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Restyling museum role and activities: European best practices towards a new strategic fit

Valentina Ferraro*

Abstract

Challenged by market pressures and enduring funding constraints, museums are actually asked to reassess their traditional role of heritage custodians, rather becoming “more entrepreneurial”. The service orientation has become pivotal in the new museum management, by ensuring a kind of dictatorship of the consumer and the dominance of marketing oriented studies. Minor attention has been dedicated to the offer side as a determinant of museum innovation and competitiveness.

By using a benchmarking approach, this paper aims at filling this gap, by unravelling museum functions into a set of value activities, in order to point out museum best practices at the activity level, ultimately attempting to reconstruct the picture of the museums today, in their struggle for survival.

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Di fronte alla sfida posta dall'ambiente competitivo e dalla scarsità di risorse finanziarie, i musei si trovano sempre più a dover fronteggiare l'esigenza di preservare il ruolo di "custodi" del patrimonio, pur diventando più imprenditoriali. L'orientamento al servizio è diventata la pietra miliare nella nuova era della gestione museale, assicurando una sorta di "dittatura" del consumatore e la dominanza di studi orientati al marketing. Una minore attenzione è stata dedicata al lato dell'offerta come determinante dell'innovazione e della competitività museale.

Adottando un approccio di *benchmarking*, questo articolo si propone di colmare tale lacuna, dipanando le funzioni museali in un set articolato di attività, al fine di individuare *best practice* a livello di attività, nel tentativo di ricostruire il volto dei musei oggi, colti in un momento cruciale della loro lotta per la sopravvivenza.

1. *Introduction*

Transformation is the term that better defines the situation public museums all around the world are living through.

The institutional setting of public museums relying exclusively on public funds envisages little incentive for product innovation and the efficient use of resources, as any additional income would go back to the national treasury and any surplus would correspond to a decrease in the following public grants. As a consequence traditionally public museums emphasise the non-commercial aspects of museum management, by pointing at the prestige of the museum intrinsic value. Moreover the legal constraints in the de-accessioning policy hanging over public museums demotivate the efficient management of collections¹ and the lacking correlation between income from entrance fees or add-on services brings about a poor orientation towards audiences to increase the visitors' number and provide appealing services². This institutional setting of public museums has set up a traditional self-referential management practice.

However over the last decade the decrease in public support and the European tendency to give the museum directors more discretionary room has led to the movement of public museums in the direction of private museum, although the institutional setting remains pivotal in determining museum behaviours.

Challenged by the establishment of an utilitarian framework³ that has substituted merit good policies, and by the new paradigm of instrumentalism, demanding for results-based accountability⁴ to provide evidence of efficient and effective use of public funds, museums are striving to find a balance between

¹ Montella 2003.

² Frey, Meier 2003.

³ Scott 2007.

⁴ OECD 2004.

market pressures, resources competition and the defence of the intrinsic cultural value of heritage institutions.

The matter of survival is twofold: on the one hand it is related to an adverse task environment, with a high level competition among substitute leisure activities⁵; on the other hand it regards the competition on the market of resources, because of the severe shortage of public funding⁶. In this context there is an increasing pressure on museums to widen their appeal to broaden, diversify and increase audience attendance.

As a result public museums are asked to become “more entrepreneurial”, by attempting to compensate the unfavourable external conditions, through a substantial restyling of their functions and activities.

In this framework benchmarking may be regarded as a prominent tool for increasing museum competitiveness, by giving a substantial contribution to establishing new routes of competition and convergence between visitors’ expectations and museums’ offer, in order to increase the degree of retention of a challenged audiences share. Indeed the benchmarking analysis is a useful strategic tool to better manage the changing processes in the cultural sector, by assessing the feasibility of new trends and new directions in museum management.

This process of public museum transformation and restyling is necessary a slow motion shift, impervious to deterministic management efforts, because of the unpredictable variables affecting the resulting image of the museum to its public and rather characterised by an experimental intentionality. Indeed public museums, as highly complex and multidimensional heritage institutions, are hard to smoothly be directed towards a brand new commitment to the public, by substituting the old fashioned commitment to heritage itself. Meanwhile it may happen that not only museum strategy but also museum vision is today just a somewhat blind experiment if not just an adaptation to superstar museums. In such cases what may seem to be museum innovation could be better assessed as a contingent behaviour of museums searching for themselves. According to this point of view new museum programs aiming at bolstering attendance are an adaptive behaviour of museums to the new environment. In this phase museums are reconsidering their own role, by experimenting actions that often appear haphazard and unfocused rather than deliberate. As such, their strategy may be deemed an “emergent strategy”, rather induced from visitors needs and competitors offer.

In this hectic context, pointing out best practices may substantially respond to the need for museums to strive for intentionality, envisaging the broad lines of a conscious determination of successful strategy for reinventing museums.

⁵ Lynch *et al.* 2000.

⁶ Goulding 2000.

Indeed the traditional role of public museum as a cultural heritage institution with an educational significance has been questioned over the last decades. However museums remain trusted civic space and their identity core seems to be maintained over their role of preserving, interpreting and providing access to the past. Thus, what seems to be changed substantially in museum practices is rather the emphasis museums place on different activities as complementary aspects of their role.

There is a lively international debate discussing the “growing visitor orientation”⁷ of public museums, which is leading them to undertake frantic activities to capture time-poor audiences, such as special exhibitions and main architectural and design restyling to brand museums on the appeal of aesthetic spaces; fancy communication and upgraded visitors’ amenities. It is in this framework that the focus of museums has shifted from collections to audiences⁸.

