

## MASS MEDIA RELATIONSHIP AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE FINANCIAL STATUS OF THE MUSEUMS IN BULGARIA

**Abstract:** Modern museums are dynamic institutions with imposed a number of functions, which require financial and manual endeavours. The state subsidies, grants and other types of support are insignificant and thus the responsibility for collecting, preserving and promoting the cultural heritage is actually shifted on the museums. The current report aims at clarifying the role of advertising by means of mass media – television, radio, newspapers and the internet, for increasing the earnings of the museum activities.

**Keywords:** museum, cultural heritage, mass media, advertisement, earnings

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### Introduction

Nowadays advanced museums are dynamic institutions with obligations by the domestic Law of Cultural Heritage, its ordinances, regulations and the international conventions, which the Bulgarian state also ratified to exercise a large number of functions requiring financial and physical (personal) endeavours. The state subsidies, grants and other types of financial support are insignificant and this shifts the enormous responsibility of preserving, promoting and collecting cultural valuables actually only upon museums. Furthermore museums (and the regional museums in particular) are practically the institutions to carry out cultural tourism in the respective regions (notwithstanding the presence of municipal tourism enterprises, tourist information centers or other structures with similar appellations, but practically pursuing no activities), an operation comparatively new as one of the engagements of museums employers. Vicarious budgets, established in some of the museums provide possibilities for additional earnings, particularly of organizations having significant cultural and historical sights and located in most visited destinations of the recreational tourism, willing to develop and build up their activities and to go beyond the principalscope of their regulated functions. Nevertheless, the museum activities, regardless of their character, should be supported by appropriate and adequate advertising, and promoting in all kinds of means of mass communication is of the first importance.

### Objectives

The present work aims at pointing out and proving the part of advertising carried out by means of the media – broadcasting, printed and social networks, for increasing the earnings of the museum organizations from the activities they perform and mainly from the tourists oriented products, which have financial measures – for their elaboration, as well as for the additional incomes for the institutions.

The report reviews the authors' understanding of a museum working with the mass media. It is not a rigorous scientific work and do not analyze particular promotional campaigns or the results of them. However, a good example taken out from the recent work of the Regional Museum of History –

Shumen will be highlighted that could be used as a model for our future activities and even as an instance for similar organizations.

### **Exposition**

For the purpose of the current work it is first needed to clarify the terms *advertisement*, *public relations* or just *PR*.

**Advertising** or **promotion** in business is a form of marketing communication aiming at encouraging, convincing and in some cases even manipulating (usually this is comprehended in a negative aspect) the public (spectators, readers, listeners, and etc.) to start or to continue undertaking a certain activity.

In general, advertising is understood as an interesting piece of information about a product, service and etc., disseminated in various forms and means, directed to a specific circle of consumers (a target group) and intends to provoke, to form or to maintain the interest in these products or services, so as they could be present on the market. Except for the particular product or service, advertising could be a part of the general promotion of their producer, and could also use some indirect marketing methods such as attracting and holding the visitors attention to a web site, which at a later stage could lead to making profits on on-line sales based on the site. There are also a number of non-commercial types of advertising – *political* (propaganda) or *campaign advertising*.

Advertising started gaining a leading position in the 19<sup>th</sup> and in the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when the mass productions were initiated, as was the mass media. Only in 2015 worldwide spending on advertising amounted to an estimated USD 529.43 billion. Advertising's projected distribution for 2017 was 40.4 % on TV, 33.3% on digital, 9 % on newspapers, 6.9 % on magazines, 5.8 % on outdoor and 4.3 % on radio (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advertising>. 08.10.2017).

One of the widely spread definitions is that of the American Marketing Association: advertising is “the placement of announcements and persuasive messages purchased in any of the mass media by business firms, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and individuals who seek to inform and/or persuade members of a particular target market or audience about their products, services, organizations, or ideas” (<https://www.ama.org/resources/Pages/Dictionary.aspx>. 08.04.2017)

During a contest organized by an American magazine (the Advertising Age) the following definition was recognized: „Advertising is a printed, written, oral or graphic announcement about a person, product, service or social movement demanded by the advertiser and paid for by the advertiser intending to increase the number of their customers, to gain more votes, or public approval.” (<http://reklama.blog.bg/biznes/2006/07/12/syshtnost-i-definicii-zareklama.7053>. 08.04.2017).

