

THE MARKETING MIX CONTRIBUTION IN IMPROVING THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ROMANIAN HISTORY STRATEGY

RUXANDRA IRINA POPESCU, RAZVAN-ANDREI CORBOS

1 INTRODUCTION

The National Museum of the Romanian History (NMRH) is the most important history and archeology museum of Romania, by both size (developed surface), and patrimony; it is also, one of the most important Romanian contemporary archeology actors and leader of the preventive archeology¹.

NMRH, as a public culture institution, in the job of the society, has the following objectives:

- research and collection of goods with historic and archaeological character, to build and complete the museum patrimony;
- organization of the management and scientific record of the cultural patrimony held in administration;
- constitution and organization of the documentary funds and the general archive;
- deposit, conservation and restoration of the held patrimony, according to the general European standards and the norms elaborated by the Ministry of Culture and Cults;
- capitalization of the cultural patrimony in its administration.

2 MARKETING MIX IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE ROMANIAN HISTORY

2.1 Product policy

Generally it is considered that the most important component of the marketing mix is the product policy (Olteanu, 2003).

¹ Preventive archeology refers to the archeology diggings associated to investments, to prevent the history patrimony destruction.

The product policy of NMRH aims four distinctive spheres, although sometimes the borders between them are hard to separate:

- 1) **basic offer** – the public exhibition and the associated programs (for example, the public conferences or the offer of the access to the museum's deposits);
- 2) **complementary offer** – products and services associated as interest sphere (temporary exhibitions, events, diverse programs based on the research activity of the museum) with the basic offer;
- 3) **educative offer** – services and programs offered with educative explicit and immediate purpose;
- 4) **supplementary offer** – services and products that mediate the access and the understanding of the basic or complementary offer (information services, guidance, confectionery, store etc.)

NMRH offers the visitors a live illustration of the Romanian history through the most valuable pieces of national patrimony, into a logic and harmonic display.

The collections contain 609.099 objects such as: archaeology – 79.289 objects, history – 191.114 objects, numismatics – 388.711, old books – 755 volumes, philately – 80.239 stamps. The museum's collections are growing permanently through donations, acquisitions and new archaeological findings.

According to the website www.mnir.ro, NMRH occupies 8000 m² and reunites in approximately 60 chambers very valuable exhibits. Crossing them, we can meet testimonies about the presence of the human on the Romanian territory still from the Paleolithic (600.000 years- 6.000 years B.C.), material and spiritual culture of the geto-dacians, the daco-romans wars and the transformation of Dacia into a Roman Empire province, the apparition and finalization of the power structure of the state in the medieval society, the Phanariot rules, the burgeois-democratic revolution from 1848, winning of the independence, the starting of the two world wars and the entrance of Romania under Russian influence.

The product policy adopted by NMRH shows the principal directions in which this can mobilize the resources to optimize its activity and materializes through the effective offer. Because the product policy must take into consideration more elements, it has more components (for example programs, supplementary services, experiences), it is also called **product mix** (Kotler, 2005). Through the product mix the modeling of the offer according to the demand on the market but also to the socio-cultural reasons is pursuit.

To accordingly capitalize the cultural patrimony in the custody of the museum, for the benefit of it, its the clients and the society in general, the following strategic options can be used (Zbucea, 2005):

- **revitalization of the offer** – creation of new products and services, improvement of the public exhibition that will attract new visitors categories and determine the growth of the visiting frequency of the present ones;
- **diversification of the offer** – offering new products and services as interest sphere, that wants to attract new visitors categories;
- **innovation of the offer** – redevelopment or amplification of the public exhibition and the offered services;
- **adaptation of the offer** – limiting the offered products and services to those that attract the most visitors.

We must say that the situation of NMRH improved in the last years, through the capitalization of the cultural patrimony and the change of the way in which it is presented and offer diversification.

