

National Museums in a Global World, Department of culture studies and oriental languages,
University of Oslo, Norway, 19–21 November 2007

Museum Global Marketing: a case study of the National Palace Museum (Taiwan)

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This research is a part of my PhD research that focuses on museum marketing strategy in Taiwanese national museums. This paper aims to examine the growth and development of museum marketing, understand the national museums in Taiwan, identify the global marketing strategy by using the National Palace Museum in Taiwan as an example and, finally, provide suggestions for the National Palace Museum. This paper adopts the qualitative method to collect data. Interviews and the literature review were used to generate the data.

Keywords: Museum marketing, museum global marketing, National Palace Museum

Introduction

The museum is a non-profit organisation and it aims to provide knowledge related to collections and encourage the audience's interest in them. Marketing professional, Philip Kotler, applied marketing to non-profit organisations in the late 1960s. Museums have experienced a tremendous challenge due to the economic recession and decrease in government support. For this reason, museums have started to use marketing as a tool to operate their museums and it has been applied in museums for over twenty-five years. It helps museums not only to generate revenue and resources but also to fulfil their mission. Marketing is a process whereby individuals and groups obtain what they need and desire through creating and exchanging products, services, experiences, satisfaction, and, ultimately, value with others. In recent years, the museums around the world have started to use global marketing not only to attract more visitors but also to achieve their mission.

It is a phenomenon in Taiwan that more museums now understand how to use marketing as a tool not only to attract people's attention to engage in museum activities, but also to achieve the museum's mission. The national museums in Taiwan are now facing changes in their management system. The government has announced that all national museums must transfer to the Administrative Corporation management system by 2008. After this, the role of marketing will become more important, since the national museums have to undertake fund-raising and provide the better service quality in order to attract new and repeat audiences. Whatever the management system that the national museums will adopt in the future, the role of marketing in national museums will become more significant and important.

After the party transformation in 2000, the national museums in Taiwan have been experiencing huge changes. The national museums have begun to use 'branding' as a tool to shape museums' images and establish their identity system. They have also begun to learn to create new museum products and work with the private sector. The National Palace Museum is the leading national museum in Taiwan, with a collection representing the 7000-year cultural legacy of China. It was established by the central government in 1957 and has become one of the biggest museums in the world. It is the only museum directly accountable to the Executive Yuan (the highest executive body). It established a 'Functional Division of Public Affairs' (not an official department) in 2005 under the 'Secretariat Office' to deal with marketing affairs and public relations. It also committed a Build-Operate-Transfer project for restaurants, which is similar to the public-private partnership, in the private sector, the Howard Plaza Hotel, in 2006.

The statistics show that seventy percent of the visitors at National Palace Museum are tourists. The statistics also shows that the National Palace Museum is the favourite attraction among the tourists in a survey. The National Palace Museum has paid great attention to attracting foreign visitors and has used a global marketing strategy to extend its audience segments and promote its brand.

Museum and museum marketing

Marketing is formally defined as "a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and exchanging products of value with others" (Kotler et al. 2005, p.6). Marketing, in this definition, is a process of exchanging things of value between producers and consumers and those who trade in things. Kotler and Kotler (1998, p.30, 59) explained that each organisation, whether it is a business organisation or a non-profit organisation, is engaged in exchange; furthermore, marketing deals as much with the intangible satisfaction and experiences that people enjoy as with tangible products and services. The Chartered Institute of Marketing (2005) explains that marketing "is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying

customer requirements profitably". According to these definitions, marketing is a process that involves 'exchange' between at least two parties; the purpose of marketing is to satisfy individual or organisational needs. 'Exchange' is thus the core concept of marketing.

The first publication which discussed non-profit organisation marketing was "Broadening the Concept of Marketing", written by Kotler and Levy (1969). They broadened the meaning of marketing from its usual interpretation of being a process used only in reference to for-profit organisations. They applied the concept of marketing to non-profit organisations as a survival technique for these organisations; for-profit organisations aim to gain benefits and make a profit, but the goals of non-profit organisations are to provide a variety of services and to accomplish their missions.