**Public Relations** or just **PR** is the practice of maintaining the public perception of well-known or social figures, organizations and programs.

This is an activity that establishes mutually beneficial relations between a particular organization and its purchasers. On these relations depends either its success or its failure.

There is a large number of various and complementary concepts and definitions for the public relations. Very popular is the definition suggested by the Public Relations Research and Education Foundation that was formulated after an analysis of 472 definitions: “Public Relations is a distinguishing management function, which contributes for establishing and upholding a two-stage communication, understanding, approval and collaboration between an organization and its consumers. It includes management of problems and of results, assists the manager in being constantly informed and responsive to the public opinion; determines and underlines the management responsibility for serving the interests of society; helps the management in being always up-to-date with the situation and effectively profiting the changes, in order to serve as an early alerting system. It is necessary to foresee the tendencies, to utilize researches and ethic communication techniques as principle implements. ([https://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/Връзки\\_с\\_обществеността](https://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/Връзки_с_обществеността). 08.04.2017)

Another experienced lecturer in Public Relations and a leading educator and expert who gave definitions for the functions and the existence of the “technology” at the same time was Dr. Rex Harlow. After a thorough analysis of almost 500 definitions taken down in the period 1900 – 1976, he developed a new definition: “Public Relations are a distinctive function of management that supports

the development of communication, interaction, maintenance, acceptance and understanding of an organization and its publics. Management of the organizations is able to understand and identify the key issues and problems by keeping intact with the public and respond through certain changes in the business. Public opinion is a great aspect for the organization to develop its strategies, products or services in order to build a good reputation. Management has a responsibility towards the public and people give positive and negative response to the organization according to their progress and performance. The basic techniques and approaches adopted by the organizations include ethical communication and research. The basic concept of Harlow behind public relations is to use communication. Communication plays a significant role for the management to identify its weaknesses and areas of low performance, which is reflected by the responses of public. Public relations can be used for a number of purposes including making improvements in business. The purpose of public relations is to bring reality to the face of the management". (Harlow, 1976; <https://newmediapr2014.wordpress.com/2014/06/05/pr-определение-същност-функции/>.08.04.2017)

Before commencing an advertising campaign for any activity or event, in our opinion, it is needed to determine the target market towards which the advertising announcements will be directed. With certainty this is an engagement that should be carried out by the departments "Public Relations", "Public Activities", "Marketing and PR" or any other term used to name these sections of the structures of the various museums in Bulgaria. In the context of the topic – the financial stability has a crucial part in the overall marketing strategy (appearance, messaging, advertising and publicity materials, and etc.) and the relationship with the means of mass media. The ignorance of the various target groups, to a great extent in our view, stultifies the campaign. On one part it leads to no financial revenues generated from tourists and on the other the resources invested in advertising are inappropriately spent. Bearing in mind the shortage of experienced employees and the huge number of assignments concentrated in these departments, it is possible, and why not even compulsory, to hire external advertising agencies for particular museum displays or special events, that would have the potential to become successful – as regards their total number of visitors, as well as the financial revenues being generated. Such expenditures are accounted for, considering the favourable outcome of the occurrence (Крайски, 2008).

In the next paragraphs we will take notice on the variety of media and the channels for spreading information to the public. The way the media are classified reflects our judgment about their significance in the process of putting forward information and advertisement of museum activities.

### **The Internet**

Present day society is characterized with qualitatively new attitude towards information. The progress of the Internet demonstrates in the best way the importance of communication and computer technologies for the modern society, defined today as information society. Keeping in mind the new necessities of the up to date visitors, we reckon that a significant precondition for promoting museum activities is advertising in the global network. At this stage, museum institutions in Shumen Province have official web sites, but it is not possible to share or upload there electronic exhibitions, which are displayed in the halls of the museum or others that are organized in other museums in Bulgaria. This is the first change that could be made. In the second place, the pages on the World Wide Web of some of the museums are available only in Bulgarian language. Supplementing one or more foreign language versions would enhance the publicity and would make the information about all museum activities and exhibitions accessible for external visitors. Yet, this is just one of the elements of the web sites that should be paid attention to. Another one is the easy access to information (one or two step entry), its being well arranged (in good order) and last but not least the proper layout of the graphic design. It would be fine if the official pages of cultural organizations are not only kept up to date and with modern appearance and control, but the information that they offer should be reliable and easy to find by every individual internet user.

