

Collaboration in museums: The evolution of cross-sector collaboration

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Abstract

The research aims to explore how museums survive in a difficult financial climate and compete for audiences by collaborating with other organisations.

Kolb (2000) suggests that these museums which under the pressure need to learn how to practise for-profit making business, while Hill et al. (1995) and McLean (1997) suggest relationship marketing is an invaluable strategy in museum management and marketing planning. In this climate, museums are seeking other ways of working, including building relationships with stakeholders, and creating a mixed economy of public and private collaboration.

The Department for National Heritage (1996) in the UK (now the DCMS) encourages museums, museum services and museum bodies to cooperate with each other. The cultural sectors in Taiwan are also aware that integrating resources from within and without is necessary for collaboration arrangements to work. A report from Taiwan's Council for Cultural Affairs shows that most arts organisations gain support from business in the form not only of money but also in goods, voluntary services and venues (Cao, 1999).

The value of collaboration is often felt in the search for new ideas and strategies among companies who lack the resources to innovate by themselves (Bergquist, 1995). Therefore, collaboration could be seen as a way to solve the pressure of museums and has impact on the management of museums.

Keywords: Museums, galleries, collaboration, relationship marketing, museum management, museum marketing

1. Introduction

Collaboration between sectors has increased in recent years (Wymer and Samu, 2003). Different organisations cooperate in a range of ways. Austin (2000) argues that the benefits of collaboration for nonprofit organisations, such as museums and galleries, include cost savings, economies of scale and scope, synergies and revenue enhancement. Arnold-Forster and Davies indicate that collaboration enables museums to share resources, experience and knowledge (1998). With the decrease in public subsidies available for large cultural organisations, these organisations need to learn how to practise for-profit making business (Kolb, 2000). Museums, although primarily committed to education, must also meet the challenge of attracting more people to visit. In this climate, collaboration has become an important element in most museums' management and marketing plans.

Museum collaboration takes various forms, most often loans and exhibitions (Arnold-Forster and Davies, 1998). Working with the mass media to organise a special exhibition is a very popular alliance strategy in Taiwan. Museums communicate with audiences and promote their events through these partnerships. An unpublished dissertation shows that about 35% of museums in Taiwan have established partnerships and cooperate with the mass media (Chuang, 2000). For example, one exhibition - *Art and Culture of the Han Dynasty* - hosted by the National Museum of History in Taiwan (NMN) in collaboration with the Min Sheng Daily, attracted about 250,000 visitors over five months (Lai, 2000). The figure reveals the extent to which a museum may benefit by attracting potential visitors through an alliance with the press. Another report from *Artist Magazine* (2000) indicates that museums will secure more publicity for special exhibitions when they cooperate with the press. This form of co-operation between museums and

the press could assist museums to increase public awareness and expand their audience. In the face of growing financial difficulties, some museums even seek financial support and human resources from the press. For instance, the National Museum of History (NMH) Taiwan, and the China Times joined together to organise an exhibition *Da-chien Chang and Pablo Picasso*. The press produced reports and supplementary stories on the exhibition, and were involved in lectures and special events (Liu, 2001). It can be seen that the role of the press in cross-sector collaboration is not only to communicate with the public; it can be directly involved in supporting special exhibitions mounted by the museum sector. Museums in Taiwan increasingly see the value of forming partnerships with other sectors and they are keen to work with the press (Chuang, 2000).

Although some research has been done, the issue of collaboration between museums and other sectors is still under-researched. A report for the Museums and Galleries Commission conducted by Arnold-Forster and Davies (1998), which explores collaboration between museums in the UK, argues that it is important to study how museums set up collaborations with different sectors, and how these alliances work in practice.

The study aims to explore the collaboration between museums and non-museum sectors. It intends to discuss the emergence of this new phenomenon. Relevant aspects of management theory and the museum context are reviewed in order properly to consider the potential significance of collaboration to the museum sector.

2. The emergence of collaboration

The tendency towards collaboration began in the early 1980s, with the growth of technology and the maturing of the global market (Lewis, 1990; Bergquist et al., 1995).

Businesses felt the need to make alliances with other organisations to meet the competitive challenge, believing that this strategy would enable them to extend their competencies to enter new global markets (Faulkner and De Rond, 2000).

Early collaborations between business and nonprofit organisations occurred in the late 1980s (Iyer, 2003). However, these relationships drew little attention from market researchers, because cooperation between cross-sector partners was initially limited (Berger et al., 1999, cited in Wymer and Saum, 2003) and very different in nature from that existing between within-sector partners (Wymer and Samu, 2003). But these collaborations have become more popular in recent years. Austin indicates that the twenty-first century is the age of collaboration. Collaboration between business and nonprofits is increasing and becoming an important strategy. The nature of the relationship varies, from charitable, to transactional, to in depth cooperation (2000).

