Sustainable museographies – The museum shops

Maria Heloïsa Figueiredo Albuquerque, Maria João Bravo Lima Delgado

CIAUD, FAUL, Rua Sá Nogueira, Lisboa, Portugal

Abstract

Our reflection is on the sustainability of museographies in the 21st century and the role of the museum shops in this area. Products available in the shops of museums, alongside other cultural marketing strategies, the level of service management, spaces and cultural, are a challenge to the museum design in the current context. We will seek to motivate all stakeholders in these organizations for the creative challenge of current museographies, in particular regarding the need to review the framework of products available in museums, its framework within the thematic links between the collections that are part of the collections and sustainability economic and financial, but also in the artistic and technological promotion of a society.

Keywords: Museum shops; Gifts; Museography; Sustainability; Cultural industries

1. Introduction

Today’s museums are a complex system of economic, social and cultural policies that accompany the development of new ideas about Art, science and technology, establishing greater cohesion in relationships with different audiences. The current framework of these institutions points to the development of sustainable museographies, which arise due to the role of museums in the dynamic socio-cultural XXI century, associated with new economic criteria and new consumption habits.

Framed in the cultural market logic, associated to cultural industries, museums looking for new operational strategies in the management of the collections, services and spaces in order to monetize economically and culturally these organizations.

Aimed the impact of such changes cause the museographies, we tried in this paper to present the results of a study that aims to understand the role of the museums’ shops on the sustainability of museums, from the identification of the types of products they sell, which illustrate the interventions particularly effective from the point
of view of a cultural market logic. It was our intention to also highlight some design objects, which, made with rigorous standards of aesthetics and quality and built from innovative materials and technologies, are available in the shops of national and international museums, helping to situate them in the context of sustainable museographies.

2. The sustainability of the museums

The second half of the twentieth century was the scene of major changes in museology in Europe, which sought to monitor the social expansion, cultural and technological postwar.

Currently, before a somewhat global consumer society, museums remain institutions alongside the cultural nature of its mission, which includes the preservation of heritage and collective memory, try to find new ways of sustainability, positioning itself within the cultural industries. Thus, the exhibition design, marked by the consumption habits and the socio cultural dynamics of contemporary society, opens to a cultural market logic, associated with cultural industries, acting to monetize economically and culturally all museological spaces. This commitment makes the museums in cultural industries, a term that arises and gains strength from the 60s with Theodore Adorno and Horkheimer [1], when submitting the first time the concept of cultural industry.

Whether the great museums or thematic museums, traditional museums, Museu-Houses, eco-museums, community museums and even virtual museums, integrate various services in its mission in the cultural, educational and leisure while enhancing the dissemination and promotion of its permanent exhibitions and / or temporary. This activity is associated with a rigorous program of social and cultural activities, in order to extend the museum experience of visitors and attract new audiences, retaining and creating an increasingly cohesive connection in various aspects with the community in which it operates.

The valuation of these material resources and innovation policies in the quality and diversification of services in the current framework has caused mixed reactions; it is feared the consequences that these actions may cause the role of museums in society, in particular the risk of transforming cultural products into commodities.

However, recognizing the inevitability of museums follow this evolutionary process, the ICOM General Conference in 1992, Musées: y a-t-il des limits?, discusses the relationship between museums and the economy, and setting limits to ensure compliance with the objectives of their mission, not forgetting the need to simultaneously ensure the sustainability of museographies.

The concept of sustainability applied to museums was under discussion in the ICOM meeting on "Museums and financial sustainability" held in November 2011 in Porto. On the theories and practices of sustainability applied to museums, Philip G. [3] points out some conditions that museums should take into account: "ponder its duration, the long-term of its performance, quality of its operation and services as non-profit-purposes and their contribution to the welfare of society." It also highlights the work of the museologist Madan, R. (2011), entitled "Sustainable Museums: strategies for the 21st century" [4], which presents some strategies that contribute to sustainability, recovered from a large number of case studies in museums, trusts and agencies in the UK, USA, Australia, Denmark and Kenya. Many of these topics have inspired some museum directors to build medium and long-term paths as Sir Nicholas Serota witness, director of the Tate.

Central to this analysis, which coexists with the requirements of the economic system, along with the coffee shop, restaurant and even meeting spaces, we find that the museum stores, making available and market products directly related to the acquis and with multiple cultural values, help attract public and to satisfy the desire of many visitors to learn more, to remember and to obtain pieces related to the exhibits.

Several studies have been conducted around the world in order to realize its importance in sustainable museology. Mottner and Ford [5] analyzed the products the stores of museums provide what is for sale on the basis of pedagogical and educational objectives set by the heads of the educational museum sector. Also Kotler and Lee [6] identified in public museums the gains coming from shops or museums, or the use of various services, market perspective in museum management strategy.
3. The evolution of the concept of museum

Stepping back to the original function of museums, realize that collecting is an activity that has existed since ancient times where exposed Art objects to make known to the people. The Romans had spoils of war in the forums, theaters and spas; in Ancient Greece there were paintings exhibited in the Acropolis stairs, as well as in Alexandria, were displayed astronomy objects and surgical along with statues of philosophers. In the Middle Ages, however, the idea set out to make known objects or works of art disappeared. However, the Renaissance resurfaces the private collecting, practiced by bourgeois, who were ascending economic and socially. During this time, appeared a number of palatial galleries where you could see sculptures and paintings. But, as did the cabinets of curiosities, were intended for a very limited audience.