As it was referred to above, the contemporary society is an information society, looking for rapid entryways to the wanted information, including such to museum events. In this connection social

networks provide possibility and a large field of advertisements of displays and events related to the museum as a whole. *Facebook* is the most popular social media in Bulgaria, but some other social networking services, such as *Twitter* and *Instagram* should not be laid aside, too. In view of the fact that in Bulgaria, and to the cultural and historical places of interest in Shumen Province in particular, the greatest part of the foreign tourists are Russian speaking, the Russian social networking service *Одноклассники* (or *Classmates*) should not be disregarded. All of them provide the possibility for exchange of a huge amount of information, including advertisements, which could reach to the millions of users of the social networking services. Besides, it is cost free and efficient and it could result in a serious financial effect for the institutions. The operation functions of the services, that are accessible only to the respective admins and moderators, make possible the feedback and the analyses of the recipients of the information and at the best they should be identical to the target market group of the organization. On that basis, purposeful activities – elements of the overall marketing mix could then be undertaken.

Innovations for the Bulgarian museums, also having a high level of potential financial aspect are electronic (on-line) shops. Admittedly, these are not novelties for western museum organizations. Their introduction for certain, even if slowly, would lead to financial results, and would also, in a large measure, facilitate possible foreign tourists and visitors in delivering entrance tickets and guided tours, as well as in buying souvenirs from the museum online shops. On one hand they represented an option for direct income generation from the given groups of services and products, and on the other they are an element of the overall museum appearance in the World Wide Web.

### **Electronic Media**

The presence of the museum in the programs of local television and radio broadcasts is satisfactory, but advertising in national televisions and radio stations should not be underestimated. Not only museum products, but their authors could also be introduced there. This is an instrument for creating a positive image, which could attract more tourists and could enhance gaining popularity in the state (on the domestic market). Respectively the number of visits to the places of interests – part of the structure of the Regional Museum of History – Shumen, during the high season would be increased, thus making a profit (additional financial proceeds). The absence of correspondents and the choice of topics to be covered on national air should not be an obstacle. Paid advertising formats are also possible – well selected and targeted they could return the invested finances. As might be expected this is a course of action only for exceptionally attractive events and exhibitions which are assumed to produce considerable financial incomings. That is not the case of occurrences that are organized as a matter of status and do not have the potential to make profit.

Making and broadcasting advertising videos (yet paid) is also a substantial means of promoting museum attractions and activities. Documentary series could be shot that would promote the tourist itineraries, displays and other happenings developed by museum employees. Radio broadcasting and especially reportages concerning the work of the museum institutions and the presentation of their products on the national radio air should not be ignored.

### **Print Media**

Releases in the local print media are not up to the standard, they are not sufficient to promote museum events either. Furthermore, a single printed publication, be it popular amongst the public or not, could not reach all the target market groups that the occurrence is oriented to. And broadcasting advertising announcement in the national daily newspapers depends on the will of the local correspondents and on the general policy of the particular publication – daily or weekly, also.

Although the institution is being advertised in several specialized magazines focusing on tourism (their circulation is in large supermarket chains, gas stations, air ports, bus service offices – places visited by large number of people) this is still beyond sufficient. Furthermore these are sporadic releases and the magazines have covered the greatest part of the events. However this is still one of the methods for going beyond the scope of the local stage of presenting both the institution in general and single exhibitions, sights – parts of the structure of the museum or regular special events, which have

turned into traditional in particular. This representation, in our opinion, should be preceded by various types of surveys and questionnaires offered to tourists. Thus its efficiency could be given an account (this is not put into practice in the Regional Museum of History – Shumen) and it could be judged whether to enhance the advertisement or to reduce it in order to save resources. We are convinced that this type of presentation will definitely yield revenues for the museum, and the mistake that we make is not analyzing the results of the surveys and questionnaires being conducted.

