

MARKETING A MEMORY OF THE WORLD: MAGNA CARTA AND THE STUDENT AS PRODUCER PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MAGNA CARTA

For Whipps (2008) Magna Carta is a document that has changed the world. This iconic manuscript, drawn up originally in the 13th century to contain the power of an English king, is seen by many commentators today as representing the cornerstone of civil liberties around the globe (West 2008). Its famous clause 39, that no one man shall be imprisoned without judgement of peers, or by the law of the land, is often quoted in contemporary political and legal debates about civil liberties (Bennett et al 2007). Reflecting Magna Carta's central significance to the history, politics, culture, and laws of the world, it was awarded in July 2009 'Memory of the World' status by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Memory of the World Programme aims to preserve and disseminate highly significant documentary archive and library collections that exist around the globe (Unesco.org 2010). Possessing memory of the world status and included on the UNESCO register, are such heritage artefacts as the Bayeux Tapestry, the original diaries of Anne Frank and the writings of the South American revolutionary leader, Simón Bolívar. For UNESCO, documentary heritage reflects the diversity of languages, peoples and cultures from around the planet and is the mirror of the world and its memory (Unesco.org 2010). Additionally, five years of celebrations leading up to the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta in 2015, have just been publicly launched (BBC 2010). Commemorative stamps, coins, major exhibitions and a possible public holiday are all planned. For those organisations owning a copy of the Magna Carta, a 'memory of the world', the developments outlined here represent a call to make these documents accessible and attractive and in that sense, marketing has a key role to play, as it does with much heritage based consumption (Babour & Turnbull 2002; Misiura 2006).

In this context, the intention of this case study paper is to examine and analysis how one of the few remaining copies of the Magna Carta, owned by Lincoln Cathedral and on display in Lincoln Castle UK, is marketed to the general tourist. This paper also demonstrates how a marketing study of the Magna Carta can inform a particular approach to teaching and research, namely the inquiry led, student as producer perspective (Healey 2005). Information to complete this case study has been extracted from two primary sources. Firstly, data was analysed based on some qualitative field notes (Marshall and Rossman 1999) taken of the Magna Carta exhibition by the first author. Following this, further data was analysed from a small scale survey carried out with forty seven visitors to the Lincoln Magna Carta exhibition. This survey, a mix of closed and open questions (Bradley, 2007), was carried out by a small group of marketing students, and also identified as authors here, who compiled an outline report on their findings. The students were supervised by the second author, who was their module tutor. The work was for an assessed project. In addition, numerous books, websites and journal articles were consulted. This collaborative approach to teaching works within the student as producer framework, (Neary 2010), where the role of the curriculum is to emphasise inquiry-based learning in a research context (Healey 2005). This perspective stresses the role of a student as an active participant, rather than as audience of subject matter. The student as producer approach is about research engaged teaching, where engagement is created through active collaboration amongst and between students and academics (Healey, and Jenkins 2009).

FROM RUNNYMEDE TO LINCOLN: THE JOURNEY OF THE MAGNA CARTA

After King John's fruitless attempts to recapture Normandy for the English in 1214, he returned home in defeat and was exposed to opposition from those who had suffered from his obdurate rule. Rebellious barons forced John, in 1215, to firstly negotiate and then at the now famous site of Runnymede, to sign the Magna Carta. Copies of the original document were quickly made, and of these only four now survive; one owned by Lincoln Cathedral, one by Salisbury Cathedral and two by the British library. Each of the copies is on a vellum parchment which is stretched animal skin. Copies are approximately A3 in size, covered in faded Latin. As a physical object, the Magna Carta might not be seen as much to look at (Danziger and Gillingham 2003), but as the latter note, these eight hundred year old documents are just as famous as any you would see in either a museum or a parliament anywhere in the world. From the time of the accession of King John's son, Henry III, Magna Carta was reissued in varying forms throughout the years that followed and became a central part of English Law (Linebaugh 2008). Additionally, the American political system has long been inspired by the Magna Carta and the United Nations declaration of Human Rights is clearly influenced by the document (Breay 2002). Lincoln's copy of the Magna Carta lay undisturbed and unrecognised among the extensive Dean and Chapter archives until the early nineteenth century (Bennett et al 2007). In 1848, members of the Archaeological Institute visited Lincoln and recorded that the Magna Carta had been framed and was hanging in the Chapter Clerk's office. Much later, when the British Government requested that Lincoln's Magna Carta be sent to the British Pavilion at the New York World's Fair in 1939, it was because concerns were raised about its safety at a time of war. The British Government then requested that it should stay in the United States for the duration of hostilities, so it was sent to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Lincoln's Magna Carta returned to the Cathedral in 1947, where it has been ever since, apart from the times it tours, which is mainly for brief periods in America.

