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Contemporarities of Indian Museums: a comparative study

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Contemporarities of Indian Museums: Current awakening in India

The current museums in India are contemporary & are working towards adding in different methods of reaching visitors to these museums. This study is about the reawakening of the audience to visit the museums that are newly made. India has museums that are related to the historical artifacts, paintings & installations. There have been museums that have been existing for a long period. There are museums like National Museum, New Delhi. There are new museums like IGNCA & Kiran Nadar Museum. The study works towards finding answers to a few questions. How do contemporary museums fare against the traditional museums? What are contemporary museums? What is the impact of these museums on the visitors? How do contemporary museums mitigate the consequences of the current pandemic? What are the national & international culture factors that impact the working of the Museums? Deciphering this via primary research and contextual interviews with the Museum visitors. This study works towards finding these differences and making a note of them for the museums in India. Understanding the learning that one gets from Museums is also an important learning that may make way in this study.

Literature Review

Learning from the museums by John H Falk & Lynn D. Dierking describes museums as the public institutions of learning and that of personal learning for all, hence playing an important role in building a democratic society along the way. Sharold McDonald in A companion to Museum studies refers to Museums as the place that helps in community building. A museum is a primary institutional locus where the value of art or art worth is proclaimed & the history of art is set for public view. Sharold also has added in the viewpoints of the rich cultural theorists like Bakhtin, Benjamin, Butler, Debord & Virilio which could be drawn upon for the near future. This book is a collection of essays edited by Sharold. Impact of the current situation or the recent pandemic situation on the Museums has been illustrative of the fact that the maintenance of the museums may actually take more than what may seem projective.

Methodology

This study has been conducted in person, literature review, contextual interviews & insitu research. Museum being a physical space to be studied, it was important to understand the user experience not only because of the space but also due to the human - space interaction therein. Understanding the perspective of the visitor is important versus understanding the reason for the museum's existence. Do the visitors tend to receive the same reason a museum was established or do they visit for some other reasons? While determining the User experience of the people visiting the museums it is important to understand their motivation to visit them physically. With the pandemic behavior in place, people also explore the possible ways of visiting museums

which may be beyond the actual impact that the museums may be wanting to create. All the above has been deciphered in this study.

Discussion

Museums in general are looked upon as a collection of artifacts, scientific discoveries etc which are well preserved so that the generations ahead benefit from them from understanding the content. The traditional museums are places where in such facts are stored and displayed for people to view. The content of the museums is of a given theme and it is followed throughout the museums. This results in a cult that may be visiting the museums. Museums are also placing wherein artifacts are stored and displayed from time to time.

Museums are more of a tool for culture building and are hence seen as important establishments in the history of any region at all. There is an anamorphic relationship between the museums and the academic rather than a transitive relationship according to Donald Preziosi.

Though today like a lot of other things and spaces, Museums are making a move into contemporisation. The actual artifacts that are stored & displayed are relatively lesser and the display is now turning into digital display with the help of technological tooling like the ICT's. There has been a quest for contextualization so that each recipient of the display is able to understand the museum artifact better without a lot of human intervention and direct human interaction. Despite that an understanding of the Museum phenomenon, discussion of heritage, globalization and commodification is important whether it is the traditional museum or a contemporary one. The delivery of the content may be different but the basic understanding and preparing the generations to come in these discussions is imperative. It

determines the existence of the museums versus it becoming merely an exhibition.

Studying the different museums around the capital of India & states around has given a few clues as to understanding their take and stake in development of museum phenomenon, discussion of heritage. It has also given insights in the globalization and commodification of the current museums. This study also looks into the necessity of this change or surface modification of the very strong foundation of the current Museums. In totality, whether the museums are looking at contemporisation they are still at the helm of combining modern User Experience principles to the age-old practices of preservation of artifacts. Museums do not thrive on their own and have their own economic model. Betterment of the User experience of the museums would help in building in a robust financial structure along with the government grant that the museums may receive.

