



BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERISTY CLUJ-NAPOCA

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DEPARTAMENT OF MANAGEMENT

PHD THESIS

SUMMARY

MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSEUMS

Coordinator,

Professor PhD Anca BORZA

PhD Candidate, Izabela Luiza POP

Cluj-Napoca

SUMMARY CONTENTS

THESIS CONTENTS	1
KEY WORDS	5
INTRODUCTION	5
Delimitation and motivation of this research theme	5
The current stage of knowledge in this field	7
DEFINING THE GOALS OF THE RESEARCH	10
STRUCTURE OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS	12
FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS	13
Personal contributions	14
Contributions at the level of theoretical and conceptual notions	15
Contributions on the empirical research level	19
Recommendations for museums	23
The limits of this research	25
Prospects for future research	26
REFERENCES	28

THESIS CONTENTS

Lis	t of figures	V
Lis	t of tables	VI
Lis	t of charts	.VIII
INTRO	DDUCTION	1
Del	limitation and motivation of the research	1
The	e current state of knowledge in the field	3
Det	fining research objectives	6
The	esis structure	7
PART 1	I: LITERATURE REVIEW	9
	TER 1. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND CONTEXTUALIZATION OF UMS	10
	Definitions and approaches of museums	
1.1		
1.1		
1.1	.3. Museum as an organization	14
1.2. T	Types of museums	16
1.3. N	Museum functions: time course	18
1.4. T	The role of museums in the economy and society	20
1.4	.1. Advantages that can be generated by museums in the economy and society	20
1.4	.2. Goods and services of museums	25
1.4	.3. Caracteristics of museum goods and services	28
1.5. N	Auseums vision and mission	30
1.6. T	The objectives of a museum	34
1.7. P	Preliminary conclusions	38
CAPIT	OLUL 2. APROACHES OF MUSEUM MANAGEMENT	41
2.1. I	Museum management	41
2.1	.1. The place of museum management in management science	41
2.1	.2. Defining museum management	44
2.1	.3. Museum management functions	45
2.2. A	Actual context and the need for changes in museum management	50
2.3. (Changes and modern trends in museum management	52
2.2	.1. The traditional museum management	53

2.3.2. Market-oriented museum management (modern type)	54
2.4. Museum entrepreneurship	55
2.5. Quality management in museums	58
2.5.1. Defining museum quality	58
2.5.2. Advantages and disadvantages of quality management in museums	59
2.5.3. Factors influencing quality of museums	61
2.6. Preliminary conclusions	66
CAPITOLUL 3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSEUMS	69
3.1. Defining the concept of sustainability	69
3.2. Museums and sustainable development	72
3.3. Defining the concept of sustainable museum	75
3.4. The four pillars of museum sustainability	77
3.4.1. Cultural sustainability	77
3.4.2. Environmental sustainability	80
3.4.3. Social sustainability	85
3.4.4. Economic sustainability	90
3.5. Measuring museum sustainability	92
3.5.1. Indicators for measuring museum sustainability	93
3.5.2. A model for measuring museum sustainability	104
3.6. Preliminary conclusions	106
CAPITOLUL 4. IMPROVING MUSEUM SUSTAINABILITY	110
4.1. Tools for evaluating and improving museum sustainability	110
4.1.1. Tools oriented towards consumers	110
4.1.1.1. SERVQUAL model	112
4.1.1.2. HISTOQUAL model	114
4.1.2. Tools oriented towards competitors	115
4.1.3. Self-assessment tools	119
4.1.3.1. Diagnostic analysis	119
4.1.3.2. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)	127
4.2. Management strategies that can be used for increasing sustainability	134
4.2.1. Differentiation strategy through technological innovation and quality	134
4.2.2. International market penetration strategy	136
4.2.3. Diversification strategy	142
4.2.4. Collaboration Strategy	144
4.2.4.1. Partnerships	144

4.2.4.2. Mixed museums	146
4.2.4.3. Strategic alliances	146
4.2.4.4. Strategic networks	147
4.2.5. Merger and separation strategies	148
4.3. Preliminary conclusions	150
PART II: MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY ANALYSIS FROM T POINT OF VIEW OF ROMANIAN MUSEUMS	
5.1. Qualitative research based on expert opinion regarding museums man and sustainability	_
5.1.1. Reasearch methodology	154
5.1.2. Interpreting the data	156
5.1.2.1. The need for sustainable museums	156
5.1.2.2. The sustainability of Romanian museums	159
5.1.2.3. Meeting the needs of community by museums	162
5.1.2.4. Methods and techniques for measuring museum sustainability	164
5.1.2.5. The connection between the size of a museum and sustainability	167
5.1.2.6. The connection between the type of museum and sustainability	169
5.1.2.7. The connection between the number of visitors, own income and sustainability	
5.1.2.8. The connection between museum sustainability and the use of mar ant marketing strategies	_
5.1.3. Conclusions of the qualitative research	172
5.2. Quantitative research on Romanian museums sustainability	175
5.2.1. Research methodology	175
5.2.1.1. Proposed hypothesis	175
5.2.1.2. Describing the structure and steps followed in developing the ques-	tionnaire176
5.2.1.3. Description of the Romanian museum sector	179
5.2.1.4. Establishing the sample	180
5.2.1.5. Questionnaire distribution methods	182
5.2.2. Analysis and interpretation of research results	183
5.2.2.1. Structure of the sample	183
5.2.2.2. Internal consistency of the questionnaire	191
5.2.2.3. Testing normality of data distribution	195
5.2.2.4. Testing the hypothesis and interpreting the results	197
5.2.3. Preliminary conclusions	217
FINAL REMARKS AND PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS	210