Only the enlightenment of the 18th century favored the formation of public collections, systematic, with educational goals. Thus, the government using for the first time, the acquisition of private collections, invests in culture in founding the national museums, such as the Ashmolean Museum, created from a donation made to the University of Oxford, and the British Museum, created in 1753, from a private collection of Hans Slone acquired by Parliament. In Paris we assist in the Louvre Palace in 1793, public presentation of the first art collection, with works previously belonging to royalty and the Church.

Despite the birth of the great museums of Europe have happened in the 18th century, the first major museum-explosion in the world takes place in the middle of the century. XIX, still with collectors practices based on arbitrary criteria for the acquisition and selection of works (Smithsonian, 1846; National Museum Washitghon 1858, Natural History Museum, NY, 1869, Metropolitan Museum in 1870; Cairo Museum; MNAA, 1884; Prado, 1872).

In opposition to this culture of pieces accumulation, without any historical or expository criterion, contemporary museology takes a critical and scientific spirit, promoting a dialogue with cultural and educational broadcasting responsibilities. Today, the museum concept goes beyond the permanent or temporary exhibition of works and invests in the development of cultural activities directly related or not with your estate or the permanent exhibition - guided tours, educational visits for children, adults or professionals, workshops, conferences -, whereas all areas for the activities of leisure-museum shop, bar, restaurant, rest areas and recreation - form an integral part of its context.

As pointed out by Delgado [7], "the museum experience is not confined to the narrative space of the exhibition, but it is assumed as a narrative journey where all the spaces and objects in constant communication maintain a dialogue with their visitors."

This renewal of museum concepts associated to services and the cultural market products, places us in a wide design of the museum, which holds new goals, a response to the interest of various public cores.
4. Museum shops

From the selection of some museums shops illustrating particularly effective interventions from the point of view of a cultural market logic, we present a set of museum institutions in Europe and the US that bet on the marketing of objects suitable to their merchandising, whether the painting museums and/or sculpture, such as natural history, science, design, industrial museums or decorative arts.

Through constant dissemination of cultural activities related to the permanent and/or temporary exhibitions and educational programs, as well as the offer for sale in the shops of museums, publications, replicas and products establish thematic relations with their present or past collections, museography promotes a better understanding of its collection, opening simultaneously to different multicultural forms.

Our attention directed to the type of products sold both in the great museums like the smaller ones, where we find shops or in some cases, small balconies, with inspirational items in their collections, seeking to stimulate the curiosity of visitors, inform, educate and provide memories of your experience at the museum.

In all cases analyzed, we find that the strategic location of the stores, occupying areas prior to the exhibition space and often with direct access from the outside, in order to motivate the public and facilitate sales, marketing has been a concern of the museums.

"The stores are usually integrated into the reception area and reception from the public, as an open space where the public can easily access" [8] In many cases there is one store, but, along the way, are distributed at points considered strategic spaces, objects related to exposure, which may facilitate interpretation of the works and satisfy "the desire of visitors to learn more, or more often, to take home a souvenir of your visit “[9].

In Europe, the most recent case and paradigmatic of this marketing policy is the Louvre Museum, which is one of the oldest museums in Europe, opened in 2014 a store in the middle of the galleries for the display of French painting, the next room that shows the painting "The Mona Lisa" by Leonardo da Vinci, one of the symbols of this museum. This institution, which has accounted for six stores across its museological space, also opened a temporary boutique in the Cour Napoléon, near the Pyramid, which will be open to the public until end of 2016, with the aim of becoming a "storefront" available to most visitors, because of its prime location.

The museum shops open up new paths through the market orientation of products associated with the museum context. Products presented in many museum shops are converted into active vehicles of collections they promote. Alongside these products, the bookstore sections and even more general also are present in museum spaces.

In the artistic domain, museums such as the MET and the MoMa in New York, the Museo del Prado in Madrid, the Musée d'Orsay in Paris or the aforementioned Musée du Louvre, market not only reproductions of paintings, sculptures, drawings, photography or posters of the works exhibited in its vast galleries of the most varied products decorated with pictures or details of works of the masters. Since stationery, decoration and household items such as tea or coffee services, mugs, plates and individual (Gauguin, Monet, Van Gogh at the Orsay and Meadow) to the household linen (Victorian & Albert, MET). Many of these institutions also invest in didactic articles geared for children (games, puzzles).

In art museums we can also find in their stores fashion accessories, such as scarves, scarves, ties, bags, among others, which contains tables of Van Gogh, Monet, Klimt (Louvre, MET, Orsay, Prado) or umbrellas playing works by Monet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Tiffany or Van Gogh (TEM). The garments (dresses, t-shirts or ponchos), also are present in these stores with patterned fabrics inspired by the works of art.

