

11
**ATTITUDES OF LOCAL VISITORS TOWARDS MUSEUM
EXHIBITIONS "**

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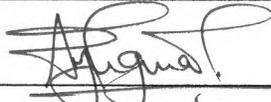
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Declaration

This project report is my original work and has not been submitted for a Degree /Diploma award in any other institution.

Name Andrew Robert Njugua

Signature 
26.06.2003

This report has been submitted for examination with approval of the university's approved supervisor.

Supervisor's Name. _____

Signature _____

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my wife Jane Wanjiru, my sons Joseph Gichere and Wallace Mathenge and to my late sister Margaret Wanjiru

Acknowledgements.

I wish to thank my employer, the National Museums of Kenya (NMK), my sponsors- Kenya Museum society (KMS) and Program for Museum development in Africa (PMDA) for their financial assistance. I would like to note that, without their assistance I would not have been able to take this course.

I cannot forget all the lecturers who came to teach us, for the wealth of knowledge they shared with us. I would like to single out Prof. Simiyu Wandibba of the university of Nairobi (UoN).

I wish to recognize in a special way my project supervisor, Dr. D.M.London for his useful advice and guidance when I was writing the project. A special debt is owed to my PMDA colleagues for their encouragement and assistance in different ways. Lastly I cannot forget to thank Patrick Kamau (KMS Guide) and all staff at NMK Headquarters who assisted me when I was collecting data.

Many thanks also to all respondents who participated in this exercise, without them this study would not have been accomplished.

Abbreviations.

NMK	National Museums of Kenya
UoN	University of Nairobi
PMDA	Program for Museum development in Africa.
HQ	Headquarters
CBD	Centre for biodiversity
AFRICOM	International council for African Museums.
ICOM	International council of Museums

Abstract

The knowledge that permanent exhibitions do not change often prompted this study. Permanent exhibitions can last even for thirty years while temporary exhibitions are expected to last for between a day to six months. This study investigated the attitudes of local Museum visitors towards museum exhibitions. The assumptions were that local visitors apparently dislike permanent exhibitions to temporary ones. It was also assumed that the community would be interested in participating in conception and mounting of exhibitions.

This study was carried out in the Nairobi Museum, which is located within the headquarters (HQ) of national museums of Kenya in Nairobi City. The respondents targeted were local visitors, grouped into two teenagers (aged 15-23 years) and adults (aged 24 years and above), males and females. A sample size of eighty four respondents was purposely selected, from among local visitors coming from Nairobi and the neighboring districts.

A questionnaire was designed for the above respondents (appendix I), and interviews were held with key informants, to shed light on some issues. Purposive sampling technique was applied to select the respondents, both the local visitors and key informants. Nairobi Museum was also purposely selected.

This study concluded that local visitors have different attitudes to different permanent exhibitions, while some are not attractive others are. Display methods that have put into consideration the context of the object/specimen were cited as reasons for preference of some of these exhibitions. Community participation was an idea the

local visitors are in support of, in fact 92% of the respondents commented positively towards the issue. Several ways through which participation can be enhanced were listed. These were donation of artifacts, suggestions and funding or sponsorship.

Chapter one

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Some of the permanent exhibitions within the chain of the National Museums of Kenya are as old as the Museums themselves. Infact some exhibitions may be more than two decades old while others are as old as the Museums. Permanent exhibitions are expensive to put up, but when they remain for too long the visitors loose interest in visiting the Museum regularly. This research study was set to find out why local visitors to the museum have a greater liking for the temporary exhibits. Museums need not worry about financing exhibitions as long as they can meet the expectations of the visitors. The cost of temporary exhibitions can be borne by a local industry or a large business. After all Museums have a duty, to offer access to collections through exhibitions. Permanent exhibitions can be redesigned to make them look different, information on labels can be updated where necessary, and interactive activities can be introduced to enhance communicability of the exhibition, hence literally removing objects behind the glass cases. However, our museums lack the resources to constantly update permanent exhibitions. This contributes to the apparent dislike or apathy towards permanent exhibitions. It is human nature to retain good experiences and tendency to repeat them, if possible. If the interaction between the visitor and the exhibit were good and enjoyable, then the visitor would want to experience the same again in future. Temporary exhibitions when well planned can be a solution to the problem above. They can be mounted on a wide variety of themes or topical issues, be they on cultural or natural

history or on contemporary issues. Temporary exhibitions need not be confined to Museum buildings; they can be installed at hotel lobbies, social halls and Airports among other places where the public frequents. After all this is taking the Museum to the people and, thereby, becoming an even important part of the community life.

1.1.1 History and Background Information -Nairobi

Nairobi owes its origin to the construction of the Uganda Railway between Mombasa and Lake Victoria, by the British at the end of the 19th century. At that time, Kenya was part of a British colonial protectorate known as British East Africa. The site of present-day Nairobi was selected to be the headquarters for the construction of the railway in 1899, when the tracks reached the area. That year, the small settlement became the capital of the province, and in 1900 Nairobi was given township status. The township grew rapidly due to an influx of railway workers and the arrival of various groups of settlers in search of profit and adventure. In 1907 Nairobi became the capital of the British East Africa Protectorate. In 1919 Nairobi became a municipality. In 1950 Nairobi was elevated to city status by the royal charter. The city of Nairobi covers an area of about 680 sq km (about 260 sq miles) at an average altitude of 1675 m (5495 ft) above sea level. The city centre and the area around it to the east and south is a relatively flat plain, while the area to the west and north is hilly. According to the 1999 census the population of Nairobi stands at 3.3 million.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Visitors seek to explore and discover new knowledge in Museum exhibitions. However, exhibitions in the Nairobi Museum do not change quite often just like in other National Museums. Temporary exhibitions when set up tend to attract a lot of visitors to our Museums and elicit a lot of excitement depending on the theme of the exhibition. This shows that the local Museum visitors have a general liking for the temporary exhibitions. Some of the themes that can be addressed by temporary exhibitions are issues affecting communities directly e.g. Street children, child labour, adult literacy etc. In this research study, I documented the attitudes of the local Museum visitors towards exhibitions. Specifically this study investigated whether temporary exhibits are preferred to the permanent ones.

1.2.1 Research Questions.

1. How can the local communities be involved/participate in Museum exhibitions?
2. Which exhibition in the Nairobi Museum do the visitors like most and why.
3. Which exhibitions in the Nairobi Museum are unattractive and why.
4. What is the purpose of exhibitions in the Museum?

1.3 Objectives.

1.3.1 Overall objective.

The overall objective of this study was to investigate the attitudes of local Museum visitors towards Museum exhibitions.

1.3.2 Specific objectives.

More specifically the study addressed the following issues: -

1. Document the reasons why local Museum visitors apparently like temporary exhibitions.
2. Document the reasons why local Museum visitors show an apparent dislike towards permanent exhibitions.
3. Find out how the local people would want to participate in Museum exhibitions.

1.4 Justification

Museums are institutions that are charged with the responsibility of documenting and preserving our heritage (guardianship). Preservation or conservation per se is not feasible in the long run, sustainable preservation is much beneficial. The general public needs to “consume” this preserved heritage. The only way to achieve this is by displaying/exhibiting the objects and specimens in the Museum storages. That way the Museums will definitely justify their existence and use of taxpayer’s money.

The findings from this study will be very useful to the Museums. This is because the Museum will understand the attitudes of the local visitors. The exhibition team will also be able to positively identify the needs and interests of the local visitors upon whom the Museum relies on to patronize exhibitions. The Museum designer will be able to incorporate these needs and preferences when designing exhibitions. The Museum exhibition team will appreciate the fact that the local visitor is not a passive patron. The springburn Museum near Glassgow in the United Kingdom, has involved the local people

in the affairs of the Museum, inviting them not only to participate passively but also to be active in running of the Museum (Fiona, 1997). As such our curators and Directors should not shy away from inviting the local people to plan for exhibitions rather than deciding what the local visitors would like to see without involving them.

Other benefits are: -

- The Museums will be able to define and solve problems related to exhibitions and the local visitors.
- The findings will help the Museums establish priorities e.g. should the Museums invest in upgrading the labeling and translate the text to the local languages.
- The findings will assist in the development of a marketing plan. E.g. where should Museums advertise? Should special groups be targeted? How might more visitors come at quiet times? Are new exhibitions needed?
- The local visitors would benefit by having their opinions incorporated by the Museums authorities during exhibition planning and implementation.
- The local visitors would actively participate in determining what comes on exhibition, especially temporary ones. These exhibitions would aim at solving some of the problems in the society.

The curator and his team rely on their eyes, taste and experience as the final arbiter in making judgments about what to collect and what to exhibit (Lavine and Karp, 1997: 4).

The community is rarely consulted.