REFERENCES
ANNEXES
Annex 1. Questionnaire
Annex. 2. Initial letter addressed to museums
Annex 3. List of museums contacted by email according to information from the database CIMEC
Annex 4. The list of museums that responded to the questionnaire
Annex 5. Cronbach alpha - detailed statistics of items in terms of mean and standard deviation
Annex 6. Cronbach alpha - relationships between items and scale
Annex 7. Cronbach alpha - relationships between items and subscales270
Annex 8. The average values recorded on each question and type of museum based on the number of employees

KEY WORDS

Museum management, museum entrepreneurship, quality management in museums, sustainable development, sustainable museums, management strategies, measuring sustainability, improving sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

This research was commenced with the belief that it will bring a significant contribution to increasing the competitiveness and organisational performances of museums so that the Romanian museum sector would be able to achieve a sustainable development in the future. The financial difficulties encountered by many museums, as well as the diversification of the roles these organisations must play in the society are just two of the factors that make it necessary for the traditional way in which museums are managed, led and operated to be changed. In this respect we consider it of particular importance to correlate the analysis of management with that of the sustainable development practices that can be applied in this sector, with a view to improving the internal performance as well as the public benefits generated by museums.

Delimitation and motivation of this research theme

The orientation of the public institutions towards the market and the consumer is an obligatory requirement with a view to achieving a durable development of their communities. Besides the responsibility of contributing to increasing the citizens' welfare and life quality, institutions such as museums must adopt certain private sector management practices, having in view the assurance of their own welfare and prosperity as well. In recent years the intense competition, the ease in substitution of museum products and services and the budgetary constraints have become threats that affect the proper functioning of many museums. Based on these considerations we have deemed it both timely and necessary to come up with a scientific research whose aim is to offer practical solutions enabling museums to cope with the challenges they encounter in their external environment and at the same time contribute to the development of the communities they belong to. The necessity for such research appears even more justified when one considers the direct link existing between museums, tourism and the economic development of a certain community. Since each museum can contribute to the economic development of its region as a result of cultural tourism (Opris, 2007), any improvement

of its management will impact positively not only on its own sustainability, but also on the prosperity of its community.

Therefore, the motivation based on which we selected this theme may be described as a multi-factor motivation. On the one hand, the museums are beginning to adopt more and more private sector management practices, whose implementation requires the elaboration of research papers on the development of the theoretical concepts on museum management. On the other hand, in the last years an emphasis was laid on the necessity of sustainable development of countries, regions and organisations, so as the next generations' capacities of satisfying their own needs should not be hindered by the exhaustion of available resources. As part of this process of sustainable development the museum sector is special case due to the fact that museums are at the same time resource consumers but also institutions empowered to conserve and preserve their communities' cultural resources over time.

Not least of all, one of the important motivations for selecting this theme was our belief that citizens can enjoy a better quality life only as long as the management on the national level is highly efficient. However, the results recorded nationally are dependent on the performance of each public institution. Consequently, by finding solutions for the improvement of the way various types of institutions are managed can generate positive effects on the national welfare assessment indicators as well.

At the same time, the current international trends highlight that, whereas until not very long ago sustainability was a mere recommendation and the museum sector could function relatively well without taking it into consideration, in the new economic and financial context only the museums that are able to change their old way of functioning will continue to exist. The main reason for this is that many museums are still largely dependant on state subsidies granted by the state. Since the current resources tend to diminish constantly and the usefulness of the services offered by museums in comparison with other public institutions is deemed to be smaller, the inevitable consequence that arises is that the public subsidies allocated to museums should be diminished. In this context the organisations in the museum sector can either continue to keep their proportions or develop by identifying more efficient ways of managing their own resources, either by attracting funding from other, non-public, sources, or by improving the public perception of the usefulness of the services they provide, so that the public authorities wish to continue the funding of the museums subordinated to them at least at the same level as before. The natural question arising is why should museums not act on all these three plans? The answer to this question is very simple: most museums don't

know how they could achieve all these things, i.e. obtain maximum results with minimum efforts, have a wide range of income and become important for a large number of consumers by satisfying or even exceeding the consumers' needs, expectations and wishes. Thus we find we are in fact returning to the same two key concepts, sustainability and management, both of which are in close relationship with each organisation's resources and know-how.

Therefore, with the necessity of museum management reformation as our direct motivation, our research aims at highlighting the way in which certain adequate management processes, techniques and strategies can contribute to a sustainable development of both museums and the communities to which these museums belong. Being it an abstract concept, based rather on quality than quantity, it remains to be seen whether and in which way the museums' progresses towards sustainability can be quantified and measured.

The current stage of knowledge in this field

Over the time, the concept of museum has changed numerous times (Opriş, 2008; Lewis, 2011), which has led to the current dispute between experts on the roles and functions that museums should play. While the modern outlook emphasize the necessity of using museum patrimony for educative, recreational, entertainment, and even regional economic development purposes (Neamu, 2010; Hume & Mills, 2011; Genoways & Ireland, 2003; Grenier, 2010), the partisans of the traditional outlook are against these trends and believe that museums should be regarded chiefly as entities in charge of cultural goods (Montias, 1995; Feldstein, 1991; Lennon & Graham, 2001).

Different opinions on the functioning of museums exist among the funding authorities as well. Some cities invest massive amounts for the creation of attractive museums in order to increase the number of tourists visiting these cities (Plaza & Haarich, 2013). Such investments are made starting from the premise that museums are able to generate important economic, social and cultural benefits for the communities they are part of (Scott, 2007; Bridaa et al., 2012; Tlili, 2008; Ambrose & Paine, 2012). On the other hand, there are countries which decide to cut down the resources they allocated to museums and even to close down some museums completely (Lehman, 2009; Steel, 2012; Brown, 2012; Hooper, 2012). In such conditions it is impossible not to wonder what exactly it is that makes authorities act in this way or the other and what the factors are depending on which a museum enjoys the community's support or, on the contrary, are

regarded by the citizens of those communities as useless institutions which only waste public money.

