Introduction

There are nearly 800 registered museums and over ninety categories of museums are present in India today. But till many people have no clear idea about museum's functioning, though the concept of the present model of museum came here about 200-years back by the British. Many museums have written mission, formulated during the establishment of that museum, but no effort has taken to fulfil it later on. As a result museum awareness among general people is till not adequately developed in India. Majority of people believe that museum is a storehouse of ancient objects and dead specimens. It is a shame of museum itself that in such a long period of time it fails to inform people about it, neither making people museum minded nor being the essential part of society.

Today, entertainment institutes, different entertainment as well as news channels, and latest the Internet are successfully occupying all the leisure time of people because of its catchy entertainment, quick access and lucrative information. Visitor's research ¹ shows that 'visit to museums and galleries declined by 8% between 1998-99 throughout the world, and almost the same for National Parks, Sanctuaries, Zoological Parks/Botanical Gardens, Theatre, Cinema Halls etc., although entertainment /amusement parks, stadiums managed to stay level; but shopping centres, health clubs, cyber cafes snatched out almost 30% of more visitors than before and this percentage is still progressing'. People like to invest huge amount of money in such entertainment and searching information but not in museums for seeing something. It is found that today's people like valuable information, interactive presentation rather than blind observation. General public opinion is that museums are worthy in having educational purposes but at the same time this is seen as very boring. Although many people visit the large and National museums of our country and it is difficult to decode them as museum's lovers, but many small and local museums are unknown and they wait for visitors.

¹ Museum Visitors' Research in U.K. 2000, "Museum Journal, April 2001, Article—'Need for visitors information has never been greater'"
Introduction

A person is said surviving when its body functioning normal. Similarly an institute is said surviving when it performs its all-vital activities. But maximum number of museums in India is not serving in the way they need to survive. If this condition persist visitor's flow towards museums will decrease and these museums will be threatened to survive due to lack of activities and poor visitor's responds.

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) notes that museum should be engaged ‘in the service of society and its development’. The Museums Association of Great Britain is also giving emphasis on dissemination of information. In its code of ethics for museums (1st Edition 2002), under Section 9, it has formulated the strategy that society can expect museum to—‘Research, share and interpret information related to collection, reflecting diverse views’. Like these, initiatives has been taken in museums of many countries as well as in few museums in India to disseminate information regarding museum exhibits, its various activities, events and public participation programmes, so that people become aware about every event of a museum and prepare themselves to visit that museum.

Statement of problems

The research has undertaken to find out the major problem areas related to visitors and community relations of museum and how a well managed information service with effective marketing strategies can help museum in its better survival. Following queries are set up to find out major problem areas to formulate the scheme of the research work:

₁ Why people are loosing and not getting interest in visiting museums and creating crisis in museum’s survivability?

₂ Expectation and desire of today’s people from museums.
Introduction

How far dissemination of information is responsible for visitors' dissatisfaction?

Where from museums can collect information related to its objects?

How museums can manage human resource, store information, select modes of dissemination, arrange finance and technology to run a successful Information Service?

How museums can exploit and disseminate its ocean full information for people and survive successfully in society with the help of information?

How museums can market the service for the benefit of people and museum?

How far information can earn revenue for museum and help in better museum functioning?

How information can establish and enhance the image of museum?

Research Objective

The Thesis wants to establish the fact that—to strengthen museums, to inform its activities and to provide information about its objects to interested people and to attract people towards museums—an ‘Information Service’ is urgently necessary in museums today. There are many drawbacks in today’s museums, which are all together alarming museums a threatening of extinction. No single attempt is sufficient for proper survival of today’s Indian museums. A ‘Museum Information Service’ can serve as one of the life saving drugs for the survival of museums in India today. But implementation of the service is not enough to fulfil its mission, it should be well managed and highly marketed in society so that it can inform every citizen about it and make museum most useful, entertaining, and informative centre for the use and access of every category of people.
Introduction

Information Service in museums and other sectors

The concept—‘Museum Information Service’ in India is new but many Indian museums are giving emphasis on dissemination of Information related to its exhibits and activities in various ways. Information Kiosks\(^2\) of few leading Indian museums are assisting visitors. In many museums, Director/Curator himself or any responsible staff is looking after the special visitors and media relations for disseminating information to reach general people. Though separate cell is not yet established in Indian museums but many foreign museums have already established it to communicate with target visitors and common people.

