SPARKLE
case

D O O R S Digital Incubator for Museums

Who | Institutional Profile

Institution	<u>Istanbul Dialogue Museum</u>
Location	Istanbul, Turkey
Short Description	The Dialogue Museum was established by the Dialogue Social Enterprise Association, hosted by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and Metro Istanbul AŞ.
	Istanbul Dialogue Museum is an interactive and immersive museum that is delivered and performed in collaboration with people from disadvantaged and socially excluded backgrounds. The project explores universal questions around isolation, access, creativity and human connection. The experience seeks to create tolerance and awareness about disability and difference. By bringing people together around arts and culture, creating dialogue and sharing experiences the museum aims to create a more inclusive society. The museum hosts a four-pillar experience: ● *Dialogue in the Dark* is equipped with exhibitions and events in total darkness where blind facilitators moderate the experiences of visitors. ● *Dialogue in Silence* is an exhibition about non-verbal communication, where participants discover a repertoire of expressive possibilities with the help of deaf and hearing-impaired guides and trainers. ● *Dialogue Café* employs and trains deaf and hearing-impaired people to become baristas. This enables the public to have dialogue with deaf people as they visit the café and order drinks in Turkish Sign Language (TSL), assisted by the unique assets and signage around them. ● Dialogue Art enables a place for artists from marginalised communities to share their stories through artistic expression. The museum collaborates with artists in creating an intimate forum for people of all walks of life to engage in thought-provoking conversations.
Ownership	Diyalog Sosyal Girişimcilik Derneği (Dialogue Social Enterprise Association) is a non-profit organisation
Size	33 employees (30 of them people with disabilities)	2013 – 2023 +500,000 visitors

Approach to Digital	*Input by Faruk Ertürk* We acknowledge the potential benefits and opportunities that digital technologies can offer in terms of improving accessibility, reaching wider audiences, and enhancing visitor experiences. By leveraging digital tools and platforms, we have created a more inclusive and interactive environment for our visitors. However, it is important to note that digital transformation initiatives also surface certain attitudes, fears and expectations within our organisation. Some of us may have reservations or concerns about the adoption of new technologies that could disrupt established processes. Others may have limited digital literacy skills or be unfamiliar with digital tools, which could create a learning curve. To address these challenges, we have been investing in fostering digital literacy providing training and support to our staff members. It was also important to create an environment

where everyone feels safe to embrace digital technologies and invited to contribute to our organisation's digital strategy.

Our organisation's expectations regarding digital transformation are centred around enhancing accessibility, increasing visitor engagement, and improving the overall visitor experience. We have been leveraging digital tools and platforms to create new opportunities for interaction, storytelling, and knowledge-sharing. To measure the impact of our digital initiatives we used metrics such as visitor feedback, engagement rates and analysing recurring visits.

Approaching digital as a means to enhance our mission and values, rather than seeing it as a separate entity, we challenge ourselves to develop a seamless and immersive experience for our visitors. In line with our approach, we have implemented the following:
1. developed and activated a loyalty application to provide added value to our committed visitors.
2. increased our social media activity, actively involving our guides and visitors in developing the museum's online presence.
3. implemented digital donation channels to facilitate convenient and secure contributions.
4. Established regular communication with visitors through monthly and special day newsletters and podcasts, gradually nurturing the bond between us.
5. improved our sustainability efforts based on visitor feedback, ensuring that their input shapes our actions.
6. continuously work on making our digitisation efforts more meaningful and enabling with the contributions of our visually and hearing impaired employees.

What | Case

Project Title	The Only Way to Learn is Through Encounter!
Timeframe	November 2022 – June 2023

Concept & Approach	The concept of our museum is rooted in the desire to develop and offer inclusive and immersive experiences for the visitors. As a team we acknowledge the digital divide faced by individuals with disabilities. So here is an overview of how it all started.

Concept birth

The idea of the museum was born out of the vision to provide a transformative experience for the visitors that would promote empathy, enhance understanding and inclusivity. As founders, we recognised the power of dialogue and storytelling in breaking down barriers and fostering connections between people with different abilities.

Scope

The scope of the museum's concept is to create a space where visitors can engage in meaningful conversations and gain insights into the experiences of individuals with disabilities. We aim to challenge stereotypes, dismantle prejudices and create a more inclusive society.

Tools used

The digital transformation journey plays a crucial role in achieving our goals. We utilise various digital tools and platforms to open up the space for accessibility and engagement.

These tools include:
- Website
  We have developed and designed the website that is accessible, user-friendly and serves as a central hub for information about our museum, its exhibits, and events.

It includes detailed information on museum's accessibility features and online ticket booking alongside interactive content.

- Digital Storytelling
  We employ digital storytelling techniques, such as videos, podcasts and interactive multimedia to convey the experiences and perspectives of individuals with disabilities. These tools facilitate a deeper understanding and emotional connection with the stories being shared. We also actively employ social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter to connect with our audience, share stories, engage in dialogue and for promotion purposes.
- Assistive Technology
  We incorporate assistive technologies, such as captioning, audio descriptions and sign language interpretation to ensure that our digital content and platforms are accessible to individuals with diverse needs.
- Digital Feedback and Evaluation
  We utilise digital feedback systems to collect visitor testimonials, measure engagement rates and gather data on visitor experiences. This information helps us evaluate the effectiveness of our initiatives and make improvements.