Given these differences in the way museums are treated by their communities, we believe that one of the key factors on which a museum's prosperity depends is its institutional management. Other researchers also noted that a museum's management is of vital importance for its public success. Sandell and Janes (2007) highlight that the application by museums of management practices can impact positively on the adaptation of museums to the changes in their external environment; Gilmore & Rentschler (2002) emphasize that museums must be market oriented and satisfy their consumers' needs so as to counter-balance the negative effects produced by the cutting down of the subsidies they are allocated; Griffin & Abraham (2007) mention that museums must use their resources efficiently and offer services that are useful for their visitors. Also, in the last years the necessity for the development of museum entrepreneurship (Rentschler & Geursen, 2004; Griffin, 2002; Klamer, 2011) and for using viable business models by museums (Camarero & Garrido, 2012; Sheppard, 2009) has been brought into discussion. The number of studies on museum marketing (Kotler et al., 2008; Zbuchea, 2009) and on the quality management in museums (Victor, 2007; Negri et al., 2009; Radder et al., 2011; Maher et al., 2011; Pachucki, 2012; Hsiao and Yao, 2012) has also increased.

However, few researchers concentrated their studies on the strategic management in the museum sector. Among the most important contributors in this field are: Porter (2006) who described the elements of the value chain within a museum, Bagdali and Polino (2006) who exemplified how the differentiation and diversification strategies can help museums attract bigger numbers of visitors and earn higher own income, and Kaiser (2009) who discussed the types of diagnosis analyses that can be carried out in a museum. We can note that the existing scientific works take into account only a small part of the techniques, methods and instruments specific to strategic management and do not offer to museum managers a very large range of strategies they could apply in order to improve their museums' performances. Moreover, the Romanian literature in this field includes a relatively small number of bibliographical resources focusing on the study of museums from an economic point of view. Among the most significant works that can be mentioned are those by Alexandra Zbuchea (2008) and Ioan Opriş (2008), which cover the field of museum marketing and museum management respectively. Taking into account all the above, we feel that the results of this research can be useful for both the general development of the literature on museum strategic management and the development of the Romanian literature on museum management.

While on museum management as a whole there is internationally a relatively acceptable number of studies and research works, the concept of museum sustainability is more recent and therefore has not been analysed thoroughly. Most of the existing literature studies museum sustainability unidimensionally, without taking into account its multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinarity (Zaman & Goschin, 2010). For instance, Swarbrooke (2015), Villeneuve (2013), Pietro et al. (2014), Lord et al. (2012), and Chang et al. (2015) mention only the museums' social sustainability; Pereira (2007), Blagoeva-Yarkova (2012), Axelsson et al. (2013), and Yuqin (2008) analyse only the cultural dimension of museum sustainability; Ambrose & Paine (2012), De Silva & Henderson (2011), Chitima, (2015), Brophy & Wylie (2013) speak only about museums' ecological sustainability and the actions museums should take in order to reduce their negative impact upon the natural environment; and Wickham & Lehman (2015), Siu et al. (2013), Sacco et al. (2009), Plaza & Haarich (2013) and Joshi (2012) focus their attention only on the economic sustainability and the positive impact a well managed museum can exert on the economic prosperity of a region and the development of tourism.

Among the few researchers who studied museum sustainability taking into consideration all its four components are Stylianou-Lambert et al. (2014), and Adams (2009), who had the initiative of elaborating the first set of indicators for monitoring museum sustainability. Also, the big museum associations which have started to give a higher consideration to this topic have drawn up a series of criteria which museums should meet in order to become sustainable. However, whereas the indicators for measuring sustainability are used in Europe in other major fields of activity, such as transportation and public health public (http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi), for the cultural sector there is yet no clear system of quantifying sustainability. However, as shown by Gil & Ritchie (2009), museums are an important part of tourism, and cultural tourism is a key factor of sustainable development (Drăgulănescu et al., 2014). Also, the sustainable development of a region is given by the impact generated upon the natural, social, economic and cultural environments by all the organisations active in that particular region. Consequently, given that they are part of their local communities and, on a larger scale, of their national units, we believe that museums can influence positively or negatively both people's life quality and the indicators of sustainability at the city, regional or national level.

Therefore, this research aims at offering the museum sector both a sustainability measuring and monitoring system, and a set of instruments and strategies that can be applied so as to the improve museums' performance in relationship with the sustainability indicators we are proposing. Since there is not enough literature on the sustainable

management of museums, we shall start from a general analysis of the concepts of sustainability and management, then singularise these concepts taking into account the characteristics of the museum sector, and in the end attempt to prove how certain techniques and instruments that are specific to strategic management can be used with a view to improving museum sustainability. Also, using empirical research, we shall try to identify the level of sustainable development of Romanian museums and the associations between various factors and a certain museum's sustainability.

Based on the considerations presented above, we believe that our research will make an important contribution to the progress of the theoretical notions related to museum sustainable management, and through the application of these notions in practice both museums and the members of their respective communities will benefit. Unlike other works which deal only fragmentarily with various aspects of museum sustainability, in this work we aim at achieving an integrated approach, so that anyone interested in this subject could find in one single work all the conceptual explanations of terms, means of application in practice and instruments of adequate measurement.

DEFINING THE GOALS OF THE RESEARCH

Since the goal of this work was to clarify a series of aspects which are very complex both from the theoretical and the practical point of view, the good progress of the research depends on setting its general and specific goals.

The general goal of this scientific research is to elaborate a series of methods, techniques and instruments which can be used with a view to increasing the sustainability of museums and, in this way, increase the benefits generated on the market by these organisations.

In order to achieve this goal we shall carry out a theoretical research, consisting of studying the specialised literature, developing a series of concepts which until now have not been well defined and set, as well as carrying out an empirical research whose aim, after the identification of the correlations between the various influence factors of sustainability, is to come up with solutions for the improvement of museum performance. In order to obtain the desired results in accordance with our goals, the empirical research will include two components: a qualitative component, which is based on several semi-structured interviews with experts from the museum sector, and a quantitative component which is based on the application at the national level of a questionnaire on museum management and sustainability.

