

Putting Museums on the Tourist Itinerary: Museums and Tour Operators in Partnership making the most out of Tourism

By

Clare Mateke
Livingstone Museum, P O Box 60498, Livingstone, Zambia
vcmateke@zamnet.zm

Paper presented at the conference *High Expectations, but Low Funding: How do poor museums meet their targets?*.
Lusaka and Livingstone, Zambia July 28 - August 2, 2002.

ABSTRACT

Using Livingstone Museum, Livingstone, Zambia as a case study, statistics show that only a small proportion of foreign tourists entering the area visit the museum. Further, the income generated through museum entrance fees and sale of other products and services to tourists, is only a very small proportion of the income required to run the museum. Museum marketing is unlikely to make a significant impact on the number of tourists entering the country or the area, and tourism is unlikely to be able to sustain the museums. However, improved marketing strategies and improved quality and quantity of products may have a significant effect on the number of tourists who put museums on their itinerary, and also on the amount of income generated for the museums per tourist. Co-operative marketing with tour companies is important for the museums to attract more visitors. Economic survival, nevertheless, would still depend largely on other sources of income.

Introduction

This paper analyses the relationship between museums and tourism, paying particular interest to how museums can generate more income from tourism. It focuses mainly on Livingstone Museum, Livingstone, Zambia, as an example of a museum which relies almost totally on Government funding, which falls far short of the museum's requirements, but is in a "tourist town", with many other tourist attractions, where it has the potential of financial benefit from the tourism industry.

A tourist may be defined as "a temporary visitor staying at least twenty-four hours in a country or place away from his usual place of residence or abode for purposes of leisure, business, family, meeting etc. (Ministry of Tourism, 1985) This definition implies that tourists travel for different reasons or motivations that affect which places they visit in a country. Tourists may be divided into two groups, namely "foreign" and "domestic", referring to those coming from other countries and those from the same country respectively.

The funding problem

Museums world-wide rely on various sources of income. These include government (in full or in form of grant-aid), donors (outside the country, usually other governments), private (individuals and companies), local authorities, and internal sources (entrance fees, sale of souvenirs, etc.).

Museums differ from art galleries in that they are not merely public exhibits, but also research institutions. As such, they require large amounts of money to sustain the cost of their research activities. In order to carry out their functions of acquiring, conserving, researching, communicating and exhibiting, museums often employ a wide variety of staff and need substantial amounts of money. Museums are, or should be dynamic institutions, ever researching, collecting, interpreting, publishing and changing their public exhibitions. They provide information not only for the tourist or curious visitor, but also for serious researchers and scholars of different levels. They serve as a reference centre, providing information about a country or region's culture, wildlife, historic and/or prehistoric heritage. In short, museums are important institutions for both local people and foreigners.

Due to the nature of their operations, museums are very costly institutions. In countries with sound economies, governments are able to sustain museums, and recognise them as their responsibility, since they preserve the national heritage of the country. In such countries, there is also much interest from the private sector, including individuals and companies, who help finance the museums through grants and volunteer work.

However, in economically poor countries, especially third world countries, funding of museums is not a priority. Governments may recognise the need to fund museums but they do not take priority over health, education and other social services. As such, they are often under-funded. Further, in economically constrained countries even local companies and individuals do not have enough to spare to help fund museums. Such museums therefore struggle to survive on the little government funding, erratic donor funding, and small amounts of income generated from entrance fees and other services and products. As Camara (1992) states, "Financial problems are a major concern for most African museums due to the absence or reduction of the operating budget."

With continuous under-funding, such museums fail to carry out useful research or to maintain their exhibits. They become mere galleries, which are not dynamic and are poorly maintained. Visitors still come, but the quality they receive is not as good as it should be, and they do not see any significant change if they return some years later. Consequently, such museums are slowly "dying".

What is the solution? Government funding is unlikely to increase unless the economy improves. Private funding is unreliable. Can tourism be the answer?

Can tourism sustain the museums?

Using Livingstone Museum, Livingstone, Zambia, as a case study, just over 1% of the museum income requirement is raised through entrance fees, as can be seen in table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of Budget Estimate for Livingstone Museum with Income raised from entrance fees

	2000	2001	Average
Total Budget Estimate for Livingstone Museum (excluding capital budget)	K1.72 billion	K2.53 billion	K2.12 billion
Total income raised through entrance fees	K29 million	K32 million	K30.5 million
Income raised from Tourists as a Percentage of Budget Estimate	1.7%	1.3%	1.44%

Source: Livingstone Museum

Statistics also show that just over 1% of foreign tourists entering Livingstone area enter the Livingstone Museum (Ministry of Tourism, 2000; Ministry of Tourism, 2001; Livingstone Museum, unpubl. visitor statistics).

