Using Technology as a Way of Enhancing Visitors' Experience in Museums. A Case Study in Albania

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INTRODUCTION

The digital area has affected various sectors of the economy; both commercial and non-commercial. Successful organisations are those that are able to adapt their processes and activities relating to these digital innovations.

This article focuses on museum sector development in Albania and the way that the use of digital technology contributes to the visitor experience, as well as to analyse the extent to which new technologies are being used in museums in Albania.

Albania reveals sufficient potential in cultural tourism products (Caca et al., 2016). The usefulness of our research results from the fact that cultural tourism development is closely related to museum product development, and museums are considered as main cultural tourist attractions.

This article begins with the assumption that museums can use digital technology and enhance visitors' experience.

The research carried out so far has proven that the use of virtual reality (VR) provides an immersive environment that can enhance the storytelling process (Suroto, Dewantara, and Wiradarmo 2020), and technology can create a communication bridge that contributes to the process of transmitting knowledge to visitors in current ways that depend on modern technologies.

Augmented Reality (AR) is increasingly being used in museums as a way of providing added value to the museum experience by attaching virtual content on physical evidence (Ming 2018).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the way digital technology has affected the visitor experience and how the use of digital technology can capture visitors' attention and interests. This paper also analyses the current situation of museums in Albania. In this regard, this paper discusses the possibilities of incorporating digital technology for visitors as a way of increasing public appreciation and accessibility. The new technologies adopted in the museum sector form a new relationship between cultural heritage objects and the public.

This research was carried out in Albania, as Albania is considered a country distinguished for the development of cultural tourism and museum experience and is considered a main attraction in this regard. The usefulness of our research results from the fact that cultural tourism development is closely related to museum product development, and museums are considered main cultural tourist attractions.

20 museums were visited and given a set of questions designed to analyse the current situation of their management, the implementation of digital technologies, the way their visitors interact with these new technologies and the evaluation of their experiences.

We believe that this study will not only be useful for the museums analysed, but for all museums in Albania. The collected data were correlated with the conclusions presented in the literature and with our experience as visitors in the selected museums.

RESULTS

The results of this paper show that the use of virtual technologies positively contributes to enhancing the visitor experience and interactivity, but we found out that there are still museums which do not use digital technologies. This is because these technologies are not cheap and also require special knowledge and accurate planning. The application of new technologies in museums is a MUST.

DISCUSSION

New technologies adopted in museums help form a new relationship between the public and cultural objects, make them more visible and offer new approaches in reinforcing the role and importance of museums. Therefore, it is easy to notice from the results of the survey that technological innovations positively impact exhibitions of cultural products and thus the visitors' experience. New technologies also influence the decision to visit museums. This study points out the fact that with technological changes, there is a possibility to increase the number of visitors and become a key economic and social actor.

CONCLUSIONS

Museums today are required to explore the great potential offered by digital technology and demonstrate the ability to understand visitors' needs and expectations. In order to become more visible to the public there is a need to implement changes in the development strategy and mission of museums.

There is a need to understand how to use and fully benefit from the digital technologies as a way to communicate their products and contents to the public.

KEYWORDS: Museums, Digital technology, Visitors' perceptions, Strategy