Deriving from the general goal, *the specific goals* are the ones that will guide us step by step through this research. Given that the purpose of this paper is to make an important contribution, both theoretically and practically, the specific goals are grouped into two categories:

A. Theoretical goals

- 1. Analysing the role of museums within the market;
- 2. Justifying the necessity of making a change in the current museum management;
- 3. Explaining the concept of sustainable museum and the advantages resulting from orienting museums towards sustainability;
- 4. Identifying a number of methods of making museums function and develop in the context of the reduction of the subsidies allocated to museums;
- 5. Proposing a set of instruments and strategies whose application will allow museums to become sustainable.

B. Empirical goals

- 1. Devising a set of indicators and a model for measuring museum sustainability;
- 2. Analysing the sustainability of the Romanian museums by drawing up and applying a questionnaire based on the proposed sustainability indicators;
- 3. Establishing and interpreting the correlations between sustainability and the various factors relating to the size and type of a museum;
- 4. Identifying the correlations between the cultural, social, economic and ecological pillars of sustainability.

Starting from the goals mentioned above, this study aims at increasing the knowledge and understanding of museum sustainability and at the same time offering the instruments necessary for measuring and improving sustainability. As we showed above, whereas in other fields of activity sustainability is already monitored through clearly defined indicators, in the cultural sector we can not speak about a standard measuring system yet. For this reason we consider that the results of this research and particularly the attaining of the empirical goals will mark an important step in the evolution of the way in which museum sustainability is approached.

STRUCTURE OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

This doctoral thesis is structured into three main parts. The first part sums up the main theoretical notions relating to the topic under research and consists of four chapters. The second part presents the results of the empirical research carried out on the management and sustainability of the Romanian museums; these results will be summed up in the fifth chapter of the thesis. The first five chapters are followed by the third, final, part, which presents the conclusions and our personal contributions to this research.

In the first chapter we shall carry out a conceptual and contextual analysis of the museums regarded as modern organisations within the current society. In this respect we shall first define the concept of museum, starting from the main definitions found in the specialised literature. Afterwards we shall detail the characteristics of the various types of museums, their functions, the economic and social roles they play, as well as the products and services offered on the market by these organisations. The last part of this chapter introduces the particularities of museums' visions, missions and goals, as well as the way in which these aspects influence the appropriate functioning and the performances of each organisation.

The second chapter will discuss the way in which museums should be managed so that their contribution to the communities they belong to could be maximised. Starting from the definition of the concept of museum management, its functions and the various approaches to the concept museum management, our attention will subsequently focus on the analysis of the context in which museums carry out their activities and the most recent trends in the field of museum management. Particularly, we shall concentrate our attention on detailing the impact that museum entrepreneurship and the implementation of a quality management system might have on a particular museum's performance.

In the third chapter we shall trace the connections between performance, the sustainable development of museums and the sustainable development of the society, starting from a conceptual analysis of sustainability and sustainable museum. Also in this chapter we shall focus on designing a system of indicators and a model that will allow us the categorising of museums by their degree of sustainable development. The elaboration of an instrument for the measurement of sustainability will contribute substantially to the understanding and the raising of awareness on this concept, and also will represent an absolutely essential stage in identifying the optimum strategies and solutions through the application of which a museum can become sustainable.

The fourth chapter will include a description of the main instruments which can be used for the evaluation of the internal and external state of a museum, with a view to identifying the most appropriate actions for its improvement. Also in this chapter we shall illustrate the methods to be used for the implementation of certain management strategies so that museums could achieve a sustainable development. The presentation of these instruments and strategies will be particularly useful for the museums which aim at increasing their performances, competitiveness and market attractiveness.

The fifth chapter will deal with the empirical study of the management and sustainability of Romanian museums. The first part of this chapter will present the results of a qualitative research which will be based on interviews with a number of experts from the museum sector. Starting from the opinions expressed by the interviewed experts, the second part of the chapter will focus on the quantitative research and will include the research methodology, the set hypotheses, an analysis of the statistical population and the representativeness of the sample selected, testing the proposed measuring scale's accuracy, an analysis of the distribution of the collected data, testing the hypotheses and an interpretation of the results we obtained.

The last part of this thesis will present the conclusions we obtained at the end of our scientific research, both from the point of view of the contributions it brings to the theoretical development of this field of research and from that of the empirical results deriving from the study carried out on a national level. In this section we shall also draw the main directions for future research aiming at completing certain aspects secondary to this research and, in this way, increase the knowledge in the field of museum management.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The selected research theme is a topical issue in the context of the global effort towards the sustainable development of various regions, local communities, fields of activity and organisations. Although the general principles of sustainability are relatively well known, the identification of the means and methods to be used for the sustainable transformation of various systems is still in an early stage. It is true that performance monitoring indicators have indeed been elaborated for the fields of activity which have a high impact on the natural, social and economic environments; however, in order to attain the goal of improving the quality of life, the efforts of monitoring the sustainability must be extended to all fields of activity.

We have also found that many a museum encounter a series of problems which could be solved should certain management methods, techniques, instruments and strategies be used. The application of this solution is difficult to apply due to the fact that management theory has been developed chiefly in relationship with the features of the private sector organisations. For this reason, the current management concepts must be completed with studies which should help museums apply such concepts to their own characteristics. In the context of the global reduction of resources, the identification of new ways of developing museums' sustainably becomes increasingly important. As a result of this, the necessity of elaborating new strategies for improving the sustainability of cultural institutions (including museums) is provided even by the national strategy for the cultural field for the years 2014-2020.

