

Role of Public Library in Tourism Development

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ABSTRACT

Public libraries are cultural centres. They serve as a catalyst for socio-cultural and educational development by providing access to information and knowledge. Therefore they can play a vital role in country's development. Tourism is a large industry and is an integral part of the development of the economic condition of a country. Local tourism benefits local infrastructure and local community. The paper aims to find the importance of public library in local tourism and designs a local history collection format for a public library.

KEYWORDS: Public library, tourism, local tourism, local history collection.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public Libraries, the local gateways to knowledge, provide basic conditions for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. They are developed out of public funds and the use of these is not restricted to any class of persons in the community. These are the local centers of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users.

While defining the public library the UNESCO Manifesto for Public Libraries (1994) states "The Public Library is a practical demonstration of democracy's faith in educational universal education as a continuing and lifelong process, in the appreciation of the achievement of humanity in knowledge and culture. It is the principal means whereby the record of man's thoughts and ideas and the expression of his creative imagination are made freely available to all. It is concerned with the refreshment of man's spirit by the provision of books for relaxation and pleasure ..." According to S R Ranganathan public library should preserve the literary remains of humanity for posterity, as vehicles of culture and as source materials for antiquarian research.

2. TOURISM IN CONTEXT

Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities,

some of which imply tourism expenditure (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2008). Tourism is now the largest industry in the world by virtually any economic measure including gross output, employment, capital investment and tax contributions

Tourism is a major and integral part of economic, social and physical development of a locality as well as a country. It comprises complete system of nature, the universe, the space and the galaxy. India's glorious traditions and rich cultural heritage are closely related with the development of tourism.

Domestic tourism or local tourism is a part of tourism, which has many benefits for the country as well as its locality. One of the most important benefits of this kind of tourism is the construction and improvement of local infrastructure. It creates a source of pride for local communities and their traditions. This expands to local heritage sites and buildings as they become hubs for tourists, exploring the locality.

This paper aims to point out the importance of public libraries in tourism. It mainly deals with local tourism and proposes a design of local history collection in the public library.

3. BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

During the study of literature, it has been found that the aspects of the theme are directly or indirectly related to the various types of materials. Public libraries are manifested through their cultural, educational and information functions; they contribute to the economic development of the society. Libraries participate in tourism in several ways. According to Bovero (2009), cultural tourism represents a new topic in librarianship and it is considered to be difficult for the information professional because they are not enough skillful in this area, but they have a great attitude to this new concept and this would help them to accept the challenge in future. Cultural tourism is favourable for tourism in Slavonia and Baranja. In eastern Croatia, library cultural heritage can contribute significantly to the development of tourism (Tokic, Ksenja, 2017). It is found in Colombo that adequate tourist information management is not in operation, and therefore there is an acute demand and need for public libraries particularly in tourist domain areas (Kumarasingha, A.P., 2017). Senapati (2007) presented a brief history of the public library system and the status of public library in India. He proposed that the public library may serve as village e-knowledge centre with the latest ICT infrastructure and discussed different types of tourism and their aspects.

Perdu (1985) categorised tourist information in three categories as i) housing, ii) transportation, iii) places to visit. Tourist information has a major influence in the creation of their image (O'Leary and Deegan, 2005), implying that it stands out as a crucial factor in qualifying the destination in the way it is promoted, and the ability to generate attractiveness. As a result, tourism information stands out as a marketing tool that can branch in competitive advantage of a destination. Tokic (2014) points out several forms of involvement of libraries in tourism namely: information role, educational role, cultural function and tourist attraction. The author also states that the library is an area of intercultural interaction between visitors and locals. Since public libraries are non-profit organizations, customer orientation is a component that has a major influence on organizational performance. Two studies about client satisfaction were conducted by Karuza, Krajnovic & Volic (2017) in Public Library, Zadar and the studies revealed that the respondents were very satisfied with services. The authors suggest that public libraries should enable interaction among their users-local and tourists and take active part in tourism information service.

Studies conducted in Bibliothecae Alexandria in Egypt, by Tomic and Lazarevic (2010) suggest that in order to introduce all the library services to tourists and the local community, it is important to develop an excellent marketing strategy. It involves a well-designed and accessible web-presentation, since it can be accessed to from all over the world. Silvar, Vitasovic, Bobanivic (2017) have explored a new initiative- that is introduction of human library in the public libraries as a new experience based tourism amenity.

4. IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC LIBRARY IN TOURISM

Society and culture are two complementary facets that go side by side. They are inseparable. There may be different culture in a society. Culture cannot be changed without certain factors – library is one of the certain factors which can change the culture of a certain group in a society. A public library functions as a cultural centre of the society. It provides and focuses the cultural and artistic development in the community and helping them to shape and support the cultural identity of the community. Public library Mission stated that, “promotion awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts, scientific achievements and innovations”. (IFLA/ UNESCO; 1994;3).The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a total of 169 targets spanning economic, environmental and social development. SDG 11 states “Make cities and human settlement inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. According to this libraries have an important role in preservation of valuable documentary heritage and local culture which strengthens the local communities. Libraries have prior duty to promote the culture and heritage. Public library collects all the documents related to different cultural fields, and promotes awareness of cultural heritage. Rath (1996) opines that “If national and university libraries are the barometer of a country’s erudition, public libraries are the barometer of its general culture”. A public library is a key agency in the local community for the collection, preservation and promotion of local culture in its diversity. A public library should

- collect and preserve its local cultural heritage: A public library needs to be involved in documenting and preserving cultural heritage, because cultural heritage is fundamental to any society. It plays an important role in promoting self respect and pride and it helps to motivate people to maintain social standards. It contributes to sustainable local and national development and it helps to create the awareness of the existence of tourist attractions in a locality.
- favour cultural diversity:
- provide access to all forms of cultural expression.

As a cultural institution libraries are important agencies behind the development and improvement of tourism. Researches show that libraries participate in tourism in several ways:

As a cultural centre for the community: undoubtedly public libraries perform well as cultural centres. Different cultural programmes are arranged in libraries eg. Rabindra Jayanti, Republic day, Independence day etc. The public libraries also may organize programmes during the popular festivals - religious or other important national ones and promote the local culture such as local folk songs, folk dance and artworks, which can boost up tourism.

Through their educational activities public libraries are often considered as “the people’s university”. Public libraries act as locally accessible place that helps to bridge the continuing divides related to wealth inequality. Through the educational activities like seminars, study circle, popular talks regarding the local heritages and local history, library can attract visitors.

In addition to these there are several other factors which could be interesting and attractive for the tourists, they are:

- i) Library building: Building should be attractive, centrally located and designed in such way that reflects the local culture.
- ii) Specific contents of the library: Along with the conventional collection, library may have a museum on local art, a rare book collection, collection of coins etc.
- iii) Presenting local heritage: Local heritages can be presented by pictures , photographs, graphics, slide shows etc.
- iv) Various cultural events: Library can observe remarkable days like republic days, birth ceremony of renowned persons and organize cultural events on particular occasions. These will also represent the local talents to the outsiders. Library can also arrange concerts, films, exhibitions of photographs and pictures to attract visitors or outsiders.

Information is one of the most important aspects in the promotion of tourism. There are several categorization of tourist information. One of them is categorization defined by Nascimento and Silva (2008) who categorized the information in three basic types:

- a) information for business management
- b) information to promote tourism; and
- c) information for the tourists.

Among the above three categories, public libraries should deal with the last two. In this respect the advancement of information and communication technology has a vital role to play.

With the help of advanced digital technology, public library can enable a direct online access to their holdings such as books, studying accessories and other information that take part in presenting a specific region to tourists. In last several years, the impact of libraries in the development of tourism has increased rapidly. One of the reason behind this is now- a -days tourists are interested to gather lot of information on a destination before deciding to visit it. Library can provide a prior knowledge about the destination; date or season related to that particular location; a short video presentation as an introduction to the things they are about to see.

The blog or website of the public library can be created for this purpose and it should be updated and maintained properly. There should be provision for the visitors' interaction or feedback section, or it will be more advanced like video chatting or incorporation of social media.

5. DESIGNING A LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION IN A PUBLIC LIBRARY

The aim of the collection of the public library is to provide resources for the local residents and researchers to explore the personal, historical and cultural heritage of the locality.

The emphasis of the local history collection is on documenting government, industry, commerce, education, recreation and historically significant individuals of the place, as well as the history of its religious, cultural and social organizations. These materials help the researchers to trace their family backgrounds too.

The areas of collection should include the following: Records that tell the history and development of the place; images and pictures of different sites, places and heritages that are important part of this collection; materials that record and provide context for understanding the lives of historically significant figures associated with the place.

5.1. Collection format

The local public library is the logical place to collect, preserve and disseminates the history of any given area simply because it is the local library. Some of the collection materials include:

