

THE NIGHT OF THE MUSEUMS EVENT AND DEVELOPING NEW MUSEUM AUDIENCE – FACTS AND MISAPPREHENSIONS ON A CULTURAL EVENT

Igor Mavrin, Ph.D.¹, Jerko Glavaš, Ph.D.²

¹Independent Consultant, Republic of Croatia, imavrin@gmail.com

²Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics,
Republic of Croatia, jglavas@efos.hr

Abstract

The Night of the Museums (originally Long Night of Museums), an event held in the Republic of Croatia since 2005, is continuously setting up new records – the number of cities and museums involved in the project records the continuous increase, along with the rising number of visitors to the museums, heritage and cultural institutions in the few hours of the event. In 2013 the Night of the Museums project involved 226 museums, galleries and cultural institutions. According to the Museum Documentation Center's Registry of museums, galleries and collections in the Republic of Croatia, there are 281 museums at the state's territory. It is obvious that there is a tendency for the inclusion of all Croatian museum institutions in the Night of the Museums project. The event is an excellent promotion of museum activities and also the promotion of the project itself. The question remains how much individual museums themselves can highlight the quality of their programs in this mass event. Also, a continuous increase in the number of visitors to the Night of the Museums does not necessarily create a new museum audience. This paper provides an overview of the success of the Night of the Museums project, and seeks to identify the extent to which these events contributed to the development of the recognition of museums themselves, but also the creation of a new museum audience.

JEL Classification: Z11

Keywords: the Night of the Museums, museum marketing, museum management, museum audiences, cultural events

1. Introduction

Museum institutions in the Republic of Croatia come into the spotlight and are probably the most successful segment of Croatian cultural life. The Night of the Museums manifestation certainly contributes to the success of the museum project, but one should not ignore the impact of reinventing and redesigning existing museums (e.g. Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb), nor the visiting mega-exhibitions (Picasso exhibition in Zagreb in 2013, Caravaggio's Supper at Emmaus in Zagreb 2013). The greatest media attention was given to the Night of the Museums project, which itself becomes the most recognizable Croatian museum brand. The question remains as to how the individual museums themselves involved in a project can get a long-term benefit from it, and come out from the shadow of the Night of the Museums popular event?

2. Developing museum audiences – global trends

Museums of the 21st century get beyond their usual functions - preservation, conservation and presentation of heritage, along with bridging the time barrier between present and past. Today, museums are the places that combine education and entertainment, using all the advantages of modern technology. Museum institutions that have recognized its new, additional role in modern society, continue paths to success, and the museums that held its traditional role remain closed guardians of heritage that attracts less interest. One of the key roles of modern museums in the digital age certainly is - continually create new museum audiences. Visiting the museum exhibitions and their visibility (media) recognition is increasingly becoming a benchmark for determining the available (and all the more limited) funds from the public and private sectors. Development and maintenance of the museum visitors become key to the survival of the museum. Successful museum can be considered only the one which is "... recognized by their identity not composed only from exclusive exhibitions, research and scientific work, but also the relationship with the audience". (Subotić, 2005:27)

Mat et al (2002:109-110) considered that museum management should constantly ask the following questions:

- "Does the offer continue to meet our commitment? (...);
- With what additional offers (...) can we expand the range of services? (...);
- What services could be abolished? (...)

- What makes us unique and clearly identifiable? (...);
- With which service offers we can bind our visitors?"

Waltl (2006:4) emphasizes the following goals, aimed to creating sustainable museum audiences:

- „To refine and enhance communication with visitors.
- To achieve an attainable and sustainable audience.
- To turn non visitors into visitors, visitors into repeat visitors and regular museum goers into supporters.
- To enhance access.
- To offer multiple experiences.
- To engage visitors (hands on & minds on).
- To establish an active network with special target groups.“

Richardson (2011:1) believes that today's cultural consumers can no longer be described by the term audience, and it is more appropriate to use the term participants, because "...these are people who live increasingly digital lives, where they are not spectators, but active participants, positively engaged through outreach programmes and projects“.

Using the term audiences or more recent term participant, it is certain that the Night of the Museums event continuously breaks all the records, in terms both passive (audience) and active visitors (participants).