Benefits & Impact

The holistic approach towards the project **The only way to learn is through encounter!** and mindful step-by-step integration of interactive digital solutions has significantly improved visitor experience. Visitors have expressed positive feedback about the use of assistive technologies, emotional design of personalised stories and the opportunity to connect with staff members.

- Sustainable Employment
  The project has contributed to the sustainable employment of disabled individuals within our organisation. By providing training and employment opportunities, we have empowered individuals with disabilities and supported their integration into the workforce.
- Increased Awareness and Empathy
  The project has raised awareness and found resonating ways to foster empathy among the visitors towards the challenges faced by people with disabilities. It has challenged preconceived notions and stereotypes, through powerful emotional experience.
- Knowledge and Expertise
  We gathered valuable knowledge and expertise in the field of digital accessibility and inclusion with the project. This knowledge can be applied in future projects and shared with other organisations, contributing to the advancement of accessibility practices in the museum sector.

In addition to these tangible impacts, the project has also had intangible benefits such as increased motivation and pride among staff members, improved morale and a sense of fulfillment in making a positive impact on the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Limits & Drawbacks

During the implementation of the project, there were several internal and external limitations and challenges that we faced.

Internal challenges

- Limited Resources

  The organisation had limited financial resources, which posed challenges in terms of implementing and sustaining the digital initiatives. It required careful budgeting and prioritization of activities.
- Technical Expertise

  Developing and implementing digital solutions required technical expertise that was not readily available within the organization. We had to either upskill existing staff members, which demands time and consistent investment, or collaborate with external partners to fill the knowledge gaps, which implies costs.

External challenges
- Digital Accessibility
Ensuring the accessibility of digital content for individuals with disabilities is challenging. Investments in assistive technologies are significant, and we had to conduct accessibility audits and make continuous improvements to meet the diverse and now better acknowledged needs of our visitors.
Keeping up with evolving accessibility regulations and standards is an ongoing challenge. We have to regularly review and update our digital practices to ensure compliance
- Connectivity and Infrastructure
In some cases, limited internet connectivity or infrastructure posed challenges, especially when implementing online platforms or relying on digital tools.

We managed to cope with these challenges through collaboration, continuous improvement and a strong belief in the project's mission. We sought external expertise, formed partnerships and maintained open lines of communication within the team and with stakeholders to address the limitations and navigate the complexities of the process.

Future Prospects

Our project has sparked several areas and aspects that can be further expanded and translated into other contexts within the museum sector.

- Digital Accessibility
The inclusive digital solutions and assistive technologies we developed can be expanded to other museums and cultural institutions, allowing them to enhance accessibility and provide equal opportunities for all visitors.
- Storytelling and Visitor Engagement
The use of personal stories and testimonials from staff members and visitors has proven to be a powerful tool for engagement. This approach can be further expanded to create interactive and immersive storytelling experiences in other museum contexts, fostering a deeper connection between visitors and the exhibits.
- Loyalty and Reward Systems
The implementation of loyalty and reward systems can be adopted by other museums to encourage recurring visits and increase visitor engagement. By offering incentives, such as exclusive content or special offers, museums can foster a sense of appreciation and enhance loyalty in a long run among their visitors.
- Digital Transformation and Innovation
The overall digital transformation process we have been undergoing as a team and organisation can serve as a roadmap for other museums seeking to embrace digital technologies and innovation. From developing digital platforms to integrating new tools and technologies, museums can follow a similar approach to enhance their operations and visitor experiences.

Key Take-Aways

The podcast series has been highly successful for our institution, offering a simple but impactful platform for storytelling and raising awareness about the experiences of disabled individuals. Here are some factors that made it special and the experiences we have had:
- Amplifying voices
The podcast series provided a powerful medium for influencers and disabled individuals, including our museum staff, to share their stories and perspectives. It gave them a platform to be heard and hopefully understood by a wide audience.
- Emotional connection
The podcast episodes were designed to evoke emotions and create a deep connection with listeners. By sharing personal stories, challenges and triumphs, the series helped to break down barriers and nurture empathy.
- Educational and informative
The podcast episodes delved into various aspects of disability, accessibility and inclusion. They provided educational insights, challenged misconceptions, and offered practical tips for creating more inclusive spaces and milieus.