2.2 Price policy

A rather neglected component of the marketing mix in the case of NMRH is the practiced price. This fact is not justified at all, because the price policy, with the product one, assure both the social capitalization, and the economic one of the museum or of some product of cultural patrimony offered by it (Moldoveanu& Ioan-Franc, 1997).

NMRH confronts with for problems related to the procurement of the necessary funds:

- reduction of the public financing;
- growth of the competition for private funds;
- growth of the operative costs;
- reduction of the subsidies.

Still there are some favorable evolutions from the perspective of the financing possibilities, including:

- the development of the tourism;
- improvement of the legislation regarding sponsorship;
- the growing interest for sponsorship;
- the change of the population's mentality in the favor of the cultural, social and educative activities maintenance;

- the intensification of the marketing activity, in the direction of the finance procurement from diverse sources;
- diversification of the accepted practices of financial, material or human resources attraction.

These elements create the necessary premises to convince a large number of persons as possible to visit the museum and to donate sums of money for the conservation and development of the held patrimony or the vast capitalization of it. This desiderate will realize also through an according prices policy.

To obtain funds, NMRH can use:

1. The evaluation of the cultural patrimony

This is extremely difficult, because it must not be quantified only the value of the physical elements that are contained in a patrimonial good, but also its spiritual value. This process must be realized by specialists and it must be objective. According to the settled value by the specialists, the price on the cultural market of the patrimonial object also grows. If a museum or a collector decides to sell an object that is part of the cultural patrimony, this must be done by auction.

2. Settlement of an entrance price

This must not be considered as compulsory. The justification of a tax request is usually related to the financial needs of the museum and the development of the activity, respectively its offer. The decision to apply a level of price must be taken after a close analysis of the generated effects. The significant decline of some segment of visitors must be avoided, that would thus be debarred of an important cultural service.

Also, the museum should respect the principle of „accessibility”. This means that all the interested ones, irrespective of their incomes, should have access to the museum’s collections. As this principle is hard to respect by economic-financial reasons, but also by reasons related to the control of the visitors flux, there can be alternatives, such as allowing the free entrance sometimes or giving financial facilities to some categories of people.

NRHM settled as standard prices of entrance to exhibitions the following:

- 1) permanent exhibitions:
 - adults: 7 RON;
 - pupils, students, pensioners: 2 RON;
 - possessors of EURO 26 card: 3,5 RON.
- 2) temporary exhibitions:
 - adults: 5 RON;
 - pupils, students, pensioners: 2 RON;

3. Acquisitions and donations

During 2008, the patrimony of NMRH grew with a number of 2.400 purchased objects, in total value of over 275.000 RON. From these purchased pieces, a very valuable object is remarked – from historic perspective – a medieval crossbow (XV century) of „deer foot” type. It is interesting that in Romania, like in all Europe, the existence of such pieces is very low, numerically speaking.

Also in 2008 a number of 44 pieces were donated to the museum. Through the most significant are: 12 gold medals from the Romanian Treasure in Moscow; a number of 8 medals, from 1971; a medal „Account Court” – Romania (issued after the entrance of Romania in the European Union); 16 soviet banknotes (dated 1961).

To develop an adequate price policy, NMRH must fix realistic objectives. If these are not fixed and understood, than the museum can not practice the most proper prices. These objective (Kotler& Kotler, 1998) must refer to:

- maximization of the number of visitors;
- maximization of the financial benefits;
- costs coverage;
- attraction of visitors in the detriment of the competition, including the entertainment one.

Irrespective of approach and objectives, the prices must justify in front of the visitor public through the benefits generated to it. It must always be taken into consideration the needs and wills of the visitors, the cost of it – financial or no – related to the participation at the activities proposed by the museum.

2.3 The distribution policy

Distribution refers to spreading the right to access culture for all market segments (Moldoveanu & Ioan-Franc, 1997). Although some offers are addressed to some specific categories of public, a lot of them being even elitist, the distribution process must be designed in such a way that the product becomes accessible, at least a portion of it, to other segments.