Though museums here are now thinking about the implementation of Information Service, but many Libraries are already established it. Among them the pioneer institute is *The British Council Library*. It is offering variety of user-friendly information services so that members can get an easy access to information resources of the library.

Other than Libraries, Railways, Airlines, Internet portals, Cellular Telephone companies, Banks, Insurance sectors, Hospitals, Department of Tourism, Stock Market, Hotels, Resorts, Amusement Parks, entertainment channels and many other public and private sector organisations are providing information in their own ways. To launch new products or services every corporate houses are undertaking market research, informing people about the new arrivals and alluring them to convert as prospective buyers and consumers. Their action of communication helps them in surviving successfully in this competitive world.

Today’s people are very much informed about the consumer market, amusement industry because of the successful information service of the above mentioned organisations. To stand with them in respect of popularity and to strengthen financial position, museums have to walk in the same path to reach people.

\(^2\) National Science Centre, New Delhi; Nehru Science Centre, Mumbai; and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalya (Former Prince of Wales Museum of Western India) Mumbai etc.
Introduction

Justification of the Thesis in Present Context

Information dissemination by museums as well as interaction with visitors and common people is in poor state in India. The research has found the reasons, why an information service is urgently required in Indian museums, how far it can improve museum's functioning, attract more visitors and help museum to survive successfully. The justification in support of the Thesis is as follows—

One: Accessibility Problems
Many visitors want to know more about his area of interest. But information is not accessible for every visitor. For example, if a visitor wants to know about total number of particular objects in the museum, present cost of any precious object or want to know in detail about any object(s), museum staff cannot guide and reply them always. Though higher authority can answer but without prior appointment they do not reply them. Museum provides information to those, who comes through proper channel, which is not possible for visitors at that moment and they generally did not come again with permission.

Two: Inadequate Information and its poor management
Many students and researchers need information from museums. Though they come through proper channel, in maximum cases do not get required information in time due to poor system of information management, incomplete documentation of objects, and even no actual accession register. As a result they loose interest on museum.

Three: Excessive financial crunch
Our government is not in a position to sanction grants to all museums. Thus, it is very much essential for the survival of every museum to earn money as much as possible. Thus a cell is required that can inform target people whatever the museum is arranging for them so that they visit museum more and more, utilize different services and help museum to earn revenue.
Introduction

Four: Lack of Publicity and Marketing Strategies in museums

Many Indian museums perform many activities, spending huge money, but they never get considerable number of visitors participating in that event. Many people do not know about the museums located at their neighbours, but know the locations and facilities of amusement parks at their city and suburb. This difference is because of poor communication, improper publicity and lack of marketing strategies in museums' management system in contrast to the catchy advertisements and strong information dissemination of the competitors. To overcome this identity crisis every museum needs to disseminate information through all possible media.

Five: Age old Image of museum in India

Since last two centuries people know museum, as an institution for housing and exhibiting dead specimens, antiquities related to art, culture, history and objects of science and technology. It is well said for museums in India that in an educated family a person comes thrice in a museum—once with his/her parents, once with schools and once with his/her child/children when he/she becomes parent. Because museums run same exhibition for a long period that gives nothing new to people. Though museums renovate its galleries, run many services, temporary exhibitions, and cultural programmes but that information not properly reaches to target people.