- i) **Books:** The public library should acquire a well guided collection of books about the area and books by “local” authors. If there are books on local history or regional level history it is usually helpful to buy two copies of each, one to be circulated and other for the reference collection. The book collection for any local history collection includes:
Regional histories or city histories,
Copies of both adult and children’s book about the area.
Travel guides
Brochures
Biological dictionaries or biographies
Directories
Fiction and non-fiction
Collection should be designed in such way that emphasis should be on the development of the area because the main aim is to grow the visitors’ interest.
- ii) **Ephemera:** Ephemera is often printed on very poor quality paper and produced to be used once and thrown away. They are sometimes seems to be very important local history material as they produce menus, organizational reports, handbills, advertisements etc.
- iii) **Manuscripts:** Manuscripts materials cover memoirs, diaries, journals, reminiscences, collection of letters, memorabilia. They are usually handwritten in nature. These materials are often the most valuable parts of a local history collection, but the problem arises in processing and preservation.
- iv) **Periodicals and journals:** Locally published magazines or journals deal with the topics on social , cultural, historical or political situation of the locality, and should be acquired in the library .The periodicals should be clipped for articles of local interest.
- v) **Newspapers:** The local newspapers are the real backbone of any local history collection; either it may be original or digital. This is an excellent tool for libraries.
- vi) **Maps :** Area maps and local maps are important for the library, which aims to develop local history collection. Special interests can be fulfilled by sketch maps or hand-drawn sketches.
- vii) **Pamphlets:** They are valuable, because they are published in or about the location. The photographs in pamphlets are often not available anywhere else. So they are important for historical study, and useful for the public libraries.
- viii) **Pictures and Photographs :** Pictures may be of different kinds- prints, negatives, slides, clippings, picture books, postcards, albums, photographs in digital format etc.; they are considered to be the easiest of local history materials to collect, because they are available for different persons, associations, local photographers. It is essential to keep the records like date, place, name of the personnel etc.

Apart from all these some other important documents for organizing local history collections in a public library are- Audio recording, census records, digital files, Govt. documents, gazetteers, institutional or organizational records, organizational directories, personal letters, diaries, video recordings etc.

5.2. Selection Criteria

For selecting the materials the first step is to find the existing collection for local history items. The task should be assigned to a person with a thorough knowledge of the local areas. The periodical collection, newspapers, pamphlets should also thoroughly examined. Emphasis should be given on relevance to the local history, authenticity, completeness and quality of the physical form of the materials. No local history collection is complete without the selection of local authors. For developing a local history collection in a public library it is very important to make a content list based on what we already have and what we think might be available. Once this list has been compiled, the search for the wanted items can begin.

5.3 Donations

The collection may be gifts from the local public like special books, items from local museums. The particular library which is developing its local history collection should welcome these donations for its local history collection. Each donation to the collection will be recorded in a donor file that will contain a copy of deed of gift and all correspondence related to the transaction. The library should decide how they will display or store the items, and how these will be used by the public.

5.4. Accessibility

Local history collection materials should generally be opened for the public during any normal working hours. Every effort should be made to make the collection accessible to the public as much as possible, but due to nature of this collection, some materials may be kept under lock and key. The users of this collection must consult with the librarian before using them.

6. QUALITY OF LIBRARIAN

The role of library in the tourism depends not only on the collection, technical equipments and capabilities of the library, but also on the library staff, primarily the librarians. The main asset of the library is educated and experienced staff. To provide high quality service, both the head and the employees of the institution should be highly skilled. A librarian should have the following skills:

- Knowledge: The librarian should have a good knowledge of the local place, local heritage, art and architecture, sociological importance, cultural context, religious importance etc.
- A good memory of facts: Librarian or library staff should have a good memory to recall different events related to the locality or the local community to face different queries by the users.
- An enquiring mind and a problem-solving approach: to aim at fully committed good service, library professional required to have an enquiring mind to find the answers of different questions by the patrons.
- A combined knowledge of digital technology and the proficiency to provide the service -“Ask a librarian”:
In this digital age ,IT skill and knowledge of digital technology is inevitable for any librarian.
- Good listening and questioning skills: To have patience for listening to the problems and queries is vital for the librarian. He or she may encounter different questions of tourism from people of different states or different countries. So he must be apt in listening to the questions and skillfully answering them.

Other qualities of the librarian are: An excellent command of more than one language specially on local language and in some case foreign language, willingness to do further research and knowledge of how to go about this, in depth knowledge about the local area and community, and of course experience as a tourist or a tour planner.

CONCLUSION

Public libraries are the part of the cultural institutional network but their primary objective is to serve local communities. Public libraries promote awareness of the cultural identity of a community. The paper analyses how public libraries can be suitable for the creation of new cultural and tourist attractions in order to develop and enrich the local communities of a place, because tourism is one of the most important economic activities that can bring positive economic effects for the local population and community. For a tourist location, it is very important to use all available heritages and cultural resources in the development of tourism. Public libraries can take a very crucial role in this respect. Public libraries should enable interactions among their users- local and tourists and take active part in tourist offer creation. They should be more and more innovative and consider need based services for tourist before, during their stay and after they leave the locality. In India, where tourism is a very vital source of revenue and where there are various forms of tourism, the public libraries have a lot of responsibilities to promote this tourism. In this way, both the public libraries can be revived and tourism can also be boosted up.

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