Therefore the originality of this thesis derives not only from the contributions it brings to solving the two problems that we identified (monitoring the sustainability of various types of organisations and the application of the management and strategic management concepts to museums), but also from the correlated approach of the concepts of management and sustainability, with application to the museum sector.

Consequently, throughout this scientific research we concentrated our attention to achieving our general goal, that of elaborating such methods, techniques and instruments that could lead to the increase in the sustainability of museums and, in this way, to an increase of the benefits generated on the market by these organisations. The way in which we managed to achieve this goal by means of the gradual fulfilment of the theoretical and empirical secondary goals will be detailed below.

Personal contributions

The scientific papers and research on the topic of museum sustainable management in Romanian are virtually non-existent, while internationally there are very few such studies as well. For this reason, we trust that the most important contribution of this paper lies in its very topic and the way it is examined in this thesis. Having reviewed the existing theoretical literature, we were unable to identify other studies which examine museum sustainability from the point of view of the components of sustainability. The idea of using certain management instruments and strategies in order to increase museum sustainability also represents our own research initiative. Our approach being multi- and inter-disciplinary, we are certain that it will contribute significantly to the development of the knowledge related to museum management and organisation. Below are detailed the main

contributions to the improvement of the knowledge in this field, both conceptually and empirically.

Contributions at the level of theoretical and conceptual notions

• Defining and clarifying museum's roles, functions, missions, visions and objectives

In the first chapter of this thesis we included a presentation of what museums are and what they offer, starting from the definition and evolution of the concept of museum and analysing this type of organisation from the point of view of its functions, the economic and social roles it plays, and the products and services it offers on the market. We also examined the visions, missions and objectives of museums, given the fact that these form the very for any organisation's appropriate functioning and that they should be the starting point for any action directed towards the improvement organisational performance.

The first conclusion we reached was that currently museums are complex educational, documentation and leisure centres, whose goal is to keep in optimum conditions, research and improve constantly the cultural patrimony they administer. Our opinion that museums should be considered complex centres was based on the combined effect of various factors, such as the variety of museums, the resources museums use, the functions they fulfil, the various roles they play within the economy and society, and the high diversity of their offers. In this respect, we could note that when it comes to offering products and services to their consumers, museums use a combination of their specific functions with those specific to other institutions such as schools, archives, libraries and entertainment centres. Also, we reached the conclusion that the traditional functions of museums, i.e. collection, conservation and research, are mere stages in the production process specific to museums, since currently the modern functions of these organisations tend to connect with the provision process, that is the benefits it generates (education, economic revival, entertainment).

Given the changes that have occurred in the structure of museum functions, we continued our research by examining the advantages which these organisations can created for the economy and the society. Thus, we concluded that museums have the capacity of supplying a large variety of social, cultural, educational and economic benefits for the regions they are located in. Consequently, taking into account that a well managed museum holds an important part in the sustainable development of a community, we

considered it useful to identify a series of ways through which the performances of a museum can be improved. Also, we noticed that the museums which are managed adequately are no longer only resource consumer of, since the outputs they supply on the market are often higher than the resources they are using. Also, certain types of museums, such as the art museums, can be regarded as financial institutions as well, since the value of the goods in their patrimony tends to increase in time, thus contributing to increasing the national wealth. Therefore, the funds allocated to museums for acquisitions of patrimony should not be deemed a waste of resources, but profitable long-term investments.

- Defining and clarifying the notion of museum management; justifying the necessity for a change in the museum management and presenting the current museum management trends;
- This contribution was made in **the second chapter** of this thesis, which is an indepth study of the features and the concept of museum management. Following the view of the specialised literature, we reached the conclusion that museum management is a subdivision of service and public management, and can be defined as the process of planning, organising, co-ordinating, leading and controlling the resources of a museum so as to generate as high social, economic, educational, cultural and artistic benefits as possible.
- Therefore, in this chapter we emphasised that the role of museum management is to optimise the relationship between a museum's resource input and its outputs generated on the market. A thorough study of museum management functions enabled us to conclude that in Romania this optimisation is imperilled by the incomplete exertion by museum managers of the functions of leading and controlling, the solution we proposed was that the managers should apply a transformational leadership style, which might offer them the possibility of motivating their employees, although financial stimulants cannot be offered. Also, we proposed the implementation in the Romanian museums of several control systems which are not yet regulated by the law, such as for instance the quality control system or the stock control system, which can help increase the efficiency of using a museum's resources to the public's benefit.
- Finally, at the end of this chapter, we analysed two important managerial trends, entrepreneurship and quality management, which can help museums increase the value they offer to their consumers. The characteristics associated to

entrepreneurship, such as originality, creativity, innovation, risk taking and identification of opportunities, are indispensable when a museum tries to offer its public attractive programmes and services. Quality management is also absolutely needed for the evaluation of the impact of a museum's offer on its consumers and the identification of the ways for improving such offer, so that the visitors' expectations and needs should not only be completely met, but also exceeded. While reviewing the specialised literature on this matter, we concluded that quality represents a means through which museums' sustainability can be increased, since it allows museums (1) to obtain a competitive advantage, by differentiating from their competitors, and (2) to increase their visitors' loyalty, their productivity and their market share.

• Explaining the concepts of sustainability and sustainable museum, and the advantages resulting from orienting museums towards sustainability;

This contribution can be noted within **the third chapter**, which begins with a conceptual clarification of the concept of sustainability. By aggregating the elements identified in the majority of the definitions of this concept, we concluded that **sustainability** can be defined as the state in which an optimum proportion is obtained between the maximisation of social, cultural and economic welfare, and the minimisation of the negative impact on the natural environment. We concluded that a **sustainable museum** is the museum which, through the activities it carries out, manages to achieve and maintain a balance between the four pillars of sustainability, i.e. the cultural, social, economic and ecological components.

