

# **Utilizing Museums as Marketing Strategies: A Case Study of Three Taiwanese Expositions in 2023**

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## 1. Introduction

Recently, as the COVID-19 situation in Taiwan has eased, the number of physical events has gradually increased, with the aim of allowing the public to engage in and understand various cultural issues through actual participation. To facilitate more profound cultural exchange, many organizations opt for the format of expos and exhibitions. This format not only attracts a broader audience to the cultural content of the expo but also presents a more diverse range of content simultaneously.

However, as the types of expos and exhibitions continue to diversify, determining the appropriate marketing strategies to successfully attract public participation has become a crucial planning focus. In several expos and exhibitions held in Taiwan in 2023, record-breaking visitor numbers were announced. Apart from conventional advertising, the use of social media, and event marketing strategies, it was observed that these large-scale expos and exhibitions integrated the role of museums into their planning, enriching the overall marketing strategy. This paper aims to analyze the marketing strategies of three expos and exhibitions from the perspective of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), focusing on the incorporation of museums as a marketing strategy.

## 2. Introduction to the Three Expos and Exhibitions

### (1) Taiwan Creative Expo

The Taiwan Creative Expo has been organized since 2010 with a mission not only to position itself as a commercial exhibition but also to promote Taiwan's indigenous arts and culture. Through international exchanges, the Expo creates opportunities for cultural brand dialogues. Held from September 22 to October 1, 2023, this edition of the Expo focused on promoting IP licensing and cultural creativity. The exhibition was designed around Taiwan's 400-year history since the Age of Discovery, gathering, experimenting, and showcasing various possibilities of Taiwan's cultural development through public dialogue. The theme of the Expo was to discover the "unique species of Taiwanese culture," showcasing Taiwan's vibrant, unconstrained, and wild cultural strength with confidence to industrialize Taiwan's cultural content and promote it internationally, initiating the "Taiwanese Flow Era" to the world.

The Expo covered four major themes:

Cultural Curation: Showcasing the diversity and uniqueness of Taiwanese culture.

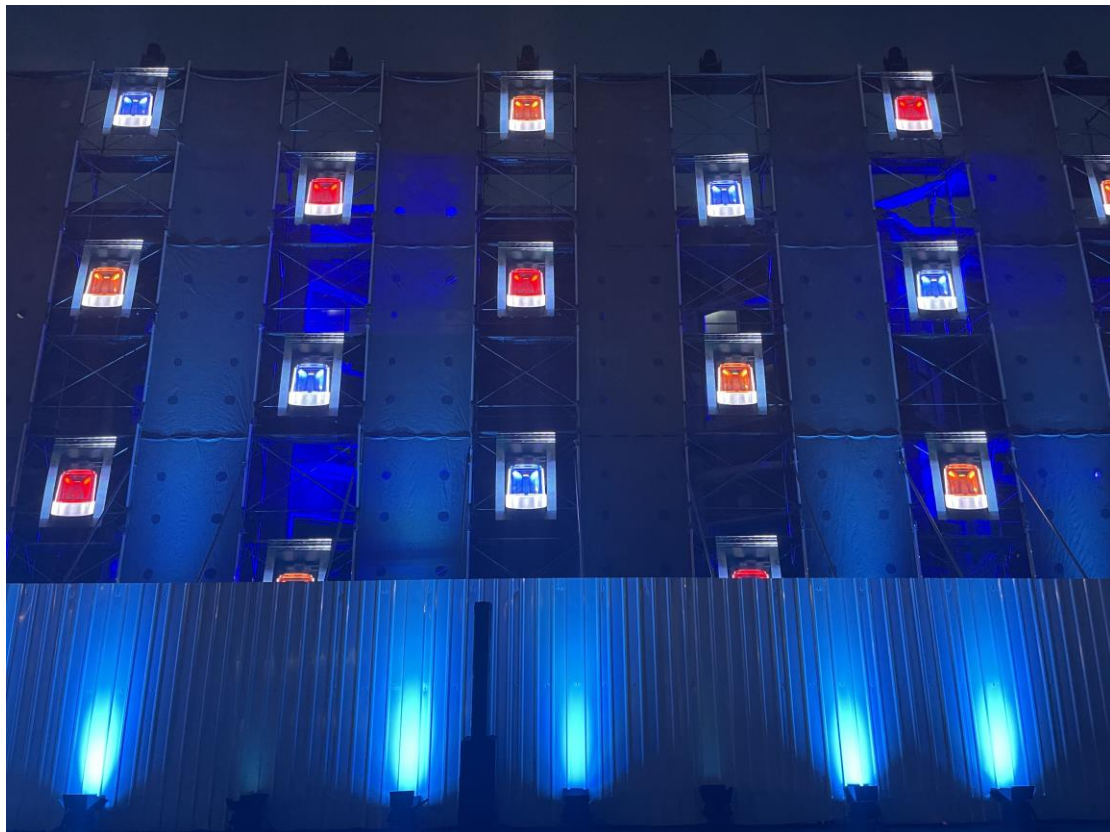
Cultural Creative Brands: Displaying culturally creative products with Taiwanese characteristics.