The NMRH’s mission is the inventory, conservation, restoration and capitalization of the heritage that it manages. The last mission’s last component is the source of the museum’s very intense public activity. There are organized permanently and simultaneously more temporary exhibitions, of various scale. Also, the educational programs have developed very much.

For suggesting the amplitude of public activity and ways of making the owned patronage known, for educating the public and for distributing thus, cultural values, one must make a shortlist of temporary exhibitions (2008):

- **New values in the NMRH patronage – acquisitions, donations and recent archeological findings** (16th – 28th of February) – the exhibition's main objective was to exhibit the most valuable and most significant cultural goods that have been added to the NMRH's collections during 2007;
- **Romania's cities. The late XIXth century – the early XXth century** (17th of April – 31st of May) – presenting images and objects regarding the cities' life, including all aspects of utilities and administrative organization – buildings, markets, parks, public and cultural monuments, theaters, schools and universities;
- **The 1848 Revolution** (June - September) – the exhibition material was extremely diverse, including documents and official printings that had been issued during the revolution, photographs and illustrated postcards, flags and weapons;
- **Aspects regarding the personality cult in communism** (August) – the exhibition included homage albums received on different occasions (birthdays, congresses, official visits etc.) by Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu;
- **Prague – 40** (August – September) – dedicated to commemorating 40 years from the soviet troops' invasion into the Czechoslovakia's capital, the exhibition comprised of 40 original photographs taken right into the events action;
- **„8“, o magic figure in Slovakia's history** (*September – October*) – *this photo-documentary exhibition was organized to mark the 40th anniversary of the armed intervention into Czechoslovakia of the Warsaw Pact's troops, at 21st of August 1968;*
- **68/89. From the Prague Spring to the Velvet Revolution** (October) – the black and white photos depicted the important moments that modeled the history's course from '68 until '89;
- **The Masters of the Romanian lyric and dramatic stage** (October) – this exhibition presented the glorious tradition of the Romanian lyric and dramatic art by using original photographs of the bands and theater companies, personal objects that belonged to the first directors of the National Theater in Iași and of the National Theater in Bucharest;
- **The embroidery's evolution in the Romanian countries. Centuries XIIIth – XVIIth** (9th of October) – the exhibition presented silver pots and ornaments discovered outside the Romania's Carpathian Arch;

- **90 years from the Great Union** (27th of November 2008 – 12th of January 2009) – the exhibition dedicated to this event illustrated through the use of valuable heritage objects, the important moments that led to this historical act.
- In 2008 the museum’s staff tried to organize more **educational programs**:
 - a) **„The Museums’ Night”** – NMRH was one of the 2.000 European museums that participated to the fourth edition of the „Museums’ Night” program, a project initiated by the French Ministry of Culture and Communications and placed under the Council of Europe high patronage. In the night of 17-18th of May, within a joint program in which took part 12 large museums from Bucharest, NMRH was open to the public between 16:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. 13.000 visitors crossed the threshold of this museum, attracted by the exceptional value of the exhibited pieces within the “Treasury History” and the “Lapidarium”, but also by the diverse theatrical representations put into scene by students, especially for this event.
 - b) **Workshops** – their purpose is to contribute – on the long-term – to attracting children towards history and its universal values, so that children would perceive the museum space as interactive as possible, a space in which they can both learn and play. Combining in an attractive manner the sending of theoretical knowledge and the forming of practical abilities, the workshops have been organized by the Museum Education and Public Relations sections together with specialists from “Restoration - Investigations” and “Numismatic and Treasury” sections. During these workshops children familiarized themselves with a series of measures and basic techniques for the restoration of ceramics coming from archeological digs, techniques that they then practiced using contemporary handicrafts. They also learnt how to order their own coin collections.
 - c) **History lectureships** – comprised of various themes linked to some of the NMRH’s exhibitions (permanent or temporary organized during 2008). This is the case of the lecture sustained during the exhibition “Romania’s cities. The late XIXth century – the early XXth century” and the series of lectures sustained under the slogan “Traian’s Column – A history in stone”. Also an interactive lesson on the theme “The History Museum – Space and support for teaching history notions to primary education level” was organized, that emphasized on identifying written and unwritten sources regarding the Getae–Dacians and Roman wars, starting from the Column’s reliefs. Children were organized into workgroups (linguists, historians, mathematicians, geographers, artists and photographers).
 - d) **A communication session for students** – was held during the celebration of 90 years of the Great Union. At this event took part