### **Printed Materials**

They comprise of posters, leaflets, brochures, information and advertising flyers, banners and billboards (Ambrose and Paine, 2006). Most common for the museum is the use of posters – prominence is given not to their large numbers, but to their rightly chosen location – busy streets and crowded central places. As regards the other printed materials, they are issued mostly for certain campaigns and special events. Often advertising and information flyers are produced in relation to major exhibitions and other events from the national culture calendar. They are spread about the town and the settlements in the region, as well as some other places of tourists' interest. Frequently they are included in the general presentation of Shumen during tourist fairs and expos. Banners and billboards, in view of the corresponding costs for their production and display, are used only as part of the preparation of large scale events with respective expectations for numerous visits and return on the invested financial resources.

### **Conclusions**

In our opinion the partnership of small number of journalists and means of communication should be sought. These would be such that prove their loyalty to the institution and release correctly the information they receive, they are of service both to visitors and tourists, as well as to cultural organizations. Sending information to a large number of media and journalists respectively could turn into a precondition for the on air appearance of unverified, interpreted or sensational details that do not correspond to reality, form negative public opinion (unconsciously, striving for originality) and have unfavorable effect for the museum and its publics and accordingly for the financial outcomes of a particular event.

Repeatability of press releases is compulsory, especially for major projects (displays), with high financial potential, which also require more financial resources for the arrangement. In this aspect crucial is the part of the leading line (the appellation of the exhibition or the event), as well as introducing new pieces of information with every other official announcement. The *leitmotiv* is one and the same since the occurrence is one. But it is gradually expanded with additional facts – emphasizing on the interest in the event through statistics (the number of visitors), new *additions* to the leading initiative (a new artifact, applying educational programs for each age group and etc.), and added value (having the opportunity to receive more without raising the admission fees).

### **The Case of a Good Practice of the Regional Museum of History Shumen**

We will give an example with the last guest exhibition in the Regional Museum of History – Shumen, which cost to the institution financial resources that have not been spent on a single occurrence so far. The case in point is “Подводен свят” (*Underwater World*) – a display created as an installation after the initiation of Burgas Municipality and with the cooperation of a private breeding company focusing on aquarium and exotic fish. The objective of the museum was rather attracting larger number of visitors, which could take a look not only on the appealing event, but on the other products presented in the halls of the museum – permanent and temporary exhibitions, too. The financial aspect of the enterprise (the expected proceeds) was important to the extent of returning the investment of the resources for organizing the Underwater World exhibition.

For that purpose, as soon as the parties signed the contracts (almost one month before the opening) an advertising campaign commenced through all the channels of promotion described above – the Internet, electronic media, print media, printed materials – billboards, posters, flyers. A wide range of thematic souvenirs were also bought and manufactured. The whole advertising strategy was

directed mainly at the target audiences of children and students. Thus the general public was acquainted with the attractiveness of the display long before the time of the official start.

Subsequently, just before the opening of the exhibition, a press release reminded about the beginning of the occurrence, and mentioned what else could be seen in the halls of the museum. The prices of the tickets remained unchanged– despite the presence of other guest exhibitions and the launching of a virtual reality mobile application at that time, they were not increased. These actions and the advertising strategy gave results and after the first ten days the display had a great success. Afterwards there was a decrease in the visitors' flow.

In the meantime an educational game was developed for students. It was announced in another press release sent to the mass media, and published on the official web site of the museum, as well as on the page of a social network. The number of visitors grew higher again and the proceeds were almost equal to the expenditure incurred. This happened in the middle of the period of staying.

We believe that our actions on the advertising of the exhibition and our work with the means of mass communication entirely covered what was referred to in the lines above. All the channels of promoting were utilized, a particular market group was targeted, thematic and boutique souvenirs were provided, repeatability of the press releases was achieved while introducing a new element each time and thus the incurred expenditure was returned. Most significant for the institution in this case was the indirect advertisement attained by the exhibition – the museum made a visible impression in the social life as an interdisciplinary organization, non-conservative, on the contrary – open and adaptive to the necessities of the visitors in the contemporary information society. More than four thousand visitors entered the permanent and temporary exhibitions and the response all around the state is still vivid.

We reckon that this is the way to work with the different mass media and it is one of the conditions for generating more proceeds from the events that are organized in Bulgarian museums and in the Regional Museum of History – Shumen in particular.

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