As a result public museums today are perceived as an amalgam of a series of both tangible and intangible multi-sensory experiences and are becoming a multifunctional cultural centre, directly competing on the convergent art, cultural and leisure markets, by providing a full range of facilities and services, ranging from traditional showcasing of cultural heritage objects to interactive educational services, art performances, commercial products, ateliers, etc.

In this multi-dimensional cultural space⁹, value occurs not in sequential chains but in complex constellations, so visitors assume a central role in creating their own value as decision-making agents and as the main agent of change¹⁰.

So audience development strategies on the one hand and participative museum policies on the other hand are increasingly deemed essential for public museum’s value creation and survival.

In the context of this trend towards a changed output, Western European public museums are engaged in a rapid transformation of their activity set.

2. *Research objectives and methods*

In our research we use a benchmarking approach¹¹, taking advantage of

⁷ Stephen Weil characterized the shift as «from being about something to being for somebody» (Weil 1999, p. 229) although Lois Silverman and Mark O’Neill maintain «museums are about something and for somebody at the same time» (Silverman, O’Neill 2004; in Korn 2007, p. 256).

⁸ Kotler, Kotler 2000.

⁹ Scott 2007.

¹⁰ Ashworth, Johnson 1996.

¹¹ According to Spendolini benchmarking is «a continuous, systematic process of products, services and procedures regarding the best practice, which encourages organisational improvements» (Spendolini 1992, p. 9). Benchmarking is also defined as «a process for identifying and importing best practices to improve performance» (Keehley et al. 1997, p. 39). Bruder and Gray see benchmarking

the results of our direct experience in a benchmarking project, carried out by the Italian Research Centre for Economic Promotion and Development Issues (CLES), in the framework of a broader strategic pilot project “*Progetto pilota strategico Poli Museali di Eccellenza nel Mezzogiorno*”¹² for the strategic planning of museum hubs in the South of Italy.

The benchmarking is a results-driven, learning process, creating a highly focused repository of knowledge to orient change.

We carried out the benchmarking at the process level¹³, in order to identify best practices¹⁴ for each museum activity bundle. In particular we applied the best-in-class benchmarking, that is an external¹⁵ benchmarking methodology¹⁶ focused on those organisations that are considered to be “the best” for a specific process, function or strategy¹⁷. Correspondingly, the benchmark partners were selected according to two main criteria: the effectiveness in the management of a specific museum activity bundle and the possibility to transfer their practices to the museum hubs in the South of Italy. As a consequence among the best-in-class organizations there are also archaeological sites and two atypical organisations, which are not museums: the Italian Trust Fund for the Preservation and Promotion of Cultural and Environmental Heritage (FAI) selected as the benchmark partner for the fundraising activity and Zètema, which has been selected for the human resource management.

The benchmark partners encompass different museum typologies: art museum, archaeological museums, and museum networks, with a local or national scope, at the Italian and European level.

The benchmark parameters were the key features characterising each activity bundles, their organizational structure, their relation to other activities, and their elements of quality and innovation.

The methodological approach adopted in our research involves the following steps:

- identification of museums activities through a systematic review of

as «a rigorous yet practical process for measuring your organization’s performance and processes against those of best-in-class organizations, both public and private, and then using this analysis to improve services, operations, and cost dramatically». (Bruder, Gray 1994, p. S-9).

¹² *Delibera CIPE 35/2005*.

¹³ Process benchmarking focuses on discrete work processes and seeks to identify the most effective practices from organizations that perform similar work functions. Process benchmarking uses the discovery of how the improvement is obtained to identify ways to improve an organization. The improvement of core processes can in turn result in performance improvements. Process benchmarking usually requires site visits. Cfr. Zairi 1998.

¹⁴ OECD 1997.

¹⁵ Benchmarking helps organizations focus on the external environment to keep up with changes in a rapidly changing world to survive. It can be characterized as internal or external, based on whether the participants of a benchmarking study are from within one’s own organization or outside. External benchmarking includes competitive benchmarking and non-competitive benchmarking.

¹⁶ Zairi, Ahmed 1999.

¹⁷ Senese 2002.

the literature and the relevant national and international charters and regulations;

- selection of a sample of activities which demonstrated to be critical according to a scenario analysis and a pre-feasibility study, carried out in the framework of the project for the development of excellence museum hubs in the South of Italy;
- identification of the benchmark partners through a focus group with professionals and experts involved in the pilot project. Each benchmark partner was chosen as “best-in-class” for a specific activity cluster;
- analysis of 12 best-in-class organisations (5 national and 7 international) through the study of the public documents available at the web sites; field visits of the museum selected and interviews to the person in charge of the activity, chosen as best practice.

Our aim is not to explore the evolution of the role of museums over the Century, but to take a look at the result of this process, by assessing the best-in-class¹⁸ museum practices at the European level, in order to induce if there is an emerging contemporary museum model, or just a chaotic ensemble of efforts to cope with new pressures for accountability and results.

3. *Literature background*

The museum sector has been the object of increasing interest in the last ten years¹⁹. Many research studies²⁰ have focused on museum services, acknowledging the importance of the fruition aspect more than the pure exhibition one²¹.

The literature records a substantial shift of museum studies from the educational role of museums as learning institutions to museums as experiences providers²².

