

Why have a shop?

If your venue or organisation is thinking about starting a shop, or you already run one and are wondering how big it could get, or maybe your venue is suffering from cuts in funding and you need to consider other sources of income, the first thing you need to do is carefully consider why you want a shop.

Reasons to have a shop

- To generate income, either for the sustainability of the venue itself or as support for the additional work of the organisation
- To be an extension of the visitor experience
- To contribute towards the visitors' enjoyment of the museum
- To provide an outlet for material relating to the museum's collection and activities

The additional benefits of having a shop

- Extend the story of the museum – this is achievable if the shop has the right products and is displayed to the same high standards as the museum collection, particularly important if the shop is the farewell, the last part of the journey
- Shop staff are often the public face of the organisation and as such have a function as ambassadors
- Brand extension - shop products stay with the customer as an ongoing reminder of the museum
- Making a purchase can feel like a donation
- A beautiful souvenir allows the customer to take a memory home
- Retail therapy – the shop can be a period of light relief if the museum visit has been quite intense

Is it always a good idea to have a shop?

- Running a successful shop needs to be done professionally and requires an investment in time, money and staff to get it right – there is a risk to brand integrity if you get it wrong
- Be very clear that your venue has the visitor numbers to sustain a shop
- Other considerations are:
 - The location of the shop
 - Who will be buying and managing the stock?
 - The shop fittings – what fixtures are available?
 - Is the proposed site of the shop the right size for the museum? Too big and you will have to invest too heavily in the stock to fill it; too small and the offer won't be right for the visitor
 - What systems will be used for managing and selling the stock and keeping control of the budget?
 - What will your overheads be?