

The Connected Museum: Role of the Changing Museums in Changing World

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ABSTRACT

In the age of tweets, face book posts and whatsapp chat messages, museum face the challenge of sharing their reverence for the past with audience that increasingly interact fleeting through technology. Museum have realized several benefits from social media, as platforms emerge and offer the chance to reach an ever increasing digital constituency, through sites like Instagram, Pinterest, Face book, and twitter, they have a direct line of communication with their audience or visitors.¹The role of a museum as a space for social cohesion and understanding is of course something to be applauded, but how does this happen in places such as India?²This paper briefly looked at the relation between social media and museums, community and museums, focusing the way in which museums use social media for communication and for forging new social connections. This paper is based on secondary sources like articles, journals, & websites. We hope this paper can help in several ways, including helping to connect with artifacts or gather more information on them. We find the link between new media and museums, which can help museums to provide the most accurate information about collection to their visitors or audience.

Keywords: *Challenges of museums, Importance of museums, Museums and community, Museum and social media, Primary functions of museum.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, public engagement is core functions of museums.² Museums have a significant role to play in preserving the anthropological record. Anthropology began in museums and museums continued to be intimately associated with the discipline. In modern society it has become necessary and indeed urgent for museums to redefine their missions, goals, functions and strategies to reflect the expectations of a changing world. Today museums must become agents of change and development.*

This paper addresses some of key questions:

- What are the Importance and primary functions of the museum?
- In this hyper connected world, how can museums use digital technology to engage its audiences?
- What are the biggest challenges facing museums in India?

Objectives

In order to response this questions we aim through this paper, first to understand the role of a museum in our world today. Second to identify the linkage between social media & museums, community & museums and finally to identify the biggest challenges facing museums in India.

1.1 back ground

Museum is an institution. A museum tells the story of man throughout the world. It narrates how humanity has survived in its environment over the years. We find the word museum used in its original sense in the Alexanderian Museum, a temple dedicated to the Muses-the goddess of learning. The important collection of books, products of art and crafts were placed under the charges of distinguished scholars there.³ Museums inspire us to wonder, imagine and dream of possibilities that are beyond what we know.⁴ According to Greek mythology the word museum is derived from the Greek word Mouseion which means the seat of Muses. The name museum indicates a temple of Muses.³ on the other side according to Hindu mythology” Museum means , the temple of the Muses” Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of learning in India was originally a river with seven streams. She was considered as a celestial river, descended from the sky, During the Vedic age. This celestial river with her varied Potentialities identified as one with Vag “the Goddess of Speech”. Saraswati with a temple at ‘Dhara’ was installed by the Paramara King Bhoja in 12th Century A.D. and thereby he named the Temple as a Temple of Learning, “Saraswati Mandir”. Thus it is evident from the very beginning that museum had intricate relation with education. This tradition never ceased even today and few museums in Rajasthan and Gujarat are called “Saraswati Bhandar”.⁵

II. PURPOSE OF MUSEUM

The purpose of a museum is to protect and conserve the different artifacts that represent human history throughout the world, for the sake of human knowledge, understanding, and enjoyment of the beauty and wisdom of those of different cultures. Museums and their upkeep are important because they are records of a timeline. Many artifacts in museums are extremely old and must be handled with utmost care or they will be damaged. Different types of museums celebrate different aspects of human culture. Many museums are now putting samples of their exhibits online in a virtual tour. This allows people to get a taste for what they are going to see before they actually arrive at the museum, helping them better plan what to see. A museum normally houses a core collection of important selected objects in its field. Objects are formally accessioned by being registered in the museum's collection with an artifact number and details recorded about their provenance. The persons in charge of the collection and of the exhibits are known as curators. Museums are keepers of time. Walking through the halls of a museum is walking through the history of the human race. A visitor can get a small glimpse of how human beings have evolved and how humans have interacted with the world around them

throughout time. Museums keep tabs on the evolution of humanity and the world around us, and objects that many look at as common today may be exhibits of museums in the future.

- The fundamental purpose of a museum or any other organization is value creation.

$$\text{Value} = \text{Social Benefits/Resources Expended}$$

- For museums, there are invariably multiple social benefits, which lead to multiple goals.

