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The role of the 'product' in the marketing mix

Andrew McIntyre works with arts organisations to give them a deeper understanding of their audiences. His work explores and models visitors' motives, needs, perceptions, attitudes and responses. This insight drives organisational change, enabling them to be audience focused; driven by artistic and curatorial objectives but focused on delivering audience outcomes.

Andrew has served as chair of the Visitor Studies Group UK and teaches and lectures widely. Recent international work includes Australia, New Zealand, Portugal, Russia and the United States. He's also a qualified FIFA soccer coach and can often be found on a muddy field somewhere urging seven year olds to kick a football.

This was a strategy focused session which took place three times during the course of the day. It explored the relationship between 'the product' and the visitor experience, looking at the impact of the organisation on a visitor. This also involved looking at the process for creating, communicating and monitoring the way a visitor engages with the work of an arts organisation. This summary focuses particularly on Session 2.

The Product

Andrew McIntyre began by saying how inspired he had been by Jerry Yoshitomi's presentation.

This session was about talking to each other and discussing ideas and therefore people should prepare themselves for participation. Delegates were invited to introduce themselves to the person next to them, to explain their responsibilities for marketing and to talk about the best exhibition they'd seen. They then introduced that person to the group.

AM gave the group some questions to consider, asking people to respond with words and phrases not essays. Each group had a different question:

- Marketing, what is it?
- What do you want visitors to get from visiting?
- What do curators want?

Once the responses had been gathered, delegates were then asked to order and categorise the answers.

Marketing, what is it?

They were themed in this way:

1. Communicating with audiences, informing and meeting their needs
2. Promoting: ideas, benefits, products, matching the offer to desires and expectations
3. Selling: proactive activity, tailoring things to match the product to the people
4. Satisfying and exceeding expectations, delivering experiences and satisfying desires

AM said he was interested in the phrase about tailoring the product to the people. The group member who had written that phrase talked about the way in which the product was to a

large degree fixed and marketing was required to find a match for it. AM thought this a good reflection of the way most museums and galleries operate. If we were working in other sectors we wouldn't be having this conversation because we would be trying to match or design a product for the customer, not the other way round. Typically, in the arts the product is churned out by one side of the organisation and marketed by the other.

What do you want visitors to get from visiting?

These were themed in this way

1. 'Wow factor': immediate sensory experiences
2. Knowledge and intellectual experiences
3. Spiritual: how it changes the visitor
4. Social: external vocalisation of how it has affected them

AM commented that the responses alluded to our fundamental drivers as human beings; for example our desire to be challenged, stretched and intellectually stimulated. The arts are often identified with the idea of self-improvement, acquisitiveness and making sense of the world around us.

Emotional intensity seems to be another factor, with reference being made to the way that the Tate has provided guides to the artwork based around your emotional state. We are also social animals and art had been seen as a way of delivering a social benefit.

The answers articulated seemed to be based around motivation and a list of outcomes. Typically we exceed expectations of outcomes all the time. Partly this is because we have sold quite low expectations of what visitors might get out of their experience. The corporate advertising world manages to make quite dull things sound life-changing by manufacturing emotion. Meanwhile, we are sitting on this volcano of emotion and what we do is market in a completely functional way.

What do curators want?

It was perceived that curators were after three main things:

1. Learning: self-development
2. Positive experiences: quality of experience and emotional responses
3. Impressions: long-lasting impact on people

What is interesting is how similar the answers are between the different groups. This seems to contradict a perceived gulf between marketers, visitors and curators.

To suggest that what visitors want is the same as what curators want is quite a revolutionary idea for many curators and marketers. There is an underlying assumption that in order to attract visitors we have to compromise our artistic integrity and that marketing is this agent of compromise. The one thing that curators say they want is for people to realise how great and wonderful their collections and exhibitions are and for those life-changing experiences to happen.

There are a range of myths which are associated with this area. For example, it is believed that only a narrow range of visitors can appreciate art in this way. However, research shows that great swathes of the audience can reach profound levels of impact and outcome – much wider than they are given credit for.

Marketing is also usually regarded as undermining this process, by dumbing down etc which seems to be a cultural problem. Marketers don't help themselves with some of the language they use in communicating with the artistic teams, often ending up in silo of promotion. Yet marketers could be seen as helping the organisation to fulfil its artistic aims.

This session aimed to identify how it is possible in just a few minutes to access all of the benefits, motives and emotions that both visitors and curators are looking for.