1.5 Scope and limitations

The following issues were addressed: -

- **Temporary exhibitions**

- Themes in the past.
- Average number of local visitors visiting temporary exhibitions
- Media used in the advertisement of the exhibitions
- Comments on the visitor's book.
- Any significant impact on visitation.

- **Permanent exhibitions.**

- Number of permanent exhibitions and their general themes.
- For each, length of stay without significant modification.

- **Local Visitors.**

- General comments on exhibitions.
- Do they prefer temporary exhibitions?
- What improvements would they want on temporary exhibitions?
- What feelings do they have about permanent exhibitions?
- What recommendations would they want on them and why?

- **Limitations**

The following issues will not be addressed.

- Cost of putting up exhibitions
- Conservation problems and related issues.
- Conceptualization and planning of exhibitions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.1 Introduction.

In this chapter the author deals with literature review, the conceptual framework, where the relationship between the main issues of the study are outlined. Assumptions of the research study have been stated, concepts (variables) used in this study have been defined.

2.2 Visitors and Museum exhibitions.

Studies carried out by various scholars indicate that exhibitions must be designed appropriately. It is the collection that differentiates the Museum from any other leisure attraction. The collection is unique and authentic; the Museums need to capitalize on this asset. An analysis of any existing and readily available information about visitors could be a good starting point. In most of our Museums data on the number of visitors is not given as the total numbers only, other attributes such as residence, classification into children or adults are also available. However, visitors feelings about the exhibitions are rarely documented and when documented they are not analyzed. One author, Grewcock (2002) notes that Museums must decide what they want to achieve through visitor information study.

Most researchers agree that visitors consist of a heterogeneous group with numerous variables. These are age and sex, intelligence and knowledge, social and economic

grouping, and particularly important motivation. A motivated visitor derives more benefits from the displays (Exhibitions) than those who casually visit the Museum or wander aimlessly around the galleries (Thompson, 1984). Motivation can be tied to past experiences, especially at school or at home and promotional materials by the Museums. However, the National Museums of Kenya has not done much to motivate the local visitors. It is important to know the needs and expectations of the visitors. For example, visitors returning to a Museum will expect to see new things as well as renew their acquaintance with established favorites. Responses to user needs reflect the increasing demand and requirements for opening up the Museums to community participation in its activities. Organizers of an exhibition on the Maori people of New Zealand in 1994 had to consult the Maori elders to seek consent for the exhibition displaying their treasures to travel. This shows that the organizers appreciated the fact the Museum co-owns the objects with the community. Different Museums have different justifications for their activities and radically different conceptions on how to use and present their collections (Karp and Lavine, 1991). This research focuses on the opinions and feelings that the local visitors have on Museum exhibitions.

A temporary exhibition may be planned to last for one day to six months. Its popularity can be determined by, its design, ability to communicate and the level of **publicity** by the Museum and probably the degree of participation by the community. These temporary exhibitions serve the purpose of creating change and variety in the Museum, by focusing on collections or topics not otherwise presented by the permanent exhibitions (Ambrose and Paine, 1993). Special emphasis may be given to temporary exhibitions, to target new

segments of the local audience and to encourage them visit the Museum on a regular rather than a once and for all basis. Evaluation of the needs of the local people can lead to better exhibitions that meet their interests. Exhibitions are there to inform and inspire visitors (Ambrose and Paine, 1993); as such, results of these evaluations may help to improve on the subsequent exhibitions.

The public side of a Museum is its galleries and an outward representation of the whole institution is its exhibitions (Gary and Dean, 1994). Exhibitions therefore tend to expose what is hidden away from public view; these are collections in the storages and research findings. Museum exhibitions therefore form a very important **link** between the public and the Museum. Exhibitions are a form of dialogue forum, as the Museum uses the objects to tell a story to its visitors. If the Museum can open up to accommodate ideas, suggestions and opinions from the public, then the dialogue is completed. This shows how important exhibitions are as part of Museum activities, perhaps second only to the care of collections.

2.3 Conceptual Framework.

My conceptual framework covers three important issues, the **community** (which comprises the local Museum visitors), the **collection** (Museum objects used on exhibitions) and the **Museum** as an institution. Museums should strive to be more responsive to the needs of the communities they serve, lest they be pushed into oblivion and a state of virtual non-existence. The Museums do not have objects of their own. The objects or collections that they have are kept in trust for the community. This shows

clearly that the Museum cannot exist without the community.

Preservation of collections in the Museums without sustainably using them may render them meaningless at the eyes of the local people. The Museum is obliged to move out into the community and assess their needs, which they can meet efficiently and effectively. After assessing the needs, Museums ought to mount exhibits that address contemporary issues such as street children, child labour, Human immunodeficiency Virus) H.I.V, free education, traditional conflict resolution methods etc. These themes can educate, inspire, change attitudes and entertain the local visitors. The local community on the other hand will feel obliged to patronize the Museum and benefit from “their” exhibitions.

These two institutions the community and the Museum on the other hand need to work together. The Museum need to act like an appendage of the community, it ought to invite the community to participate actively in the development of exhibitions, both temporary and permanent. When the community members are involved, they will own up the exhibitions. Museum exhibitions are a function of the community who are owners of the collection. The Museum should therefore not try to own exhibitions by not involving the local community.

Most of the exhibitions in our Museums have been mounted with little or no input from the local communities. Could this be the reason why many local people do not visit them? The local visitors are the creators and users of these objects/collections in our museums but are rarely consulted when exhibitions are conceived and mounted. Since

Museums mount exhibitions for the “consumption” of the local community, they should fully involve them. The three entities are fully interrelated and none can operate without the other, e.g. the Museum acquires objects from the community to build up their collections and expects the local community to benefit from the exhibitions mounted.

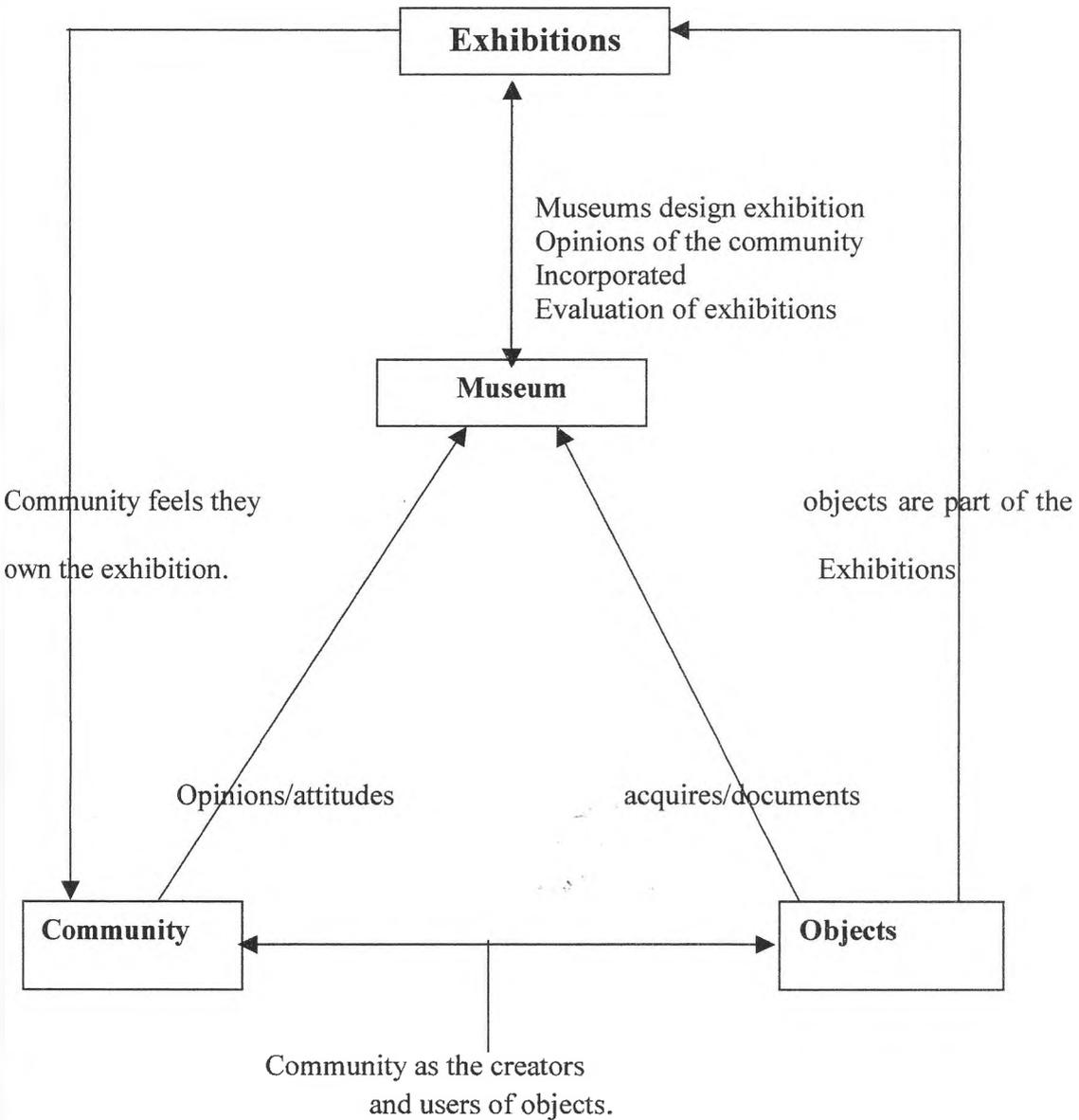


Figure 2.1: The bond between Museums and their communities.