In recent decades, especially since the 1980s, non-profit organisations have been confronted by several management problems, such as limited budgets and staff shortages, in what have become competitive and changeable environments. In order to enhance their administrative efficiency and service quality, non-profit organisations have decided to adopt marketing strategies in their operations. Marketing in non-profit organisations can help them to accomplish their mission and achieve the goals they have set themselves. However, marketing is a tool for management and not a method of resolving all of the problems within the organisation itself. When non-profit organisations adopt marketing as a tool, they need to consider their mission and goals, and plan marketing activities accordingly. All marketing activities are designed to enable the organisation to accomplish its mission and achieve its goals. For profit-making organisations, marketing is emphasized as being 'market-driven'. Organisations provide products according to the needs of their customers in order to make a final profit and create an income. For non-profit organisations, however, marketing is designed to enhance administrative efficiency and service quality, to gain support and recognition from the public and to accomplish their mission.

In the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan decided "to balance the budget through cutbacks in government spending and creating private sector initiatives to take up the slack"; the museum and cultural institution community was particularly hard hit by this retrenchment, and it responded by lobbying against the proposed cuts (Bigley 1987, p.14; Kotler & Armstrong 1994, p.6). For this reason, museums and other non-profit organisations began to use marketing as a tool in their operations. Bryant explains museum marketing in terms of the changeable environment, including such factors as social economic recession, increased competition, decrease in government support and grants (Bryant 1988, p.2, 16).

Museums, whether public or private, are influenced by governmental budget cutbacks, and face difficulties due to deficient resources (Bigley 1987, p.14). Some researchers claim that museums and other non-profit organisations started to use marketing as an operating tool as a result of the increasingly competitive environment and depleted resources (Kawashima 1998, p.21; Huang 1997, p.81; Vaughan 2001, p.253). Weil (1998, p.263) identifies three factors that have contributed to this phenomenon: money, the loss of public confidence and the lack of public recognition. Kotler (1998, p.27-29) points out three reasons for museums to adopt marketing: revenue building and fiscal self-sufficiency; competition; and accountability. The essential reason why museums and other non-profit organisations should become interested in formal marketing principles is that these will enable these organisations to become more effective in accomplishing their missions and in earning income. Kawashima (1998, p.21) also indicates that government policies have been encouraging museums to use marketing and income generation skills in museum management since the mid-1980s, particularly in recent years. Good management enables museums to face the challenge of managing change and developments within their organisation (Fleming & Hushion 2006, p.3).

McLean, in 'Marketing the museum' (1997, p. 1), mentions that "marketing is a process that brings together an organisation and people, whether it be for profit, to satisfy their needs

or wants, to increase visitor figures, etc.” Museum marketing is ‘a process of management’, involving ‘the confirmation of museum mission’ and ‘consistent effort’ (Kotler 1998, p.59); the subjects of museum marketing are the public or users; the purpose of the museum marketing process is to understand and educate the public and to determine, confirm and satisfy the users’ wants and indicate their needs. Thus, the target of museum marketing is the public; consequently, there is a dependent relationship between museums and the public.

A museum is a particular type of non-profit organisation with a particular mission. The mission of a museum, regardless of its particular characteristics, is to collect and interpret its objects, to display these objects to the public, to educate its audiences and to encourage the public to support it (Kotler 1997, p.29). Marketing is a process which always includes exchange. Museums provide ‘something’ (for example, exhibition, display, collection, objects) and receive ‘something’ (for example, admission fees), thus creating a process of exchange. This exchange process includes tangible things (such as money, information) and intangible things (such as satisfying needs) or both tangible and intangible things (Kelly 1993, p. 18). Kotler (1998, p.28) states that “a growing number of museums depend on earned income, in the form of admission and special exhibit fees, earnings from sales in the gift shop and the restaurant, revenue generated by membership dues, and earnings derived from rental of museum facilities for private functions”. Museums are under pressure to attract larger, more diverse audiences, to perform more roles, and to raise additional earned income, all of which have led to the use of marketing strategies.