Comparison of foreign tourists entering Livingstone with visitors entering the Livingstone Museum

	1999	2000	Average
No of visitors entering Livingstone area via Victoria Falls, Kazungula and Katima Mulilo border posts and Livingstone Airport	214,430	228,743	221,587
No of foreign visitors entering the Livingstone Museum	2,525	3,532	3,029
Percentage of foreign tourists entering the area who visit the Livingstone Museum	1.2%	1.5%	1.37%

Source: Ministry of Tourism

In other words, if all the tourists currently entering Livingstone area could be persuaded to visit the museum, the museum could be totally funded by tourism.

However, this is not practical for various reasons. Firstly, tourism is an unpredictable business because it relies on various factors including immigration policies, infrastructure development and political stability. For example, the volatile political situation in Zimbabwe has had a big impact on neighbouring Zambian tourism. There was a significant drop in the number of foreign visitor arrivals in the 1970's during the freedom struggle in Zimbabwe. After Zimbabwe's independence Zambian tourism improved drastically (Ministry of Tourism, 1985). The recent political situation in Zimbabwe has also had an impact on Zambia's tourism. International crises, such as the terrorist attacks on USA in September 2001, can also

seriously affect tourism. Other factors within the country, such as transport, accommodation, immigration regulations and security can also have an impact on tourism. It would therefore be dangerous for museums to rely on tourism alone as a source of income.

Secondly, the likelihood of all the tourists entering the area or the country being persuaded to visit the museum is very small. This is due to the fact that tourists come for different reasons, for example some come on business and do not have time to visit museums, while others come to visit friends or relatives, not to see places of tourist interest.

Thirdly, museums do not generate a large proportion of income from tourism, compared to other tourism institutions. The largest proportion of income from tourism goes towards accommodation. For example, in 1999, 38% of the direct revenue generated from tourists in Zambia came from accommodation, 29% came from Travel, 28% from Tours and Car Hire, while only 5% came from other tourism sectors, including museums (Ministry of Tourism, 2000). Therefore, an increase in tourism to a country may significantly affect hotels and lodges financially, while having an insignificant effect on museums.

It has been stated (Min of Tourism, 1985) that "whilst museums, monuments and other such facilities are indeed of considerable tourist interest and merit, they in themselves would not attract tourists except for a few specialist groups." Following this idea, increased museum marketing alone is unlikely to have a significant impact on the number of tourists entering a country.

Domestic or local tourism is another possible source of funding and there may be possibilities for improvement of the domestic tourism industry. However, with the current economic situation in many African countries, Zambia included, the likelihood of a significantly larger number of local tourists touring the country and visiting museums, to the point of financially sustaining the museums is slim, due to the low levels of personal income of the majority of residents.

It is therefore apparent that it is not feasible, at least at present, that tourism, either international or domestic, can completely sustain museums in Zambia. In fact, it seems unlikely that there are many museums in the world that are totally sustained by tourism. Nevertheless, if a larger proportion of the current international tourists entering Zambia, as well as the local Zambian tourists, could be persuaded to put museums on their itinerary, to visit and revisit them, this may have a significant impact on the museums' income generated through entrance fees and other tourist products and services.

Putting Museums on the Tourist Itinerary

As has been stated above, the Livingstone Museum receives only a small proportion of the foreign tourists entering the area. Possible reasons for this may be

- i. **Lack of publicity and information attracting visitors to the museum**
- ii. **Different reasons for visiting the country or area (e.g. business, visiting friends or relatives)**
- iii. **Poor quality products or services provided**
- iv. **External factors (e.g. distance from other tourist attractions)**

According to Wolf (1984) there are four critical elements which contribute to an individual's decision to buy a product or purchase services: product, promotion, price and place. In order to increase the number of tourists coming to museums, these factors have to be addressed. In the case study under discussion, not much can be done about the place, but the issues of promotional strategies and product improvement, which is related to price (value for money) are discussed below.

i) Publicity and Co-operative Marketing

Some tourists may not visit a museum because they have not heard of it or it is not included in the list of activities offered to tourists by tour operators. Existing information available to tourists may not adequately arouse enough interest in the tourist to visit the museums

Lack of publicity is compounded by the fact that tourists come for different reasons. Statistics show that only 33% of visitors entering Livingstone through Victoria Falls border post in 2000 were coming on holiday (Ministry of Tourism, 2000). The majority (46%) were coming on business, while the rest were coming to visit friends or relatives or for other reasons. These latter two groups are less likely to spend time visiting places of tourist interest. It has also been noted that the Victoria Falls is of world renown and is Zambia's prime attraction (Ministry of Tourism, 1985). The second main attraction is wildlife or National Parks and third is culture in form of traditional ceremonies. In other words, although there are at least nine museums in Zambia, they tend to rank low on the priority list of places to visit. This trend in tourism interest seems to apply elsewhere too. According to a profile of United States resident travellers visiting overseas destinations in 2000, in a survey of international air travellers, only 29% mentioned an interest in visiting Museums and Art Galleries.