2.4 Assumptions.

This study has been guided by the following assumptions: -

- Inclusions of contemporary themes in temporary exhibitions have adverse effects on their popularity.
- The apparent dislike of permanent exhibitions by the local people is due to the fact that exhibitions are not changed or modified over a long period of time.
- The local community would like to be involved in exhibitions.

2.5 Definitions of operational concepts

The following concepts will be used in this study: -

1) Local Museum Visitor.

This term refers to community in the neighborhood of the Museum. This is the population in Nairobi province and it may also include the neighboring districts. The study area for this research is Nairobi, so the neighboring districts are considered to be part of the immediate community that can visit the Museum. These districts are Kajicho, Thika, Kiambu and Machakos. The local visitors were grouped into teenagers and adult.

2) Exhibitions.

A Museum exhibition is a deliberate display of objects with intended purpose and targeted at a particular audience. An exhibition can be permanent or temporary.

3) Attitudes

These are opinions, feelings and recommendations that the local people may wish to

express on Museum exhibitions. These attitudes could be positive or negative.

4) Collections

A collection refers to a group of Museum objects, which have been registered and accessioned.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the author describes the research site in details. The population and sample are defined. Sampling design for respondents has been described here. Various methods of data collection have also been outlined. The methods of data analysis, problems encountered as well as ethical considerations are also discussed.

3.2 Research site

This research study was carried out at the Nairobi Museum (NMK HQ). Nairobi Museum is located within the city of Nairobi off Museum hill road Nairobi.

3.2.1 Background information on Nairobi Museum

Nairobi Museum was founded in 1907. An association that was then called the East Africa and Uganda natural history society was responsible for its establishment. In 1911 a wealthy member of the Asian community erected a small stone building for the society. This building stood at the corner of Muindi Mbingu and University way. By 1923, the society had grown and had to move to another site, they put up a structure at the corner of Kirk Road (Now Nyerere Road) and Kenyatta Avenue. Unfortunately in 1928, Kirk Road was rerouted and the building had to be demolished. At around this time, the governor of Kenya, Sir Robert Coryndon died. The society decided to erect a Memorial Museum on Museum hill, on a plot made available by the government. This building, now the Nairobi Museum was officially opened on the 23rd September 1930. Infact it was

actually known as the coryndon Museum. Nairobi Museum is a world famous conservation institution, with its famous collection of Hominid and other fossils. Nairobi Museum is also the Headquarters of the National Museums of Kenya, in addition to housing other important institutions such as the International council of African Museums (AFRICOM), East African Herbarium and the Center for Biodiversity (CBD).

3.3 Population

The population that was studied consisted of the local Museum visitors. The local visitors were defined as residents of Kenya from Nairobi and its neighbouring districts including Machakos, Kajiado, and Thika etc.

3.4 Sample.

The sample comprised of 84 people, aged 15 years and above.

3.5 Sampling techniques

3.5.1 Sampling of the Nairobi Museum.

The National Museums of Kenya has eighteen Museums spread out in the country and open to members of public (NMK Horizon, no. 2). The Nairobi Museum was purposively selected for the following reasons: -

- It posts the highest number of local visitors per year.
- The Museum has several research departments and hence subject experts are easily available here.

- The Museum is at the headquarters of the NMK. The exhibits department is also located here thus hosts experts in the various fields of exhibition. Most of the exhibitions in the NMK network are designed here.

3.5.2 Quota sampling

Sampling of the respondents relied on accidental choice as they were leaving the Museum. A sample of eighty four respondents in approximately equal proportions between men and women was drawn. Each category was interviewed as they left the Museum ensuring that, balance between the categories was checked. Each category was divided into two equal proportions, teenagers and adults. About forty seven percent (47%) of the respondents were teenagers, while the remaining 53% were adults. These are the people who need to develop positive attitudes towards the Museums so as to support their growth in future. The adults, who are mostly parents, comprised 53% of the respondents. Parents take their children to visit the Museum, so they have some influence on them.

3.5.3 Purposive sampling

The researcher targeted four Museum professionals as key informants, for individual interviews. These key informants were purposely selected because, they are involved in one way or the other in conception, design and preparation, mounting and maintaining exhibitions.

3.6 Methods of data collection.

3.6.1 Structured interview.

A questionnaire (Appendix I) was administered to the visitors as they left the Museum.

The questionnaire was mostly self administered to save on time in order to reach the targeted number of respondents. Eighty four visitors responded to the questionnaire.

The nature of data that was gathered from the Museum visitors was to gauge their feelings about Museum exhibits. This was done through administering a questionnaire, whose themes were: -

- Visitation in the last one year.
- Understanding of Museum activities and other related aspects.
- Motivating factors, preferred activities in the Museum etc
- Other places one can visit.
- Likes and dislikes about Museum exhibits and their reasons.
- Recommendations.
- Community participation in Museum exhibitions.

3.6.2 Key informants interview.

To gain a deeper understanding of the concept (Relationship between the visitors and Museum exhibitions), interviews were conducted with respondents considered to be knowledgeable in the themes under investigation, see appendix II. Purposive sampling was used to select the four key informants namely: -

- o The curator in-charge of Nairobi Museum.
- o The curator of the Contemporary art gallery.

- Exhibit designer.
- Education officer.

The interviews focused on the following themes.

- Exhibition Policy.
- Types of Exhibitions.
- Publicity of exhibitions.
- Modifications and reasons on the permanent exhibits if any.
- Community participation in exhibitions.

This method of data collection was time consuming because of their busy schedules considering the limited time for data collection. However, it supplemented information collected through structured interviews.

3.6.3 Direct observation

This method was adopted in the course of fieldwork to complement the other methods of data collection. It involved taking a gallery walk together with the visitors though not very close. The researcher was able to observe the visitor's reactions towards the exhibitions.

3.6.4 Documenting/secondary data

Here the researcher relied on secondary data collected by the Nairobi Museum staff. The study was interested in two data sets. One, data on the total numbers of local visitors, month, for the last two years and data showing the number of local visitors interested in temporary exhibitions and their comments.

3.6.5 Photography

A few photographs were taken, showing the different types of exhibitions in the Museum and also some aspects of these exhibits discussed in this report (appendix IV). The purpose of these photographs is to illustrate some aspects of the phenomena discussed in this report.

3.7 Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected during this study was mostly qualitative data. Answers to the open ended questions were given numerical figures. This method of data preparation is called a **coding system**. In this method the question number was changed into a variable number and the possible answers (values) to each question were given numerical value. These numerical values are called **codes**. In this system a question was changed into a statement but conveying the same meaning. The results were summarized in a table, some of the tabulated data was then represented graphically using histograms to show frequency of certain responses. Secondary data was treated in the same way.

3.8 Problems encountered

The following problems were encountered: -

- The time allowed for the fieldwork was not adequate and the researcher identified and trained a research assistant who continued collecting data. The researcher maintained contact with him while in Mombasa through phone calls.
- Some of the respondents were reluctant to give an interview as they said they

were in a hurry. The researcher would assure them that the interview would take a short time, so that they may consider their decision.

- It was not possible to interview all the key informants (Museum professionals) due to nature of their work and busy schedule at the time. The researcher had to travel once again to Nairobi to meet them after fixing new appointments.
- Some respondents would return the questionnaire without filling it.

3.9 Ethical issues

The following ethical issues were put into consideration when conducting the interview.

i) The principal of voluntary participation

The participants/respondents were not coerced into participating in the research. After a brief self-introduction by the researcher, the respondent was kindly requested to fill the questionnaire.

ii) Principle of informed consent.

The researcher ensured that all prospective participants were fully informed on the procedures involved in the research in order to give their consent to participate. In addition participants were fully informed of the benefits of the research findings.

iii) Confidentiality

The participants were assured that identifying information would not be taken down. In fact their names were not written anywhere on the questionnaire. The researcher made sure that the participant remained anonymous through out the study even to the researcher himself.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with presentation and analysis of primary and secondary data. The primary data was mainly obtained from local Museum visitors and key informants who are Museum professionals. Secondary data were sourced from visitors' books normally on display when there is a temporary exhibition. A brief description of the data collected and analysis is also presented here. The findings are presented in tables and histograms.

