacrilegious. In the 80s the official „union” of the two terms took place, which gave rise to the concept of „cultural business”, initially received with great distrust due to the non-profit cultural sector. Some experts believe that the concept of „cultural business” when referring to the museum reveals the transformation into an organization seeking to optimize business and production towards its audience.

The economic component of museum activities

The use of marketing techniques and means by the cultural sector was seen as an act of impiety, an affront to the culture, also making use of economic instruments would mean losing

its superiority. J.M. Tobelem proposes the use of another term instead of „cultural business” namely that of „cultural organization of the market” because, he says, this would better emphasize marketing developments in the cultural sector into revealing an organizational analysis that takes into account the size of their staff and budget. And then, he says, museums, monuments, cultural centers or libraries are not business because they have no shareholders, no profit objective, they need only one having better management of human, technical and financial capabilities in order to achieve with priority the mission of the institution (scientific, cultural, educational, social and tourist).

However, the changes undergone by society in recent decades, the technological revolution which has left its mark on all areas of activity also affected the cultural sector thus its constituents: museums, monuments, libraries, archives, theaters, cultural centers, etc. Long time, cultural institutions, and museums by default, remained far from the economic world, because most of the funding was provided by public authorities, a small portion coming from sales of tickets, which for reasons of accessibility to a large number of visitors remained at a modest level. But the new societal trends require the museum rethinking its entire activity, its objectives and mission. If several decades ago the economic component of museum activities was shy, almost insignificant, with the scientific and educational component excelling, for some time the financial aspect was also taken into account, like with industrial or commercial enterprises.

In recent years, decentralization policies have put the spotlight on local development, tourism and capitalization on all areas of cultural significance, which boosted international tourism development. Local authorities develop their urban policies orienting them towards attracting as many visitors, arrange their territories to become as attractive as possible, support the development and modernization of museums, restoration and enhancement of the tourist circuit monuments, festivals or organized cultural demonstrations, all to increase the number of tourists and visitors. This is a direct consequence of revenue growth. For now on, marketing is starting to pay increasing importance in the cultural sector.

In 1972, Kotler, in his *A generic concept of marketing*, argued extension of the marketing concept to the relationship between organizations and their public as a whole, not only to the consumers, giving birth to the generic concept of relationship marketing, which now is the new credo of this science. He thus extend the marketing of the organization to all potential markets.

Peter Drucker was the first to put the consumer at the heart of any economic society, this point of view constituting one of the most important marketing guidelines.

Today marketing is considered a pedagogical model which, used wisely, is contributing to long-term survival of the organization. Therefore, to succeed in what it proposes, the cultural institution must, at some point, act on the perception of the institution by actual or potential audience through the cultural offer and its contents, serving itself of the following levers: defining a development strategy to audiences based on their best knowledge; improvement of reception conditions (hourly rates, services), educational tools, friendships, quality; development programs of adhesion, loyalty through subscription, strengthen partnerships with educational, social, tourist and local development sectors; development of promotion and online communication. All these actions should be reflected in a policy of publics that takes into account the institution's mission, objectives, priorities, action plan and evaluation criteria.

Research of the visitors is one of the major priorities of any museum because knowing this as well as possible will determine the diversity of activities designed to best respond to

cultural needs, tastes and wishes. But by this cultural offer, the museum must teach the public to better understand its goals and mission, for the purpose of marketing is ultimately educational. Today sovereignty of the public, the consumer, is proclaimed, all activities being such oriented. In this way, marketing influences other areas of the museum as well, such as personnel management, collections, exhibition design, and all sectors which deal with the public.

But what is essential in this museum-public relationship is reciprocal exchange between these actors. R.F. Kelly believes that marketing is defined as a permanent exchange between the museum that offers something (an exhibition, a presentation, a conference, etc.), and receives another thing (time, remuneration). J.M. Tobelem, however, sees this exchange as a relationship established between the institution and the consumer, the latter giving up a thing he owns (time, money, energy, habits, values) in exchange for a beneficial thing, of social economic or psychological nature, offered by the institution.

