Museums Marketing Strategy for Wales 2013 - 2016

Executive Summary

Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
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Museums Marketing Strategy for Wales Audience Development and Marketing Strategy for Museums in Wales 2013 - 2016

Museums in Wales and their visitors

In 2010 there were an estimated 3.5 million visits to Wales' 160 museums and numbers are on the increase. Some places regularly attract as many as five repeat visits from satisfied customers within a single year.

Appealing to families, tourists, school groups, 'cultural' visitors and individuals looking to enjoy, learn and expand their horizons, the 160 museums in Wales make an undeniable and growing contribution to Welsh cultural and economic life. They support the Welsh people's interest and identification with national, regional and local heritage, helping to nurture and promote a powerful sense of identity and place.

Developing this strategy

Creative Cultures was appointed in December 2012 to develop this Audience Development and Marketing Strategy as part of CyMAL and the national Steering Group's delivery against the objectives of the Museums Strategy for Wales 2010-2015.

This strategy is written for everyone involved in working in museums or in partnership with them including tourism and educational organisations. Its aim is to support all these individuals and organisations to work together to improve marketing of museums and raise the number and range of visitors using them.

Implementation of the strategy in the period 2013-2016 will be managed by the national marketing team funded by CyMAL, who are hosted and managed by Wrexham County Borough Council.

Overall conclusions of the research and consultation

The extensive interviews with museums and stakeholder organisations plus research strongly suggests three particular conclusions:

1. Despite the strength of much museum marketing and promotion to family, tourist and schools markets (among others) the limited and patchy available data on users and non-users nonetheless indicates a substantial proportion of potential visitors with negative or out-dated views of what a museum can provide by way of visitor experience and the benefits of museums
2. With only a few exceptions, marketing within museums takes place with very limited resources in terms of skills, understanding, workforce time and budget - and there is a clearly stated need within a considerable proportion of the sector for support in developing marketing skills and practice
3. The existing infrastructure for museums in Wales already provides valuable support and advice to the sector on many matters (as well as good online resources to support marketing and audience development work) and offers this national marketing strategy a strong array of potential partners.

The challenges to museums today

There are clearly challenges for the strategy to address with a particular focus on:

- broadening audiences and challenging outdated or negative perceptions of museums
- increasing museums' capacity for carrying out marketing research and activities
- developing the sector's relationship to key stakeholders and partners who could help develop the market for museum visits.

One writer has starkly stated the overall challenge to the museum sector:

> *'Museums in the UK are in a state of transition and are facing a number of special challenges. Traditionally, museums have been important in gathering, preserving and studying historical objects and sites and have had a key educational role. But this is no longer sufficient to guarantee their survival. Nowadays modern museum managers must also understand, and more importantly, fully embrace the need to attract visitors and other customers.'[1]*

Alongside this need for museums to adopt a market facing approach is the need for them to engage with the wider political agenda, to demonstrate the benefit to communities of the work museums do, and their contribution to the economic benefit of attracting visitors to Wales.

Whilst there are examples of museums doing all these things, including insightful user and non-user research, most of the sector simply lacks the capacity and resources to develop a truly 'modern' approach to museum marketing. This would require museums to be enabled to:

- not just promote their collections and buildings or facilities, but also to identify and address different audience segments and their needs, wants and attitudes
- have a marketing function which is not just about data gathering and publicity, but which is embedded as a shared philosophy across the whole service - with everyone involved and integrated into its strategic development and delivery
- recognise how the experience of the museum visit can be enriched for a variety of different visitors by increasing their direct engagement with the collections.

At present, with some notable exceptions among the larger publicly funded and independent museums, this is a tall order given the numerous constraints on museums' resources, their premises and amenities.

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1   Paul Williams, A Modern Approach to Museum Marketing, Oct 2009, Tourism Insights website

Meeting the challenges

In response to these findings our **overall aim** is **to increase the numbers and range of those visiting museums in Wales**, including those making online visits or working as volunteers and working towards these broad aims, the specific **objectives of this strategy** are to:

- **Improve the effectiveness and impact of the resources** currently available for marketing museums
- **Build sustainability into marketing skill development** and improved marketing work
- **Challenge the outdated views** about museums and other perceptual barriers that discourage a substantial proportion of local populations and tourists from visiting Welsh museums
- **Raise the profile of museums** and the benefits that they deliver, to everyone in Wales and to visitors
- **Improve the strength and effectiveness** of all the compelling messages and stories that can be told by museums, directed at their various target audiences.
- **Strengthen and extend partnership working** by museums so that they increase their level of recognition and value as an important element of the visitor economy.

The programme of initiatives to make the strategy work

There are two key priority areas for intervention as the strategy is rolled out to support more proactive and effective audience development and marketing for museums in Wales:

A) Building the capacity and sustainability of marketing work across all museums in Wales

The strategy will work to build marketing and audience development capacity among museums through four initiatives:

1: Training - helping make marketing effective and sustainable among museums in Wales

This initiative seeks to help lay the foundation for more effective marketing among museums in Wales through the provision of accessible and attractive training.

2: Supporting skill development and spreading good practice - developing and promoting online support

The aim of this initiative is to work with key partners including AIM, the Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales, Audiences Wales and UK bodies to collate information on online resources which can support the development of marketing in Wales and to actively encourage museums to make use of them.

3: Volunteering - promoting the contribution that volunteering can make to museums in Wales

This initiative seeks to strengthen the already invaluable contribution that volunteers make to the running and promotion of museums in Wales through promoting to potential volunteers and their support bodies the opportunities for widening the range and skills of volunteers and extending the ways in which they contribute to marketing and audience development.

4: Researching user and non-user perceptions and needs - helping strengthen the basis for marketing in the future

This initiative seeks to strengthen the basic market and visitor data for museum visiting in Wales and to develop understanding of non-visitor opinion and perceptions, so as to provide a better basis for future marketing work.

B) Promoting, profile raising, and advocating the benefits of museums across Wales today

The strategy will work to promote museums through five additional initiatives:

5: Promoting museums to the visitor market through building relations with tourism and promotional bodies

This initiative will strengthen the visibility of museums to tourists and day-visitors from inside and outside Wales, particularly those seeking information online on things to do in the area or in Wales as a whole.

6: Promoting high profile Welsh Museum Awards

In this initiative the national marketing team will work closely with partners to develop a regular set of awards that will reflect and showcase to the media and the general public the wide range of work undertaken by museums of all sizes and governance structures in Wales and the benefits museums deliver for society and the economy.

7: Promoting selective, targeted engagement in a wide range of national initiatives

This initiative will promote the opportunities on offer to museums across Wales to participate in a range of Wales-wide and UK-wide initiatives and campaigns, that seek to extend and build audiences for cultural bodies.

8: Delivering key advocacy messages for museums

In this initiative the national marketing team will promote a set of key advocacy messages aimed at challenging outmoded perceptions about what museums in contemporary Wales are and do.

9: Developing media relations for the museum sector

This initiative seeks to develop good media relations between the museum sector as a whole and the national media in Wales (and beyond).

Implementing the strategy

A national marketing team based in Wrexham will be responsible for implementing this audience development and marketing strategy for museums in Wales. They will do so over a three year programme of work which is set out in outline in the strategy Implementation Plan with a strong emphasis on working in partnership with the organisations which support the work of museums in Wales.