DECOLONISING MUSEMS

WHO IS THE TARGET?

WHAT IS THE NARRATIVE?



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INTRODUCTION

- Museums globally are questioning colonial legacies
- European museums often curate African art for European audiences
- Decolonisation demands shifting both exhibition and communication strategies

OBJECTIVE

To determine:

- Who the exhibitions in European museums are designed for?
- What narratives dominate exhibit labels and storytelling?
- How African museums can lead communications to reclaim narratives?

METHODOLOGY

- Literature review: Decolonisation theory, marketing, museum studies
- Analysis of exhibit labels in European African galleries (British Museum, Musée du quai Branly, Weltmuseum Wien)
- Review of Kenyan museum practices (e.g. NMK Digital Kitambo, community curation)
- Stakeholder interviews:
  - NMK curators
  - Community contributors
  - African diaspora audiences

RESULTS

- African galleries in Europe still designed for European gaze
- Narratives Dominated by Colonial Language: e.g. “tribal art,”
- Kenyan Innovations:
  - Community co-creation of exhibit texts
  - Digital storytelling
  - Restitution campaigns framed around dialogue, not only repatriation
- Language as Decolonisation: Kiswahili and indigenous languages increasingly used in Kenyan labels

ANALYSIS

- Decolonisation is not only about returning objects but also returning voice and narrative ownership
- Marketing & Communications critical in shaping:
  - Audience engagement
  - Institutional transparency
  - Global digital reach

CONCLUSION

- Decolonised exhibitions require:
  - Defining who exhibitions target
  - Shifting narratives toward African-led storytelling
  - Innovative marketing to bridge local and global audiences
- Kenyan museums can lead by example in creating exhibitions that speak to African futures, not just colonial pasts