IP Licensing: Promoting the licensing and commercialization of cultural content.

Cultural Performances: Hosting various cultural performances and activities.

The 6-day Expo attracted a total of 600,000 visitors, reflecting the high public interest and participation in the event.

Figure 1: The Taiwan Creative Expo integrates elements of construction scaffolding to create installation art that combines lighting and imagery. Beyond showcasing the atmosphere of artistic creation, it also highlights the cultural essence of everyday life.



## (2) World Hakka Expo

The World Hakka Expo was held in Taoyuan, Taiwan, from August 11 to October 15, 2023, marking its inaugural grand event. The Expo's theme was "Travel to Tomorrow," centered on Hakka culture, showcasing the migration history of the Hakka people

who have moved worldwide since the 1850s and how they have integrated and developed diverse identities with local cultures. The migration history of the Hakka population is closely related to the histories of global, regional, and individual immigration countries, influenced by political, economic, and social interactions. From being initially considered as descendants of the Hakka, evolving into Hakka people, and eventually transforming into locals over several generations, known as localization, the overseas Hakka have formed a trans-regional ethnic group. The Expo aimed to demonstrate the multifaceted development of this "Hakka nature," outlining the overall picture of the Hakka culture.

The Expo not only presented Hakka arts and culture but also integrated the smart city characteristics of Taoyuan, engaging in dialogues with new technologies and the future, from local to global, from tradition to innovation, to establish Taiwan as a new platform for global Hakka cultural exchange. The 66-day Expo attracted an astounding 10 million visitors, reflecting the high public interest and participation in Hakka culture.

Figure 2: The World Hakka Expo not only presents the connection between Hakka culture and the world, but also showcases the unique characteristics of Hakka culture from various regions of Taiwan in different exhibition areas, demonstrating its diversity.



### (3) Taiwan Design Expo

The Taiwan Design Expo has been held annually since 2003, collaborating with

different local governments to interpret the significance of the new era through design thinking, focusing on local life, culture, and industrial development characteristics. Through exhibitions and various activities, the Expo showcases the present and future of local design and industry and explores design or industrial issues of domestic and international concern. To exert influence through local design and city creation, with rapid technological development and the transformation of social values, there exists a symbiotic and contradictory state between the past and future, industry and life, and tradition and modernity. "Design" plays a pivotal role in mediating these transformations, starting from human needs and connecting with the unique characteristics and professional design of the city to reorganize localities from multiple perspectives and create urban brands.

The 2023 Taiwan Design Expo was held in New Taipei City from October 6 to October 22. This exhibition touched upon diverse issues such as aging, industry, arts, and culture through the unique characteristics and professional design of the city. The 17-day Expo attracted 6.58 million visitors, reflecting the high public interest and participation in design and industrial development.

Figure 3: The Taiwan Design Expo transforms local elements of life into exhibition designs, aiming not only to connect with collective memories but also to encourage individuals to reflect on their personal lives and life experiences through artistic creation.



### 3. Contemporary Positioning and Integration of Museums

Museums inherently carry meanings of knowledge, culture, history, and the era. For the public, integrating museums into expo marketing adds profound cultural implications, with the essence of museums supporting the activities of the expo. The three examples provided in this study are large-scale exhibitions in Taiwan with cultural and artistic themes. Museums are integrated as a marketing strategy. We should further explore the definition of museums.

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) announced a new definition of museums in 2022, highlighting that museums embody the following principles:

**Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Ensuring that museums are open and welcoming to all, regardless of background or ability.