Also the merchandising of small museums, foundations, art galleries, and Museums-House put on sale in its stores materials related to the exhibition in order to inform, motivate and influence the purchase decisions of visitors. We find shops, some of considerable size, in foundations, such as the Bayeler Foundation in Basel, Switzerland, which offers a wide range of books on the most varied arts, as well as all kinds of items created from their collections and temporary exhibitions. The same applies to the Foundation Lazaro Galdiano in Madrid, where we found several inspirational products or related to their collections.

If noteworthy is the Musée Marmottan in Paris, a museum of small dimensions, which is exposed one of the most iconic paintings of Impressionism, Monet Impression soleil levant, and many other obrasimpressionistas, which are played on several items for sale in the store museum. Also the small Museo Sorolla in Madrid, the Wallace Collection in London, or the Neue Galerie in New York, among many other small museums, public or private, market-inspired products in their collections.
Two small industrial museum, the Musée du Papier in Risheim and the Musée de L’ Impression sur éttofes in Mulhouse, both located in France, found in museum stores a space to publicize the activity they represent. In the latter, sell different articles made of fabrics, which use the exposed printed. Currently most museums available on its official website that sells items in the online store.

The Portuguese museums, like many other international museums, have been adjusting its mission and its communication path to the demands of contemporary cultural market, finding in the shops of museums a promotional focus of art culture and Portuguese technology. The partnerships established between Portuguese institutions responsible for heritage and museums with artists, designers and companies has led to the marketing of products appropriate to the merchandising of national and international museums.

As a result, visitors to the Museum d’Orsay can buy many items - mugs, cups, pencils, cases of "iPhone" and "iPad", erasers, bags, "t-shirt's", umbrellas, fans, magnetic, bookmarks and carpets, computer mouse - fully designed and produced in Portugal. Each of these objects is a tribute to the Portuguese cultural heritage, where history, culture and traditions are allied to technology for creating everyday product lines, inspired by various themes of our culture: the parts drawings Collection embroidered bedspreads of Castelo Branco, belonging to the Museum Francisco Tavares Proença Junior, Castelo Branco embroidery, cobblestone, among others.

The famous brand of Swiss watches Raimond Weil, used the work of the Greyhounds image, painted in 1911 by artist Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso, belonging to the collection of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, for the production of a limited series of watches.

Although there is some resistance to preserve and safeguard the excessive trivialization of image and marketing of works of art belonging to the museum collection, the creation of product lines associated with the identity of the museum, is part of the cultural marketing this policy in contemporary museology.

Currently, the design museum shops have been playing a key role in spreading the creation of everyday design products, especially the latest design concepts and materials developed worldwide.

The MoMA Design Store, since the mid-twentieth Century that has taken a key role in the design value. Discloses the work of renowned artists through the diverse range of products designed by designers and architects or inspired by these works.

Alvar Aalto, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Mario Bellini, Arne Jacobsen, Karim Rashid, among others - ranging from personal accessories, household items and office stationery, among others. Responding to a younger audience, fan of new technologies, we find in the shops of museums articles for use on computers, mobile phones and tablets - mouse pads, mobile covers.

Among the most varied offer, we highlight the original part of the Portuguese designer Joao Sabino, the, a bag constructed from the assemblage of ABS plastic parts of computer keyboards.

Fig. 2. Castelo Branco collection.
Also in its shopping areas of Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein, Germany can be purchased countless design products that combine art with the materials and technologies.

The design of various objects in cork, in which innovation and technology of materials is combined with sustainable design, has a presence in the collection of products for sale in its stores to many museums and palaces around the world.

This was the NY MoMa bet by including in its catalog cork pieces created in Portugal, which are an exclusive collection. The Portuguese cork is also represented in fashion articles and its numerous accessories - shoes, hats, bags and wallets to the umbrella - and the pieces of furniture and decorative objects, an interpretation of history, culture and Portuguese traditions.

5. Conclusion

The history of museology shows us that the concept of museum, its paradigms, ways to expose and act the educational and social level, have been changing over time in response to the demands of an ever broader and more diversity. However, the current discussions are in addition to other concerns related to the sustainability of museographies, regardless of economic and financial model underpinning this these non-profit organizations, which in Europe is based on a majority in public model, while in the United States prevails the private model.
In this study we realize that this evolutionary process is inevitable given the competitiveness of the cultural market. Thus, the museum complex and diverse universe of our time, in the search for new strategies, structures and models, find in stores museums a potential market through the sale of products associated with the museum context.

The used dissemination and promotion techniques respond to a cultural market logic, associated with “cultural enterprises”. The stores are associated with the expansion of the reputation of the collection of each of these institutions and are assumed as innovative projects for the consolidation of the museum institution relations with the population as an important advertising vehicle and promotion of the museum and its activities under cultural and scientific. The products that are sold in stores museums show their contribution to the sustainability of museographies either in the broadcasting of the collections, whether educational, acting simultaneously as art disclosure engines, culture and each technology societies.

References