So it is abandoned the traditional museum principles of collections centrism and heritage as identity reminder²³, which mirrors a notion of culture that infuses technical procedures with moral imperatives²⁴ and is reflected in the museologists perspective on their agency, as being tied more closely to the practice of transferring knowledge based on objects than to creating possibilities for community participation.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ Frey, Pommerehne 1989; Feldstein 1991; Frey 1994.

²⁰ Jansen-Verbeke, Rekom 1996; Harrison 1997.

²¹ Riganti *et al.* 2004; Goulding 1999.

²² Loomis 1993; McIntosh 1999; Rowley 1999; Otto, Ritchie 1996.

²³ ICOM 2006.

²⁴ Ames 2006.

This paradigm shift of museums towards visitors and experience²⁵ has led to the prominence of a museum marketing approach²⁶, determining a revolutionary impact on museum practices²⁷.

As a result, the demand side has been widely explored according to the model of recreational demand²⁸, which is detailed in the levels of activities, setting, experience and benefit. In this framework museum service experience consumption is filled with the contents of imaginative, affective, cognitive and emotional values²⁹. The visitor-centrism has re-defined museum offer in accordance with four clusters of museum experiences: objective experiences, cognitive experiences, introspective experience and social experiences³⁰.

Accordingly, the theories of hypermodernity³¹ have widely recognised the sensorial dimension of the contemporary cultural consumption. This new perspective on museum management has been addressed from the viewpoint of different research fields: consumer behaviour, museum studies and service marketing.

However it has also been acknowledged in the literature that to act as custodians of heritage, museums depend on the value created by a diversity of processes and activities³² that are not exogenously given.

In this respect, by exploring the museum production function³³, we adopt here a strategic management approach, by focusing on postmodern readings of Porter's value chain model³⁴. The value chain model is here interpreted as an application of the systemic approach that has been elaborated at first by Amaduzzi and Zappa in the business management studies. In this respect museums are considered as «economic coordination into act»³⁵, involving personal, patrimonial, organizational conditions, all combined in order to reach the common result of value creation. The sub-systems in which we may split museum management must be viewed as parts having in common the same goal and in play in a complex interaction process, in accordance with an holistic approach³⁶.

²⁵ Falk *et al.* 1985.

²⁶ McLean 1997; Walsh 1992; Kim 2009.

²⁷ Cunnel, Prentice 2000.

²⁸ McIntosh 1999.

²⁹ Kotler, 1999.

³⁰ «*Object experiences* focus on something outside the visitor, and include seeing “the real thing,” seeing rare or valuable objects, and being moved by beauty. *Cognitive experiences* focus on the interpretive or intellectual aspects of the experience, and include gaining information or knowledge, or enriching understanding. *Introspective experiences* focus on private feelings and experiences, such as imagining, reflecting, reminiscing and connecting. *Social experiences* focus on interactions with friends, family, other visitors or museum staff» (Packer 2008, pp. 33-34).

³¹ Pulh *et al.* 2009.

³² Geursen, Rentschler 2003.

³³ Hutter 1998.

³⁴ Porter 1985.

³⁵ Zappa 1927, p. 30.

³⁶ Zappa wrote that «business is not a dissociate mass, it is not a temporary association of

In this scenery we refer, in particular, to Sweeney and Souter's³⁷ view of value chain, as the best fitting to museum context. The authors maintain that perceived value may be charted in the quality, emotional, price and social dimensions and it occurs at different stages of the purchase relationship process that in museum perspective is referred to a multifaceted service consumption experience. In this respect, value is clustered around different areas of outcome³⁸ and it is viewed as an assimilation of favourable and unfavourable elements along a hedonic continuum³⁹.

This literature shades a new light on the relationship between emotional value, intangible heritage⁴⁰ and the changing role of museums⁴¹.

Although these authors' revision of Porter's approach may be deemed useful for our purposes as we pointed out above, we must go back to Norman and Ramirez⁴² assumptions to root on robust foundations our analysis of museum as multi-value⁴³ and multi-service providers. Beyond the "use and non use value", museums also have an "intrinsic value" with regard to the symbolic, emotional, and intangible aspects of the museum brand; an "institutional value", as «honest information brokers»⁴⁴ and ethical public institutions generating trust in the public realm and adding value to government; an "instrumental value" as the public investments on museums are expected to generate economic returns such as civic branding, tourism, employment; community returns such as social capital and social cohesion and individual returns in the form of private benefits and learning.

It is in this multi-value perspective that we refer to the contributions of Norman and Ramirez⁴⁵, who point out that in a competitive environment, such as museum one, strategy is a matter of reinventing value rather than representing a linear value-adding process. Their main contribution is a change in perspective, by focusing on the "value-creating system", where different stakeholders are positioned in a constellation, by co-producing value to create an ever-improving fit between competencies and customers, and concentrating on the social dimension of innovation. In this framework where value occurs

dissociated factors. On the contrary it is a reality into action: it is always under construction, always renewing itself in response to the changing circumstances it must adapt to» (Zappa 1956, p. 37).

³⁷ Sweeney, Souter 2001.

³⁸ Hogan 2001,

³⁹ Westbrook, Oliver 1991.

⁴⁰ Here intangible heritage is referred to social relationships, story-telling and spiritual beliefs. «Characteristics of emotional value commonly cited include trustworthiness, reliable information, flexibility, no-hassle service, unique value-adds, truthfulness, speed, knowledge of the consumer, entertainment, and education» (Suchy 2006, p. 3).

⁴¹ Suchy 2006.

⁴² Norman, Ramirez 1993.