3. The Night of the Museums project development (2005-2013)

Project Museum Night has European roots and is associated with the intention of attracting a younger audiences, which no longer visits the museum institution organized (because you do not attend primary or secondary school, where the practice is applied). "Directorate of Museums of France (Direction des Musées de France) in Paris gathers the European museums on joint projects for nearly twenty-six years. Since 1999 it was a Spring project in museums, and in the 2005 The Long Night of the museums was launched. The project is aimed to inspire and encourage museums to hold numerous events, from artistic performances, unusual guided tours through the collections and exhibitions, tours of the museum by candlelight concerts and lectures, to heritage made more attractive and interesting for younger users and families." (Margetić; 2007:145)

Since 2005 and the first Night of the Museums, until today, the event has become the most recognizable museum brand in the Republic of Croatia, which can be seen by the attendance during the same period (Table 1).

Table 1: The Night of the Museums event in the Republic of Croatia (2005-2013)

Year	Number of cities	Number of museums, galleries and other cultural institutions	Number of visitors
2005	1	6	10.000
2006	0	0	0
2007	8	27	70.000
2008	20	60	111.000
2009	31	73	140.000
2010	43	116	278.000
2011	60	150	300.000
2012	80	180	315.000
2013	100	226	324.000

Source: Croatian Museum Association; available on <http://nocmuzeja.hr/o-nama/>

The Night of the Museums outgrows the usual concept of the museum event, which seeks only to draw attention to the existing museum exhibition. Numbers from the 2013 event show that “... there were 129 exhibitions, 40 lectures were held, 57 professional guided tours through the museum’s exhibition organized, 40 screenings held” along with “... 9 plays, 41 workshops, 67 music programs, two fashion shows (...) literary evenings, storytelling and performances.”

(Croatian Museum Association; available on <http://nocmuzeja.hr/o-nama/>)

3.1. The Night of the Museums 2014 and the new visiting records

The record-breaking trend was continued in 2014 – the number of visitors to the Night of the Museums event grew once again, so there were “...350.900 visitors in 100 cities and more than 200 institutions”. (Croatian Museum Association; available on <http://www.hrmud.hr/>)

The following table brings information on visiting numbers of the Night of the Museums 2014 event in Croatian cities.

Table 2: The Night of the Museums 2014 event –visiting numbers

City	Number of visitors
Zagreb	138.278
Split	51.633
Zadar	33.187
Rijeka	21.306
Dubrovnik	15.094
Pula	12.288
Osijek	11.760
Varaždin	9.600

Source: edited by authors, according to Croatian Museum Association; available on <http://www.hrmud.hr/>

As it can be seen, Croatian capital (and the most populated city) Zagreb leads by the number of visitors, followed by Split. The following table displays the numbers of visitors in the most popular museums.

Table 3: Top 10 most visited museums in the Republic of Croatia – the Night of the Museums 2014 event

Museum	City	Number of visitors
National Museum Zadar	Zadar	18.127 (Note: museum on 6 different locations)
Museum of Contemporary Art	Zagreb	14.970
Car Museum Ferdinand Budicki	Zagreb	14.500
Croatian National History Museum	Zagreb	11.800
Mimara Museum	Zagreb	11.501
City of Split Museum	Split	9.925
Archaeological Museum in Zagreb	Zagreb	9.053
Archaeological Museum in Zadar	Zadar	8.960
Museum of Arts and Crafts	Zagreb	8.764
Dubrovnik Museums	Dubrovnik	7.780 (Note: 5 museums in total)

Source: edited by authors, according to Croatian Museum Association; available on <http://www.hrmud.hr/>

As it can be seen, the most successful museums are in Zagreb (6 of 10 museums from the list), while an exceptional success record the museums from the Adriatic part of Croatia (Zadar, Split and Dubrovnik).

4. Comparing the most visited museums in 2006 and 2011

Museum Documentation Center (MDC) provides statistics on visiting numbers for year 2006 and 2011. Data on the period since 2000 to 2006 show continued growth in visitor numbers.

Table 4: Number of visits to Croatian museums 2000 – 2006

2000.	2001.	2002.	2003.	2004.	2005.	2006.
845.000	1.402.500	1.474.000	1.901.000	2.352.000	2.260.627	2.505.636

Source: Franulić, 2007:2

An interesting detail of these statistics is the Year 2005 – the only one with decreased the number of visits to museums in the period since 2000 to 2006. It is also the first year the Night of the Museums in Croatia (six museums from Zagreb involved in the project). The upward trend was repeated since 2006, and this was the year in which the event was skipped (it continued in 2007). Let's compare the data on the most visited individual museums in 2006 and 2011.