4.1.1 Primary Data

The questionnaire (appendix I) was administered to eighty four (84) local Museum visitors from Nairobi and the neighboring districts. The respondents were aged from 15 years and above and had a bimodal age of 15-23 (female teenagers) and 24 years and above (male adults). The respondents were grouped by age and sex into teenagers (15-23 years) and adults (24 years and above), males and females respectively. This was done to check on the possibility of interviewing only a certain category of local visitors. Of the total number of respondents, 46% were teenagers (15-23 years) while the remaining 54% were adults. The respondents were sampled purposively as they left the Museum. During the planning stage it was intended that the questionnaire would be administered. However, a few questionnaires were administered but most of them were self-administered. This was done in order to have the questionnaire responded to by a large number of respondents within a shorter time. The exercise was preceded by a brief self-

introduction that included the purpose of the study.

4.1.2 Purpose for visit.

Data collected showed that 48.8%(see Figure 4.1 below) of the respondents had something that they had come to see in the Museum while the remaining 51.2% had nothing specific they had come to see. Of these respondents who responded yes to this question (48.8%), 17.1% had come to see a temporary Exhibition. The other 82.9% had come to see a Permanent Exhibition.

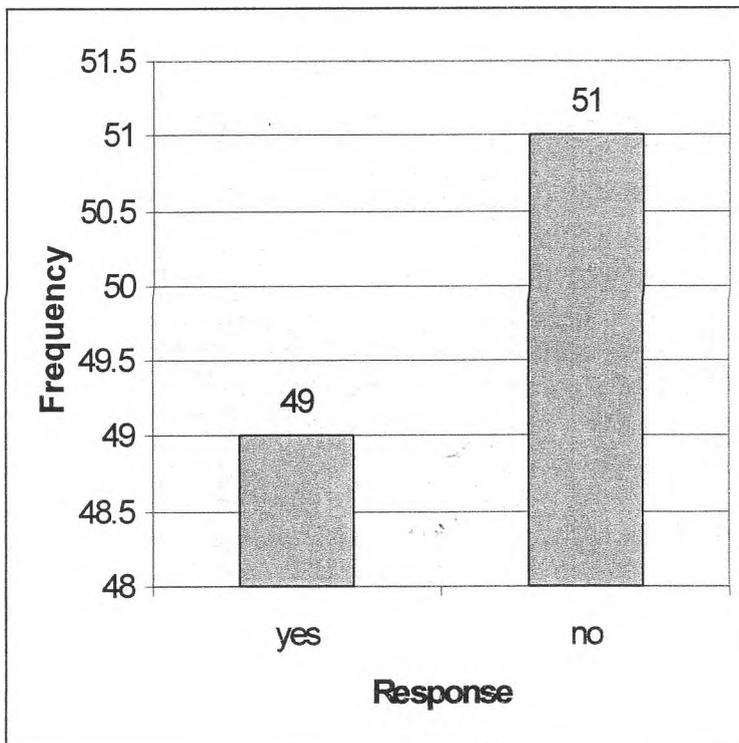


Figure 4.1: Purpose for the visit.

4.1.3 Most interesting exhibition

Most of the Museum visitors may not know the differences between a temporary exhibition and a permanent one. The respondents named the exhibition they found most interesting and researcher classified them into one of two categories. Table 4.1 is a summary of responses, highlighting the temporary exhibitions in light green.

Table 4.1: Most interesting exhibitions.

Exhibit	No. of respondents	Percentages
Fadhili Williams	4	4.9
Art gallery	7	8.5
Asian – African heritage	6	7.3
Marine	4	4.9
Birds	24	29.3
Snake Park	5	6.1
Prehistory	16	19.5
Mammals exhibition	7	8.5
Ethnography	5	6.1
Geology	2	2.4
Space exhibition	2	2.4
Total	82	100

Temporary exhibitions mentioned by the respondents were, **Fadhili Williams, Contemporary art, Asian-African heritage exhibitions**, and accounted for 20.7% of the total responses. The permanent exhibitions accounted for 79.3% of the responses. Two other exhibitions have not been mentioned here, these are the Joy Adamson's paintings and the Lamu gallery.

The birds exhibit alone accounts for about 29% of the responses. The respondents who felt that the birds exhibition was the most interesting supported their choices with the reasons discussed here. A few respondents felt that the species of birds shown are very many. In fact on display, there are about nine hundred bird specimens (source: Curator Nairobi Museum). Other reasons given were that most species known are represented, display is very good because it makes the birds to look alive. One respondent who hails from Nairobi notes that some species shown are not found in his neighborhood, another respondent who is a teacher felt that information provided is useful for teaching. The responses given show that our visitors interpret our exhibitions with the context of their background in mind. (appendix IV, plates 6a and 6b). Plate 6a shows a number of bird species on display, while plate 6b shows aesthetics in display methods that captivate the visitor.

4.1.4 Least interesting exhibitions.

Different respondents had various reasons for classification of exhibits. This shows that visitors to the Museum have different interests and preferences. Table 4.2 below lists the least interesting exhibitions.

Table 4.2: least interesting exhibitions.

Exhibit	No. of respondents	Percentages
Asian – African heritage	9	11.8
None(All were interesting)	23	30.3
Joy Adamson's paintings	3	4.0
Mammals gallery	1	1.3
Art gallery	10	13.2
Museum shop	1	1.3
Ethnography	1	1.3
Geology	7	9.0
Birds	6	8.0
Lamu gallery	3	3.6
Prehistory gallery	5	6.6
Snake park	1	1.3
Space exhibit	2	2.6
Marine	3	4.0
Eadhili Williams	1	1.3
Total	76	100

From the data collected, about a third (30.3 %) of the respondents felt that all the exhibits in the Museum were interesting. About 69 % of them were visiting the Museum for the first time. About two thirds of them (69 %) had come to the Museum to see a specific exhibit; i.e. they had visited the Museum with a purpose. This observation (All exhibitions are interesting) can be attributed to the fact that when one visits a Museum for the first time, it is fascinating and captivating. However, on subsequent visits, one starts being more critical. Please note that this question was responded to by 90.5% of the people sampled.

One respondent indicated that he had visited the Museum many times in the last twelve months. During this particular visit, he had come to see the marine exhibition. This shows that this respondent has a lot of interest in this subject, as such it becomes a driving force in the visitor's interest in Museum activities. This kind of interest may have some root in the background life of such a visitor. It might have started when he was young due to the parent's or the school's influence.

Data collected shows that the Asian-African heritage exhibition, which is one the temporary exhibitions was the least interesting. Some the reasons given include, it is boring, it is poorly arranged and it has been there too long. In fact it was mounted in the year 2001, this is the third year. (Source: Curator-Nairobi Museum). A temporary exhibition is expected to last between a day and six months. That means a temporary exhibition has a defined time limit unlike the permanent one. So the question of how long temporary is temporary is difficult to answer and varies from one Museum to

another. It can also be determined by other overriding factors such as its popularity, the interested community and its sponsors.

Some of the reasons the respondents gave for various choices made are discussed here. Lack of interest in the subject of exhibition, inadequate information and lack of interpretation are some of the reasons that were given. One respondent commented that some exhibitions have portrayed information that conflicts with the Christian faith i.e. the aspect of Evolution. The Museum therefore has a challenge to develop exhibits that put into consideration certain feeling about their visitors. In some exhibitions, some respondents felt that not enough objects have been displayed. The Swahili culture displayed in the Lamu gallery was singled out as one that is lacking in objects. This shows that the respondents did not see certain aspects of the Swahili culture represented. The space exhibition was also singled out as not interesting because the text had not been updated to match current information on space exploration. Only 90% of the sampled respondents answered this question, while 10% did not.

4.1.5 Comparison between the most and least interesting exhibitions.

When the two sets of data are compared it is clear that about 30% of the respondents felt that the bird exhibition was the most interesting, though 7.4% thought it is not. However, 7.4% is about a quarter of the respondents who rated the birds' exhibition as the best. Among the reasons given by the respondents were; varieties of birds are many and display method as being very good, hence they look alive. Over the years this exhibition has continuously been modified in terms of updating text. This can be attributed to the

fact that ornithology department is one of the most active research departments at NMK. As such this exhibition has been able to attract visitors over the years. My assumption that permanent exhibitions are not popular/attractive to local visitors is therefore incorrect. Figure 4.2 below is a comparative summary of the most and least interesting exhibitions.