⁴³ Scott 2007.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

⁴⁵ Norman, Ramirez 1993.

in complex constellations, museum goal would not be to produce innovative products but to mobilise visitors to take advantage of the cultural and social options museums offer and communities to get committed to revitalise heritage into a live substance with a true cohesive significance. By stressing the value of interaction and active participation, this reasoning is coherent with the changing role of museums as experience providers.

The urge to engage a partnership with the public⁴⁶, by revitalising the “sense of place” where community members feel a particular attachment to⁴⁷, may also contrast the condition of «museological iatrogenesis»⁴⁸ brought about by the traditional museologists approach, by ensuring authenticity through participation and providing a content to museum activities through consensus.

A community based museum value system would reframe museum role according to the well-established principle of social responsibility⁴⁹, changing the emphasis museums place on different aspects of their role, so leading to different attitudes and approaches to visitors⁵⁰.

The models of museum co-participatory partnerships in community development⁵¹ relate to how museums might approach communities from an endogenous and sustainable developmental perspective. Inclusive, process-oriented museum infrastructures are deemed binding for museum value creation.

An attempt to adapt Porter’s approach to museums has been implicitly made by Geursen and Rentschler. They suggested a theory of “entrepreneurial value balance” by dynamically defining cultural value as «a pursuit of audience opportunity with regard to resources and programming»⁵². They point out different value drivers for four distinct groups: audience, sponsors, government, and management. In this framework the museum management’s task is «to entrepreneurially balance the value structures of individual interest groups and to integrate these in a manner that achieves a sustainable whole».

In particular they frame museum activities into a cultural value model characterised by three domains: an operational domain comprehending all the external activities directly resulting in net revenues from operations; an internal domain, including management, planning and internal assets management, and an external domain of sponsors, philanthropists and government, which constitutes an area of resources management that is essential for successful museums⁵³.

The model stresses how those activities belonging to the three domains are linked to each other: revenues deriving from the operational domain enhance

⁴⁶ Scott 2009.

⁴⁷ McArthur, Hall 1996.

⁴⁸ Ames 2006, p. 172.

⁴⁹ Janes, Conaty 2005; Ames 1994.

⁵⁰ Packer 2008.

⁵¹ Ryan, Robinson 1996; Chambers 1994; Holland, Blackburn 1998; Ames 1999, 2005.

⁵² Geursen, Rentschler 2003, p. 200.

⁵³ *Ibidem*.

internal activities that in turn, with a quality planning generate values for control, governance and compliance, affecting the ability of fundraising in the external domain.

Although the value-relationship for each group of activities must be understood according to a holistic perspective, in this paper we are not claiming any holistic dissertation on value, rather concentrating on the single elements able to bring about value added to museum deliveries. In this framework innovative internal processes and products are deemed as value-drivers for a broad range of stakeholders, including sponsors, funding agencies, internal stakeholders and end-users.

We assume the museum perspective, by stressing the role of organisations creating service opportunities that make attendance more accessible. However the need to constantly test audience and other stakeholders' sensitivities to those service opportunities⁵⁴, assessing the strategic fit between museum offer and visitors expectations, seems to be crucial to our aim, in order to unravel the skein of innovative intentional museum practices. Indeed there is a whole range of relational value-bundles referring to museums' audience choices and expectation sets.

Our choice to concentrate on the offer side comes from the awareness that museum value experience, which is widely accepted as the outcome of museums⁵⁵, is derived from both the museum's opportunities offer and personal experiential gains⁵⁶.

It is in this framework that we position our paper on the museum value-bundles that proves to be critical for museum performance, and assess the value processes relevant both to the audience attraction and maintenance and to museum cultural and aesthetic mission.

Indeed under the pressure of both funding constraints and a highly demanding competition environment, museums are faced with the challenge to rethinking quality offer to attract visitors⁵⁷, moving museums from the paradigm of "contemplative" heritage institution to the category of experimental space⁵⁸.

However the shift in focus from collections to audiences and from heritage product to audience-related services does not mean devaluing the collection; but rather «revaluing the social relationships that are built around the collection»⁵⁹, putting on the need for a new balance among museum activities affecting the institutional appeal and a new effort to establish quality processes and deliveries.

As contemporary museums provide complex and multiple products, which are not always tangible or commercial, and deal with a wide range of qualitative

⁵⁴ Brown, Eisenhardt 1998.

⁵⁵ Cunnell, Prentice 2000; Kotler, Kotler 1998.

⁵⁶ Kim 2009.

⁵⁷ Zolberg 1994.

⁵⁸ Zorzi 2003.

⁵⁹ Korn 2007, p. 256.

resources, it seems difficult to measure the performance of a museum. However, it is still possible to posit alternative tools, by reflecting on the quality of museum deliveries, which may at least point out what might be deemed “best practices” in museum management⁶⁰.

What makes museum competition stark and thirst for best practices compelling is the need to adapt to the best-in-class museums.

The economic literature on museum has found evidence of a “superstar effect” assessing that small differences in quality offer may result in very large differences in visitors’ appeal and then in outcome and income⁶¹. As a consequence, museums need to align their strategy to superstar offering, tailoring “total experience”⁶² provided by superstar museums to their dimensions and territorial context and competing effectively for audiences using the toolkit of branding⁶³ and marketing.

This competitive context put a major emphasis on the fundraising ability necessary to allow for improvements and process orientation. In this respect museum networking has been envisaged as a valuable alternative to overcome the limits and constrains of a single organisation⁶⁴.