Because no specific collaboration policy exists within the cultural sector in Taiwan, we must look for examples in the UK. The Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB, now the ACE, 1986) has called for partnerships since the late 1980s, believing that they can improve the cultural industries and enhance their economic potential. The UK Department for National Heritage (now the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1996) encourages museums, museum services and museum bodies to cooperate with each other. A survey, conducted by Arnold-Forster and Davies on behalf of the Museums & Galleries Commission (1998), shows that 67% of museums do not regard the concept of collaboration as a central aspect of museum management. However, over half of them (66%) have participated in at least one collaborative project. The Council for Museums Archives and Libraries (now MLA, 2001) appeals a strategic and operational

framework for museums and galleries to work together and proposed research into cross-sector collaboration strategies that will allow museums to operate with new vision. In 2003, ACE identifies four priorities, '*the creative economy, healthy communities, vital neighbourhoods and engaging young people*' to work with arts organisations and set up closer partnership between arts funding system and local government. A Manifesto for Museums (NMDC, 2004) declared that collaboration between national and regional museums can attract new audiences. The issue is becoming more widely discussed in the museum sector.

In the face of financial difficulties, museum managers recognise that collaboration is a way to gain support (Kotler and Kotler, 1998). Cultural bodies in Taiwan are also aware that by integrating resources from within and without, they can maximise performance. A report from Taiwan's Council for Cultural Affairs shows that most arts organisations gain support from business in the form not only of money but also in goods, voluntary services and venues (Cao, 1999). For example, over 90% of performing arts organisations recognise the role of the press in stimulating ticket sales (Lo, 2000). Chuang (2000) also indicates that the managers of museums are aware of the power of the press; therefore they have a positive attitude towards cooperating with it.

3. Motivations for collaboration

This investigation of the collaboration between museums and different sectors will start by exploring the reasons why these organisations form partnerships. Much of the literature discussing these issues relates to management in the business sector. In order to understand the context, the study will look at the whole picture relating to cross-sector collaboration from the perspective of both business and nonprofit organisations. Then, the motivations behind the collaboration

between museums and other sectors will be examined.

Collaboration has become popular as markets and technology have changed. Businesses have been stimulated to take action and adopt this strategy. Bergquist, et al. found that attitudes towards simple partnerships are generally positive. One motivation to collaborate is often the search for new ideas and strategies among companies who lack the resources to innovate by themselves (1995). Thompson points out that the reason behind the strategy is “to gain access to new markets and technologies, to share expensive research and development costs and to manage innovation more effectively” (2001:615). These partnerships become a bridge enabling traffic between people and organisations, in turn strengthening relationships. Bergquist et al. also suggest that, in addition to creating markets and expanding resources, partnerships enable improvements in efficiency and flexibility. They allow participating organisations to provide high quality service at lower cost. The collaboration arrangements can be readily adjusted to meet changes in the environment (1995). Personal satisfaction can also be improved through partnerships. Bergquist et al. (1995:17) show that “partnerships offer the chance for increased personal involvement, control, and professional fulfilment.” In other words, this strategy facilitates stable relationships among participants.

Iyer (2003) indicates that the most important motivation for participants is the belief they can achieve a better outcome than they could in isolation. Bergquist et al. (1995) call this attitude ‘pragmatism’. Other motivations are more personal, such as the wish to find more fulfilment at work, to enjoy the experience and to be involved in partnership formation (Bergquist et al., 1995). Kogut (1988; cited in Child and Faulkner,

1998) argues further that the motivations for setting up joint ventures are to lower transaction costs, improve strategic position, and facilitate learning within the organisation.

Collaboration across sectors is increasing. Wymer and Samu indicate that collaborative relationships between business and nonprofits are different to those found within sectors. Nonprofit organisations may wish to increase awareness and their market, while businesses may be attracted by the incentives of positive promotion and public relations (2003). Austin explores the reasons for the creation of collaborative relationships between business and nonprofits. At the macro-level, political, economic and social forces encourage collaboration. At the micro-level, positive feedback from participants is a strong motivation for alliances (2000).