To break this age-old tradition and belief, museums need a Central Information Service Cell that can provide all necessary information related to museum, its exhibits and activities to target people and institution to keep them always in touch by giving constant reminder and inhibiting them for their generous repeated visit. An Information Cell can give immediate reply to every interested people and assist museums in assessing its information resources that will help museums to explore more information. It is very much essential that the Service should be backed by strong management and marketing strategies. Museums need to remember that it is for society's benefit and not for few invitees only.
**Review of the Previous Research Work**

'Museum Information Service' in India is the new and emerging concept, thus evidence of research in this field is till not reported from here, though relevant research is undergoing in the field of Library Science. Elizabeth Orna along with Charles Pettitt in U.K. has conducted various surveys in the museums of United Kingdom on 'management of information' and published the result in her book—'Information Management in Museums' in 1998. This is the only relevant published work related to the Thesis.

**Conceptual framework**

The research has done to establish the Thesis that can surely guide museums in India in respect of the necessity of an Information Service in museums in India today. It can explain why along with the implementation of Information Service, Management of entire information regarding collection, storage and dissemination is essential. It can also state various ways of Marketing of the Information Service to popularize museum, its collection and activities. It can be able to explain how a well-managed and highly marketed Information Service can help museums to survive successfully in today's competitive market.

**Chart: 1. Representing the conceptual framework of Thesis—the research objectives, and its ultimate result that museum can achieve.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Museum</th>
<th>Management of Information Service</th>
<th>Survival of museums in India Today</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information Service</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing of Information Service</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Methodology Adopted

The Thesis has been established to assist Indian museums in dissemination of information using modern technology and media to survive successfully today. To structure it effectively, a pre-planned methodology is followed. The entire research work has been done on the basis of this methodology in following ways:

Stage I

The first stage has been emphasized on random collection of field and desk data.

- Field Data

Field data is collected through consultation with following persons—

- Consultation with experts

Present situation, technical aspects, problems and capability regarding present modes of Information dissemination in museums and its further improvement are discussed with the following experts:

1. Museum Professionals— Consultations are made with museum Directors, Director General of Archaeological Survey of India (Central Zone), Assistant Directors, Curators, Education Officers and few museum staff, visiting over hundred museums in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, New Delhi, Orissa, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal as well as few museums in Nepal.

2. Management Persons— Few Managers in Public and Corporate Sectors in Kolkata are consulted, like Manager in Systems in the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, Manager in Customer Care of the State Bank of India etc. and Professors in Management in the University of Calcutta.

List of hundred and ten museums, monuments and museum like organisations visited in India and abroad along with few Research Proofs is given in the Appendix: II.
3. **Marketing Persons**—Marketing Managers in both Corporate and Public Sectors in Kolkata are consulted. For example, Senior Field Research Executive in the Indian Market Research Bureau, Sales Manager in the Allianz Bajaj Life Insurance Company and Consultant, Reliance Petroleum—NIS Sparta Limited.

4. **Public Relations Officers**—Detailed discussions have been made with the Chief Public Relations Officer of the Indian Railway, Public Relations Officer in JK International and Hindustan Papers as well as with the present President of the Public Relations Society of India.

5. **Information Technologist**—Software professionals of the Kolkata Information Centre, Elogics Software Solution Private Limited and NIIT Computers in Kolkata, Natural History Museum in Mumbai and North East Zone Cultural Centre, Dimapur in Nagaland are consulted.

- **Consultation with Visitors, General people, Teachers and Students**: To know their opinions, expectations and suggestions regarding museum and its information as well as museum awareness among these groups of people:

  1. **Museum Visitors**—Survey has been conducted among visitors in different museums, visiting throughout India.

  2. **General People**—Local people outside museums in few cities in India are consulted. It includes professional, housewives, students and tourists.

  3. **Teachers**—Opinion of few teachers in the University, College and School level are taken.

  4. **Students**—Survey has been conducted among students in few schools in West Bengal, New Delhi, Nagaland, and Maharastra.