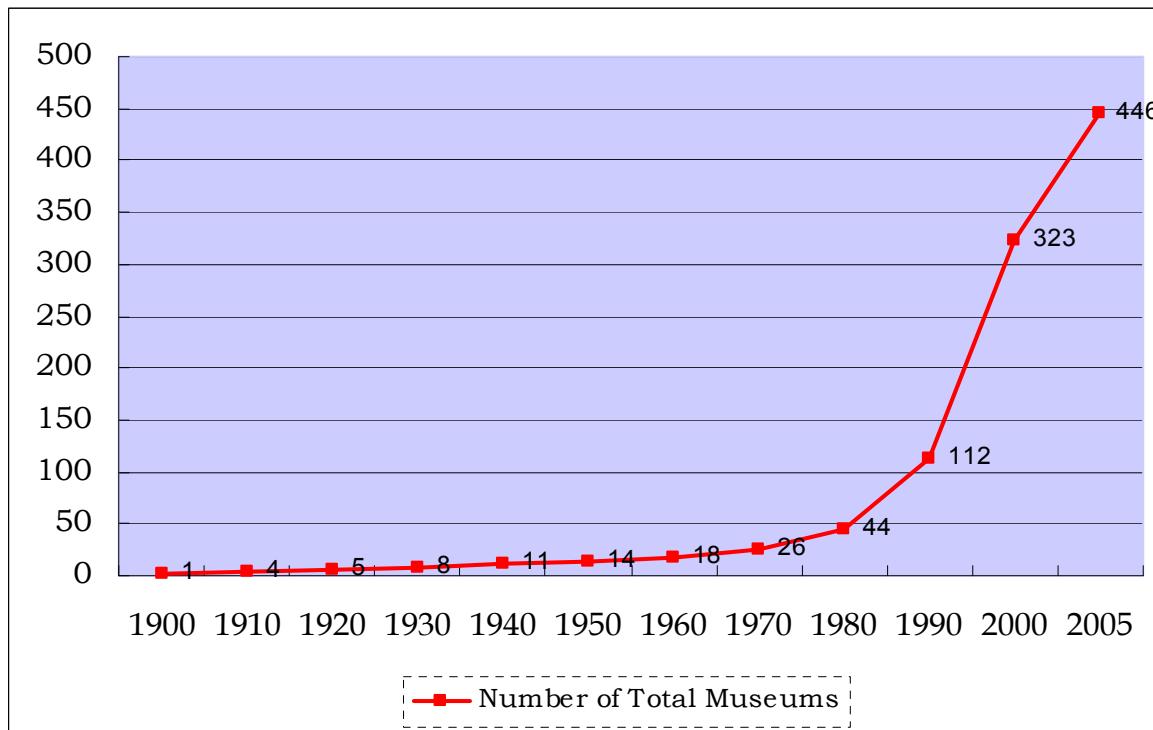
Marketing in museums is designed to help them to provide and display products that match the needs of the current markets. Marketing requires a careful diagnosis and analysis of the current environmental issues, eliminating any possible impact on the public, museum products, museum services and museum resources. More specifically, Lewis (2002, p.220) states that: “marketing is the management process which confirms the mission of a museum or gallery and is then responsible for the efficient identification, anticipation and satisfaction of the needs of its users”.

Museum professionals are becoming more sophisticated in their understanding of marketing and its value to their museums and audiences. Fundamentally, marketing is a process that helps people to exchange something of value for something they need or want. Both museums and audiences are the beneficiaries of the marketing process, which one marketing professional describes as a process “in which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering, and exchanging products, services, experiences, and ultimately values with others” (Genoways 2003, p. 247). However, Šola (2001, p. 57) mentioned that museums today have realised that the goods they provide may not meet the visitors’ needs. She emphasized that museums are unlike businesses, which invent the needs; museums should look for the aspirations of human nature and devise the actions to serve them.