2.1 defining value for museums specifying goals

Collection

E.g.

- **Comprehensiveness**
- **Rarity**
- **Sophistication**

- **Popular appeal**
- **Restoration**

Visitation

E.g.

- **Number of visits**
- **Repeat visits**
- **Types of visitors (sophistication, age, etc.)**
- **Time spent per visit**
- **Spending per visit**

Research / Scholarship

E.g.

- **Original vs. applied**
- **Scholarly vs. popular**
- **Conferences vs. publications**

Visitor Experience

E.g.

- **Level of interactivity**
- **Amount and sophistication of information provided**
- **Extent of ancillary services**

Education

E.g.

- **Whom to educate–**
Children,
Enthusiasts,
Educators,
As many people as possible.
- **Means of education–**
Didactic,
Experimental.

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III. IMPORTANCE OF MUSEUM

The importance of a museum is mainly educational and cultural and not merely housing collections of curious objects just as the old Hindi word “Ajayabghar” might suggest. Thus the importance of a museum is two-fold.

- 1) A place of work for the scholars

2) A place of instruction for the general public



The services of the museum to the general public are three-fold:

- 1) It stimulates curiosity, the gratification of which increases knowledge.
- 2) In some of its department, it exhibits the aesthetic culture. It opens before the visitors the beautiful products of nature and of art. It shows what man has been able to create out of clay, stone or metal or by the use of pigments and so gives him means of training, his taste and developing a cultivated appreciation of the beauties.
- 3) It provides recreational intellectual and aesthetic enjoyment.³

Other features of importance of museum are:

➤ Preservation of history

The principal role of museums today of course is the preservation of history. Museums store artifacts that have significant cultural, religious, scientific, and historical value; objects that denote significant turning points in the history of mankind and of the planet in general. Museums help in preserving the cultural remnants, and provide proof of man's survival through the ages. It is through museums that we can get a solid, evidence backed glimpse into our past.

➤ Crucial to education

The museum holds a place of prime importance in the field of education. Any education is incomplete without proper cultural education and awareness, and museums play an undeniable role in this respect. A museum holds the cultural history of a nation and its many inhabitants, along with the history of other cultures as well.

➤ Window to history

It is impossible for mankind to progress if we are not aware of our past, and museums provide the only window to our history. The artifacts stored and displayed in museums help us to understand where we came from, and thus determine where we are going.

➤ Invokes unity

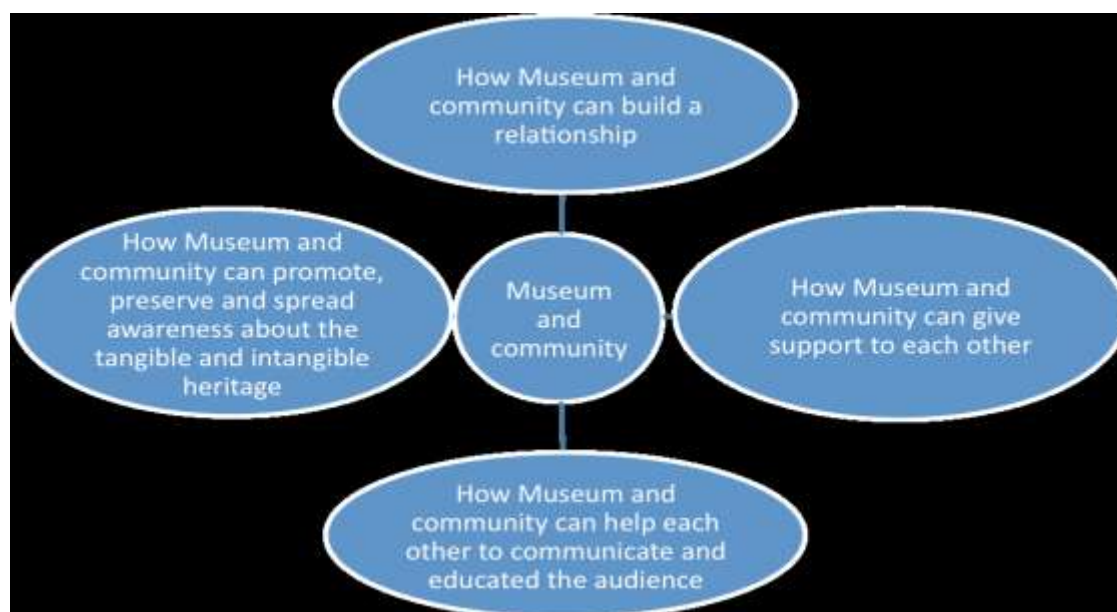
Unity is necessary in order to ensure that people live in happiness and prosperity. Museums use their resources and ensure appreciation and solidarity among the various social and cultural groups that exists within a community, and thus promote unity in a society. This brings about greater understanding about the other cultures, thus paving the way for further appreciation and communal harmony. Today, communal and religious problems are driving the world apart, and museums, with their horde of cultural and religious artifacts, have the ability to promote understanding and appreciation of different cultures, encouraging people to embrace diversity and be peaceful in acceptance of difference.