While accepting the fact that tourists come for different reasons and may not all be persuaded to visit the museum, better publicity to improve the image of the museum may significantly increase the number of visitors coming to the museum.

Most foreign tourists come into contact before or during their visit with tour operators, travel agents and places that offer accommodation. All these tend to have some influence on which places a tourist will visit during his stay in the country or area. In order to market their service, they have to present an attractive picture of the places to visit, and offer attractive tours. Since museums are one of the tourist attractions, it makes sense that in order to market them properly, there should be co-operation between the museums and other tourist industries, such as tour operators and tourist facilities. This can be done through distribution of brochures, posters, and physically talking to the tour operators and hotel and lodge owners. Even domestic tourists, whether they are coming on business or on holiday, often stay in hotels, lodges or guest houses, although few may use tour operators. For these, marketing could be done through the accommodation places or through the other tourist attractions.

Information given by tour operators determines the expectations of tourists. Marketing should be done in a way as to attract visitors to the museum. It should give brief information about all the attractions within the museum to cater for people with various interests and different age groups. It should include information about souvenir shops and other facilities. Preferably, it should specify the entrance fees, to allow the tourists to plan their tour financially.

In a town like Livingstone, for example, where there are many other tourist attractions, the tourists need to be made aware of the museum as early as possible and encouraged to put it on their list of places to visit.

ii) Quality of products and services

Improving the quality of the services offered to the public will make museums more attractive and perhaps increase the number of visitors. Tourists tend to meet up in various places and pass on news about places they have visited. A poor report about a museum can put off other potential visitors. These services include not only exhibits, but also customer-relations service offered by the entrance and gallery staff, cleanliness of the museum, including resting and eating places and public conveniences, and also the quality and availability of traditional crafts and souvenirs. Many foreign tourists today have a good experience of other museums around the world. They have certain expectations about quality or standard of museums. Lack of some facilities such as souvenir shop, canteen or entertainment for children may be limiting factors affecting the number of tourists visiting the museums. Changing exhibits or having a regular turnover of temporary exhibitions would encourage visitors to return to the same museum.

While some of these improvements cost substantial amounts of money and may not be easily achieved in a poorly financed museum, other changes can be made with minimal financial implications, by means of management strategies. These could include improved customer-relations among entrance and gallery staff, minor improvements to permanent exhibitions and cleanliness programmes, and better management of food and souvenir shops.

Making the most out of tourism by increasing spending opportunities

While museums are, by definition, non-profit-making institutions, and should not make profit by selling their objects, they can make income to help cover running cost by various means. A museum's main tourist-generated income is often from entrance fees. However, more income can be generated by providing other products for sale to the tourist who visits the museum. By increasing the spending opportunities for visitors, the museum can generate more income per tourist, thereby becoming more self-sustaining. Some products or services which can be sold to tourists may include the following:

- **Souvenirs and/or crafts**

Many museums already have a souvenir or crafts shop, where visitors can buy local crafts or souvenirs to remind them of their visit. However, improvement and expansion of such shops could generate more income from tourists who visit the museum.

- **Refreshments**

Many museums have some sort of facility where drinks and/or food can be purchased. The presence of this facility, if well managed, can provide additional income for the museum.

Other possible revenue generating activities could include library services, hall hire, filming (the museum charges fees for taking photos or videos of museum exhibits), and sale of museum publications.

Conclusion

While recognising that most museums cannot be sustained totally by tourists, by finding ways of putting museums on the itinerary of more tourists through co-operative marketing and publicity, improving the quality and image of the museum and by increasing the spending opportunities for tourists within the museum, museums may be able to generate a larger proportion of their required income through tourism.

References

Camara, A, (1992) Financial Autonomy - A Case Study of the History Museum of Senegal in Goree, in *What Museums for*

Africa? Heritage in the Future, ICOM

Livingstone Museum, (unpublished) Visitor Statistics, 2000, 2001

Ministry of Tourism, (1985) *Tourism Policy Development Plan and Strategy*, Ministry of Tourism, Republic of Zambia

Ministry of Tourism, (2000) *Digest of Tourism Statistics, 1999*, Ministry of Tourism, Republic of Zambia

Ministry of Tourism, (2001) *Digest of Tourism Statistics 2000*, Ministry of Tourism, Republic of Zambia

Tourism Industries, ITA, U.S. Department of Commerce, (2001) <http://tinet.ita.doc.gov/view/f-2000-101-001>

Wolf, T, (1984) *Managing a Nonprofit Organisation*, Simon and Schuster, New York

ICME - International Committee for Museums and Collections of Ethnography

<http://icom.museum/icme>

Updated by [webmaster](#), 25.01.03