

MARKETING HAND WOVEN TEXTILE EXHIBITIONS AND CREATING RELATED PUBLICITY: WHAT AUDIENCES WANT TO SEE AND KNOW AND WHY

Ruth Lesher Taylor, Texas State University, San Marcos

Abstract

Textile exhibitions, as attractions at museums, have fascinated large and varying local and tourist audiences for centuries. However, today's exhibition attendance has changed in number and composition. Local and international tourism is currently on the rise, however attraction attendance (attendance at exhibitions, historic places, and other attractions), as part of tourism, is on the decline. On the positive side, in this electronic age, all made-by-hand products constitute a growth market (USAID, 2006 and Barron, 2013). By extension, being positively related to this growth market, visitations to exhibitions featuring made-by-hand products should rise accordingly. This expected rise makes knowledge of hand-made products' marketing processes and principles requisite.

In the same vein, based on the positive relationship between hand-made products and the exhibit of them, exhibition marketing should receive attention in marketing education programs. At the present, as determined by a content review of ten marketing textbooks, much of marketing education emphasizes the marketing of high volume-output run-of-the-mill, standardized products. These texts, do not address the differences in marketing strategies as needed for custom or hand-made products that is different from marketing standardized products. Improvement is needed in marketing education to include marketing concerns particular to the marketing of unique handmade goods. Revised marketing curricula would benefit students as upcoming professional marketers if such revision emphasized training students in exhibition attendance management and exhibition publicity management, and in particular emphasized marketing of hand woven textile products and related tourist consumption behavior.

Purpose

This paper is exploratory. It serves to call to the attention of two constituents, exhibit marketers and marketing educators, that the travel, tourism and hospitality industry is growing, yet there is a decline one of its 25 subsectors, the recreation and attractions (R&A) subsector. The R&A subsector is comprehensive including exhibits of all kinds including exhibits of hand-made products in the general and exhibits of hand-woven textiles in the specific. The second purpose is to convey qualitative research findings based on personal interviews where interviewees shared their views on the need to change the traditional nature of textile exhibits in order to attract contemporary young locals and tourists, and yet retain their present growing market sector, the young at heart. Findings of their collective views are reported in the three of the four tables associated with this paper. Interviewee' and review of literature' suggestions regarding changes need basically surround the task of exhibition marketers meeting their multiple exhibition audiences demands of what they want to see in an exhibit, want to hear about the items exhibited, and how they want to be entertained in the process. These three factors are top priorities in exhibition attendance management and exhibit publicity management.

Research Methodology

Research methodology included collecting interviewer' thoughts on the need to change hand woven textile exhibit marketing strategies in order to increase audience numbers and diversify audience composition, and thoughts on making changes in associated exhibition publicity. Data were collected from review of literatures, and the use of qualitative survey methods that

included: observations; accompanying assistants; daily journaling; attendance at formal and informal meeting; and informal personal interviews with museum directors, museum exhibition specialists, and textile industry representatives, and hand weavers, entry-level and veteran.

Merit of Paper

The paper offers thought-stimulating ideas for developing potent marketing strategies useful in hand woven textile exhibit attendance management and in associated publicity management. It also makes contribution to the scant present academic marketing education literature related to teaching exhibition marketing, audience attendance management, exhibition publicity management and exhibition audience satisfaction management, and success measurement in these areas.

Limitations

Generalizability of this exploratory paper is limited as it is with any study regarding exhibition attendance numbers and composition as, in general, these factors tend to vary by age group, by life cycle stage, and by geographic and economic sector of country and across countries, making generalizability problematic. This research included interviews with practicing hand weavers as exhibit attendees.

References Available upon Request