➤ Source of knowledge

Museums are a great source of knowledge. There is something in every museum that will attract the interest of someone.⁷ At its deepest level a museum is a collective memory bank of human achievement through a collection of objects. The museum's function can therefore be seen at its basic level as ensuring the objects that associates with human life. After that follows the activity of presenting the objects to the people so that human consciousness continues to incorporate these achievements in its activities. Museum officials execute innumerable actions to achieve this goals.³

IV. MUSEUM & COMMUNITY

In the time of urbanization, communities are losing their intangible cultural heritage very fast. The new generation is losing the connection between their cultural heritage and beliefs followed over a long period by their elders. Museums can build this relationship and fill the gap through cultural interpretation of the artifacts and with community support. Community museums are run for and by the community.



With the beginning of this new era, museums are working in directions to connect with communities in an effective way but still are lacking the right punch. With the advent of a new world order, i.e., urbanization, traditional knowledge about culture is not being passed on to future generation for many reasons, such as families moving to urban areas for better employment. These community members are far from their roots, traditions and family arts and crafts. And thus newer generations of particular communities are losing their interest in their traditional art, crafts and other cultural skills. Museums can play the role of a mediator or communication bridge to fill the gaps between the generations and to share the community knowledge on a larger platform with different communities and a diverse range of visitors. **For example, “The National Museum, New Delhi”**, has an extensive collection of Indian textiles of the different states, like bandhani work from Rajasthan, banarasi textiles from Banaras, Pulkari from Punjab, Mochikari from Gujarat, Kanth from Bengal, Pichhawai from Nathdwara and Chamba rumal from Himachal Pradesh. Currently, these special textiles are produced in living centres for textile arts and crafts in different states of India, such as Gujarat, Rajasthan, Banaras, Nathdwara, etc. There is some written evidence also available, such as the famous **Book of “AAINE-A- AKABARI”**, which shows that the Mughal emperor Akbar (16th century A.D.) had royal factories for different textile arts in areas such as Lahore (Punjab), Agra, Fatehpur (Uttar Pradesh), Ahemdabad (Gujarat). Sometimes communities find themselves emotionally attached to the museum artifacts. A beautiful example in this case is in **“The National Museum”**. The museum houses various Buddha replicas as a part of its collection and every month many Buddhist people come to the gallery and pray, especially on the occasion on Buddha purnima. Hundreds of visitors from Buddhist communities come to see the Buddha replicas. This is an example where a museum does not make any special efforts to connect with a community but an object itself connects to and welcomes the community in the museum.⁸

V. PRIMARY FUNCTIONS OF MUSEUM

- ❖ Preservation - The preservation of heritage comprises activities related to acquisition, collection management, including risk analysis and the development of preparedness capacities and emergency plans, in addition to security, preventive and remedial conservation, and the restoration of museum objects, ensuring the integrity of the collections when used and stored. An inventory is an essential tool for protecting museums, preventing and fighting illicit trafficking, and helping museums fulfill their role in society. It also facilitates the sound management of collections mobility.
- ❖ Research - Including the study of collections, is another primary function of museums. Research can be carried out by museums in collaboration with others. It is only through the knowledge obtained from such research that the full potential of museums can be realized and offered to the public. Research is of utmost importance for museums to provide opportunities to reflect on history in a contemporary context, as well as for the interpretation, representation and presentation of collections.
- ❖ Communication - Communication is another primary function of museums. Member States should encourage museums to actively interpret and disseminate knowledge on collections, monuments and sites within their specific areas of expertise and to organize exhibitions, as appropriate. Furthermore, museums should be