pupils from several schools in Bucharest, the communications presentation was followed by an artistic program supported by pupils from the Children's Club in District 1. The program was organized in partnership with the School Inspectorate of Bucharest.

- e) **The pedagogical project „The ancestors from the Column”** – held in three separate stages, addressed themes regarding culture and ancient civilization and was based on the excellent educational support that Traian's Column represents. In the first stage, under the slogan „Let's decipher the story from the stone”, the children familiarized themselves with the dacian wars' history just like it is depicted on the ancient monument's bas. In the second stage, „Traian's Column in the like artists' vision”, the participants made drawings based on the casts exhibited, as well as on some lectures and stories. The last stage, named „We honor heroes”, comprised of a spectacle put into scene by pupils and the opening of a mini-exhibition housing the works made by them.
- f) **The program „The Little Chevaliers School”** – this program, that had its official opening in December 2008 was developed by NMRH in collaboration with the Medieval company. The project is comprised of courses that take place in the NMRH building, every week-end starting from 31st of January 2009, at 12 o'clock. The courses are meant for those who wish familiarize with the glorious world of the medieval knights.
- g) An important matter which the museum should address is the way in which it can achieve its mission and make accessible the heritage owned and the specific offer outside the physical location. For this the museum has at least three different channels (Zbucea, 2005):
- **other museums** – both museums from Bucharest and outside it, from within the country or from abroad, the objects from the museum's collections can be exhibited as part of other exhibitions or there can even be organized independent exhibitions;
 - **the educational system** – whether through collaboration programs or independently, NMRH can get involved in the pupils education using diverse means, directly in schools. Also, through the educational system can be sold tickets to different events held by the museum, or just for visiting;
 - **travel agencies** – in the West there is a well known practice for the travel agencies or hotels to include in their products' prices the entry to different museums.

Another point that needs a better management by the museum is the *distribution of publications* also in other locations (libraries, but also in souvenir shops).

Also, it could have a tighter collaboration with researchers from outside the museum through which to make valuable albums, that would be edited under the museum's name.

2.4 The promoting policy

Often people understand marketing as product promotion, but promoting a product is the last step of the marketing strategy. Before promoting its products, cultural institutions must first understand the institution's external environment and the way in which it affects the selling of the product (Kolb, 2005).

The promoting policy is comprised of complex activities aiming to inform the targeted public regarding the cultural products and services offered. Also known as the promotional mix, promotional activities seek to rise the public awareness regarding the new offer, to attract new market segments, to gain the trust in different works, but also to construct the identity of new services. The success of promotional activities consists in the capability of the bidder to focus on the main reason that convinces potential consumers to become real clients (Moldoveanu & Ioan- Frânc, 1997).

The specific activities undertaken for the purpose of making the exhibitions known, the museum's events and projects focused on using efficient means of communication and, at the same time, involving costs as low as possible.

All the events undertaken under the NMRH logo were announced in the press through specialized services for the transmission of press releases and the museum's media partners: TVR, the daily newspaper *România Liberă*, the periodicals *Șapte Seri*, *Descoperă România*, *Historia* magazine, *Revista 22*, *Radio România Cultural*, *On-Line Gallery*, *Zoom TV* network, *Smart FM* and the dedicated websites www.comunicatedepresa.ro, www.stirievenimente.ro, www.comunicatemedi.ro, www.ghidulpresei.ro.