4. Identification and selection of museum activities: building on international and national charters and regulation

The assessment of museum activities is grounded on the assumption of the multidimensional character of museums as heritage institutions with multi-attributes stocks providing both multi-value services as private components of economic benefits and public functions as non-use components⁶⁵.

In this framework, the museum production function may be approximated as a combination of collecting, showing and selling⁶⁶.

⁶⁰ Del Barrio *et al.* 2009.

⁶¹ Rosen 1981; Adler 1985.

⁶² «Superstar museums are forced to provide “total experience” to the visitors; they have to provide for everything from education, food, gifts, shopping to entertainment, even commercializing their aesthetic value through merchandizing and licensing. The “total experience” offered by the superstar museums, and demanded by the huge crowds of visitors, must meet two conditions. The first is that art must be placed in the context of history, technology and well-known events in politics and entertainment such as motion pictures. [...] The second condition for offering a “total experience” requires that museums provide for everything, not unlike entertainment parks» (Frey 1998, p. 119).

⁶³ A is a mental construct, the sum total of all human experiences, feelings and perceptions about a particular thing, product or organization. Cfr. Watson 1992.

⁶⁴ Frey 1998; Zorzi 2003.

⁶⁵ Mazzanti 2002.

⁶⁶ Hutter 1998.

In particular the main museum activity segments are: expansion, maintenance and documentation of a collection; display services and add-on product and service offers⁶⁷.

However although museum management remains rooted on the typical dimensions of conservation, display and service that are the common denominator of every kind of museum, new dimensions are coming to the fore, such as the greater concern of museums to align their strategy to new caveat of co-production and governance, new learning and entertainment opportunities, empowerment and creation of identity value, determining a shift of the museum model from a celebration place to a multi-sensory experience consumption place.

Thus our effort to draw a picture of museum activities consists in integrating these new directions in museum management into the well-established framework of museum traditional activities.

In the context of this re-interpretation process, we tried to adapt Porter's value chain model to public museums by recognising its contingency. Adapting the model has meant also to questioning the nature of each museum activity, in order to come out to a contingent classification of the activities according to the categories of "core" and "support" activities bundles.

In order to build up a museum value system, we reviewed the museum standards set by the most reliable international organisations (e.g. ICOM), also taking into account the Italian regulations on museum management⁶⁸ and the Documents of the Permanent Conference of Italian Museum Association (PCIMA).

The ICOM standards, the PCIMA and the literature converge on the identification of the following museum functions:

- research⁶⁹;
- conservation⁷⁰;
- valorisation of collections through display⁷¹ and add-on services⁷²;
- museum management and collection management, a technical area including financial management, human resources management and physical structures management⁷³;
- institutional communication of all the activities related to conservation, research, valorisation and management⁷⁴

The article 150 of the Italian legislative decree n. 112/98 introduces a further

⁶⁷ Solima 1998; Vaughan 2001.

⁶⁸ Italian Legislative Decree n. 112/98, art. 150.

⁶⁹ ICOM National Chart of Museum Professions 2008; Italian Legislative Decree n. 112/98; ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums 2006.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁷¹ Italian Legislative Decree n. 112/98; ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums 2006.

⁷² ICOM National Chart of Museum Professions 2008.

⁷³ ICOM National Chart of Museum Professions 2008; Italian Legislative Decree n. 112/98; ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums 2006.

⁷⁴ ICTOP European Manual of Museum Professions 2008.

functional area: the “relations with the territory”⁷⁵, adding on those identified by the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums.

Indeed the integration between the museum and the territory is an issue characterising the European context, where the dialogue with the territorial stakeholders is the centre around which the museum management gravitates. That is particularly true for archaeological museums that have by nature a strong relation with the diffuse heritage they refer to. In this respect the World Bank pointed out: «museums are at the heart of the cultural services networks because they shelter public goods and offer them to public view»⁷⁶.

The governance dimension is confirmed by the ICOM museum standards⁷⁷, which dedicate to it a specific guideline: “working with communities”.

Moreover the governance dimension is widely recognised in the literature. In this respect, among the others, Korn⁷⁸ maintains that museums need to refocus their balance between internal assets and external expectations, by building a community-based evaluation of their material and intellectual assets.

As a result we have identified four museum clusters of activities:

- research & conservation: the research and conservation functions have been unified into the same group of activities, as suggested by the ICTOP⁷⁹ European Manual of Museum Professions⁸⁰, by the ICOM Charter of Museum Professions, which unifies the activities of collections research, handling, inventorying and management and by the ICOM Management Guidelines⁸¹, which unifies in the function “making and maintaining collections” the acquisition, documentation and conservation activities;
- valorisation & communication: in this cluster we have unified all the activities that the legislative decree n.112/98 regards as related to display management and the relationship with the public. Thus this area represents the integrated system of museum offer⁸², comprehending all the range of activities contributing to qualify the visit experience and the perceived museum value;
- support activities: in this cluster we include all the strictly instrumental activities: human resources management; planning and control; fund management; ICT;

⁷⁵ «Gli istituti museali che, indipendentemente dall'appartenenza giuridica e dalla dimensione, ospitano collezioni provenienti dal territorio vicinore assumono in molti casi l'inevitabile funzione di centri di interpretazione del territorio stesso. In questi musei la ricerca deve potersi naturalmente estendere dal museo al territorio di riferimento [...] il museo può inoltre garantire lo svolgimento di attività di indagine, rilievo, ricerca, documentazione, pronto intervento, conservazione preventiva e ricovero per ragioni di sicurezza estese al territorio» (D.Lgs. n. 112/98, art. 150, comma 6).