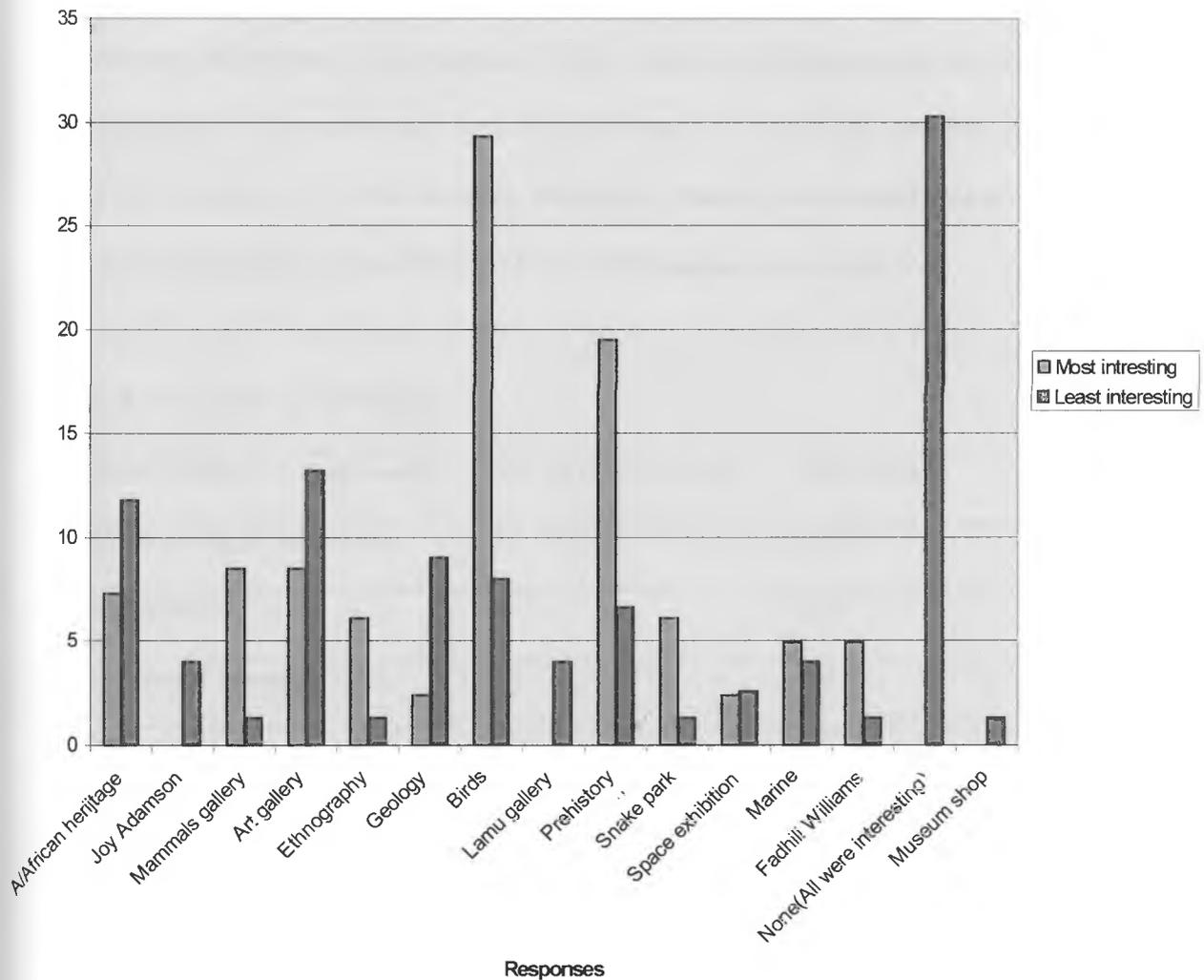


Figure 4.2: Comparison between most interesting and least interesting exhibitions.

4.1.6 Purpose of exhibitions in the Museums.

Exhibitions in the museum are meant to create awareness, discuss certain themes and entertain the visitors. More than fifty percent, i.e. 55.7% of the respondents felt that the Museum is an educational resource, 15.2% thought that the museum enlightens and helps create awareness, while 16.5 % associated the Museum with preservation of culture and promotion of history. A small percentage i.e. 3.8% felt that the Museum plays a role in entertaining the visitors. Entertainment is one aspect the Museum can use to reach a certain section of the community including the youth. Some of the Museum exhibition ought to be planned with that in mind, where the youth are entertained and at the same time a message is put across. The table below summarizes these responses.

Table 4.3: Purpose of exhibitions.

Purpose (category – responses)	No. of respondents	Percentage
Enlighten & create awareness	12	15.2
Entertainment	3	3.8
Education and research	44	55.7
Preserve & promote history	13	16.5
Others	7	8.9
Total	79	100

About 9% of the respondents had the following views classified under others, these are: -

- To relate modern life to traditional life
- Expose Kenya's culture and heritage.

- For money
- Enhance growing talents among exhibitors.

Out of the whole sample only 94% expressed their views, while 6% did not as is shown on the table above.

4.1.7 Ranking

The respondents were asked to mention/indicate the other places they would wish to visit and rank them in order of preference. Out of the seventy three respondents who responded this question, slightly more than a third ranked the Museum as their first destination. However, slightly less than a quarter each ranked the Museum in position two and three, 16.4 % ranked it in position four. This is presented in table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Ranking of the Museum

Rank	No. of respondents	Percentages
1	27	37.0
2	17	23.3
3	17	23.3
4	12	16.4
Total	73	100

The data shows that all the respondents who ranked Museum at various positions also named other places that they would wish to visit. Those other places except the Museum

were listed (see appendix III) then grouped as is shown in the table 4.5. Each of the respondents other desired places of visit were analyzed, classified and tallied. The results are summarized in the table below

Table 4.5: Other desired places of visit and their ranks

Rank	Museum	Parks	N/Features	Lakes/beaches	Arts	Forests	Monuments	others
1	27	27	2	4	1	-	-	-
2	17	18	4	6	6	3	2	7
3	17	21	3	3	6	4	-	3
4	12	7	11	3	1	2	1	8
Total	73	73	20	16	14	9	3	18

The data collected indicates that all the respondents mentioned National parks and other closely related places like animal orphanage, Marine parks and the Giraffe center. This category was followed by those who would wish to visit natural features (Mountains, Forests, Arboretums etc), i.e. slightly more than a quarter.

The National parks are also as popular and attractive as the Museum, as is shown from the table above. From the comments made by the visitors, it is evident that real objects and specimens are more appealing to the Museum visitors. This explains why the National parks, lakes/beaches and natural features are the other desired places of visit.

4.1.8 Community involvement in exhibitions

The Responses were classified as follows: -

- Donations (of artifacts and rare objects including natural history specimens)
- Giving opinions and suggestions, Consultations with the community.
- Through publicity.
- Sponsoring and funding exhibitions.
- Others (Participation, Voluntary service and by visiting the Museum regularly)

The data collected shows that slightly more than a third of the respondents, (36.7 %) felt that the community can be involved in Exhibitions through, sharing ideas, giving opinions or suggestions and consulting with the Museum professions. On the other hand slightly less than a third of the respondents (32.9 %) felt that participation could be through donating artifacts and rare objects, while 12.7% thought that aggressive publicity would give them a chance to participate. My understanding of this is that the Museum should publicize its intentions of developing an exhibition in order to give those interested a chance of participating. From the data collected, as shown in the figure 4.3 below, about 92% of the respondents felt that the community can participate in exhibitions through funding/sponsoring exhibitions, sharing ideas and consultations as well as donation of the artefact. The remaining about 8% felt that their participation can be through visiting the Museum regularly. This supports my third objective of this study as it shows that the respondents are of the opinion that the community has a role to play in exhibitions. Participation or involvement of the community can take place at different levels as the respondents have indicated. This reflects the different abilities and skills and

hence the diversities in our communities.