Museums in Taiwan

Since the first museum, the National Taiwan Museum, was established in 1908, more than 450 museums have been funded (see figure 1) by the private sector and the government. Around 50% of the museums are funded by the public and sixteen of them are national museums. Every national museum in Taiwan charges the admission fee and receives an annual budget from the central government.

Figure1. The development of museums in Taiwan



Source: Chinese Association of Museums

National museums in Taiwan are traditionally governed directly by the central government: the Executive Yuan, the Ministry of Education and the Council for Cultural Affairs. Therefore, the national museums are directly influenced by the political and economic climate. Each national museum has its own museum act legislated by the Legislative Yuan. The organisational structure, personnel, staff employment, departments, etc are all prescribed, and the acts have existed for many years without being revised. The directors of the national museums are assigned by the museum authorities and it is rare to see the promotion of a director from within the organisation. As a result of their organisational structure, the national museums in Taiwan are often thought of as bureaucratic, inflexible, and inefficient.

Museums have developed rapidly over the last twenty years in Taiwan. In the 1980s, the public museum¹ was the principal type of museum, but, in the 1990s, private museums became predominant (Chen Y. S., 2005). The growth of Taiwan's economy at the beginning of the 1990s was spectacular, and, at the same time, as this led to a rapid increase in the national per capita income, more and more people became interested in participating in art activities (Chen 2005). As a result of a change in the dominant political party and the enhancement of local awareness in the 1990s, the total number of museums in Taiwan has increased over the past twenty years. The number of local authority museums and private museums also increased during this period. Statistics obtained from the Chinese Association of Museums (2005) show that 70 public museums and 42 private ones were established before 1990; by contrast, 143 public museums and 171 private ones were established after 1990. Among the 213 public museums in Taiwan, only 16 are national museums established by the central government.

In 1977, the Executive Yuan began to implement the 'Twelve Major Constructions Project', and the number of the libraries, museums and cultural centres was established as the

1 Including national museums, city museums and local authority museums.

part of this project. Ten of the sixteen museums were established after the completion of the ‘Twelve Major Constructions Project’, all of which were located in central, southern and eastern Taiwan in order to adjust the balance between city and county.

The museum market in Taiwan has been expanding but the national museums have been unable to alter their management systems in order to keep up with the times, owing to the antiquated and oppressive nature of the organisational management system and the limitations of the civil servant recruitment system (Chen 2002, p. 68). With this situation in mind, on the one hand, the government has to rethink and find a way to solve the problems existing in public museums; on the other hand, the government has to allow the private sector to put new power into the museum industry and make museums more accessible and friendly to the public (Chen 2002, p. 68).

In recent decades, several local authority museums or cultural organisations have given permission to private organisations to operate certain parts of the public museums; for example, the Taipei 228 Memorial Museum. Subsequently, several national museums have introduced the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) or Operate-Transfer (OT) management modes. In 2000, the Taiwanese government assigned regulations under the Executive Yuan and started to consider another management system called “Administrative Corporation” to manage those departments or organisations which should be run by neither the government nor the private sector. The government has announced that all national museums must be transferred to the Administrative Corporation management system by 2008.

This shift to this new management system offers national museums the opportunity not only to re-structure their organisations, but also to re-think their purposes and mission, and thus to work towards operating more effectively and smoothly in the future. However, to date, no national museum has transferred to the Administrative Corporation management system.

In Taiwan, museums have been paying more attention to the concept of marketing in recent years. The reason for this is that, like museums in the rest of the world, Taiwanese museums are faced with the problems of reductions in their budgets and competition from other service and leisure industries. As a result of their inflexible organisational structure and the limitations imposed by the museum acts, it is difficult for the national museums in Taiwan to market and change the service they provide. The government is aware that problems have existed in national museums for several decades and plans to change the management system of the museums. Those national museums which are changing from the traditional management system are now focusing their attention on audience services and marketing strategies. This will give the national museums a new vision. In 2004, the National Chiang Kai-shek Cultural Centre was reorganised and became the first institution to use the Administrative Corporation management system to make it a semi-public organisation in Taiwan.