HERITAGE, MAGNA CARTA AND EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING

Whilst the Lincoln Magna Carta can be said to serve three target markets, which are the schools sector, the American market and the general tourist (Ardley & Ardley 2010), it is the last of these which is the most significant. This market segment is wide ranging and can include visitors from abroad and home, including groups as well as individuals. These variables can of course cover significant differences in terms of age, income, and background. However, various studies have shown that common factors exist between these groupings in terms of visits to heritage attractions, for example a search for nostalgia, authenticity and the desire for knowledge (Belk 1997; Goulding 1999; 2000; Masberg and Silverman 1996). In addition to these types of findings, it can be argued that a more fundamental notion of managing and marketing the heritage product exists through the notion of experiential marketing (Leighton 2007; Williams 2006). In support of this, evidence drawn from the research carried out for this paper, suggests that experiential marketing has the potential to become an integral part of the Magna Carta exhibition. The notion of experiential marketing was first introduced by Pine and Gilmour (1998), who noted that when individuals buy an experience, they pay to spend time enjoying a collection of events that the company is responsible for staging. Leighton (2007) gives one such example related to heritage. A trip to The Galleries of Justice in Nottingham provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a real trial from Victorian times, before being dispatched to the cells where they are greeted by costumed warders and a hangman who welcome them for their stay. This type of experience can of course involve the purchasing of tangible goods related to the attraction. Visitors to the

London Eye run by British Airways, can, apart from taking a ‘flight’, purchase replica models and other types of tangible goods (londoneye 2011), a lesson the organisers of the Lincoln Magna Carta exhibition need take account of.

THE LINCOLN MAGNA CARTA EXHIBITION

By purchasing a ticket to view Lincoln Castle, the visitor is also able to view the Magna Carta. In terms of the Magna Carta visitor experience, which is entitled ‘The First Charters of Liberty’ there is, alongside the Magna Carta, the Charta of the Forest on display. The latter document is important in its own right, being one of only two surviving copies, dating back to 1217. The Charta of the Forest dealt with the rights of the common people to be granted proper subsistence in the forests of the King (Linebaugh 2008). Currently, both these two documents are housed in the old prison of the castle. Signs point to the entrance and in the first part of this exhibition artefacts are present from the time of Magna Carta and the Charta of the Forest, along with display boards of information about the 13th century. These display boards provide detail about crime and punishment, feudalism and the life of the common people and the revolt which resulted in the signing of Magna Carta at Runnymede. Next is an interactive board game which encourages visitors, particularly children, to construct their own version of the hierarchical social order of the 13th century, and it is possible in this part of the exhibition, to make a wax ‘King’s seal’. The second part of the exhibition contains displays and features reflecting the desire to market that Magna Carta not just as a historical document, but one that has relevance for people’s lives today. One part of an interactive game for children asks them to identify from illustrations, detainees who are not being fairly treated at the Guantanamo Bay prison camp. There is a ‘have your say’ section, where visitors can post their own comments on things like the Stop and Search and Anti Terrorist Law. Additionally, information boards tell visitors that there are clauses of the Magna Carta that are embedded in UK law today. Other information panels discuss the relevance of the Magna Carta across the contemporary world. Next, the visitor moves on to the culmination of the exhibition, where the Lincoln Magna Carta is featured alongside the Charta of the Forest. Both documents are contained in temperature monitored, vacuum sealed display cases. The visitor also has a chance to spend time in the castle gift shop and café, both of which can be accessed before or after the Magna Carta visit.