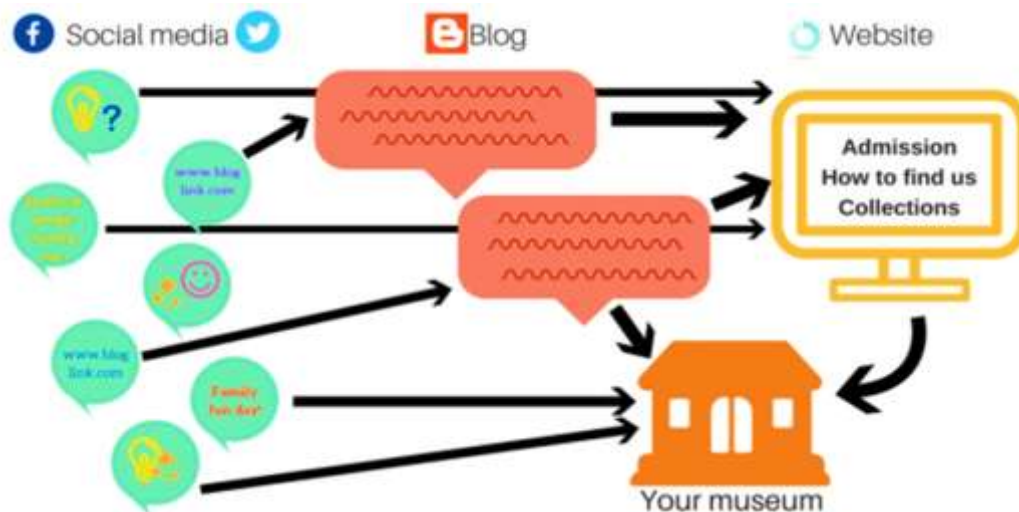
encouraged to use all means of communication to play an active part in society by, for example, organizing public events, taking part in relevant cultural activities and other interactions with the public in both physical and digital forms.

- ❖ Education - Education is another primary function of museums. Museums engage in formal and non-formal education and lifelong learning, through the development and transmission of knowledge, educational and pedagogical programs, Educational programs in museums primarily contribute to educating various audiences about the subject matters of their collections and about civic life, as well as helping to raise greater awareness of the importance of preserving heritage, and fostering creativity. Museums can also provide knowledge and experiences that contribute to the understanding of related societal topics.⁹

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VI. MUSEUMS & SOCIAL MEDIA

Museums have increasingly utilized social media as an important method to communicate with current and prospective audiences. Social media platforms, including Face book, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr, provide diverse opportunities for museums, libraries, and other cultural institutions to share their unique offerings to people around the world. With this new type of access, museum departments like collection management, research, education, and conservation are better able to directly reach people. Social media has blurred the lines between traditional roles of exhibition developers, designers, educators, and conservators, merging with roles previously assumed by marketing and public relations departments. Followers can watch a video of exhibition designers mapping out the early stages of a new exhibition or an interview with educators and curators on particular subjects. Many experts believe that sharing internal museum processes with the public is the driving force behind online public engagement.¹⁰



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The social apps are effective at conveying concise messages and can be accompanied by images that can quickly attract a viewer's attention. Blogging, Wikis, and other long-form platforms can be equally appealing, though for different reasons. Long-form social media can market the museum in ways that other social media platforms cannot, including those with news feeds that require shorter entries.