By the end of the twentieth century, and owing to the rapid increase in the number of museums, the development of museums in Taiwan reached saturation point, and museums faced stiff competition from each other and from the rest of the tourist sector. The most significant change in recent years is the decrease in the amount of support provided by the government. Many alternative strategies have been proposed since the late 1990s; among them, the most widely discussed are the ideas of establishing the BOT (Build, Operate, and Transfer) model and of incorporating an administrative agency (Chiang 2003).

The Global Marketing Strategy of the National Palace Museum (NPM)

Kotler and Andreasen (1995, p.8) mentioned that one of the major changes in nonprofit marketing in the 1990s is paying much attention to the ‘international dimensions’ and so is the museum. Hennessey (2004, p.4) states that ‘a global marketing involves the creation of a single strategy for a product, service, or company for the entire global market. Such a strategy

encompasses many countries simultaneously and is aimed at leveraging the commonalities across many markets". The American Association of Marketing (2007) defines global marketing as "a marketing strategy that consciously addresses global customers, markets, and competition in formulating a business strategy". Rectanus (2006, p.381) considers that most museums today are 'global' but less apparent. The most successful museum using global marketing to expand its market is the Guggenheim Museum, which expands its universal branches to epitomise the 'global museum' (Rectanus 2006, p.381).

The National Palace Museum is the biggest museum in Taiwan as well as a world famous museum, with a full collection about the 7000-year cultural legacy of China. It is the only national museum that is directly administered by the Executive Yuan, which is the highest administrative body, and receives a budget from the Legislation Yuan, which is the highest legislative body in Taiwan. It contracted out its restaurant to a famous five-star hotel in 2006 and the restaurant plans to open in 2008. The global marketing strategies that the NPM delivers are as follows:

1. Renovation of the building public space

Due to the limited space in exhibition hall, the NPM decided to expand the space. After several years, it finally reopened in February 2007. The new exhibition hall is brighter and more friendly to visitors. As it is one of the most popular tourist spots in Taiwan, the NHK, the leading Japanese media company, broadcast a special report on TV about the expansion.

The NPM is currently planning the Southern Branch, and orients it as an Asian museum. This establishment aims to shorten the gap between the north and south of Taiwan in terms of cultural exposure. Also, it aims to strengthen the public's understanding about the surroundings of Taiwan, and to develop the public's broadened global view.

2. Branding

The NPM is a landmark in Taiwan because of its traditional Chinese Palace building.

In recent years, the NPM has gained great economic benefit from 'brand licensing'. The NPM aims to market itself and promote its brand in the world. It devotes great efforts to turning and building the museum's new image from the old, conservative and hard-to-reach image. It redesigned the Museum's business identity system and logo (figure 2). de Mooij (1997, p.18) explains that the nature of a brand is that "it is a name in the memory of consumers and a perceptual map of positive and negative associations, a symbolic language, a network of associations". A good brand can impress the consumers and so establish loyalty and this is an essential factor of marketing. The NPM uses this new identity system on its publications, products, internal and external communication and each object that the visitors see in the museum. The first image advertising was on TV in 2005.

Figure 2. The new NPM logo



Source: the National Palace Museum

3. International exhibitions

The NPM began to launch international exhibitions in 1995 with the loan exhibition of "Famous Painting of the XVI-XIX Centuries from the Louvre Museum". The international exhibitions the Museum organised included "Splendors of Imperial Chia" which travelled to the USA in 1996, "Western Painting and Sculpture Highlighting the Theme of Women and of the Chang Da-Chien and Pablo Picasso" in 1998, the "Ilha Formosa—the Emergence of Taiwan on the World Scene in the 17th Century" in 2003 and the "Treasures of the Sons of

Heaven—the Imperial Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei” in Germany in 2004. To celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Museum and the reopening of the main exhibition hall, the “Grand View: Painting and Calligraphy from the Northern Sung Dynasty” was held from 25th December 2006 to 25th March 2007. The selected items of this exhibition were the most important and characteristic pieces in the Museum’s collection. The museum statistics showed that 70% of the NPM visitors are tourists, with the Japanese forming the majority. The museum has a good relationship with Japanese travel agencies. The Japanese companies even organised a travel package only for visiting the NPM’s “Grand View” special exhibition.