**Diversity and Sustainability:** Representing and promoting diverse cultures, histories, and perspectives, while ensuring sustainable practices in operations.

**Ethics:** Upholding high standards of integrity, transparency, and responsibility in all museum activities.

**Professionalism:** Maintaining excellence in collections management, conservation, and research.

**Community Participation:** Engaging and involving the community in museum activities and decision-making processes.

**Varied Experiences:** Offering diverse and interactive experiences to visitors through exhibitions, programs, and events.

**Reflection:** Encouraging critical thinking and self-reflection on cultural, historical, and societal issues.

**Knowledge Sharing:** Promoting the dissemination and exchange of knowledge both within and outside the museum.

From this latest definition, it is evident that museums are no longer merely institutions for preserving artifacts and transmitting knowledge. They now emphasize inspiring the public, fostering dialogue, and creating meaningful connections with the public. Based on this international foundational definition, almost all museums in Taiwan have incorporated relevant thinking and implemented it in museum education promotion.

Integration with Expos and Exhibitions:

#### (1) Taiwan Creative Expo

The Taiwan Creative Expo integrated several museums including the National Taiwan

Museum, National Taiwan Museum of History, National Museum of Prehistory, National Taiwan Craft Research and Development Institute, and the Hualien Heritage Museum as secondary exhibition venues. Spanning across Taipei, Taitung, Tainan, and other cities, the 2023 Creative Expo became the first cultural expo to venture beyond a single city. Through the diverse museums across different regions, the expo aimed to enrich the overall historical and cultural narrative. These museums represent various stages of Taiwan's development, responding to Taiwan's cultural growth and allowing the public to gain deeper insights and extended reflections on the expo. This article contends that the exhibition's Facebook Fan Page, with the highest number of followers and the most linked museums, is associated with the richness of cultural information it contains compared to other activities. Its content is also more diverse, further combined with the museum's own marketing efforts, resulting in a higher number of followers.

## (2) World Hakka Expo

The World Hakka Expo connected with nearby museums such as the Xingshan Calligraphy Art Museum. Besides its regular exhibitions, the museum introduced a special Hakka-themed exhibition in response to the World Hakka Expo, leveraging its unique venue to enhance the promotion of Hakka culture. Through the museum's diverse art displays, visitors can engage in deeper reflections on Hakka culture. As the first officially operated calligraphy-themed museum in Taiwan, the Xingshan Calligraphy Art Museum is committed to preserving, researching, developing, and promoting calligraphy art. By integrating into the World Hakka Expo, not only does it complement the Hakka-themed displays, but visitors can also reflect on the relativity of Hakka culture through other artworks. The Hakka community is closely intertwined with the development of Taiwan's multiculturalism. In addition to the current expo, there has been a growing number of museums with Hakka culture as their theme operating recently. These museums have attracted public interest and further understanding, resulting in a favorable level of participation and interaction among the public.

Figure 4: Through data analysis of the Fanpage, it can be observed that the cultural and creative expo has the highest number of followers, while the World Hakka Culture Expo demonstrates better performance overall in terms of interaction rate and follower growth.



### (3) Taiwan Design Expo

The main venue of the Taiwan Design Expo is the New Taipei City Art Museum, catering to art perception and experiences for all ages and orientations. The artworks displayed align with the goals of the design expo. The expo also connected with the nearby Yingge Ceramics Museum, incorporating topics from the ceramics industry to resonate with the overall theme. Visitors can extend their understanding of life and design-related topics through the ceramics museum, making their design thinking comprehension more comprehensive. Visitors to the museums can also activate their design thinking through the expo and find practical examples within the museum.

## 4. Analyzing Museums as Marketing Strategies from an Integrated Marketing Communication Perspective

While the growth in visitor numbers demonstrates the benefits of integrating museums with expos, an analysis of the Facebook fan pages of the three expos reveals that the articles with the highest click-through and engagement rates are primarily related to the expo itself. This shows the high level of public attention the expos garner. To gain a deeper understanding, this paper refers to the dimensions proposed by scholars such as Esther Thorson and Jeri Moore in Integrated Marketing Communication. We will extract and discuss four dimensions—cognitive integration, image integration, consumer integration, and relational integration—that are closely related to the core of this study, focusing on the discussion of museums as a marketing strategy for expo integration:

### (1) Cognitive Integration:

The planners of all three expos incorporated the essence and themes of the museums into their exhibitions, strengthening each other's brands. Particularly, the Taiwan Design Expo included the ceramics industry from the connected Yingge Ceramics Museum as an important aspect of the design expo's theme, making it a logical inclusion in the designer's portfolio. However, while the Taiwan Creative Expo combined its curatorial theme with museums, the main IP image of the expo did not resonate within the museum.