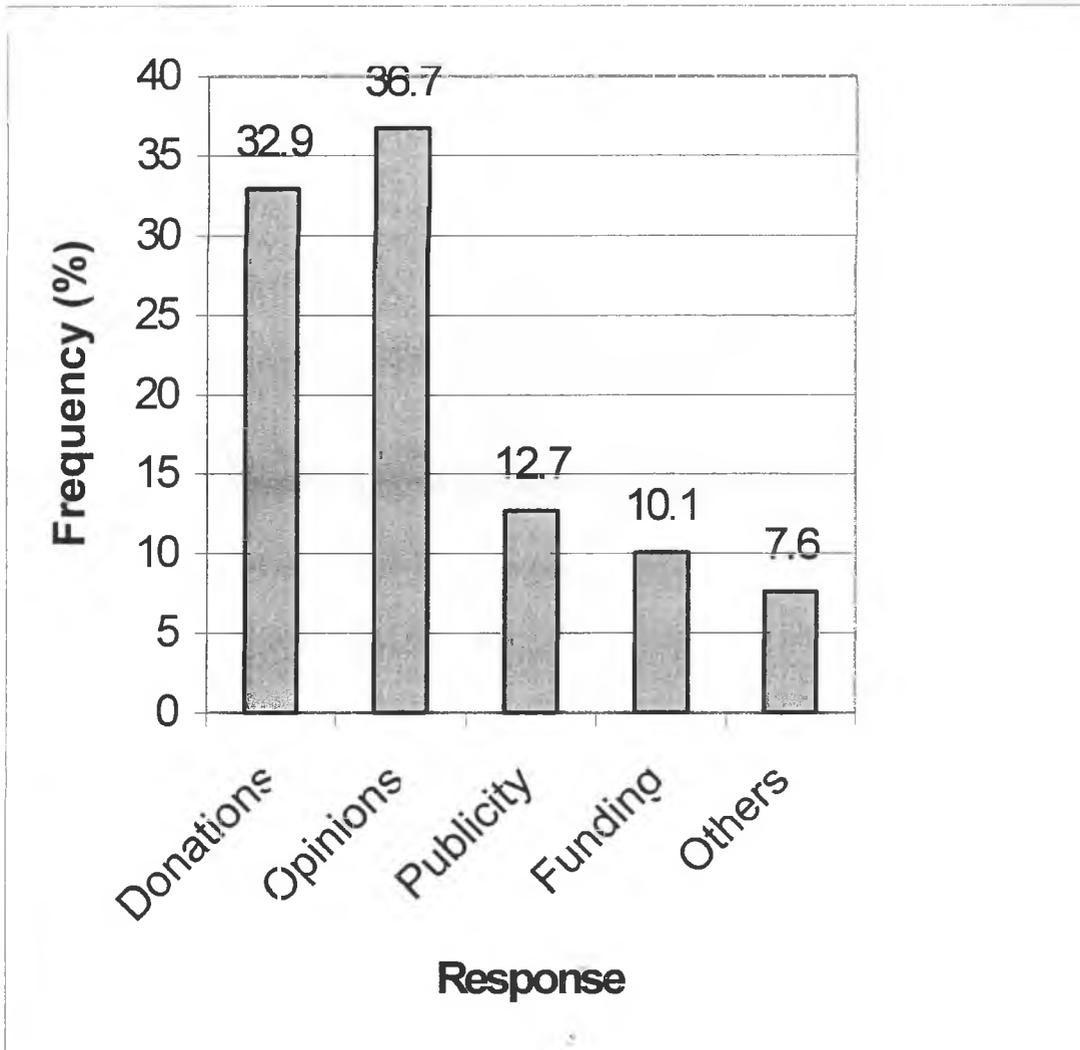


Figure 4.3: How the Community can be involved in exhibitions

4.2 Secondary Data

4.2.1 Introduction.

When temporary exhibitions are mounted the Museum and the organizers provide a book where visitors can put down their comments. These comments are useful to gauge the visitors opinions and in improvement of subsequent temporary exhibitions. In this *section, analysis of the visitors' comments is done. However, during the course of this study, I noted that, not all visitors sign this book. It is therefore not a true representation of the total number of visitors viewing a temporary exhibition.*

Foreign missions, companies or even groups of people sponsor some of these exhibitions and when the exhibition is over, they take away the comments book. Therefore the researcher was unable to sample quite a number of them. However, here below is a description of three exhibitions. For each, a brief background and analysis of comments is presented.

4.2.2 Photo Exhibition on the bomb blast.

In August 1998 the American Embassy in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed and destroyed through acts of terrorism. In Kenya about 250 lives were lost. People agonized a lot and so many questions went unanswered. The Museum realized that people had built up emotions and decided to give them an opportunity to empty these emotions through this photographic exhibition. This exhibition was displayed for three weeks, starting 27.8.98 through 17.9.98. The Museum used this catastrophe as a hot issue to pass a message to the visitors.

In this exhibition 50% of the comments were positive, while 48% had no comments to make. This exhibition had high emotional overtones due to the nature of the images of death, destruction and suffering that were on display. As such 48% of those who signed the book found themselves emotionally choked to an extent that they had no words to express their feelings. This explains why responses in this exhibition depart from the trend of the other two exhibitions as summarized in table 4.6 below. Some of the suggestive comments (accounting for 1.2%) were, add happier pictures, man is his worst enemy etc.

Table 4.6: Summary of comments from the visitors' book

Name of exhibition	No. Visitors	Nature of comments				Total
		Positive	Suggestive	Negative	No comment	
Photo Exhibition on Bomb Blast -1998	418	50.5%	1.7%	0.2%	47.6%	100%
Head dresses	1212	97.5%	1.2%	0.6%	0.7%	100%
Carnival of arts 2003	97	88%	1%	0%	11.3%	100%

4.2.3 Treasures of Kenya-Head dresses.

Treasures of Kenya was a series of ethnographic exhibitions mooted by the department of ethnography in 1999 with the intention of exposing to public for the first time, the rich and diverse ethnographic objects of the Kenyan people. The idea was prompted by the surprise expressed by many people on visiting the department and realising that there were many artefacts in storage, hitherto unknown to the public.

The exhibition also aimed at promoting the appreciation of Kenya's material culture especially by the youth, who are known to embrace western lifestyles. This series further intended to promote the appreciation of traditional Kenya aesthetics with hopes that designers would incorporate some of these designs into their productions.

The first exhibition to run under this series was dubbed "treasures of Kenya, Head-dresses". It was to showcase the different kinds of headgears in Kenya and their symbolic relevance. The other exhibitions in the series were 'treasures of Kenya-containers, khangas and headrests'.

Out of the three temporary exhibitions, this one had the highest number of visitors signing the visitors' book. This can be attributed to the length of time it was displayed and probably interest in the subject matter. The exhibitions run for a period of about two and half months unlike the other two, which run for a shorter period. About 98% of the visitors put down positive comments, which is a sign of appreciation and understanding of the subject. From the data collected, 1% of the visitors made suggestive comments.

Negative comments and no comment categories registered less than one percent each.

4.2.4 Carnival of arts 2003

Every month the contemporary art gallery in Nairobi Museum has a display of contemporary artwork from different local artists. There are about three hundred artists registered with this gallery, which is one of the three most popular in the city. Its popularity with the local artists is attributed to the turnover of visitors in the Museum. The main aim of this temporary art exhibition is to popularize art among the local Museum visitors. The artwork on display is also up for sale to willing buyers, though the local visitors rarely buy, this can be attributed to their level of interest in contemporary art. The tourists are the main buyers and the proceeds are passed on to the artist.

The data collected shows that, only ninety seven visitors to this gallery who signed the visitors book. Of this about 88% made positive comments. This shows that comments were mostly made by those visitors who have an interest in art. Actually some of the respondents to the questionnaire mentioned that art is difficult for them to interpret. This explains why about a tenth of the visitors had no comments to make and only 1% of the visitors made suggestive comments. To make suggestive comments one should be fairly conversant with the subject at hand. A summary of this data is presented in table 4.6

Table 4.6 summarizes the observations noted on the three visitors' books that the researcher was able to get. These temporary exhibitions are displayed for a period of between three weeks to two and half months. Only comments by the local visitors were

noted down. These comments were categorized as shown below: -

- Positive comments

These are comments showing appreciation and satisfaction e.g. Wonderful, enjoyable, educative, good, nice etc.

- Suggestive comments

These comments show that the respondents are contented but would be happier if there was an improvement in a certain direction e.g. Market the exhibit aggressively, why don't we have materials from Kamba community

- Negative comments

Comments were classified as negative because they showed dissatisfaction of the visitor. He/she may have felt that the exhibition was not appealing.e.g. Disappointed, Boring, Visitor care absent.

- No comments

This represents a category of visitors/respondents who did not want to comment.

This would have been because they were unable to interpret or understand the subject.

It could also be due to emotional reasons as is the case of the Bomb blast photographic exhibition.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.

5.1 Discussion.

Some permanent exhibitions are attractive to the local Museum visitors though they have been on exhibition for many years. A permanent exhibition is mounted without a definite lifespan tagged to it. My assumption that they are not popular can not be generalized to all of them. The subject of the exhibition as well as other factors such as the display methods and its aesthetics determines its attractiveness. Constant updating of text and general improvement of the exhibition gives it a new look. Display methods that do not isolate the object/specimen from its environment give it a sense of reality, which is what the visitor seeks. Actually the recreated environment e.g. in case of animals gives the exhibit context. To achieve this the Museum personnel should be very creative. Assessing the needs of the various target groups would be a good starting point. This argument is supported by the fact that the respondents to the main questionnaire showed a high preference of visiting National parks, forests and lakes (table 4.6). This is because they want a touch with reality, where the context adds value to the subject of exhibition.