- Blogging - “A well-written, engaging blog has the potential to build relationships by bringing readers back to their site repeatedly, to enhance museum’s educational program, to pique interest in current and future projects, and generally to meet museums’ mission to stimulate new thought.”
- Face book - Face book, for example, brings the best of both short-form and long-form communication into a concise platform with which the public can engage. Museums can easily post status updates to Face book that appear on followers’ news feeds, can create photo albums to show their collections and to tag visitors who have attended events, and museums can share videos or write blog entries that the public can comment on or share with others. While it is an unscientific approach, the institution can informally gauge their Face book followers’ interests. Analyzing individuals’ public comments or the number of times a Face book post has been ‘shared’ or ‘liked’ demonstrates a museum’s success at engaging followers via this platform. Further, the Face book page provides demographic breakdowns of individuals who engage online, such as gender and age.¹⁰
- Captiva Tours - This is a mobile-based audio guide app. Visiting the Taj Mahal, have you ever wondered where the funds to build it, really came from? But using this app we get all answers and knowledgeable things very easily. People don’t want to keep downloading one app for each monument they visit. India needs to promote it all together! ***Captiva Tours is currently hosting sites from Delhi, Jaipur and Agra.***
- Instagram & twitter - Social media tools like Instagram & Instagram stories are free marketing tools that Museums can use to their advantage – but let’s not limit them to advertising spaces. Museums and their participation in people-centric campaigns are just as important in establishing their relevance to the community.
- The Heritage Lab - The Heritage Lab is a digital platform connecting museums & citizens through campaigns, public-engagement programs & free access content for youth, families and kids.¹¹

VII. THE CHALLENGES FACING INDIAN MUSEUMS

There are six major challenges facing Indian museums right now:

It is very important that they appoint a permanent director. Across the country, most museums don’t have a director. In most western museums, they have a director for 4 or 5 years; because it takes some time to transform a vision to reality.

In India all museums always report to the government. I think that is a challenge. But museums around the world they have a degree of autonomy. They don’t report to the government of the day but to a board. It gives a certain degree of freedom in how they operate. So it’s not controlled by the agenda of the government, and that’s quite essential.

#we need the right staffing. Most staff in museums here does not have the capacity to be part of the museum. Part of the problem is with the system. A lot of them come through UPSC and then having the necessary skill set is not part of the selection criteria. A proper selection process needs to be put into place.

#One of the things that should be done is that they really need to figure out what would make museums more attractive for audience to come, and feel connected.

In terms of collections, it's going to reach a stage where they really need to priorities what they are collecting. Museums need to rethink in terms of how they manage this whole aspect. In the West, many museums would have a collection development strategy. What they do is only a certain kind of collection can come under a certain museum, if not they can go somewhere else.

#The last point is important to most developing countries and not just India. That is the issue of intangible cultures- dances, stories etc. The museums need to bring the intangible aspects to the fold. It will drive more audience.¹²

VIII. CONCLUSION

Technology plays a major part in modern museums, with considerable use of multimedia, touch screens, and digital displays as well as cutting edge interactive technologies. Interactive technology is a good way to turn the museum experience from a being passive into something truly engaging and educational, even for a younger audience who otherwise remain glued to their smartphones.¹³ One museum's successful social media strategy to reach and engage their intended audience may not be successful for another, as each institution will have its own priorities and challenges. The platforms chosen and the ways in which these platforms are used varies greatly depending on an institution's desired goals.¹⁰ Museums in India are incorporating very little of that.¹² Most museums have not actively marketed themselves beyond their small local audiences to increase footfall. Some museums have a website, either independent or under a mother organization. These sites are more like contact information pages. The purpose of these websites is to provide the location, timings of the museum and in a few cases very basic information about the collection. They lack the dynamic nature required to attract and engage the contemporary online viewer. Indian museums now have the potential to use digital channels to reach huge audiences, both nationally and internationally. Many of these audiences will never have had the opportunity to experience the vast riches of Indian culture and heritage or have appreciated the complex stories they have to share about them.¹⁴ in our society today; museums must promote exhibitions that are topical and challenging. They must broaden their scope and not restrict themselves solely to objects and materials in their collections. In a changing world, museums have become very important institutions that are respected and valued.³ Museums in 2018 display a genuine desire to reconsider the roles of history, culture, learning, and explore how technology alters the relationship between audiences and objects.¹⁵

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