Reminding ourselves of our marketing definitions

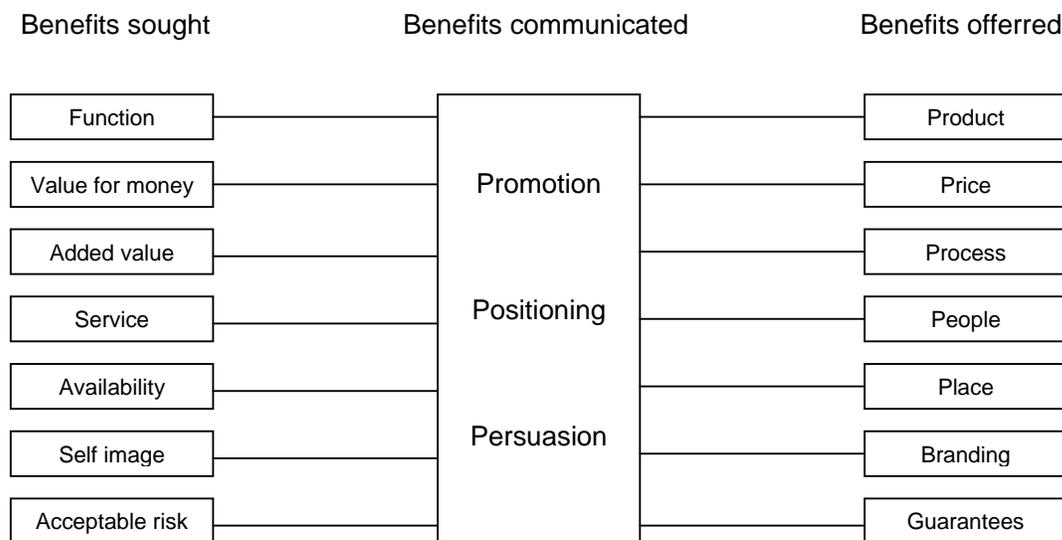
'Marketing is the process of identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements efficiently and profitably' (CIM)

'Marketing is a management process whereby the resources of the whole organisation are utilised to satisfy the needs of selected customer groups in order to achieve the objectives of both parties.' (Malcolm McDonald)

'Marketing is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and values with others.' (Philip Kotler, Gary Armstrong, Principles of Marketing)

The shorthand that Morris Hargreaves McIntyre uses is that it is 'a management process that meets the organisation's objectives by satisfying the needs of the audience.'

A Benefits Matching Model communicates this well



It's important to do the matching process between the left and right hand boxes before diving into the middle box, yet as marketers we spend all our time locked in this box without considering how we are supposed to be connecting the benefits sought with the benefits offered.

A good test to do for yourself is consider how far you are able to influence the box on the right. If you can give yourself high scores you are a marketer, but if you have low scores you are a publicist.

Marketers need to annexe what is happening in the building rather than only being responsible for bringing the customer to the door. It's possible to do this by taking note of what the visitor is doing inside. We can examine what the visitor experience is like for them, whether it is the ambience of the gallery, facilities etc or more interestingly about the visitor's relation to the objects; their expectations, behaviour, depth of engagement, interpretations used, impact, meanings constructed and what is taken away. This feedback gives us a currency which the rest of the organisation is very interested in. Our scientific analysis can be carried out quite simply and cheaply, making us the person who can measure the success of the work in terms that everyone understands and cares about.

By being the customer advocate you can help the organisation by providing insights into their thinking.

AM pointed people in the direction of the Visitor Studies Group (www.visitorstudies.org.uk) for more information and stimulation.

The session finished with delegates being asked to identify one thing they would do as a result of attending the session. The answers were:

Talk to curators and ask the question – what they want their audience to get out of the show
 Put learning to engage into action
 Remind people we all need to think of our audiences
 I felt very positive about the relationship with my curators
 Be more open with our visitor feedback
 Think harder about audience experiences
 Great to think about how to use what already exists as a strength
 Expand the questions to be used in forthcoming research
 Help to set up a customer group for our gallery
 Get to know the curator more
 Feedback surveys to curators
 Use ideas in my consultancy to arts organisations
 Engage in dialogue earlier in exhibition planning with curatorial staff
 More customer stories
 Continue to talk to and discuss audiences with internal and external groups/departments/individuals
 Monitor, measure and report on visitor outcomes
 Carry on with our research champions group, a cross-slice department group that looks at using research! They love it. Things are moving forward.
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 Carry out audience experience research  
 More surveys  
 Ask to attend the public programme department brainstorm sessions for events for exhibitions  
 Buy a seat at the table. Thank you! Sound advice well presented and inspirational.  
 Use better language  
 More visitor research, thinking time, share and talk to colleagues  
 Lock our new director in a small room  
 Widen scope of values visitors may relate to when making a visit  
 More exhibition research  
 Make more time to analyse and interpret our visitor research to make it useful and exciting for colleagues  
 Understand our customers more  
 Work harder to get an idea of what the visitors are looking for. Fulfil their needs.  
 Ask 'what for?' a lot

Visit the lateral thinking website

Create/use new methods to capture data insights

Share information with colleagues – some of which will feed into current piece of work around knowing and understanding audiences

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Conduct a visitor study!

Reaffirm role in whole exhibition process

Visit the visitor studies website

Give you my card

Revisit copy with a fresh eye/objective

Visitor services spend all day everyday with visitors so get them involved in marketing eg. doing visitor observation getting them to write down anecdotes

Discuss the role of marketing in the museum with staff in other departments

Use visitor feedback

Monitor visitor activity more and get myself a chair in the yellow section

Re-think/write some of our Thrive project rationale

I need to find out what the gallery needs? Not sure how to do this though?! I am going to survey customer experience?

Find out through variety of means (face to face, online(?) questionnaire) what visitors think about their visit, qualitatively – experience, opinions

Getting more marketers in charge

Try and speak to my clients to become more instrumental in the marketing mix not just traditionally

Think more about the experience of the visitor at the event.

Modify the advice I give to artists and arts organisations marketing pre grant application

Talk to the curators differently