MAGNA CARTA AND THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

This section of this paper considers the responses of the general tourist, based on an analysis of survey questions, to the Magna Carta exhibition outlined above. Results suggest that three main problems exist in terms of negative customer experiences. These are guidance signage, the small, dark inauspicious surroundings of the exhibition and finally, the level of visitor interactivity present. ‘The First Charters of Liberty’ documents, being housed in the old prison of the castle, means this area falls well short of providing an ideal exhibition venue. The area is small, relatively confined and in a dingy building that the visitor can pass through quite quickly. This is a general critical point noted by visitors, as the following quotes illustrate. Many visitors wanted to see a much bigger area devoted to the exhibition. If the Magna Carta is one of the key icons in the United Kingdom today, (ICONS: 2009), then visitors expect its surroundings to reflect this status.

“It’s small, cramped and dark.....The exhibition is dated and cramped.....The display is too small...” Additionally, one respondent, speaking for a significant number, pointed out that

what is required “are more open areas and bigger displays” It can be argued that on the basis of these observations, how and where the Magna Carta is displayed within the castle grounds fails to do justice to such an important and iconic document. Rather than symbolising historic grandeur, or the impact of the document on today’s laws and culture, it could be argued that the opposite occurs, with the manuscript appearing, as a result of its surroundings, to be of little significance. As one visitor commented, “It’s too dark in the exhibition, these important documents need more fitting surroundings.”

A number of visitors were quite specific about the inferior quality of lighting. Nearly half of the visitors complained about this feature encapsulated in five words used by many, “the exhibition needs better lighting” Another problem identified by one third of surveyed visitors relates to exhibition signage. As Misiura (2006) points out, many heritage organisations use signs for guidance purposes, but this is a feature neglected by the organisers of the Lincoln Magna Carta exhibition. Although the latter is near the main entrance of the castle, visitors complained that it was poorly signposted. This means that signage needs improvement immediately outside the exhibition, but also leading up to it, which could also include some form of panel outside the castle as well. Typical comments from visitors included the following,

“The Magna Carta exhibition is not very prominentSignpost the exhibition better.... I didn’t know where the exhibition was....Provide more signage so people know where it is.....”

What visitors see as the most important but neglected aspect of their visit, is concerned with the poor level of interactivity provided. Customers to the site were asked what improvements could be made. A typical answer simply stated that the exhibition organisers need to “make it bigger, more interactive, invest money in its development”. The very traditional approach currently adopted with a largely static exhibition does not arguably meet the experiential based needs of heritage site visitors. One visitor to the Magna Carta exhibition noted that what there needs to be provided are...“staff role playing people from the time.” Leighton (2007) points out that live interpretation has emerged in recent times, as an important way of marketing an attraction in an experiential fashion. Actors perform for, or interact with visitors so as to construe objects and provide the latter with a human element. In line with this type of subjective, human projection, another visitor wanted to see “...films showing what life was like.” In the context of the Magna Carta, a redesigned exhibition could have for example, historic re-enactments of the signing of the document or of some of the turbulent events surrounding it. This could be extended to actually involve visitors, so they become characters from the time, in much the way that the Courts of Justice in Nottingham do, or as on Brunel’s SS Great Britain in Bristol, where visitors can become Victorian passengers for a period of time (Baron 2010). This last point is taken up by another visitor who commented that the organisers of the current Magna Carta exhibition should “make it more interactive and get visitors involved”. From this perspective, a great deal more use could be made of the latest technology. This can include “videos....headphones....audio visual development” as visitors commented, to items such as 3D projection and multi media production. Visitors to a revamped exhibition could experience a variety of different types of touch screens to access Magna Carta games, history, and co-creation experiences (Pralalad and Ramaswamy, 2000), where they could perhaps write their own “Magna Carta for a modern world”. In terms of the latter, a positive point from the current exhibition was that the message came across strongly that the document has relevance for modern life, with virtually all respondents saying they

had learnt something about the Magna Carta in terms of issues like its links to the American constitution, freedom of speech and trial by jury.

