# Chapter 16
# Using New Tools to Attract Visitors to Museums and Heritage Sites

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter discusses the ways in which museums and heritage sites have adapted to the need to create technology-based experiences in recent decades culminating in the intensive online provision during the COVID period. The aim of both online and live visits should be as inclusive as possible of different audiences, stimulating interesting, rich, multi-cultural experiences that encourage re-visitation or at least recommendation to others. Ideally, sites should create meaningful as well as memorable experiences. This process includes several aspects and is very complex requiring the combination and harmonisation of education, heritage interpretation, marketing skills, and local initiatives. This chapter uses case studies to analyse the extent to which museums are rising to these challenges above, including the principles of the so-called 'new museology', the need for more innovative technology to create visitor experiences, and COVID-19.*

## INTRODUCTION

A large number of recent publications and conferences have investigated how to present museum exhibitions and attractions to tourists, including built, natural, tangible and intangible heritage. In 2021, this became a double-edged intention and post-COVID-19, tourism attractions will be wanting to gain back

their previous numbers of visitors as well as those who are more eager than ever to leave their homes. Before COVID-19, over-tourism and crowd management was a major concern for many attractions, but now they have experienced significant losses and will want to compensate.

On the other hand, during COVID, museum and heritage site visitors experienced various well-developed digital programmes, such as streamed guided tours, exhibitions of objects, 3D presentations and on-line events which they previously never had the opportunity to see. The on-line experiences offered by the closed institutions may have been so attractive and exceptional that now visitors want to make the effort to spend money and time to visit a site in person. So, it may mean that the online programmes have raised an interest in certain sites or experiences which tourists formerly did not know about or had no time or intention to visit. Indeed, Choi and Kim (2021) suggest that COVID-19 created a trigger for museums to expand their participants, especially from local communities. However, there is not much data about the effects of online museum and heritage site visitation during COVID-19 and what could be expected afterwards. King, Smith, Wilson, and Williams (2021) undertook an analysis of 88 online exhibitions in the UK and concluded that more work needs to be done in order to understand fully how digital exhibitions work for audiences, especially the impact of the presentation methods.

This paper discusses the ways in which museums and heritage sites have adapted to the need to create technology-based experiences in recent decades culminating in the intensive online provision during the COVID-19 period. Systematic reviews of literature about the use of technology in heritage sites and museums show that a number of techniques or tools are used, such as VR (virtual reality), AR (augmented reality), robots, QR codes, location detects like GPS, animation and games. Many of these are assisted by mobile devices like telephones, tablets, iPods and interactive display screens (Chen, Duan & Wang, 2021). The aim of both on-line and live visits should be as inclusive as possible of different audiences, stimulating interesting, rich, multi-cultural experiences that encourage re-visitation or at least recommendation to others. Ideally, sites should create meaningful as well as memorable experiences. This process includes several aspects and is very complex requiring the combination and harmonisation of education, heritage interpretation, marketing skills and local initiatives. The process connects changes in cultural heritage experiences with teaching methods as well as with the new approaches and tools of site interpretation of tourist attractions. Marini and Agostino (2021) suggest that digital technologies should enable new systems of interactions between museums and their visitors in a more 'humanized' way. In the future, Choi and Kim (2021) predict that museums will co-create new products along with visitors meaning that users will become producers and consumers at the same time.

This chapter uses case studies to analyse the extent to which museums are rising to the challenges above, including the principles of the so-called 'new museology', the need for more innovative technology to create visitor experiences and more latterly, COVID-19.

## BACKGROUND

### Heritage Preservation and Education

Cultural heritage is of primary importance in a person's development and in his/her surroundings, including the construction of the local communities. If heritage protection is incorporated in the educational development of children from the very beginning, it will contribute to the formation of their direct environment and communities having a common history and past. It is also important to identify and

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