

1. Participation, inclusion & interaction

“A crisis does not always bring only negative consequences. The need to implement changes concerning the institution's activities may result in the development of new ways of reaching the audience of the offer and enriching the experience and skills of the team.”

Increasing the number of visitors

Today many museums are becoming more consumer oriented, focusing more and more on the visitors' experience and needs, as means to bringing more visitors to the museum, and expanding the museum activity.

Participation, inclusion and interaction part is orientated to new view of working with visitors, target groups, volunteers and etc. It is highlighted that there is a need time by time to review and understand museums and cultural institutions visitor: try to create your museums stereotypical visitor, explore their needs, understand their expectations, make them surprised.

Review (revision) visitor questionnaire and get a way to know you visitor more.

The more you know about your visitors, the more you can satisfy their needs. So gathering information about your visitors, such as interests in exposition, their leisure time etc., all serves to provide a clearer picture of the people you are aiming to please.

Use attractive way to measure portrait of visitor, for example visitors' circulation, use of signage and labels, interaction with exhibits and social interaction.

- *Find out what kind of experiences your visitors, current or prospective, are interested in.*
- *Analytical approach to your visitors. Who are they, what are they interested in, what kind of questions do they have and why?*
- *Use service design and plan your upcoming exhibitions/events in a way that address visitors' demand.*
- *Be open to the current demand or what's happening in the world. For example, recent crisis, especially in Ukraine, have increased public interest in military-themed museums and Ukrainian culture.*
- *Get to know regular visitors.*

The visitor's time and attention span are scarce resources, and they are one of the parameters by which a museum artifact and museum exhibitions need

to be assessed. Nevertheless, always remember that target groups are the main core of exhibition luck.

Set up target groups

- *Which are your main target groups? Do you reach them?*
- *Youngster and children (including as a part of children's school program), families with children, students, citizens, tourists, people with disabilities, domestic visitors, international and large groups.*
- *Families with children represent a group where there is room for growth. They might also increase the demand in other segments such as museums shops and restaurants.*
- *The main target group may vary depending on season. Local visitors and schoolchildren during spring and autumn and tourists during summer.*
- *Pay attention to local citizens who rarely or never visit. How can you attract them?*
- *Does people with special needs have access? This is a group that is at risk of exclusion.*
- *Do you offer service and information in multiple languages?*
- *Participate in national and international tourism exhibitions.*
- *Educational programs tailored for different age groups.*
- *Agreements with other organisations, for example educational institutions, associations, NGOs).*
- *How do you market to your visitors that exhibitions, events, and program change and that there often is something new to explore?*
- *To reach people better you can improve accessibility through, for example, digital and virtual exhibitions.*
- *Innovative use of social media and various digital platforms which people already use in their day to day lives can increase people's knowledge of museums and what they have to offer.*
- *Significant resources and long-term commitment may need to be invested in content and tools like virtual exhibitions and social media campaigns, which may be problematic for museums with limited budgets and staff. Thus, cooperation between museums is needed so that smaller museums can reap benefits from these advances.*
- *Be a meeting place for all generations. We have developed the work of making parallel exhibitions, both digitally and physically.*

- *Visitors will come back to the museum due to a combination of factors which includes both permanence and change.*
- *Museums need to be seen as stable, trustworthy institutions based on a solid foundation of historical knowledge and research, but ones that can always surprise people by telling them new kinds of things about the past.*

Offer positive experiences and emotions

- *Provide your visitors with positive experiences and emotions through targeted actions*
- *Tailor your exhibitions and events to audiences*
- *Be a part of increasing the spiritual resilience of the civil society by boosting trust in public institutions and the different authorities' ability to provide people aid in difficult times*

Use the premises of your institution in a different way

- *Rooms for children*
- *Develop interactive areas for children*
- *Workshops*
- *Visits to/from schools*
- *Outdoors and indoors festivals/events*
- *Walking excursions*
- *Online events*

Tickets & offers

- *Try new selling methods such as e-tickets through web page or external ticketing platforms or combined tickets*
- *Several countries offer different kinds of "Museum cards". The cards are organised by a national or regional institution or association. There is an annual fee, and it gives the visitor the opportunity to make short or multiple visits or visit, for them, new museums. The card can, for example, give the visitor free entrance, discounts, invitations to events or the opportunity to visit new exhibitions in advance of opening.*

- *Cooperation with providers of mobile exhibitions gives the opportunity to sell combined tickets*
- *Gift coupons at e-platforms*
- *Offer free or reduced entrance on Sundays or days with less visitors*
- *Cooperate with other museums nearby for mutual offers to visitors*

Communication and interaction

“Good communications are a key issue during a crisis, both inside and outside of the museum.”