Thus, from the **economic** point of view, the sustainable museums will be preoccupied with improving their efficiency, productivity and the own income they attract, but also with a series of external aspects, such as developing the local economy and revitalising their communities by creating new jobs and by means of cultural tourism. From the **social** point of view, in order to be sustainable, museums must function in such a way as to make sure they respect and implement such principles as equity, equality, inclusion, cohesion, development of identity and a feeling of belongingness, social interconnection and interaction. **Culturally**, museums make a contribution to the conservation of the cultural patrimony, shaping adequate attitudes, values and knowledge among their communities and assure the public's access to cultural resources. Last but not least, from the **ecological** point of view, museums can contribute to the protection of the natural environment by (1) organising exhibitions, workshops, thematic camps and other

activities having in view the development of responsible attitudes towards the environment; (2) the direct protection of natural resources (species on the verge of extinction, protected areas, etc.) by the museums of natural science; (3) an adequate management of natural resources, which means rendering consumption efficient, using regenerating energies, reusing resources where possible and recycling the resources which can no longer be used.

Following our study of the connection between museums and sustainable development, one of the conclusions we reached was that museums must become sustainable so as to be able to fulfil their mission, survive and develop, but also in order to make a contribution to the economic and cultural development of their regions, reduce the budgetary deficit and improve their communities' quality of life. Sustainable museums not only help meet the society's general goals, but also draw benefits internal benefits, for themselves. Among these benefits are an increased efficiency due to cost reduction; maintaining their microclimate conditions within optimum parameters, which helps conserve their patrimony; and obtaining a competitive advantage due to an increase in the public's faith, the involvement of the community, the consolidation of their brands, attracting new audiences and, inconsequence, an increase of their financial resources.

• Proposing instruments and strategies through which museums can become sustainable

The **fourth** chapter presents the grouping of the instruments for the improvement of sustainability into three categories: instruments focusing on the consumers' perception on the products and services offered by a museum (SERVQUAL and HISTOQUAL); instruments which have in view the improvement of the performances of a museum by comparison with their competitors (benchmarking); and instruments focusing on self-evaluation (diagnosis analysis, the SWOT analysis, the PEST analysis, the analysis based on the model of the five competitor forces, the value chain analysis and the common framework self-assessment analysis used by the public institutions). The originality of this approach consists in the fact that each of these three sets of instruments are presented both from the point of view of the way in which it can be applied in a museum, and from that of the contribution the respective instrument can make to improving a museum's sustainability.

Also, in the second part of the fourth chapter we presented a series of management strategies, as well as the way in which museums can improve their sustainability by using such strategies. An important conclusion we reached by analysing the strategies of differentiation, extension, diversification, collaboration, fusion and division is that there is a close relationship between the use of such strategies and a museum's performance. Among the most important effects generated through the implementation of such strategies by museums are the following: an increased attractiveness, a higher number of visitors and bigger incomes earned; an increased visitors' satisfaction; lower storing expenses; an increased assimilation of information by the beneficiaries, i.e. the public; a higher number of items on display, which leads to an increased visibility of the respective museum and a better public access to the museum's collections. Taking into account these effects, we believe that by using the appropriate management strategies museums can improve all four components of their sustainability.

Contributions on the empirical research level

• Devising a set of indicators and a model for measuring museum sustainability

The indicators and the model we propose are detailed in the second part of **Chapter Three**. This personal contribution was possible by correlating the information deriving from reviewing specialised literature with the opinions expressed by the experts from the museum sector on various methods and techniques which could be used for measuring a museum's sustainability. Thus, as a result of this action, we elaborated a system including 30 indicators which can be used for an objective quantitative measurement of sustainability. The indicators we propose are grouped according to the four dimensions of sustainability, but also take into account the interdependences between these four dimensions. By calculating these indicators, a museum can measure its sustainability either by comparing the progress recorded over a number of periods of time or by comparing its progress with that of other museums. Naturally, one must also consider that such approach is based on the idea that sustainability should be improved permanently, which at a certain moment will become practically impossible (infinite effects with zero effort). Also, the point where a balance is obtained between the four dimensions cannot be identified solely based on these indicators. For this reason, we considered that it is necessary to elaborate a museum sustainability measuring model through which these weaknesses should be eliminated. The model we propose allows the percentage measuring of museum sustainability, on a scale from 0% to 100%, by comparing the performance of a museum to the best market values obtained in a certain geographic area for each of the 30 indicators of the system. According to the assessment scale, a high level of sustainability is reflected by values in the range of [80% - 100%].

• Clarifying some terms used in the specialised literature and identifying the state of the museums in Romania from the point of view of their sustainability, based on the opinions of several experts from the museum sector

The first empirical research action we took was to carry out a series of interviews with museum experts, so as to get to know their opinions about the characteristics of a sustainable museum and the degree to which a series of factors can impact positively or negatively on the sustainability of a museum. Thus, the first part of **Chapter Five** presents the conclusions resulting from the qualitative research. Among the most important results of this research is that it offers an image about the concept of a sustainable museum. In the experts' opinion firstly a sustainable museum has sufficient financial resources coming from a number of different sources, not only from the state budget. In order to diversify and increase their incomes, the experts state that museums must get a good knowledge of their clients, competitors, competitive advantages, market share and goals, and adopt an entrepreneurial behaviour so as to better the value they offer to their consumers. Another characteristic associated with sustainability in museums is the rational and efficient use of their resources. As regards the museums in Romania, our experts said that there are few examples of Romanian museums which managed to improve their sustainability by developing participating cultural projects that are attractive for the community. The main cause for this situation is the staff employed in the museum sector, which is both undersized and resistant to change, poorly motivated and insufficiently qualified for the current requirements of museums. Besides the human resource problem, the experts noted that sustainability is also associated with such factors as the size of a museum's collection, its profile and the strategies it applies. The statistical hypotheses tested in the second part of this chapter are based on the experts' opinions about the factors which impact on museum sustainability.

