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'Plaza'Museum: Re-defining traditional museum roles considering audience behaviour

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What is 'Plaza'Museum: the term refers to a communal exhibition space, which encourages simple leisure time in the everyday through the admiration of the authentic artefacts while separating itself from the general information-focused museum trends of continuous dialog, ideologies, and teaching. It helps connecting the local community by intriguing them, thus creating a more appealing museum sphere for a wider audience.

Origins and research: The term was introduced first in Granada at the Inclusive Museum Conference in 2018. The idea was formulated by observing audience behaviour in common parks, shopping malls and fairs, focusing on the least interested groups (strolling types and local people). Early common parks were places where people spent time leisurely while learning the basics of social interaction and etiquette among the separate classes and the positive discourse between social groups by enjoying nature together. The idea also drew from the earliest idea of museums, and a much more focused attention on the artefacts themselves opposed to the wake of digital/interactive and ideology based exhibitions.

In order to prove and reinforce the theory, a quantitative research was conducted in 2019 involving several regional museums. Questions were focusing on audience preferences and behaviour as well.

Results: the quantitative research showed that artefacts hold an overwhelming authority over other aspects in the eyes of the audience. It also showed that they prefer to look at artefacts, or passively stroll around spending their time leisurely rather than engaging in active entertainment (interactive/digital elements). This result was hardly surprising, since the modern man is flooded with insurmountable amount information and possibility of active entertainment. This also creates 'museum bore' which was uncovered by Selene Frascella in a similar research. The data also showed that this is true to all age groups, though younger generations have a bit higher preference to activities.

Conclusions: If museums are trying to become "Hubs of Culture" and stay relevant they need to understand their uniqueness, which lies within the artefacts they hold. They cannot afford to enter the race of different entertainment complexes without the risk of losing their core values. Original artefacts cannot be touched, and only allowed to look upon, thus have zero interactive opportunities. If digital and interactive components would take over in museums, original artefacts would lose value because of this.

However this uniqueness could be addressed and reinforced. Museums can offer **a space (Piazza), an opportunity to visit and admire the pure existence of authentic treasures at their place: a "sacred ground" for the artefacts of the past.** They can be "hubs of culture" by becoming part of the local everyday leisure life where people can enter without the need for active entertainment, or seeking knowledge; where meditation self-reflection and the silent-dialog happen with the artefacts themselves. This would draw in locals who have less time to engage in their everydays, and also satisfy the need of "strollers" who do not seek deep information-filled activities, but would rather enjoy their short free-time surrounded by the beauties of the past just like in a common park. The 'Plaza'museum itself would support this phenomenon allowing to create a deeper emotional bond between museums and their audience.

About the author: My name is Árpád Bebes a Hungarian historian and the ethnographer (museologist) of the DBSL Museum in Körmen town. My research involves identity, connection of local treasures with the community and museum theory. I also conduct research about the national identity of medieval Hungary as a PhD student at the University of Debrecen. As a museologist I strongly support partnerships between separate institutions. If you have any inquiry about this research or the presented poster please refer to my email address or phone above.