⁷⁶ WB 2001.

⁷⁷ ICOM 2004.

⁷⁸ Korn 2007.

⁷⁹ ICTOP is the ICOM International Committee for the Training Of Personnel.

⁸⁰ ICTOP 2008.

⁸¹ ICOM 2004.

⁸² ICOM 2008.

- networking & governance: networking has proved to be pivotal for museum survival. This cluster identifies the systemic dimension of museum management according to the Legislative Decree n.112/98 and ICOM⁸³, encompassing all the activities relevant for museum offer integration, governance and functional integration.

Accordingly, the adapted museum value chain model is represented here below.

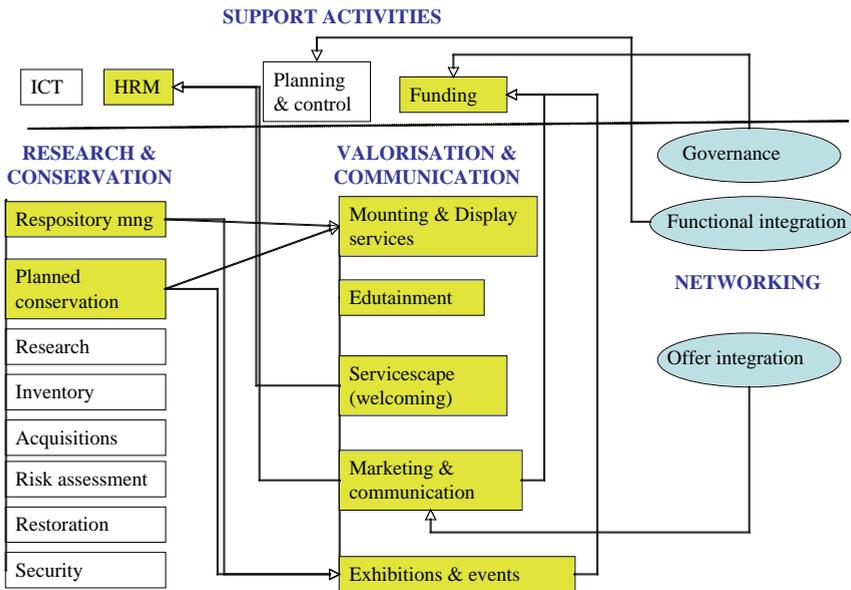


Fig. 1. The museum adapted value chain model

The choice to focus our analysis on some specific museum activities (in yellow) of the value system model has been taken on the ground of several filters which have been applied in the benchmarking project for the development of Excellence Museum Hubs in the South of Italy, such as the results of the literature review and the scenario analysis.

Indeed the literature review has pointed out the criticality of HRM⁸⁴; governance and networking⁸⁵; marketing, communication⁸⁶; fund raising;

⁸³ ICOM 2004.

⁸⁴ Jallà 2006; Cabasino 2005.

⁸⁵ Ames 2006.

⁸⁶ Bagdadli 1997; Tortorella, Traclò 2008.

display services and ICT⁸⁷; planned conservation⁸⁸; strategic planning⁸⁹; edutainment⁹⁰; welcoming services; repository management⁹¹.

The scenario analysis has allowed for a second-stage selection of the critical activities, by pointing at the main weaknesses of the museum offer in the South of Italy:

- the display services are elementary and not diversified for different visitors' targets, leading to a poor perceived quality in the visit experience;
- among the activities belonging to the macro function of “valorisation”, the organisation and management of complex events represents a striking weakness in the South. In this respect, the repository management may be a potential resource, as repositories contain huge materials as hidden heritage, just generating maintenance costs and requiring fixed investments, rather than being the collection of heritage pieces to valorise in temporary exhibitions with appreciable returns for the museums;
- the “absent giants” in the museums of the South of Italy are marketing and communication, apart from some cases of museums settled in the urban areas, where a critical mass is reached to develop relevant communication programmes;
- the quality of the add-on servicescape is still lacking in some museums;
- any form of networking, synergy, functional integration, offer integration and governance is totally absent;
- the fundraising is only embryonic;
- in most of the cases there is not an adequate fit between role, duties and professional background: the human resources' technical and scientific competence is lacking.

As a result of this first stage of activity assessment we have selected 10 clusters of activities (planned conservation; repository management; display services; edutainment; exhibitions and event management; marketing and communication; HRM; fundraising; networking), to explore in 12 benchmark museums (see the table below).

⁸⁷ Horne 1992; Solima 2005; Granelli 2006.

⁸⁸ Della Torre 2001.

⁸⁹ Paoli 2006; Cicerchia 2009.

⁹⁰ De Socio, Piva 2005.

⁹¹ Shepherd, Benes 2007.