• Elaborating a questionnaire which will enable an analysis of museum sustainability in Romania and testing the correlations between sustainability and various other factors

In order to make a quantitative analysis of the sustainability of Romanian museums, we considered it necessary to apply a questionnaire which included questions about all four dimensions of this concept. Having reviewed the specialised literature, we concluded

that all the questionnaires we identified offer an in-depth view of the different subcomponents of sustainability, but fail to approach this subject matter in its entirety. Thus, starting from the theoretical research presented in Chapter Three and from the indicators we proposed for measuring museum sustainability, we elaborated a new questionnaire which could satisfy the imposed requirement. The items referring to museum sustainability were grouped in the first section of the questionnaire and we used the Likert scale from 1 to 5 in order to assist and encourage the experts in completing the questionnaire. The characteristics of each museum and expert were collected by means of multiple choice questions or open answer questions. These items were made after an exploratory analysis of the features of the Romanian museum sector, based on the online information supplied by National Institute of Statistics and the Ministry of Culture (both directly and indirectly, through its subordinate institutions).

• Validating the proposed questionnaire by testing its measuring accuracy, internal consistency and trueness

The questionnaire we elaborated was sent nationwide and the registered response rate was 47.54% of the calculated sample. The recorded answers came from all regions of Romania and were diverse enough to cover all museum types, irrespective of profile of the museums, importance of their patrimony, number of staff, type of organisation, size of collection, legal personality, total income and number of visitors. Almost 60% of the answers were given by people from the managing staff of these museums, which means that the quality of the collected data is likely to be high. However, since this as a new questionnaire, which had not been validated scientifically before, in order to make sure that our questionnaire could provide accurate information about the topic under scrutiny, we tested it by calculating its Cronbach alpha (α) coefficient. The coefficient we obtained was over 0.85 for each sub-scale, which shows that the instrument we elaborated is very consistent and the items included in it are inter-correlated. Subsequently we tested the normality of the data distribution in order to select the most appropriate statistical tests which should be used for checking the hypotheses. All the three tests effected (w/s, Shapiro-Wilk şi Kolmogorov-Smirnov) proved that there is a difference between some of the collected data and the total population, which made us continue our research by applying some non-parametric tests.

• Setting and interpreting the connections between sustainability and various factors referring to museum sizes, characteristics and types

Based on the answers to our questions, we calculated the average sustainability of each museum and we tested each sustainability from the point of view of its association with a series of factors, such as the museum profile, the existence of a budget of expense and income, the museum's legal personality, the number of staff, the total incomes and the collection size. In order to achieve this, we used non-parametrical statistical tests, such as the χ^2 test, Fisher's exact test, the Contingence coefficient, the Phi coefficient and Cramer's V coefficient. As a result we were able to validate hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 and invalidated hypotheses 5 and 6. Thus, the tests we carried out allowed us to conclude that a museum's sustainability is closely linked with the existence of a museum's own income, the legal personality of the museum and its number of staff. Based on the data we collected, we noted that the museums which have their own budget and a legal personality are generally more sustainable than the ones without an own budget. Also, the museums with a higher number of staff tend to have higher average sustainability. A museum's profile is also linked with its average sustainability. This can be interpreted positively, since it shows that museums have equal chances of being sustainable irrespective of how big they are or the type of collections they manage.

• Identifying the correlations between the cultural, social, economic and ecological sustainability

The grouping of the questionnaire items into the four basic components of sustainability subsequently allowed us to note the correlations between these components, using the Spearman rank correlation coefficient. Despite the existence of significant correlations between all four dimensions, we noted that the closest link is the one between the social and the economic pillars of sustainability. The positive association between these two components was also supported by the spreading chart drawn up. Thus, based on the results we obtained, we were able to assert with a certainty of 99% that there is a strong correlation between a museum's economic prosperity and its social impact, which made us validate the first hypothesis.

• Identifying the correlation between a museum's financial independence and the application by the same of a diversification strategy

This contribution results from the validation of hypothesis 7 on the existence of a positive medium-intensity correlation between the proportion of a museum's own incomes

from its total incomes and the diversification of the range of products it sells. Taking into account the validation of this hypothesis, we can assert that a stronger emphasis on making and selling products inspired from the museum's collections can be a solution which could impact on diminishing the respective museum's dependence on public funding.

Besides highlighting these contributions, we must mention that our personal preoccupation for the subject matter of our research materialised in a progressive dissemination of the results obtained through the publication of these results in specialised works (Pop & Borza, 2014a, 2014b, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Pop & Alexa, 2016), the participation in a series of international conferences both in Romania (in Bucharest and Păltiniș) and abroad (in Venice and Rome) and the drawing up and presenting research précis before the thesis coordinating commission. The actuality and relevance of the theme studied were thus confirmed through the acceptance of the presentation of the articles in conferences and the publication of these articles in prestigious specialised magazines (one of which is ISI, with an impact factor of 1,343 in 2015). Based on these considerations, the final thesis includes ideas and concepts which were included in the articles published throughout our doctoral studies.