One must remember the existent partnership with Onlinegallery.ro – a prestigious website for cultural information and entertainment – where the events organized by the museum were highly promoted, as well as the collaboration with the website www.comunicatedeoresa.ro, where the museum offered for free the Professional subscription, NMRH benefiting of the priority distribution of its press releases, which can be accessed – in maximum an hour from publishing – by over 1.400 journalists and approximately 13.000 people that use this modern information service.

The collaboration with the diplomatic representatives of other countries represents a constant for the NMRH activity (NMRH 2008 Annual Report). A series of exhibitions were hosted and promoted in collaboration with institutions like the Polish Center from Bucharest, the Czech Center and the Czech Republic Embassy in Romania, Slovak Republic Embassy in Bucharest, Ministry of

Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Public Diplomacy Division of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The NMRH website (www.mnir.ro) was redesigned in a new, more dynamic version. The new format is intended to better respond to the need for faster updates, given the large volume of information and ability to change graphics without costly interventions. It creates the preconditions for museum professionals to become editors of the site, directly, without the intervention of a web programmer. Similarly, authorized translators – that collaborate with NMRH – will have direct access to the online forms, thus shortening the reaction time for publishing news. Also on this basis, it becomes possible to devise an online search engine, part of the institution's heritage, an instrument that will be created in 2010. During 2007 the website of NMRH recorded a number of 74.936 visitors. All major cultural events organized by NMRH in 2008, had dedicated websites hosted on the museum's server. In this context were made micro-sites for presentation of exhibitions.

3 CONCLUSION

The marketing mix implementation for the market development of the National Museum of Romanian History is difficult to achieve because of the low level funding available. At the present moment the auto financing for the National Museum of Romanian History remains a desideratum.

The museum would achieve a successful marketing implementation by formulating clear objectives, by an efficient management of the funds, by attracting new sponsors, collaborators and by attracting as many visitors as possible.

Four factors (Kotler & Kotler, 1998) have determined the search for applying the marketing principles and practices in the museum:

- The museum's sector development, the promoting of the Romanian cultural heritage;
- The problems regarding the financing problems;
- Multiplying the offer for spending the free time of the clients-visitors;
- The need for better visitor knowledge.

The NMRH's management sees marketing more and more as a very useful tool for reaching in optimum conditions the objectives proposed. The efficient application of the modern marketing methods depends not only on the management of the respective organizations, but also on its employees. They must understand the role that the marketing policy plays, the importance of improving the work and the services that they provide. Unfortunately, the

National Museum of Romanian History makes no exception at this chapter, being, like most museums in Romania, poor in this area.

Marketing would contribute to the elimination of the numerous problems that the museum is facing with, like the following: the fairly reduced number of visitors, the insufficient funds for the corresponding management of the heritage and the collections' development, the lack in popularity of its specific cultural products.

A solution for the National Museum of Romanian History was the transformation of clients from simple visitors into active users and discussion partners. Also, other persons and businesses from the museum's external environment should become active partners.

This thing is not very easy because there are some factors that limit the projection and the appliance of marketing strategies in this museum. Some negative aspects were found, such as:

- Inadequate knowledge of marketing theory and practice;
- Insufficient experience;
- The inadequate quantity and quality of market information;
- Considering the products and services offered as addressing to a any person, not to a specific segment;
- The offer's rigidity;
- The fear of radical changes;
- The lack of motivation.

A frequent wrong approach and extremely harmful is the equivalence of marketing with promotion (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004). Also, it is extremely difficult to measure the efficiency of the marketing activity performed. This is due to the fact that mostly, the objectives pursued are of socio-cultural and not financial nature.

Others factors often met are the resilience of employees, the ethical and moral problems regarding a too „commercial” approach of the offer, the fencing of access for some visitors categories etc.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ruxandra Irina Popescu, Razvan-Andrei Corbos. The authors are lecturers at Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania, Faculty of Management. Their research work is focused on management, marketing and public administration.

e-mails: ruxandra.irina@gmail.com, razvan.corbos@man.ase.ro