#### (2) Image Integration:

The display formats of the expos and museums are similar, and the selected museums are predominantly government-run institutions. This mutual association helps enhance each other's positive brand images. For instance, in the case of the World Hakka Expo, which is a temporary exhibition area, the hardware design appears temporary. However, through the connection with established museums, the stability and saturation of the exhibition area are both improved.

#### (3) Consumer Integration:

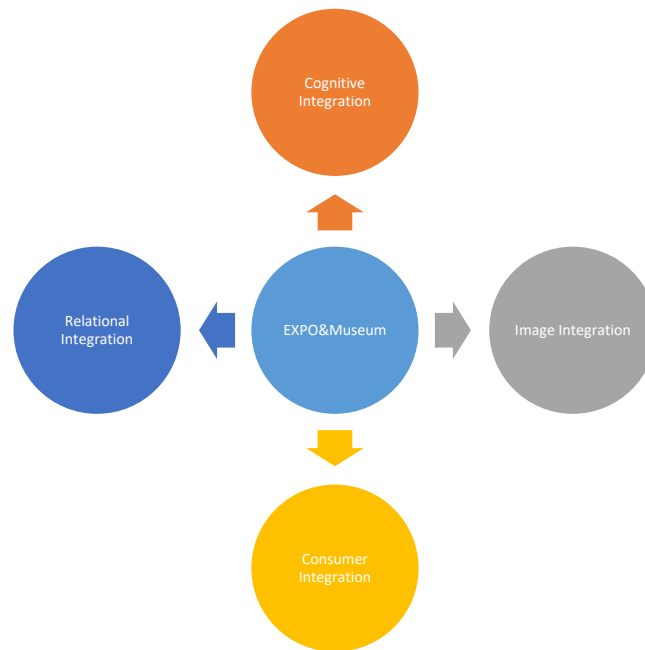
Utilizing the existing audience of museums as the foundation for the short-term expo can effectively enhance public participation. By integrating museums, the expos tap into an already interested and engaged audience, thereby increasing the overall attendance and engagement levels.

#### (4) Relational Integration:

Beyond thematic and image integration, geographical proximity was also a crucial consideration for the integration of the expos and museums. The regional expansion of the Taiwan Creative Expo was too broad, and museums located far from the main exhibition venue did not show corresponding cohesion. However, thematic relationships were still evident.



Figure 5: This paper proposes utilizing the four dimensions of integrated marketing as a framework for analyzing museums as marketing strategy references.



#### Concluding Remarks:

The integration of museums into expo marketing strategies not only enhances the cultural and historical narrative but also contributes significantly to the overall success of the expos. By leveraging the unique strengths and resources of museums, expos can attract a broader audience, foster deeper engagement, and create a more enriched and multifaceted experience for visitors.

#### 5. Conclusion

In this article, we propose three main conclusions:

##### Museums as a Marketing Strategy for Integrating Expos is Generally Successful:

Utilizing museums as a marketing strategy to integrate with expos has proven largely successful. It not only stabilizes the basic number of visitors but also enhances the visibility and appeal of the expo.

##### Narratives of Expos Should Align Closely with Existing Museum Narratives:

The narrative of the expo should closely align with the existing exhibitions of the museum to provide a seamless experience for the audience. A cohesive narrative avoids dispersing concepts and offers a more engaging and coherent experience.

Proximity and Relevance in the Selection of Museum and Expo Locations are Crucial: The selection and distance between museums and expo locations should not be too far. To ensure visitors have a complete and meaningful experience, close and relevant connections between the two can truly synergize and achieve the goal of integrated marketing.

By considering these conclusions, future expo organizers and museum curators can work together more effectively to create integrated and compelling experiences that benefit both institutions and enhance public engagement and appreciation of cultural and artistic narratives.

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