Activity clusters	Benchmark partners	Description
Planned conservation	Pergamon Museum	Dating back to 1910-1930, the Pergamon museum is one of the most important German archaeological museums, with over 1 mln visitors per year. It is managed by the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, with a public governance structure and a consultive Committee composed by academic experts. As part of the Museum Island in Berlin, which has been enlisted in the Unesco WHL in 1999, the Pergamon has been addressed by the conservation and restoration interventions carried out since 2001 by a private Foundation, founded by private companies such as Deutsche bank, Allianz Group KPMG.
Repository management	Vatican Museum	Dating back to 1506, the Vatican Museums belong to the Museum Directorate of the Vatican State. The objects on display represent only the 16% of the inventory, which, in turn represent only the 30% of the properties. With over 4 mln visitors per year, the Vatican Museums are an extraordinary example of successful museum with high artistic standards and substantial self-financing.
Display services	Acropolis Museum, Athens	Dating back to 100, the Acropolis Museum has been restored and re-opened in June 2009. The architects Bernard Tschumi and Michael Photiadis have designed the construction, by combining traditional materials (marble) and modern ones (glass and concrete). The project has been financed for €130 mln by the Greek government and the European Fund for Regional development. The galleries are dedicated to permanent and temporary exhibitions. The Museum is endowed with a 200 seats auditorium, a multimedia centre, a bookshop, a coffee shop and a restaurant.
	MAEC (Italy)	Dating back to 1986, the MAEC assumes the role of archaeological hub and information centre, which provides welcoming services for the visitors of the archaeological park in the surroundings.
Servicescape	National Gallery (NG), London	Dating back to 1838, the NG is a non-departmental public body, whose sponsor body is the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It is an art museum, which built its huge collection on acquisitions and donations and is actually visited by over 4 mln visitors per year
	Archaeological Site of Mérida (Spain)	Mérida archaeological site has been enlisted in the Unesco WHL in 1993 and in the category Conjunto Historico-Arqueológico in 1973, envisaging special protection in the urban planning. Mérida archaeological site belongs to the Consorcio de la Ciudad Monumental, Histórico-Artística y Arqueológica de Mérida, a public organisation with a multilevel governance structure involving the central, the provincial, the regional, the municipal levels (Junta de Extremadura; Ministerio de Educación; Excma; Diputación Provincial de Badajoz; Ayuntamiento de Mérida). The site has 350.000 visitors per year (93% from Spain). The main financial sources are ticketing (48%), donations (29%) and public funding (17%).

Activity clusters	Benchmark partners	Description
Edutainment	Quai Branly, Paris	Quai Branly is an anthropological museum dedicated to Africa, America, Asia and Oceania. It has been opened in June 2006. It has assumed the role of “Grand Département” of extra-European ethnography. As a result it has a double reference to both the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Research. Indeed the museum has a strong focus on research and education. The collections are composed by over 300.000 objects (less than 2% on display). The acquisition policy envisages a striking increase in the properties, also on account of donations and patrons.
Exhibitions and events	MART (Italy)	Mart is a public contemporary art museum belonging to the Province of Trento, endowed with 3 exhibition halls. The new building has been designed by the architect Mario Botta, and is characterised by a wide square with a glass domed roof that is the gravity centre for all the activities of the museum. The museum has re-opened in 2002.
Marketing	V&A Museum, London	Dating back to 1852, the V&A museum is a non-departmental public body and one of the biggest art and design museum worldwide. The museum contains 15 sections and organises exhibition theme events to valorise the collections and develop audience.
HRM	ZETEMA (Italy)	Zètema is a public in-house company established in 1998 and totally belonging to the Municipality of Rome since 2005. It is in charge of the implementation of the Municipality’s strategies for the enrichment and the integration of tourist and cultural services of the museum system of Roman civic museums. For what concern its museum business area Zètema manages a variety of front-office services as well as back office services, according to a global service approach.
Fund raising	FAI	FAI is the Italian Trust fund for the preservation and promotion of cultural and environmental heritage and cultural landscapes, dating back to 1975. It is actually responsible of 1210 sites and it is articulated in territorial divisions.
Networking	Network of Piceni Museums (Italy)	The Piceni Museums are a museum network including 4 Municipalities and 23 collections of the Region Marche, which has been established in 2003 and financed by the European Structural funds. The network has been awarded by Federculture with the prize “management culture”. The 4 municipalities have signed an Association Agreement that rules the activities at the network level.

Tab. 1. Activity clusters and benchmark museums

5. *Museum best practices*

5.1 *Repository management: the Vatican Museums*

Vatican Museums' repositories are widely heterogeneous. Their characteristics (temperature, props, objects' disposition) vary in accordance with the type of materials they contain (e.g. marble, polymateric materials, ceramics)⁹² and their period of construction (some date back to XIX Century and are under restoration, while others are in the forefront of technological progress of contemporary constructions).

The most part of the repositories are set inside the Vatican City, while others are annexed to the archaeological excavations.

A large part of the repositories, the so called "almost repositories", may be positioned at the edge between stores and exhibition spaces, such as the paintings repository, "Ex Ponteggi", the "Armour repository"⁹³, and the gravestones repository.

One of the challenges the Vatican Museums are facing is to take a comprehensive census of all the properties, some of which are difficult to make an inventory of because they are ceramics or sculpture fragments, or they are works of art inserted in the building, such as frescos (e.g. the Raphael's School of Athens) or particular architectures. In this respect the Vatican Museums has adopted a pragmatic approach: if the works of art are cited in scientific researches or requested for an exhibition, they should have a priority to be on inventory.

The intimate connection between conservation and research is proven by the location of the restoration laboratories: they are annexed to one of the repository space, together with the archive and the diagnostic centre.

There is a high turnover of the pieces, on account of restoration or exhibition needs. As a consequence the Inventory Office carries on routine inspections of the repositories, monitoring the position of the objects; while the laboratories are in charge of updating the conservation and the restoration files, which detail the risks and the interventions carried out on the pieces⁹⁴.

⁹² The typology of storage and the characteristics of the space and shelving depend on the type of materials: e.g. grills on sliding tracks are used for the paintings and the marble inscriptions; shelves for marbles; dresser. The equipment of the different repositories has been chosen in respect of the period of construction of the rooms.