Whilst visitors to the Magna Carta were only asked to comment on the exhibition itself, what is likely to add to the general quality of the consuming experience is the availability of related merchandise. As Misiura (2006) points out, it is unusual for customers not too expect to find products available that relate to the historical artefacts they have just seen. For Williams (2006) the purchasing of mementoes of a visit can retail at well above the market value because of the memory attached to the experience. Although there are small shops in both the Cathedral and the Castle, the qualitative field notes revealed that what is conspicuously lacking in these outlets is any attempt to sell a range of goods, apart from one book produced by the Cathedral that complements the Magna Carta. At the time of the research, this actually was out of stock in the Castle shop. Types of merchandise that could be sold in a shop dedicated to the exhibition include Magna Carta pens, jewellery, book markers, books, ties, coasters, pictures, board games and replicas of the document.

CONCLUSION: MAGNA CARTA, MARKETING AND STUDENTS AS PRODUCERS

Two sets of implications result from the study here, one related to marketing strategy and the second to teaching and learning. With regard to the first, Leighton (2007) points out that the marketing of cultural heritage is a unique privilege. No better an example is provided than the Lincoln Magna Carta. So how can the marketing of this document be improved so as to better reflects its status as a “mirror and a memory of the world”? Whilst the Cathedral hosts an attractive and functionally effective web site that features the Magna Carta (Ardley & Ardley 2010), based on the survey research here, it is a priority that the exhibition be re-housed in a purpose built display area, rather than where it is presently. Unfortunately, ambitious plans to turn the existing Lincoln courts of law, currently located in the Castle grounds, over to a Magna Carta exhibition area, have been rejected by the government. It is estimated that due to this, twenty million in heritage lottery funding has been lost along with sixty eight million to the local economy (Lincolnshire Echo (2010)). Despite this, the opportunities represented by the Magna Carta’s 2015 anniversary and its Memory of the World status could still be capitalised on. As Lincoln Cathedral owns the Magna Carta, and its buildings are in the popular historic part of the city, its representatives could think seriously about moving it from the castle, so as to adopt an improved marketing strategy. The document could perhaps be housed in the cloisters of the Cathedral, with the exhibition enclosed in glass. Alternatively, a new exhibition area could be built in the Cathedral grounds, or other existing spaces owned by the cathedral, reutilised. For example, there is the impressive Wren library building available, plus the space beneath it and other properties adjacent to the Cathedral. These include the infrequently used but spacious Cathedral Centre and the architecturally imposing Chancellory, one of the oldest brick building in Lincoln, recently refurbished to house the Cathedral’s Dean, when instead, it could be used to generate revenue. Imagination is required and, as one visitor pointed out, investment. Additionally, based on the survey responses, it is imperative that greater attention be paid to the interactive elements of the exhibition. A more sophisticated level of technology needs to be employed and more creativity used in the construction of consumer experiences. Along with this, a particular focus needs to be applied to using appropriate signage. Also, wherever the Magna Carta goes, the type of lighting used greatly affects the atmosphere and overall visitor experience, so it needs special attention.

Further, it is important to ensure that a new Magna Carta shop be in the exhibition area, selling related goods and services.

In terms of educational implications, rather than seeing the marketing curriculum as being structured around the teaching of subject content, with student's writing papers around that priority, this paper has employed and consequently advocates the student as producer approach. Learning occurs primarily through engagement in real research projects, ones that replicate the process of research. (Healey & Jenkins, (2009). It could be possible to envisage further projects based on an inquiry led approach, where learning is achieved by engagement in similar projects around the marketing of the Magna Carta. Students, with the assistance of the tutor as facilitator, and as co creator of research knowledge, could be asked, for example, to research the design a new exhibition centre, complete with interactive features, along with a shop and ideas for products and services. This could involve original research with customers and potential customers to the site, and also include a detailed analysis of actual and potential competition. Promising strategies for the marketing of the Magna Carta could be drawn up and tested in a wide variety of different research situations. It might be possible to engage Lincoln Castle and Cathedral in this process and a high degree of realism could be introduced to the project if students had to pitch their ideas to senior personnel for approval. The planned anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta in 2015, could add a further dimension to this. Lincoln students could possibly collaborate with academics and students from other geographical areas, in terms of researching possible joint marketing strategies on behalf of all organisations owning copies of the Magna Carta, this precious "memory and mirror of the world".

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