Understanding what does the museum entail and does it really be a place only for the age old artifacts it may also have some new artifacts and work around them. When thinking about this is there a possibility that there may be an increase in the current footfall to the current museums possible ? Could there be some innovative programs or events that may be held in the current museums ? Avni Varia contemplates that in her quest for study of museums she suggests that there may be a cooking event at the Vishala museum so that the locals may turn around to this museum as the visitor and as the person who may build in the current sensitivities. She has contemporaries the understanding of the museums via her recent program, Museums of Ahmedabad. She holds Instagram live sessions in which there are walkthroughs into the museums which have existed since long and in a way reaching new audiences.

Museums may not be devoid of Art galleries when discussed in reference to artifacts & cultural heritage.

Culture is built via exposure to such museums which helps in understanding culture as is. Different kinds of museums like the National museums which have content related to the regions exist while there are museums that are related to religion. There are age-old museums like the Indian Museum Kolkata, National Museum New Delhi, Safdarjung Museum Hyderabad, Patna Museum, Albert Hall Museum, Jaipur which have the National treasures too. While there are new museums for Fine arts like the Kiran Nadar museum, Museum for religion like the Virasat - e Khalsa, Museum of Christian Art, Goa, Ajmer Museum. All the museums may work on the same premise of building in culture but they are focused on different structures.

Motivation to visit any museum:

Caldwell & Woodside (2003) & Rossl (2011) have discussed motivation to any museums through their research as the sociality, relaxation & emotion may play an important role in shaping the attitude towards cultural services. Respondents have discussed the primary motivation for going to the museums to of course understand the exhibits better. Although there are many other not so evident reasons to go to the museums. Visitors from other countries or cities may visit the museums for the necessary cultural interaction and learning. But the visitors who may be repetitive visitors may not actually be representative visitors. There were many different reasons discovered as insights while talking to the visitors / respondents.

'I go to park my car at the NGMA gallery, since it is a central place to park & my vehicle is safe. I also visit the museum when I go.'

'Museums generally have good washroom facilities; I go to avail

them instead of actually seeing the museum.’ ‘Museums feel great when I am out of the country since they are in the tourism package.’ ‘Owing to my walking problem I truly cannot visit museums as I cannot walk as much’ ‘It would be nice if I could know the artifacts & exhibits before I go.’ ‘Not all museums have good audio-visual understanding tools, let alone guides. The tools are not functioning half the time’. Verbatim as such are also a reality of the museum visit.

Museums have the novelty element lesser than other spaces and are more sanctimonious with relation to the place having historical artifacts etc. Museums are more a place to study, to understand the culture and find the understanding an important space in the knowledge as a constructivist. Addition of new media for visiting museums is great to visit, but the current opportunity to visit museums digitally also cannot be minimized looking at the pandemic digitalization. This may make an impact on the revenue stream and the upkeep of the museum. To add to the motivation of the local people to visit the museums is another challenge that museum enthusiasts are working at. They have organized various new media structures which may help in increasing the reach of the material in the museums but whether it will righteously add in to the motivation to visit the museums is still an imperative inquiry to be done.

Whether the traditional museums and the contemporary museums differ in the basic motivations, structure, then the answer is negatory as of now. Unless there will be virtual museums for multiverses that are planned. Will they be called as a museum is another inquiry that may be levied as and when that will happen? As of now, the traditional museums are the museums which are old and have stringent policies for display while the contemporary museums are open and accessible with regards to visitors &

artifacts. Security, motivation to visit, learning, cultural nuances and exchanges remain the same.

Scope for further study

Scope for further studies: there is a new concept that this study has deciphered. Understanding the museums for a more contemporary understanding. Thinking of new versions of museums. There are NFT's and multiverses coming to life. As a futuristic version there may be a possibility of a museum involving all the VR, NFT in an additive multiverse.

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