4. Museum and technology

Due to the development of technology in Taiwan, the government invests a large amount of its budget in developing the digital collections and encourages the national museums to participate in this. In recent years, the NPM has undertaken three major online ventures: the Digital Archives, the Digital Museum and E-learning. These provide a multimedia experience of NPM’s rich cultural and educational resources to audiences worldwide via the internet. In accordance with the National Digital Archives Program, the NPM has been working on setting up a digital database of its collection. Hence, it has also created an international-standard Matadata for search and retrieval. The NPM also has a well-designed website in eight different languages, including Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, French, German, Spanish and Russian. The official website has won several awards because of its interactive design.

5. On-line stores

The Museum began to develop its on-line store (website: <https://www.npmeshop.com>) in March 2006 selling products like the other international museums do since it could reach a worldwide audience and achieve the aim of global marketing. Consumers could find merchandise information on-line in five languages: Chinese, English, Japanese, French and Spanish. The new products have been continually designed and developed and sold online. The Museum expects to earn an extra NTD\$10,000,000 (approximately 233,500 Euros) per year. In the new refurbished NPM’s giftshop, it is usually crowded and people can be seen queuing for the well-designed products. The NPM has contracted-out a product design and manufacturing project to some companies. They use the NPM as a brand on all of the products, such as biscuits, cakes, sweets, key rings and stationery. The staff in the gift shop mentioned that the profit per day is about NTD 1,000,000 (which is approximately 23,500 Euros).

6. Licensed merchandizes

In accordance with ‘Regulations of Government Publications’ and ‘The Government Procurement Law’, the NPM has publicly selected qualified agencies that own legal dealerships. The NPM has contracted with 26 agencies and actively exploited retail stores, both domestically and abroad. The NPM is now keen to promote ‘brand licensing’ and ‘Old is New’ projects. The vice-director indicated that the NPM has finally made a leap in marketing since it was established eighty years ago. The Museum has registered its trademark in some countries, such as the US, Japan, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, and licensed out its trademark and digital collection to the companies in Taiwan and other countries. Five international companies which have received brand licensing from the NPM are the Franz Collection, Sanrio Far East, the BenQ Corporation, Bright Idea Design and the Ling Yuan International Show, in order to create more business opportunities for the brand and image authorization. The NPM invited the companies and design studios to create new products on

the basis of the NPM's collection. For example, it cooperated with ALESSI to design products that tell stories to the consumers, and NPM's products used ALESSI's 5,000 channels to expand its image and brand worldwide. The purpose of undertaking global marketing is not only to make profits but also to market the NPM throughout the world. This means that the NPM can promote its brand worldwide through the international marketing channels. In 2004, the NPM co-worked with the Taiwan Business Bank to launch the "VISA Platinum Affinity Card" which enabled the cardholders to visit the 10 best museums² in the world without admission fees.

A new revision of the 'NPM Image Authorization Information Management and Fees Standard' has been set up. Hence, the NPM provides the public with its collection image authorization for academy use, research, publication, video broadcasting and commercial and public uses.

7. Co-work with international media

In 2004, the NPM co-operated with the film company to produce 'The NPM Passage'; the museum first became the subject in a Taiwanese movie. The NPM recently worked with the National Geography to film a documentary entitled 'Inside: The Emperor's Treasure' to unveil the NPM. It describes the history of the NPM and the collections in the off-limit treasure vaults of the back mountain. This was the first time that the NPM worked with the international electric media and was the first museum subject in the 'Inside' series of the National Geography. This documentary will be translated into 34 languages and shown in 166 countries.