Austin also shows that the motivating factors are significantly different for the various partners in cross-sector collaborations, because the participants have different objectives, performance assessment criteria, cultures, competencies and motivations (ibid). Museums are a public service whose aim of educating the public depends upon their being able to communicate with them. The mass media has a role as a facilitator of communication between audiences and the performing arts (Geng and Shia, 1998). Therefore, arts organisations, including museums, should use the mass media to communicate with the public and build their image (Kotler and Kotler, 1998). However, promotion is expensive and museums have cost concerns, so they have to identify the most efficient way to reach their targets. Boston's Museum of Science, for example, set up alliances with local TV and radio stations in order to reduce the costs of promotion and communication (Kotler and Kotler, 1998). Hopper-Greenhill (1994) suggests that, in order to increase visitors, museums work together with other groups to set up exhibitions and projects or

that they collaborate with different sectors. Museums have cooperated with newspapers such as the *New York Times* (USA) and the *Telegraph* (UK) (Lai, 1998). A survey, conducted by Su (1999), indicates that collaboration with the press by arts organisations can secure improved promotion for special events. This would seem to be an obvious motivation for museums to cooperate with the press. Chuang (2000) has researched 64 museums in Taiwan and found that museums are increasingly aware of the need to communicate effectively with their audience to ensure the success of their exhibitions. Using the press is a highly effective way of communicating one's message and attracting visitors.

Most organisations recognise the advantages of collaboration and are committing themselves to this strategy. Iyer (2000) reveals that organisations that understand their own competencies can join together to achieve mutual benefit. Such alliances can compensate for individual participants' weaknesses or extend their strengths. Collaboration can also assist organisations to access new markets, and provide learning opportunities (Child and Faulkner, 1998). The benefits of partnerships with businesses for nonprofits include reduced costs, extended economic scope and improved revenue (Austin, 2000).

Particular benefits can be identified for museums. Wireman (1997) suggests that these include increasing visitors and revenue, fulfilling educational and research aims more effectively, expanding exhibitions and collections, improving public relations, raising funding and gaining expertise. Kotler and Kotler (1998) also suggest that improved finance and resources, such as equipment, marketing, expertise and so on, come to museums entering into corporate partnerships. A survey conducted by Arnold-Forster and Davies (1998) shows that most museums in the UK deem that the primary

benefits of collaboration are to gain expertise and knowledge, reduce costs and expand communication channels. They also recognise that they cannot reach their objectives in isolation.

Collaboration between museums and the press in Taiwan has had a significant effect on the performance of the museum sector. Huang (1999), the former director of the National Museum of History in Taiwan, indicates that when the press becomes involved in special events at museums, the museums benefit from the additional promotion. A number of surveys also support this. Chen (1998) reveals that when museums cooperate with the press, more visitors are attracted as the profile of the event is raised. Cheng (2000) found that museums collaborating with the press not only gain a higher profile but also enjoy increased income and support.

3.1 Resource dependence theory

In looking at the nature of the collaboration between museums and different sectors, it is necessary to investigate the theory which underlies this cooperative behaviour and provides the rationale for collaboration.

Collaborative organisations are expected to integrate with or seek resources from their partner to complement their own insufficiencies or extend their strengths. Heide (1994; cited in Iyer, 2003) describes this arrangement as Resource Dependence Theory (RDT). This theory shows how organisations' operations and resources are interdependent. Preffer and Salancik (1978; cited in Faulkner and De Rond, 2000) argue that organisations become dependent upon resources from the outside environment. According to Iyer (2003:44), the basic principle in RDT is that "both partners in the potential alliance lack key resources, which acts as a driver in their seeking out partnerships". In this way, organisations may seek to complement their own shortages

or improve their capabilities (Iyer, 2003).

Collaboration could provide the resources which organisations rely on in order to survive. It could be financial resources, expertise, skills, processes or markets (Faulkner and De Rond, 2000).

4. Stages of collaboration

This section will discuss the stages through which collaborative arrangements between business and nonprofits are developed. Austin (2000:19) reveals that strategic alliances are “multifaceted relationships that change over time.” There are a number of stages and types of collaboration.

Austin (2000; 2003) provides a conceptual framework for the collaboration between business and nonprofit organisations. His collaboration continuum identifies three stages in the relationship: the philanthropic stage, the transactional stage and the integrative stage. These stages ‘characterise the degree and form of interaction’ (2000:20) taking place, and the framework can assist organisations to evaluate their current and future situations. Kotler and Kotler identify similar stages, but more closely attuned to the particular challenges faced by museums to raise money and attract resources. They call their stages: begging, collections, campaigning, and development (1998). These stages serve as a useful framework for museums seeking to arrange collaborative strategies with different sectors.

The most common type of relationship between business and nonprofits is the *philanthropic stage*. In this stage, a corporate donation is requested by the nonprofit. The level of engagement and resources is ‘relatively low, infrequent, simple and nonstrategic’ (Austin, 2003:25). The first way for museums to appeal for money and donated resources is by begging. However, Kotler’s characterisation is a simplification; even for simple donations, museums

generally offer some kind of benefit in return.