Table 5: Comparison of the most visited museums in the Republic of Croatia (2006 and 2011)

Most visited museums in 2006	Number of visitors in 2006	Most visited museums in 2011	Number of visitors in 2011
Dubrovnik Museums Dubrovnik	445.000	Dubrovnik Museums, Dubrovnik	385.421
Archaeological Museum of Istria, Pula	444.952	Archaeological Museum of Istria, Pula	314.674
Klovićevi dvori Gallery, Zagreb	200.000	Museums of Croatian Zagorje	181.503
Brijuni National Park – Cultural and Historical Heritage Department	155.410	Museum of technics, Zagreb	159.316
Museums of Croatian Zagorje	95.986	Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb	112.485

Source: edited by authors, according to Franulić, 2007:6 and MDC, 2012:1

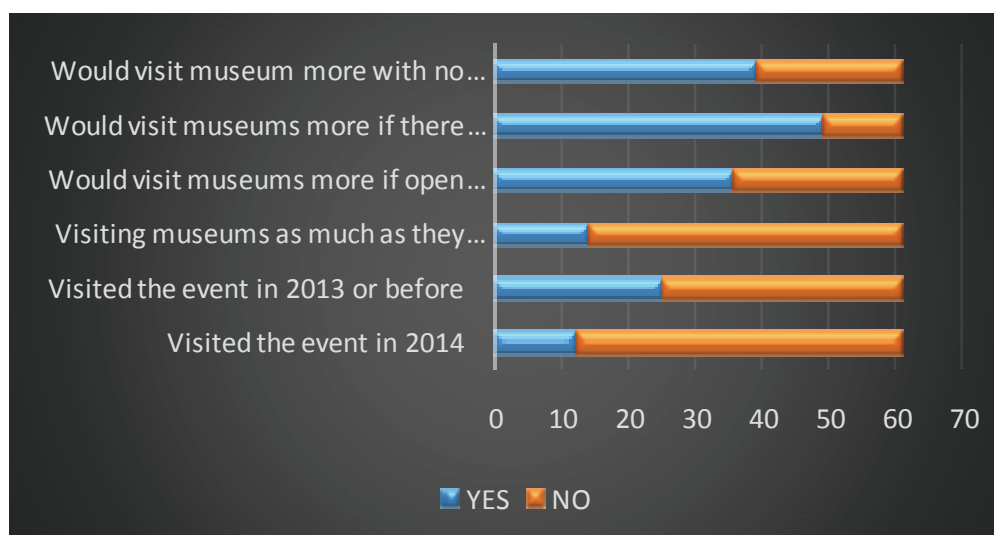
As shown in the previous table, the two most visited museum institutions are on top both years, but the number of visitors to both institutions has considerably declined in 2011 compared to 2006. Number of visitors to the Museum of Croatian Zagorje (five museums in one institution) was almost doubled in the same period. The Night of the Museums event reached 300.000 visitors infor the first time reached, noting the continued growth earlier, but also in the coming years. This may lead us to the conclusion that the Night of the Museums event benefited the museum institutions from periphery, while most visited institutions failed to achieve additional growth. In fact, the most visited museums recorded a decline compared to the period 5 years ago.

Continuous increase in number of cities, museums and visitors as part of the Night of the Museums project speaks in favor of the event and the creation of its brand. However, it remains in question whether the success of the event reflected on branding museums involved in the project. The opposite is more likely. A quality museum programme becomes invisible in mass museum offer concentrated in one (free) museum day (or night, as the event typically held in the period between 18 hours and 1 hour after midnight). For most recognizable museums, the event participation becomes a certain prestige, but the long-term success of the institution still depends more on the organization of the programme, strategic planning, management of the museum and marketing campaigns carried out during the year. The Night of the Museums certainly drew attention to the visibility of the museum in Croatian cities, and there has been some impact on the marketing activities of museums themselves. Quality and effective leadership of the museum will take advantage of this attention and visibility. It will use it for the implementation of continuous activities, which will in turn result in a permanent increase in attendance to regular and occasional activities offered by museum institution.