Temporary exhibitions are conceived with a definite exhibition lifetime. They are not meant to last for "ever". They are expected to discuss certain themes, such as HIV AIDS, which is a pressing social problem. Breaking monotony of permanent exhibitions, marking of certain important occasions as well as creating awareness can be achieved through temporary exhibitions. Temporary exhibitions can be used to attract a clientele

that never used to visit the Museum before. This can be achieved through an exhibition that targets a certain category of people e.g. having an exhibition on modern music may attract the youth who identify with that kind of music. This research was unable to determine conclusively that visitors prefer temporary exhibitions to permanent ones. Data showing actual number of visitors to temporary exhibitions was not available. On the other hand not all visitors sign or put down their comments on the visitors' book. One issue that came out clearly is that the exhibition theme or subject, timing and level of publicity determine visitors' responses. Views of visitors towards temporary exhibitions can only be documented properly within the exhibition area. This should be done using a questionnaire, designed for that purpose. The method used in this research, where visitors comments were sought after visiting all the exhibitions may not achieve much. This is because most visitors may not differentiate between a permanent and a temporary exhibition. A visitors' book is not an accurate tool of determining their feelings, some visitors copy what others have written.

Participation of the local community in exhibitions and especially temporary ones should be facilitated by the Museum, to enhance good will and ownership. Respondents interviewed identified various ways through which the community can be involved in conception and implementation of exhibitions. Data collected showed that about 92% of respondents think that the community can participate in different ways. The research findings support my assumption that local Museum visitors would be willing to participate in exhibition planning and implementation is correct. This will give the community a chance to choose what they would want to display in their Museum. At the

moment the decision on what to go on display is basically determined by Museum professionals, with little or no input from the community. Active participation would give the community a lot of satisfaction, however this has to be within the institutions mission statement. In 1972 participants at the international council of Museums (ICOM) meeting in Santiago, Chile, claimed that a Museum should be integrated with the society around it. This led to ICOM's definition of a Museum being revised in 1974 (Fuller N.J, 1992)

5.2 Conclusions.

This study has shown that Museum visitors prefer exhibitions that do not isolate the objects/specimens from their context. This calls for a high level of imagination and creativity on the part of the designers, objects and specimens ought to be displayed within a context. That means display methods should be attractive and if possible allowing for interaction with the visitor.

Some permanent exhibitions are still very attractive to Museum visitors even after being on display for decades. This is due to the fact that these exhibitions are constantly updated and improved e.g. Birds Gallery. Since research is an ongoing process, natural sciences exhibitions should be updated promptly. The space exhibition was mentioned as one that is outdated and therefore not interesting for lack of current information. This is a good reason for a visitor to lose interest in such an exhibition. Sometimes visitors seek to update themselves on what they know about certain subjects, it is therefore frustrating to find that such an exhibition is not answering their questions.

Temporary exhibitions can be used to break monotony of permanent exhibitions, mark important occasions, and create awareness

About 92% of the respondents were of the opinion that the community can participate in the process of mounting exhibitions. Suggestions, consultations, funding and donations were listed as means of community participation efforts. This phenomenon is practical because, the Asian-African heritage exhibition was a result of a joint undertaking between the Museum and the Asian-African community in Nairobi. Involving local people in such ways as having them contribute their own artifacts, funding as well as enlisting the assistance of local experts can help ensure that the community maintains ownership of the exhibition. The development of relationships/partnerships with the community should enable the Museum devise challenging and relevant exhibitions. This would have a positive effect on people's perception of Museums as worthwhile institutions with a role to play in contemporary Kenya.

5.3 Recommendations.

The Museum should carry out a needs assessment, this will enable it determine what changes to carry out on the exhibitions, especially the permanent ones. As mentioned earlier some of them have outdated text information.

The exhibition planning and implementation committee in place, should include major stakeholders such as, cooperate bodies, schools, friends of the Museum, the media etc. this will give the stake holders and the public/community a chance to determine what

should go on exhibition. The Museum on the other hand will benefit by getting discounts in advertising or other ventures it might undertake together with the stakeholders.

Marketing of the Museum and its exhibitions should be given a first priority. From comments made by the respondents, not much has been done by the Museum in this area. However, the Museum advertises temporary exhibitions through banners, brochures, posters and even newspapers. It should also advertise in the electronic media, though I know it is a little more expensive. There would be no point in developing very good exhibitions whose target group is not reached. The museum should activate its marketing section within public relations and marketing department.

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Appendix I -Main questionnaire.

Aim of the Questionnaire:

To document the attitudes of the local Museum visitors towards exhibitions, particularly temporary ones.

Date of interview.....

Time.....

Part one - Background information on the respondent.

1. Who is the respondent? Circle/tick one of the following.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 01. Female adult (24 yrs and above) | 02. Female teenager (15-23yrs) |
| 03. Male adult (24 yrs and above) | 04. Male teenager. (15-23yrs) |

2. Where do you live? Circle/tick one of the following.

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 01. Nairobi | 02. Thika |
| 03. Machakos. | 04. Kajiado |
| 05. Kiambu | 06. Other _____ |

3. What is the highest level of schooling you have completed? Circle/tick one.

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 01. Primary | 02. Secondary |
| 02. College | 04. University (including Postgraduate) |

4. a) What do you do for a living?

b) What is your monthly income?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 01. Ksh.5, 000.00 & below | 02. Ksh 5,100.00 – 10,000.00 |
| 03. Ksh 10,100.00 – 25,000.00 | 04. Ksh. 25,100.00 & above |

Part two -General information on the Museum

5. Have you visited any of the National Museums? Circle/tick one.

01. Yes

02. No

If no, Why? _____

6. How many times have you visited Nairobi Museum or any other Museum in the last twelve months? _____

7. (a) According to you, what is a Museum?

(b) In order of preference, Name four places including the Museum that you can visit if you are given a chance.

01.

02.

03.

04.

8. Is there anything in particular you came to see today? Circle /tick one

01. Yes.

02. No.

If yes, what? _____

Part three -Exhibitions

Nairobi Museum has a number of exhibitions/galleries e.g. Birds, Mammals, Art, Ethnography, Prehistory e.t.c

9. How long have you been here? (Exhibition area)

01. 10-30 minutes.

02. Over 30 minutes.

04. About One hour.

03. Other. _____

10. What do you think is the purpose of exhibitions in this Museum?

10. What do you think is the purpose of exhibitions in this Museum?

11. a) How many exhibitions have you visited / seen today?

b) Which exhibition did you find most interesting?

Why?

c) Which exhibition did you find least interesting?

Why?

12. Which exhibition(s) would you want changed or modified?

Why?

13. How would the community be involved in putting up an exhibition?

Why?

Thank you very much for sparing your time to fill this questionnaire

Appendix II-Guiding themes for key informants.

Key informants interview

General Themes

What are permanent exhibitions? How many do we have in Nairobi Museum?

What are temporary exhibitions? How many temporary exhibitions are there at the moment?

Purpose of temporary exhibitions. Please explain using examples. What has the Museum been able to achieve through them?

Any policy on exhibitions in NMK.
Brief outline

In the last five years, have you had any modifications on permanent exhibitions? If yes what was the driving force/motivation.

Comment on **participation of the community** in the process of putting up exhibitions.

Media for publicizing exhibitions.

- Monuments and ruins
- Animal orphanage
- Bomas of Kenya
- City park
- Fourteen falls
- Game parks/ National parks/ Game reserves
- Coast marine parks
- Lakes Baringo/Nakuru
- Longonot /Ngong hills
- Nature trails
- Mountain climbing
- Giraffe center
- Mamba village
- William holden foundation-Nanyuki
- Paradise lost
- Coastal beaches
- Agricultural society of Kenya shows (A.S.K.)
- Local pub
- Children's home/slums
- Airport
- Libraries/learning institutions

- Okavango bay
- Physical sceneries
- Exhibitions
- Seminars
- Rift valley
- Art galleries
- Arboretums/forests

These listed places were clustered into the following categories according to how closely related the places are.

- ❑ National parks
- ❑ Natural features
- ❑ Lakes and coastal beaches
- ❑ Art galleries – including Bomas and national theatre
- ❑ Monuments and ruins
- ❑ Forests/arboretums and nature trails

Appendix IV-Some exhibitions in Nairobi Museum



Plate 1: Asian-African heritage exhibition showing construction of the railway.