The next stage, in which organisations gather annual or special support from defined groups on a regular basis, is *collection* (Kotler and Kotler, 1998). Corporate giving represents one of the most important resources in the museum sector and it is different from foundation giving in a number of ways (Kotler and Kotler, 1998). A survey shows that one of the most popular types of collaboration is with commercial organisations (Arnold-Forster and Davies, 1998). However, museums must be able to withstand fluctuations in the corporations’ fortunes - this can significantly affect the nature of the collaboration (Kotler and Kotler, 1998).

A number of business organisations and nonprofits are migrating into the transactional stage. Austin illustrates that in this state, “the interaction tends to focus on more special activities” and “there is a significant two-way value exchange.” (2003:24). This is not only simple fund transference; the relationship also covers activities such as marketing programmes, event sponsorships, special projects and volunteer services (Austin, 2000; 2003). In the 1980s, corporate giving increasingly took the form of strategic philanthropic collaborations. Corporations involved in collaborating with nonprofits in the 1990s adopted an integration strategy and sought to become involved in the nonprofits’ activities (Rich, 2000). The situation has also changed in relation to collaborations between museums and corporate organisations. Kotler and Kotler (1998) call this stage *campaigning*. It involves a planned arrangement made to gain financial support and resources from a corporation. Many ongoing programmes are being developed to attract support from different sectors. The corporate attitude shifted from philanthropic giving to giving as a strategic investment in the 1990s, and the scope of corporate giving is now wider, including in-kind services or marketing and

advertising know-how (Kotler and Kotler, 1998:301).

The integrative stage involves “deep mission mesh, strategy synchronization, and values compatibility” (Austin, 2003:24). A small but growing number of collaborations are adopting this strategy. More joint activities, such as joint ventures, are being undertaken (Austin, 2000; 2003). Some museums are now at the development stage and perfecting a range of long-term and loyal partnerships (Kotler and Kotler, 1998). A model of the collaboration continuum posited by Austin (2000) follows (Table1).

Comparing the stages of collaboration identified in the *Collaboration Continuum* (Austin, 2000) and in *The Art of Fundraising* (Kotler and Kotler, 1998), it seems that both frameworks can be applied to collaboration

between business and nonprofit organisations, such as the museum sector.

5. Selection of partners

Once organisations have decided to adopt a strategy of alliance to solve their problems, it is important to select the right partners. Bergquist et al. (1995) reveal that the idea of collaboration exists in many forms. However, sometimes the participants are poorly prepared for the challenges of collaboration. Although companies can see the benefits of collaboration, they find it hard to identify potential partners (Madhok, 2000). Austin (2000) also suggests that information about potential partners is sometimes limited or unavailable. A number of issues need to be addressed in selecting partners.

Lewis (1990) suggests that a primary factor

Table 1 Collaboration Continuum (cited in Austin, 2000: 35)

Relationship Stage	One Philanthropic →	Two Transactional →	Three Integrative →
Level of engagement	Low	→ → → → → → → → → → → → → → → →	High
Importance to mission	Peripheral	→ → → → → → → → → → → → → → → →	Strategic
Magnitude of resources	Small	→ → → → → → → → → → → → → → → →	Big
Scope of activities	Narrow	→ → → → → → → → → → → → → → → →	Broad
Interaction level	Infrequent	→ → → → → → → → → → → → → → → →	Intensive
Managerial complexity	Simple	→ → → → → → → → → → → → → → → →	Complex
Strategic value	Modest	→ → → → → → → → → → → → → → → →	Major

Table 2 Comparison of collaboration stages

Concept	Collaboration Continuum (Austin, 2000; 2003)	The Art of Fundraising (Kotler and Kotler, 1998)
Stage 1	Philanthropic stage	Begging / Collection
Stage 2	Transactional stage	Campaigning
Stage 3	Integrative Stage	Development

in making successful alliances is partner selection; organisations should scan potential partners and identify. He illustrates the basic principle that *'The circumstances of an alliance define separate criteria that must be met to reach your objective'* (1990:217). Selection criteria include the ability of the partners to meet the combined required strength, their trustworthiness and commitment. Bergquist et al. (1995) found that failed partnerships occur when the partners never complete the start-up stage. Key factors in the selection process are familiarity with the prospective partner, the desire to work with like-minded people, the access offered to limited and valuable resources, and the opportunity to learn from partners (ibid). Bergquist et al. (ibid) reveal that the most important reason for choosing a partner is familiarity, with family-and friend-based alliances being the most common.

