

Cultivating Museum Visits in Young Audiences

A case study on audience development at the Tokyo National Museum

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Hello, Everyone. Nice to see you. I'm Yasuhiro Sekiya, a chief officer of business development at the Tokyo National Museum. Today's theme of my presentation is about audience development. The title is "Cultivating Museum Visits in Young Audiences, a case study of audience development at the Tokyo National Museum".

In recent years, museums around the world are showing new visitor statistics with increased number of young audience and families. Japan is also on the same track. However, Japan's situation still has problems. These are financial difficulties and low number of visitors which may be due to Japanese people's lack of understanding towards museums. The situation has to be improved for sustainable development of museums.

So, as one of the ways to increase people's interest, what I'm doing in my museum is audience development.

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To describe my challenges at the museum, I would like to briefly introduce the Tokyo National Museum first. And then, what audience development is and a case study of my museum will be described with research outcomes.

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The Tokyo National Museum is the most historical museum in Japan, established in 1872. But as it is now independent from the government, the museum has a responsibility to generate its own income and secure visitors.

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These are some of the works in our collection. As we are a typical classic style museum, sometimes we are seen as old and arrogant like museums from 19th century. Unfortunately a part of this kind of critics was true.

Audience research showed 81% of people living in Japan knew about our museum, but their view on the museum was mainly educational which often means boring and difficult to understand.

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So, based on the data, we renewed our strategies towards 2020 when the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics will be held.

The new project is called “1 million project”, and it was launched to increase regular exhibition visitors from 400 thousand in 2013 to 1million in 2020. Therefore, to reach our goal, we focused on new audiences, especially young people and families who were not at the core of our existing visitors.

And we thought audience development could be one of the solutions to reach out to new audiences.

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So, what is audience development? As arts Council of England defines, simply stated it means the action to connect museums with audiences.

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It's like a royalty program in the marketing field, which focuses on the customers' royalty for a long-lasting relationship. This is a royalty pyramid for museums. Uninterested groups are unlikely to become potential visitors simply by approaching. However, potential visitors who have not been to the museum yet are interested in art and cultural activities may be attracted to the museum through strategic approach, and may even become frequent visitors as shown at the top of the pyramid.

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For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York celebrates

Hispanic and Latin American culture through an event like in this picture. Furthermore, their audience development is geared towards various cultures, and events such as Chinese New Year, LGBT party, women's rights events etc. are held.

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These kinds of events are also created for young people who are sometimes distant from museums. Museum Hack is a NY based private tour company specializing in providing enjoyable museum tours to young audience. Their style of tour is very unique as you can see from this picture. Participants can find museums not only as a place to learn but also an enjoyable place to have fun.

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From one of the studies of audience development, I want to focus on MAO model. MAO stands for motivation, ability and opportunity. Only the visitors that have these three elements can move from the bottom to top of the pyramid and become frequent visitors.

People who have three of these elements are existing visitors. People with motivation but with no opportunity or ability can be classified as potential visitors. People with no motivation to be involved in art are defined as an uninterested group. These people are difficult to include to museums.

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My case study is on the MAO model and is especially focused on giving opportunities to potential visitors to become frequent visitors. Since uninterested groups who have little motivation to visit museums are difficult to attract through only one or two events, they were not considered in this research. And ability to visit the museum includes technical capabilities such as entrance fees or transportation. These are not significant factors for my museum, as it is located in central Tokyo and entrance fee is quite low. I therefore focused on "opportunity"

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To approach new audience, I planned an open air cinema at the museum featuring Japanese animation because films can attract new audience and more approachable than educational programs.

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Moreover, some of the scenes in this movie actually take place in our museum as you can see here. This kind of activity is actually very popular in Japan. People who love animation films like to visit the location depicted in the work.

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This approach at my museum showed a positive result. We collected over 8 thousand visitors in 2 days.

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Now what kind of people came to the museum? We had audience survey like this and collected 207 samples. Visitors in their 20s reached 63%.

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Most of these visitors were university students, reaching up to 46%, and 55% of accompanied persons were their friends. It was significantly different from visitor statistics on normal days.

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I also asked about visitors' habits to visit museums and their past visits to TNM. The majority of visitors were occasional visitors who can be categorized as new visitors. It meant that the event was able to attract occasional visitors. And as 50% of visitors were first time visitors, the event also prove it was effective on attracting first time visitors.

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Their sources of information were mainly SNS and Internet. 54% of visitors

came to the event after seeing a post on SNS. This result was totally different from how people usually learn about museum exhibitions, which is mainly newspaper advertisements.

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Visitors' purpose for visits was the open air cinema.

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They were satisfied with the event but a part of them did not appreciate museum exhibits.

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In terms of motivation to revisit the museum, 35% of the visitors answered they will definitely come back. 43% answered they will revisit only if there are some attractive events in the future.

In terms of telling about such museum events to their friends or families, most of the visitors answered definitely yes. Actually, we saw lots of Instagram and Twitter posts on this event the following day.

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The results revealed their visiting habit has strong correlation with their past TNM visits, satisfaction rate, and desire to revisit. Here I have cross tables to illustrate this finding.

In terms of a cross table between visiting habits and past TNM visits, while museum lovers came to the museum very often, new audiences like occasional visitors and potential visitors visited the museum for their first time for the open air cinema.

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Looking at the cross table on satisfaction of the exhibition, we notice that unfortunately only a few number of people with low visiting rate saw the exhibition after the film. It means even if we attract them to visit museums with events, they would not go into the gallery to see exhibits after the event.

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In terms of relationship between visiting habits and motivation to revisit, you can see that frequent museum visitors definitely revisit without any actions from the museum. However, museum beginners including occasional visitors may come back only through our audience development approach like this event.

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In conclusion, in order to attract Millennials, I'd like to point out 4 tips. The first and the second may be obvious or have already been done around the world, but it is to change events from educational to entertaining and to change marketing tools from paper based to digital based. The third is that events should be held regularly to retain their interest. And lastly, steady and patient capacity building is required. This is the only tool to increase visitors who are new to the museum.

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Implementing the event and analyzing the surveys in fact prove my hypothesis incorrect. Young-people-oriented events *can* influence their visiting habits, even if they are not familiar with the museum. However, they may come to the museum only once. So if you want them to return back to the museum on regular basis, strategically incorporating some educational elements is still necessary. It means a single approach cannot capture them to be frequent visitors. Only through multiple approaches can these people develop into frequent visitors.

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That's what I wanted to say today. These are references. Any questions?
Thank you!