

# MUSEUMS' ROLE IN THE POST-COVID-19 ERA: AN E-BUSINESS CASE STUDY OF THE NATIONAL PALACE MUSEUM IN TAIPEI

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## ABSTRACT

From almost unblemished success to the mishandling of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, accountability based on trust is compulsory for making efficient decisions to boost e-business in every industry in Taiwan, including the cultural sector. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the management of e-business among museums in Taiwan, focusing on the well-known National Palace Museum in Taipei. Decision-makers in the museum have had to draw more consumers' attention online to generate revenue. However, the findings suggest that the exploitation of up-to-date technology substantially boosted the financial consumption at the museum to prove a dynamic online service. Therefore, this may prove to be an exciting new form for consumers regarding post-pandemic cultural e-business.

**Keywords:** National Palace Museum, e-Business, Post-COVID-19 Era, Online Shop, Co-Branding

## INTRODUCTION

With the global recession due to COVID-19, non-profit organizations such as museums also suffer from the loss of visitors and revenue from product selling. Accordingly, museums rely on the Internet and e-business more than before, resulting in the general public's online shopping lifestyle nowadays, especially during and after the pandemic. As the largest and most famous museum in Taiwan, the National Palace Museum (NPM) has lost a significant number of visitors on-site and plenty of potential income to maintain the operation every year. In the post-COVID-19 era, the strategies that the NPM implemented to turn over a new leaf are worth researching to take as an example to other cultural sectors worldwide. Based on the concern of the NPM's e-business and co-branding operations with some international and national companies, the case study of the NPM in Taiwan focusing on its successful co-branding strategies might help broaden the horizons for higher management in the museum field and other industries. Furthermore, the in-depth analysis and comparison of information collected in between provide insightful conclusions and hopefully open new perspectives for future research regarding the Internet and e-business.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research focuses on the NPM's co-branding instances and online shop operation by reviewing its

annual reports and related publicized articles. Furthermore, interviews with the museum staff are implemented to follow up on the actual practices in the museum shop. The methodology applied highly relies on field research study skills and interdisciplinary training in statistics, marketing, and museum management background knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

NPM's revenue in 2019 was NT\$561,828,306 (approximately US\$18.7 million) (Wu, 2020, 152). Yet, due to COVID-19, the general revenue in 2020 was NT\$121,853,354 (about US \$4.06 million) (Wu, 2021, 126). The yearly income decreased significantly from 2019 to 2020. Hence, employees at the marketing department in the NPM and the outsourcing company that operates museum shops both onsite and online shop have done their best to execute more creative strategies to co-brand with various companies. For example, a well-known grass jelly brand called Blackball co-branded with the NPM on 15 June 2020 to create a special edition of grass jelly dessert inspired by calligraphy ink, which impressed consumers a lot, and the selling channel expanded from the museum shop to convenience stores including 7-11 and FamilyMart in Taiwan which covered over 10 thousand units in total.

The successful co-branding strategies prevented the NPM from losing more market share. With NT\$116,238,211 (approximately US\$3.87 million) revenue generated in 2021, the NPM did not suffer another dramatic loss compared to the previous year (Wu, 2022, 130). In addition, the NPM's revenue in 2022 increased by 24%. In 2023, the NPM co-branded with Disney's centennial marketing strategy to design patterns such as Mickey's Forbidden City Adventure to present the encounter and interaction between Mickey and the famous cultural relics of the NPM, such as the Jadeite Cabbage and the meat-shape stone. With multiple collaborations with dynamic product manufacturers such as Lay's potato chips in February 2023 and the limited-edition BE@RBRICK figures by Japan's Medicom Toy Company as well as Häagen-Dazs Ice Cream in August 2023, the NPM shall soon return to the glory of US\$18 million revenue in the near future.

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