8. Awards

- The awards that the NPM received last year are: (National Palace Museum, 2007).
- Taiwan Internet Content Rating Promotion Foundation, Taiwan Internet Content Rating Promotion Foundation's Selections for Excellent Websites (Website Excellent).
- American Association of Museums, MUSE Award (GOLD: Promotional and Marketing).
- Government Information Office, 2006 Innovation Awards for Digital Publishing (Bronze Prize).
- Digital Archives e-Park, 2006 Digital Archives Commercial Application Content (Digital Archives/Award of Excellence).
- Yahoo, 1st Yahoo! Search Marketing Awards (Gold Prize Outstanding Brand of the Year).
- Yahoo, 1st Yahoo! Search Marketing Awards (Silver Prize Precision in Search Marketing of the Year).

Discussion

The NPM has paid much attention to building its brand and developing its relationship with the global markets. It also delivers different marketing strategies to the world. The Museum has established good relationship with the media, including that in Taiwan and Japan. To reach a diverse group of visitors, the Museum usually designs its publications, both printed and electronic, in different language. The internal reports also show that the effects of these

² The museums without admission charges are National Palace Museum (Taiwan), the Louvre Museum (France), the Musee d'Orsay (France), the British Museum (UK), the National Gallery (UK), the Metropolitan Museum (USA), the Museum of Modern Art (USA), the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (USA), the Tokyo National Museum (Japan), The Palace Museum (China) and Shanghai Museum (China).

strategies are beneficial and the feedback they receive is usually positive. However, Black (2005, p.46) indicates that, when museums are developing their global marketing strategies, they have to broaden their audience base and develop strong local links and identity. In the interview with the vice-director, he mentioned that 70% of the visitors are tourists from different countries. Although the NPM is one of the best museums in the world, most Taiwanese are unaware of it and do not appreciate it. The Museum should establish its friendly image to the country and encourage people to engage in museum programmes.

The other difficulty that the Museum faces is the museum act. In Taiwan, each national museum has its own individual museum act and it is very hard to amend or revise it. This means that the museum administration is inflexible and the national museums have to follow the regulations, such as about the personnel, departments and services, and these cannot be decided by the museum director or committee. The government has announced that the national museums will change their management system to the Administrative Corporation in 2008; however, most national museums have negative attitudes towards this and try to oppose it. Marketing has been an important task in the NPM. However, there is still no department or division in charge of it. Also, there are no professional marketing people dealing with the marketing affairs. Most of the staff at the Museum do not have any background or experience in marketing. If the Museum would like to be more specific or plan the marketing programmes, it is necessary to have professionals to deal with this.

Besides, it is quite difficult to market delicate and well-designed products in Taiwan due to the high prices. Some products are too expensive to afford for certain groups. The museums could develop some low cost products. Because of its old image, the Museum finds it hard to reach the local people. If the Museum keeps designing and selling delicate products, the relationship between the Museum and local people will not be close.

In conclusion, the most significant factors for the Museum to market are: the collection, the services and the brand image; the weak factors for marketing are: the organisational structure, the relationship with the local people and the old image existing in Taiwanese.

Conclusion

The National Palace Museum has the best Chinese emperor collection in the world. Many of the works are masterpieces, leading the Museum to become one of the best museums in the world. The museums in Taiwan are facing tremendous challenges from other services and tourist industries. The National Palace Museum is like a hard-to-reach building for the people in Taiwan because of its traditional building and management system. In recent years, it has been trying to reach not only the local people but also the global markets. The statistics shows the NPM is successful in some ways. However, the purpose of global marketing is not only to achieve the global market but also to take care of the local one. The NPM is developing its global marketing strategy and trying to attract more visitors worldwide, on the one hand; on the other hand, the Museum should also focus on developing its local strategy and making the Museum more friendly and easy to reach.

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