- Diverse perspectives
  Featuring a range of guests - including disabled staff, experts, and advocates - added depth and richness to the conversations, providing a wider coverage of disability issues.
- Expanding reach and influence
  The podcast series enabled us to reach a wider audience beyond our physical capture area, extending our influence and message to people who may not have otherwise engaged with our institution.
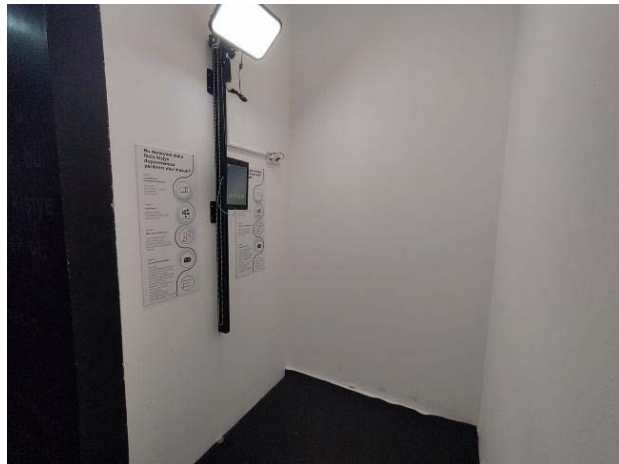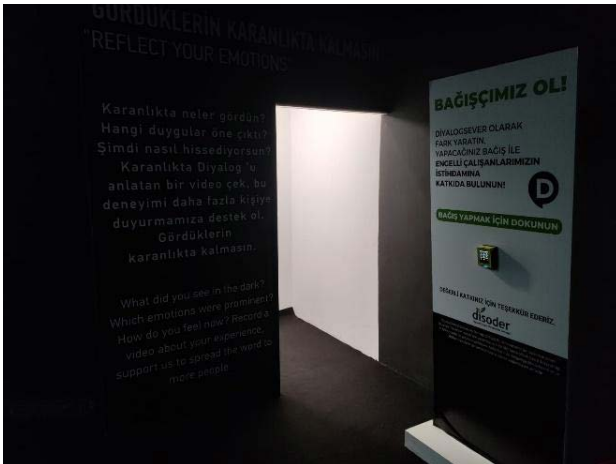
Overall, the podcast series have been instrumental in raising awareness, fostering empathy and creating a positive impact both within our institution and the wider community. It has given voice to disabled individuals, challenged societal perceptions and informed about possible actions and more ethical practices, thus contributed to our mission of promoting inclusion and understanding.

Involved Parties	- Multiligo Reklam Bilişim Pazarlama ve Danışmanlık LTD. ŞTİ. (digital solution partner) - BD İç Mimarlik İnşaat Sanayi Ve Ticaret Limited Şirketi (construction process of the video feedback areas) - Mimeray Grafik Ürünler Basim Tesisleri Ticaret Ve Sanayi Anonim Şirketi (design of the guide for the video feedback area) - İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality) (the owner of the public space where the museum is located is a public institution) - Metro İstanbul A.Ş
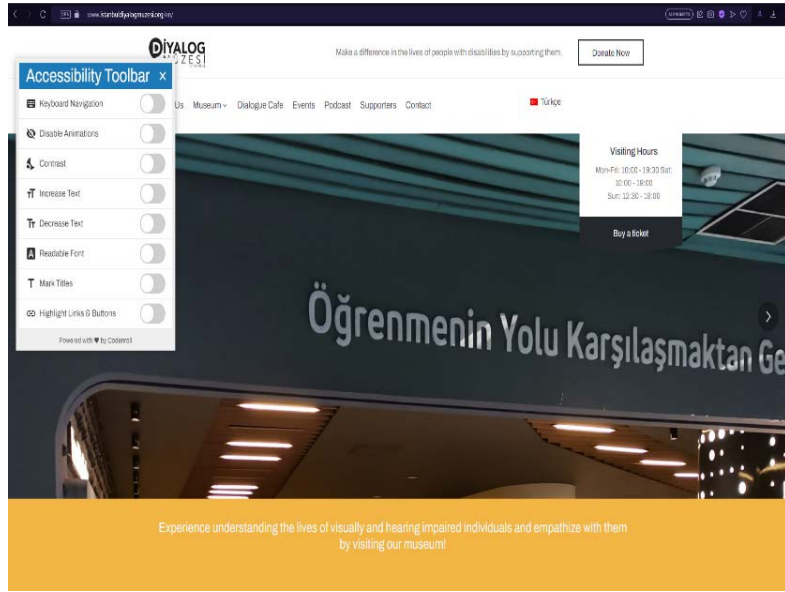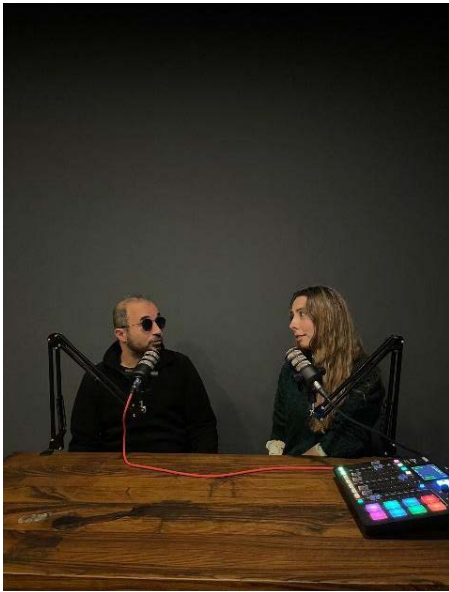
Istanbul Dialogue Museum's feedback areas, website and Podcast in the Dark, Istanbul Dialogue Museum

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