Child and Faulkner (1998) take a different approach, looking at the importance of *strategic fit and cultural fit* to organisations seeking an alliance. A good strategic fit will maximise partners' chance of achieving competitive advantage, while cultural factors are crucial in determining whether the relationship will run smoothly. As we can see in Table 3, most collaborative relationships start in Box 1. Partners have the incentive to work with different cultural organisations and reduce any conflict. There is little chance of success in Box 4. Collaborations here offer no significant advantage and cultural conflicts become an obstacle. In Box 3, partners are unlikely to do better, because they lack common objectives and strategies. Box 2 represents the optimal conditions for alliances.

Strategic fit	High	Box 1 Many start here	Box 2 Optimal
	Low	Box 3 No point	Box 4 No competitive advantage
		Low	High
		Cultural fit	

Table 3 The strategic fit-cultural fit matrix (cited in Child and Faulkner, 1998: 93)

Kotler and Kotler (1998), address the factors which influence museums choosing organisations as partners for collaboration. Corporations find it hard to refuse to support nonprofits in their own region and are more likely to be drawn to institutions operating in the same field. Some corporations support a particular area of interest. Unique resources may be found in a specific company. Personal relationships and contact with corporations will influence the level of support from these companies. Corporations which have a reputation for giving generously are popular potential partners and receive many approaches from nonprofit organisations.

6. Process of collaboration

As collaboration becomes an increasingly important strategy, it is important to understand how the process works. Doz and Baburoglu (2000) have drawn up a framework outlining the process leading to collaboration. They identify the steps:

1. *Identifying interdependencies*: an organisation sees that a market is difficult to access without same form of collaboration strategy;
2. *Developing shared norms of problem solving*: the organisation has a strong problem-solving ethic;
3. *Triggering cooperation*: initiative and leadership skills are in place and active;
4. *Selecting participants*: partners are chosen according to the nature of the problem;
5. *Making the shadow of the future visible*: in order to reduce potential risk, the organisation chooses partners who have a proven track record in collaboration;
6. *Securing the participant's sustained ability to contribute*: then the relationship will be sustained;
7. *Designing cooperation*: the outcome of the collaboration will be affected by the planning of both organisations;
8. *Learning and adjusting over time*: collaborations need to adjust over time in terms of expectations, processes and governing principles;
9. *Expansion of scope and deepening of*

commitments: common ground is established, commitments fulfilled, and new ways of cooperating and new objectives are identified (2000:174).

McCann (1983) identifies three stages in the development of inter-organisational collaboration: problem-setting, direction-setting, and structuring. Problem-setting involves identifying key stakeholders within the problem domain (Gray, 1996). In the direction-setting stage, common objectives are identified by mission statements. The structuring stage aims to integrate shared meanings into institutionalised systems (Metcalf, 1976).

Austin stresses the importance of five main elements in the creation and development of an alliance. These include: *1. Understanding strategy collaboration, 2. Making the connection, 3. Ensuring strategic fit, 4. Generating value, 5. Managing the relationship* (2000:16). The first point is to be aware that the relationship may pass through different stages. Making the connection means building alliances and finding a potential partner. Having found the potential

partner, organisations need to pay attention to the strategic fit, which will depend upon the match between the organisations' missions and values. The value of the collaboration to each partner will influence the long-term relationship, although this value is often not analysed. The final stage is to manage the relationship, which involves communication, trust-building, responsibility and learning.

These three frameworks are summarised as follows to show their differences and similarities.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Collaboration between museums and other sectors has increased dramatically in recent years, and it has become an important element in museum management. However, this phenomenon is largely under-researched in the academic field. This paper examines the emergence of collaboration and the motivations behind it. The stages in the collaboration process, selection criteria for partners, and frameworks describing the phenomenon are also reviewed in detail.

Table 4 Comparison of collaboration frameworks

Collaboration: Preconditions to the process	Alliance creation and development	Inter-organisational collaboration
(Doz and Baburoglu, 2000)	(Austin, 2000)	(McCann, 1983)
Identifying interdependencies	Understanding strategic collaboration	Problem-setting
Developing shared norms of problem solving		
Triggering cooperation	Making connection Ensuring strategic fit Generating value	Direction-setting
Selecting participants		
Making the shadow of the future visible		
Securing the participants' sustained ability to contribute	Managing the relationship	Structuring
Designing cooperation		
Learning and adjusting over time		
Expansion of scope and deepening of commitments		

This paper is more descriptive than analytical; the researcher has tried to present an overview of the general situation in regard to collaboration between museums and other

sectors. The intention of the researcher is to add to the debate among policy-makers about how to encourage further cross-sector collaboration.

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