If at first marketing was defined as the means used by the organization to sell its products or services to consumers, mainly through advertising, the product being the focus, in the next phase attention is focused on the desire to sell as much by influencing the buyer and in the last phase it focuses on the consumer. Therefore, the museum manager must seek the most efficient combination of the two aspects, on the one hand the consumer needs for culture, on the other hand influencing demand so as the mission of the institution to be fulfilled. In this sense, Kotler and Andreasen in their *Strategic Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations* (1987), identify six states of the demand: 1. **Absence of demand** - consumers are not interested or are indifferent to the product; 2. **Latent demand** - consumer need is not satisfied with any item; 3. **Demand swing** - cyclically, the institution is facing a decline in demand for one or more products; 4. **Irregular demand** - depending on the season, hours or days; 5. **Satisfactory demand**; 6. **Excessive demand**. Depending on demand status, museum managers can take corrective action, bringing demand to a level of satisfaction, both for visitors and for the institution.

Closely related to product and demand is the price. In marketing, this is of particular importance. Referring to this, one of the schools prevalent today, „Marketing Manager School”, utilizes the model of the „4P”, widely used by companies, but which may be commonly used with great success by museums as well. These represent four inseparable parameters used in developing a market strategy and are: 1. **Product** - a catalog, a visit, a research; 2. **Promotion** - advertising **campaigns, press**; 3. **Place (Distribution)** - channels through which museums distribute their products: tickets for exhibitions sold by various independent companies, catalogs in libraries; 4. **Price**.

In the case of working tools developed by current marketing is „business portfolio analysis”, which sees the institution as a set of various activities whose cost is determined separately, making it possible to specify the contribution of each activity center to fulfilling the mission of the museum. Kersti Krug in his work, *Profit or Prostitution: Portfolio Analysis for Museum Marketing* (1992), proposed the schedule of an ideal portfolio for museum activity, which identifies seven activity centers that have the characteristics of a profit center: 1. Hiring museum spaces for commercial purposes; 2. Fundraising campaigns; 3. Store; 4. Restaurant; 5. Recruitment of members or friends of the museum; 6. Organizing events: concerts, plays, festivals, conferences, etc.; 7. Permanent and temporary exhibitions. For each of these a price should be set that fits the pricing policy of the institution and each activity center must propose one or more products for the exchange. For example, the association „Friends of the Museum”

may sell members some benefits in kind, such as free visits, invitations to exhibitions, conferences etc. But all this process of fixing the price of a product must consider several aspects: analysis of the market situation in relation to the product, market response to product price analysis, cost of manufacturing analysis, competition analysis, analysis of legal and ethical constraints.

Conclusions

The use of marketing in museums always takes into account the nature of the institution, the museum development, financing, competition and the need to know how to best target audiences. Another aspect to be highlighted is the diversity of cultural products, subjected to the nature of the museum (art, history, archeology, natural history, science and technology, ethnography etc.).

Current museum marketing in Romania is in an early stage because many institutions do not have separate marketing departments. Moreover, there is a serious confusion between marketing and advertising, promotion or communication, many museum managers undergoing marketing activities in the public relations and in the educational departments. Another impediment is the lack of specialists in marketing, which are complemented by other specialists, usually those in the public relations and communication departments.

If museum management has made visible progress, marketing still faces serious problems of perception and practical application. It should be understood that the museum fulfills three important functions, the production and advertising, visitor services and research, the first two claiming serious and effective marketing knowledge to meet social demands. One must not forget that the museum has become a supplier of products designed to satisfy the need for information, education and culture of its audience, moreover, of psychological needs, such as the feeling of beauty, joy, affection, reasons for which manager museum must necessarily include in its management plan effective marketing practices if he wants the institution he heads to survive fierce competition in the cultural market.

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