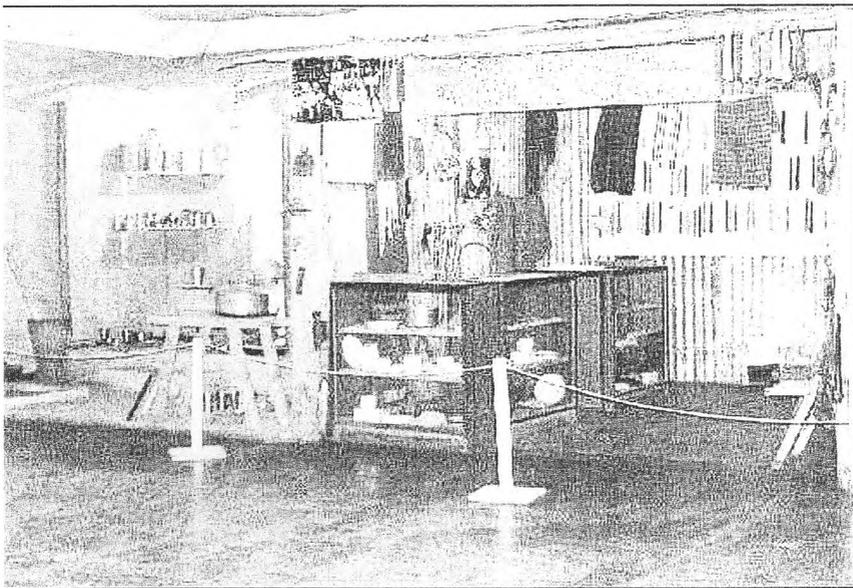


Plate 2: Asian-African heritage exhibition showing an Asian shop

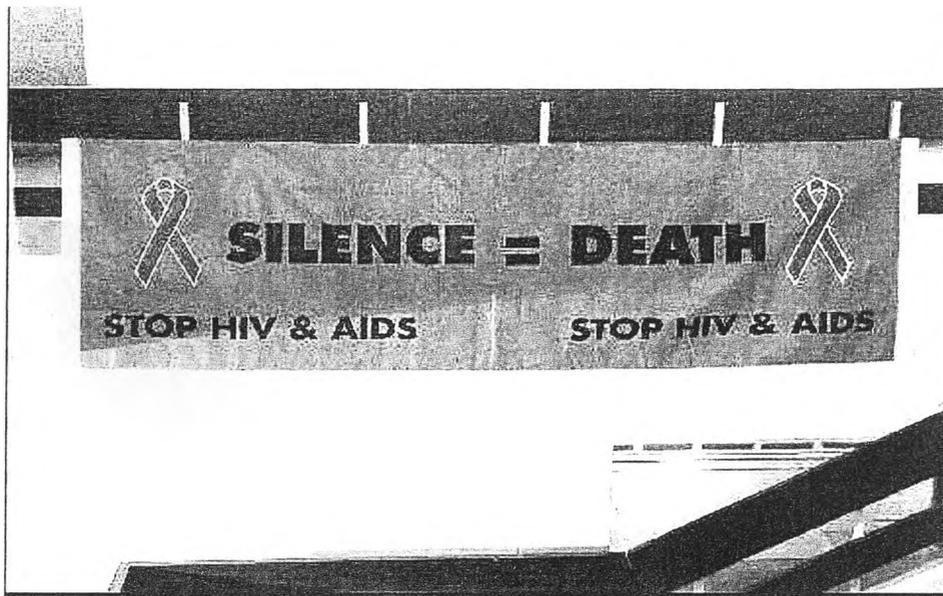


Plate 3: A temporary exhibition on HIV AIDS theme.



Plate 4: Contemporary art gallery with artwork displayed on the walls.

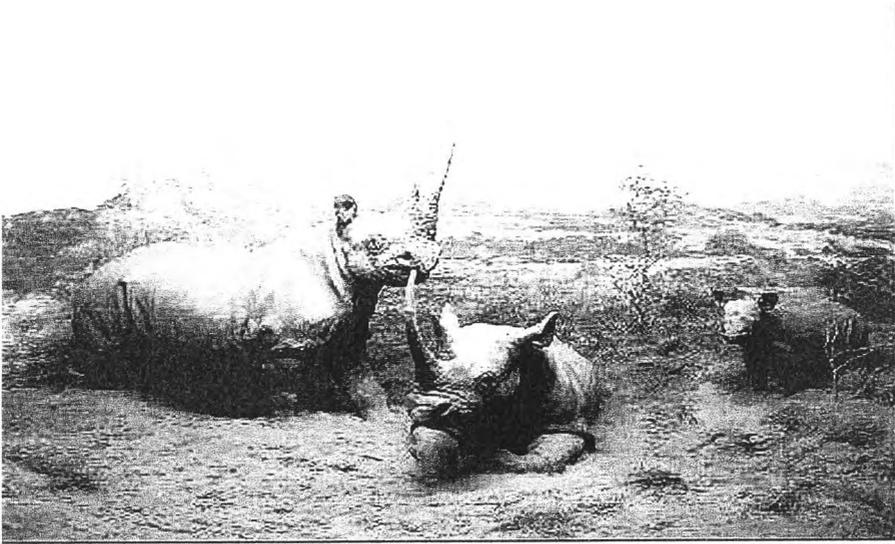


Plate 5: Mammals diorama depicting rhinos in their natural environment.



Plate 6: Mammals diorama showing elephants in their natural environment

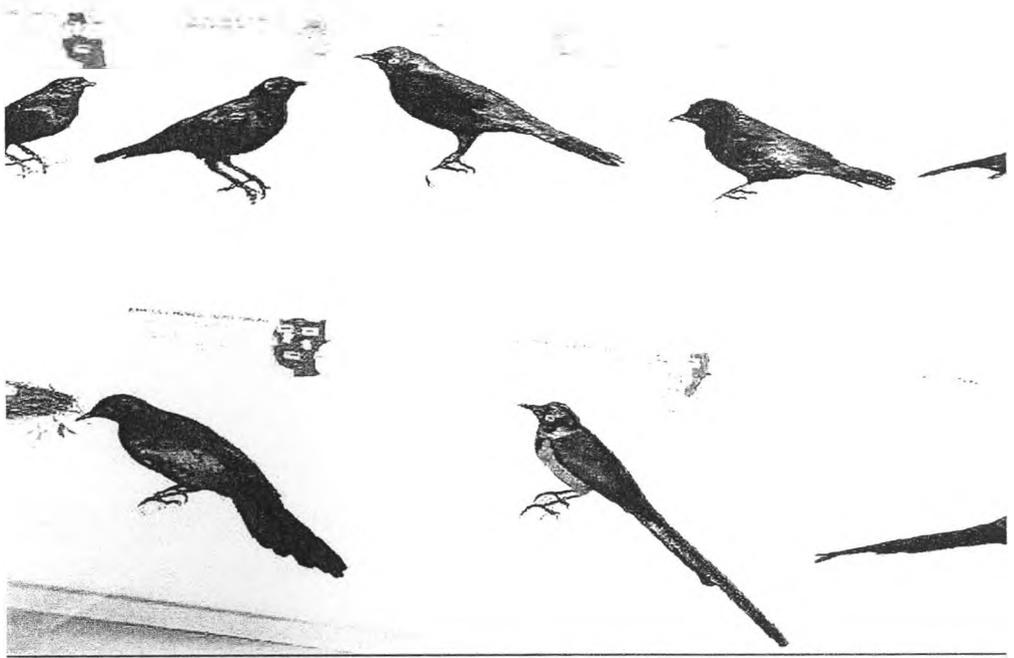


Plate 6a: Birds gallery showing different birds species.

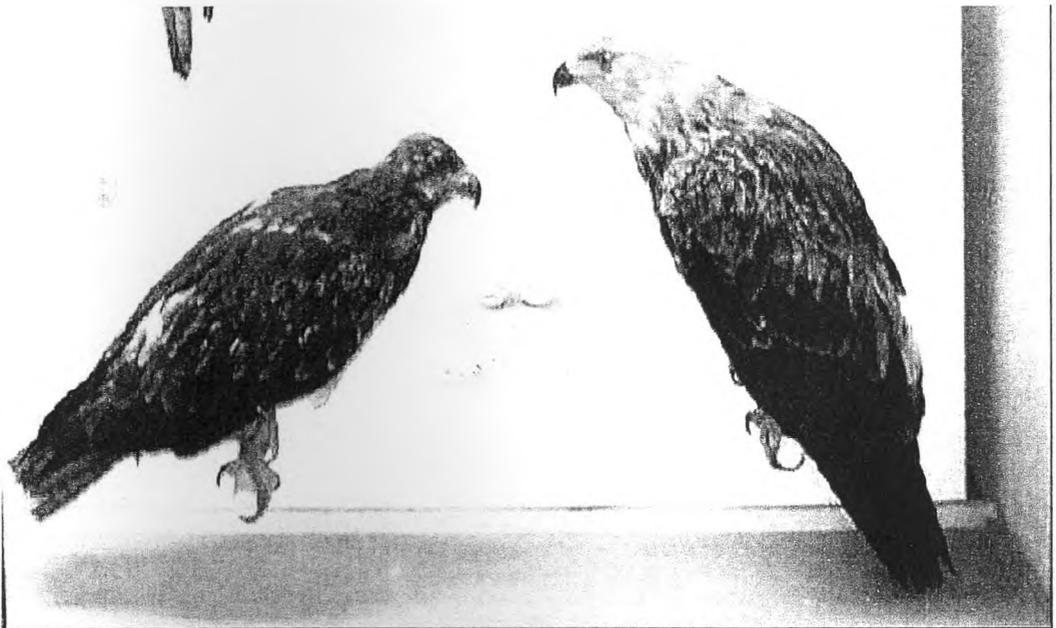


Plate 6b: Birds gallery showing two birds and their eggs.