5. Research: The Night of the Museums and new cultural audiences

Research conducted on the student population at the Josip JurajStrossmayer University in Osijek shows the trends of the new museum audiences and their museum' preferences, with special emphasis on the Night of the Museums event. 61 students of Management at the Faculty of Economics in Osijek took the survey(30 male students and 31 female students). The following graphic summarizes the basic preferences of the student population associated with the event and museums in general.

Graphic 1: The Night of the Museums and museum offer – students' preferences



Source: edited by authors

As can be seen from the graph, the majority of respondents did not visit the Night of the Museums in 2014, neither the earlier years. Most of them still do not visit the museums to the extent they would like. They would visit the museums more frequently if there are more events like the Night of the Museums, if the museums would work in the evening and night hours, and if the entrance to the museum was free of charge.

6. Concluding remarks and recommendations

The year-to-year continuously growing numbers of the Night of the Museums visitors proves that it is possible to create a new museum audience, but data on visits to the museums outside of the event are proof that the new museum audiences is difficult to retain and it is also difficult to attract them to museums more than once a year. Some of the possible directions of development of the museum audience outside the event model are as follows:

- museum late evening/night event once a week – museums open to the audience in the evening once a week free of charge;
- ensuring active participation of the public in the exhibitions, and increased interactivity of museum exhibitions;
- greater connection between the museum displays and modern technology – attractive presentations connecting museum exhibition and modern mobile communication technology;

- increasing the accessibility of the museum offer – reverse distribution process in which part of the exhibits of the museum comes to citizens (set in the streets, squares, shopping malls).

Previous recommendations can be implemented successfully through two significant changes in the museum expertise:

- strengthening the museum marketing activities - training museum experts in marketing skills and/or employment of individuals with marketing education in museums;
- strengthening the leadership of the museum – the implementation of managerial skills from the business sector and application in museum sector.

Changing the communication strategy and attracting younger people to the museums (as a future permanent museum participants) has become imperative for museums which do not want to be interpreted like uninventive, unattractive places focused exclusively on the preservation and conservation of heritage, without adequate presentation strategy for museum content. Creating new and maintaining existing audience (i.e. museum participants) are the tasks which arise for the 21st century museums. Events such as the Night of the Museums are a good way, but are still insufficient. Without defining a clear strategy in each institution, museums would gradually become part of the culture of spectacle, in the form of one night attraction.

References

1. Franulić, M. (2007): Posjet hrvatskim muzejima – Statistika broja posjeta (2006. g.) i trendovi; available on: <http://www.mdc.hr/UserFiles/Image/projekti/statistika/old/Broj%20posjeta%202006.pdf>; accessed on: 11th February 2014;
2. <http://nocmuzeja.hr>; accessed on: 15th January 2014;
3. <http://www.hrmud.hr/>; accessed on: 10th February 2014.;
4. Margetić, M. (2007): Noćni posjet muzeju; *Informatica Museologica* 38 (1-2), 2007; pp 145-146; available on: [http://www.mdc.hr/UserFiles/File/IM_38\(1-2\)_WEB.pdf](http://www.mdc.hr/UserFiles/File/IM_38(1-2)_WEB.pdf); accessed on: 10th February 2014;
5. Mat, G., Flatz, T., Löderer, J. (2002): *Menadžment muzeja*; Clio, Beograd; ISBN: 86-7102-048-7
6. Museum Documentation Centre (2012): Posjet muzejima u Hrvatskoj 2011. g.; available on: http://www.mdc.hr/UserFiles/Image/projekti/statistika/Posjet_muzejima_%202011_posjecenost.pdf; accessed on: 11th February 2014;

7. Richardson, J. (2011): The audience is dead – let's talk participants instead; Museum Next, available on: http://www.museumnext.org/2010/blog/museum_audience_development; accessed on 1th February 2014;
8. Subotić, I. (2005): Stvoriti i voleti publiku; in Gilbert, C. (2005): Muzej i publika; Clio, Beograd, ISBN: 86-7102-225-0
9. The Art Newspaper (2013): Visitor Figures 2012 – Exhibition & Museum Attendance Survey; The Art Newspaper, Section 2, No 245, April 2013; available on <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/attfig/attfig12.pdf>; accessed on: 15th January 2014;
10. Watl, C. (2006): Museums for visitors: Audience development – A crucial role for successful museum management strategies; available on: <http://www.intercom.museum/documents/1-4Watl.pdf>; accessed on: 10th February 2014.