Sample questionnaires prepared for the above groups are given in the Appendix-III
Introduction

Desk Data

Desk data has been collected from two sources—Library and Internet:

1. Library: Reference work has been done in the following libraries for collecting information from books and journals, previous research works in relevant fields and publications of museums:
   i) Central Library of the University of Calcutta, Kolkata
   ii) The British Council Library, Kolkata
   iii) Library of the National Council of Science Museums, Kolkata
   iv) Library of the Indian Museum, Kolkata
   v) The National Library, Kolkata
   vi) Library of the National Museum, New Delhi
   vii) Library of the National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi
   viii) Library of the National Science Centre, New Delhi
   ix) Library of the Nehru Science Centre, Mumbai
   x) Library of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai
   xi) Library of the Manipur State Museum, Imphal
   xii) Library of the Assam State Museum, Guwahati
   xiii) Library of the Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati
   xiv) Library of the Nagaland State Museum, Kohima
   xv) Library of the Indira Gandhi Rastrriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal etc.

2. Surfing Internet: Websites of number of museums and museum organisations in India and abroad are surfed for relevant and updated information. List of fifty Websites is given in the Reference Section.

Step-II

The second stage has been emphasized on the following analyses:

1. Analysis of the available facts—museums' present conditions and capabilities are assessed through the Strength Weakness Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) Analysis. The format is given in the Appendix IV.
2. **Analysis of the information service provided by the museums abroad**—this is done for comparative analysis with museums in India.

3. **Analysis of the available opinions**—ideas and suggestions of all the consulted persons are analyzed to establish the Thesis successfully.

**Step-III**

In the final stage, all the facts are incorporated and establish the Thesis. It is then approved by the supervisor and prepared it for the final submission.

**Limitations of the research work**

1. The Thesis is a proposal for Indian museums. It is a presentation of views that highlight how a well managed and popularly marketed ‘Museum Information Service’, can assist in successful survivability of museums in India. Relevance of the Thesis can be compared with the evidences of implementation of the service in few leading museums in India, museums abroad and other public and private sector organisations.

2. In India till date, more than ninety categories of museums have been reported. All of these museums deal with different types of objects and its information. Therefore, it was not possible to explore different types of information, target areas and required modes of information dissemination of all such categories of museum separately. Thus, only general museum information is considered to establish the Thesis.

3. Technological implementation is discussed in this Thesis but in-depth technological developments in case of software and hardware are not incorporated here, since this area is under the computer engineering and not under the purview of a researcher having the background of Museology.
4. In this Thesis, information service required for museum visitors, users, target institutions and general people are emphasized mainly. Management of information and its dissemination or service is studied on the point of view of these target sectors.

5. In case of marketing of information service, emphasis is given on the publicity or dissemination of information regarding museum's collection and activities related to visitors and users through various modes only to fill up the gap between museum and common people.

**Chapterization***

The Thesis is divided into five chapters and conclusion. In addition to this supportive documents are given in the Ten Appendix and Reference Section. These are formatted as follows—

The First Chapter of the Thesis is ‘**Museum Information Service**’. The Chapter explains about the museum and its information, present scenario of information dissemination in Indian museums, opinion of visitors and common people, role of Information service, modes of information dissemination and its effectiveness in the survivability of Indian museums today.

The Second Chapter of the thesis is ‘**Developmental Process of Information Service**’. The Chapter established a guideline of the planning and conception procedures required for the development of Information Service in Indian museums. The findings of the chapter will help museums to plan and develop Information Service.

The Third Chapter of the thesis is ‘**Problems Regarding Development of Information Service and its Probable Solution**’. The chapter shows the major problems that museum might face while developing the Information Service in Museum. It also shows the probable solutions that museums can undertake to overcome the arising and expected problems.
The Fourth Chapter of the thesis is 'Management of Information Service'. The Chapter explains the policies required for management of Information, strategies requires to implement information management policies, management of information and human resource required to run a successful Information Service.

The Fifth Chapter of the thesis is 'Marketing of Information Service'. The Chapter describes the concept of Information Service marketing in Indian museums, its essentiality today, marketing of information regarding museum and its activities associated with visitors and users, information marketing through public relations, marketing of museum's website and process of feedback.

In the Conclusion of the Thesis, relations between all the chapters are established in accordance with the research objective. It is the summary of all the above five chapters that provides the overall views and recommendations in the context of the Museum Information Service—Its Management and Marketing for the survival of the museums in India Today.