Recommendations for museums

Based on the theoretical and empirical research we carried out, our recommendations for the museums which aim at developing in the context of the current changes, trends and environmental challenges are as follows:

1. In order to receive, you must first offer something. In other words, if a museum wants to receive financial support from its community through the public authorities, it must first prove that it has the capacity of generating benefits and added value for its target market segment. The results obtained by the museum will then form a good negotiation basis for obtaining benefits such as a bigger budget or the approval for employing more staff in the organisation chart. Also, once it has demonstrated it is able to generate added value through projects aimed at the community, a museum can also attract financial support from sponsors, as more and more companies are willing to apply the concept of corporate social responsibility. Thus, just as a business plan can receive funding from investors only if it meets certain criteria through which it proves that it can be implemented successfully, museums will receive support if they come up with interesting and useful projects. Therefore, our

- conclusion is that *proving its entrepreneurial spirit* is an important ingredient which lies at the basis of a museum's financial prosperity.
- 2. In order to offer, you must have a motivated human resource. The most important resource of an organisation is its staff, since the way the other resources are used depends on the staff's creativity, originality and initiative. A museum which has high financial and material resources but demotivated staff will not succeed to attain a high level of efficiency, which is measured as the proportion between the resource entries and the outputs generated on the market and offered to the public in the shape of products and services. Also, the generation of project ideas and the implementation of these ideas are actions which depend primarily on an organisation's human resource. For this reason, the first recommendation can only be fulfilled if a museum's staff is willing to get involved in the development of the institution.
- 3. In the context of the rather restrictive legislative regulations, the most convenient solution for the use of a museum's staff to its maximum potential is *to motivate the staff through a transformational leadership*.
- 4. The two things which can move mountains in an organisation are a well motivated team and the initiation of interesting projects. Besides the financial support they can attract, museums can also be supported by their communities, which can help carry out projects through volunteering. Moreover, we notice that in this stage there is another important facet of social sustainability that intervenes: the projects aimed at the community can be carried out the together with the members of the community.
- 5. Once the first such projects are implemented successfully, a museum reaches the phase where they get financial support at a level which allows them to make the next step, the diversification of the museum's income sources and a higher financial independence due to the increase in the museum's own incomes. Just like a start-up which is at first part of a business incubator, after which it manages to evolve and develop on its own, museums can accelerate their expansion by generating financial resources from the inside. Naturally, this does not mean in any way that the museum's external resources (from the public authorities, sponsors, non-refundable funds) should be stopped or diminished. The role of any increase in a museum's own incomes is to complete the other types of income and thus to help the museum better fulfil its mission and goals. Therefore, a museum's own incomes can be increased through various managerial strategies, from the simple diversification of the products and services the museum sells, to the application of a strategy of

- expansion on the international market. The effect of all these so-called commercial actions is an increase in the beneficiaries' satisfaction and an improvement it the museum's public image, which are two important elements of sustainability.
- 6. For the offer of a museum to have the expected effect, special attention must be paid to *the quality of the products and services* the museum offers. As we showed above, quality is a resource-consuming factor, which requires higher investments, but also leads, over a long term, to attracting new visitors and in the end to an increasing in the museum's economic prosperity.
- 7. After the museum has reached an acceptable level of development, its attention can be directed to a larger extent towards the component of sustainability dealing with the protection of the natural environment, both through the adoption of some measures aiming at reducing the consumption of natural resources and/or rendering this consumption efficient, and the organisation of exhibitions and educational projects which will promote the principles of sustainable development among the public.

The limits of this research

One of the most important limits of this research comes from the subjectivity of the experts we interviewed. Ideally, museum sustainability should be measured by calculating the sustainability indicators presented in this thesis and, depending on the results obtained, museums should be categorised by their different levels of sustainability. In this way the measurement would be founded on objective data. As many of the persons we interviewed are not fully familiar with the concept of sustainability and the effort of supplying all the information required for the calculation of these indicators would have been rather big, it is highly unlikely that sufficient data could be collected so as to carry out an analysis based on open answer questions. For this reason we chose to devise a questionnaire through which museums could assess themselves on a scale from 1 to 5 based on the various components and aspects of sustainability. Since the answers given to these questionnaires reflect the respondents' opinions, not exact data, we consider that there is a risk that in some cases the assessment did not necessarily reflect the real sustainability of a museum. This error might have occurred for a number of different reasons: (1) the terms or expressions used were not understood correctly by the respondents; (2) the respondents' reservation in answering some questions honestly, despite the guaranteed confidentiality of their answers; (3) some of the respondents might not have given much interest to the questionnaire.

Also, although we tried to simplify the process of questionnaire completion as much as possible, we encountered situations of reluctance and refusal from the part of some museums in supplying the information we requested. For this reason, in order to increase the representativeness of the study, we had to extend the deadline for the questionnaire completion several times and allow multiple ways of sending the completed questionnaires.

Despite these limitations, we trust that our research is an important step forward towards monitoring and improving the sustainability of museums, and opens a perspective towards more extensive research in the future. The main directions for future research are presented below.

Prospects for future research

As the research instrument we created was validated nationally, it should be applied in other countries as well. As we stated above, the results we obtained might have been influenced by the characteristics of the Romanian museums, which makes it necessary for similar studies to be carried out in other geographical locations, so as to make to generalisation of the conclusions resulting from our study possible. Therefore, the first recommendation is for this research to be extended to other regions. Also, we should consider the prospect of a similar research applied on a sample with a larger geographical distribution, such as for example the museums in all the EU member states. Such a research would be large enough to allow an in-depth study of the phenomenon of museum sustainability and the elaboration of some general conclusions.

As regards the perfecting of the study on museum sustainability nationally, this could be achieved through the elaboration by National Institute of Statistics of an annual statistical study which should collect the information required for the calculation of the sustainability indicators described in this paper.

Also, we consider that further research into measuring the impact of various management and marketing strategies upon a museum's performance, depending on its characteristics, would be useful. Such research would allow the experts to devise different recommendations, by types of museums, which would result into a more rapid development of these institutions.

This thesis focuses on examining all the components of sustainability in order to form a general outlook on this concept; however, we believe that an in-depth research of each element of each of the four pillars of sustainability might contribute to devising more ways of improving museum sustainability.

We must also emphasize that case studies should also be carried out which should present the best practices in the field of museum sustainability, thus enabling an examination of the success factors identified in each case and then the adaptation of these success factors to other museums as well.

In the end, since this thesis includes one of the first attempts at identifying the influence factors and measuring museum sustainability, we consider that the results we obtained can contribute to raising the understanding of the concept of sustainable museum both from the academic and the practical points of view.

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