There has been a change in the channels of communication with the stakeholders/visitors:

- *digitization of various areas of activity and different elements of the institution's programme*
- *introduction of online activities and online events*
- *introduction of a new offer available to the recipients remotely*
- *increasing the institution's activity in social media*
- *increasing the communication with the stakeholders/visitors via the institution's website (modernization of the institution's website)*
- *increasing the number of digitized objects*
- *increasing the number of outdoor events*
- *Reviewing Tripadvisor platform account and Google reviews*

Other comments

- *The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of cultural institutions and increased their focus on inclusivity, accessibility, and community engagement. These changes aimed to ensure that cultural experiences remained accessible and engaging while prioritizing the health and safety of visitors and staff.*
- *One theme that often came up in discussions with other museums was the fact that we still have only limited information on how people see new services like digital exhibitions, and what they expect from such offerings by museums. This is a theme that is connected to both participation, inclusion and interaction and organic connections and digital sustainability, and it would require gathering more information*

for example through questionnaires, analysis of user statistics and targeted interviews.

Conclusions of the pilot of the Estonian War Museum - General Laidoner Museum

Museum (EWM) - General Laidoner Museum implemented a pilot while the individual numbers of the “Soldier” have been systematized and made available.

The main issue: The database solution has been developed through a continuous PDCA (plan-do-check-act) cycle, including the input from the volunteers. Training programme for the volunteers is being developed and training conducted.

Data concerning about 450 individuals from different numbers of the “Soldier” have been already entered into the database (including the relations).

PDCA aspects from the process:

P: future possibility to link the platform with other databases (as listed on p1 or similar, also see <https://esm.ee/kogud/andmekogud>) and to include besides “Sõdur” also other related journals / newspapers (“Kaitse Kodu” 1925-1940, “Eesti Politseileht” 1921-1940, “Eesti Arst” etc + also those from the Soviet era and 1991+ era)

D: this presupposes sufficient number of persons entered into the current database and system analysis of the different platforms;

C: too early to draw major conclusions at the current stage, continuous improvement along the way;

A: too early to pose any specific improvements at the current stage, continuous improvement along the way.

No matter how wise and profound you think you are in the planning phase, a lot of new ideas and solutions emerge during the process, including how the technical solution should look like and what should be its functionalities.

Pilot disclosure such aspects as planning process with plenty of time available, allow times for reflection and discussions between different partners (museum workers, historians, ICT etc); selection of a technical partner who “cares” about the project, i.e. its is no just a task that he is paid for, but he thinks along the way.

Pilot showed that there is no limitation to military heritage, but this approach would help to improve the accessibility and quality of data in any historic field (medicine, agriculture, education, etc.).

- *There is importance to have a well-functioning and flexible work structure in place, so that you can handle major crises, such as the one we are experiencing now with a heightened threat level.*
- *One of our clear strengths lay in team, which proves to be extremely committed and creative when it comes to finding innovative solutions.*
- *Cooperation with other museums. Work together on very different issues such as opening hours and how to protect objects in the event of an armed conflict.*
- *Ability to quickly adapt to new circumstances.*
- *There has certainly been a shift towards creating more virtual exhibitions, but it is yet to be seen if this is more of a temporary than permanent change. The answers we have received about the future of virtual exhibitions have been rather different based on the respondent, ranging from enthusiastic to pessimistic.*
- *The priorities of our visitors have probably changed less than was expected during the COVID years. It rather seems that the crisis time has only made people's existing priorities stronger. When museums could open their physical exhibitions again, people returned in great numbers: apparently, the periods of closures had created penned-up demand rather than a change in people's priorities regarding museum visits.*
- *The COVID years were long enough to create a major disruption for the museums' ability to provide services and communication to their visitors and stakeholders, but they were probably not long enough to create a major change in their priorities. Rather vice versa, they may have served as a boost helping them to remember that functional and strong museums are important. Museums are not something they should take for granted, but that they require a strong commitment from the society and public authorities in good days to keep going also when the times get bad.*