⁹³ The name of the repositories is evocative of the location in the building or the ancient use of the space, such as horse stables.

⁹⁴ The Inventory Office is the main organizational structure in charge of the repository management, together with other complementary units: the Photographic archive Office, the Conservation office and the restoration laboratories.

The access policy to the repositories is particularly restrictive. They are alarmed and monitored by museum custodians, security cameras, smoke-detectors and intrusion-detectors. The access is always registered and may be authorised to researchers visiting specific items, under the supervision of a staff member.

A monitor station controls the visitors' flow in the museum and the repositories.

One of the quality factors in the Vatican Museums' repository management is the human resources' professional profile, their commitment and empathy with the museum's values. Every employee is aware of the other departments' activities. For this purpose conferences and lessons are organised in the main Gallery or in the conference hall, involving the museum custodians and the departments.

Another quality element in the Vatican Museums may be recognised in the monitoring system of the objects displacement. There are computerized "displacement files" which guarantee the inventory accuracy.

However the main innovative factor is represented by the technological element. The Vatican Museums are going through the computerisation of the inventory through the experimentation of *Phoenix*, a software that conceives a computerised inventory as a central hub for satellite information systems, including information on objects movements, insurance, positioning and annexes that refer to the other museum units. Its strength is represented by its user-friendly interface. Actually *Phoenix* is an internal management tool, but the Vatican Museums are planning to develop it as an integrated information system with an external relevance for the visitors.

Another major best practice concerns the valorisation profile of the "almost repositories" and the lending policy of the collections for temporary exhibitions. In this respect the Vatican Museums promote the lending of works of art in storage, as removing a piece of the permanent collection from exhibit may induce a sense of frustration in the visitors' experience, as they expect to see the originals that have a great appeal on them.

One of the tricks is to lend an appealing object with an object in repository.

However the lending policy must take into account the risks of moving the works of art, so the insurance policy and the careful evaluation of the hosting institution and the transfer security are crucial in this respect⁹⁵.

Another substantial valorisation opportunity is the valorisation of the repositories annexed to the archaeological excavations, by setting up museum archaeological sites that would be a relevant marketing strategy directed to the Patrons funding the archaeological excavations.

⁹⁵ All the transfers are outsourced to a trusted company and are supported by a member of the restoration staff and a museum custodian.

5.2 Planned conservation: the Pergamon Museum

The restoration and valorisation programme that the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation is carrying out in the Museum Island has been translated for the Pergamon in a 25-years programme (2002-2027) that will end up with the restoration and the enlargement of the museum building.

In this exceptional framework, the conservation activities are envisaged in a long-term planning on the issues of preservation, restoration and maintenance.

In this respect the conservation policy of the Pergamon Museum may be considered as a landmark experiment for the definition of ideal conditions for extraordinary and ordinary conservation interventions.

Indeed the exceptional conservation policy for the Museum Island has led to an intense concertation activity among the Ministry of Infrastructures, the General Directorate of the Berlin Museums and the Pergamon Museum, which constitute the Steering Committee for the extraordinary conservation interventions on the architecture and the building.

For what concerns the ordinary conservation management, each collection has a restoration team, working in close collaboration with the archaeologists and a technicians' equip working for all the Museum District.

As the restoration teams are collection-specific, their professional background depend on the type of materials in the collections they are in charge of. The restoration team identifies the intervention priorities, the budget and suggests the ideal course of actions, according with the acknowledged risks of deterioration and the vulnerability of the objects that are rated in four different categories of risk.

The conservation activities are financed by special purpose federal funds for the building's rehabilitation and the collections' maintenance; research project-related funding ensured by public-private Foundations and extraordinary network funds, such as those coming from the partnership with the Iblean Archaeological Museum, which guarantees periodical funding to Pergamon for the restoration.

Another quality element in the Pergamon conservation management is the institutional cooperation with Universities and other research institutes, such as the German Archaeological Institute, that positions the museum as an active agent of change. In particular the Pergamon has established a partnership with the Berlin Universities in the framework of the project "excellent cluster", which aims at investigating the interdependencies between space and knowledge in the Mediterranean civilizations.

5.3 *The servicescape: the National Gallery and the Archaeological Site of Mérida*

The National Gallery (NG) provides a particularly rich and heterogeneous service package, enabling visitor to plan a daylong stay in the museum.

The service offer include: an information desk at the entrance; a bookshop with a wide ranging offer (e.g. merchandising, original reinterpretation of the NG properties by contemporary artists, toys); a didactic hall; a stylish restaurant, which has been awarded with the Best British Restaurant – Time Out awards 2007; a cloakroom, a coffee-shop with an informal style; temporary stands for merchandising during temporary exhibitions; conference rooms, theatre; multilingual audio guides; and a multimedia centre.

There are different units in charge of the servicescape management: the “Visitor Services and Security” Department; the “Information” Department; an in-house company (NGC) which is in charge of the add-on services and Antenna Audio, a private independent leading company in the audio guides international market.

The partnership with Antenna Audio envisages a three-years plan for the development of new contents for the audio guides, with specific quality targets. The Audio guides service is a strategic asset for the NG, generating the most part of the museum’s income⁹⁶. The partnership agreement ties Antenna Audio to reinvest an income share on marketing, in order to reach out the 5% of visitors using audio guides and on the development of new contents. Antenna Audio has also contributed to the production of the NG Pod casts.

The add-on services managed by the NGC are another substantial income generating activity, which capitalises on the copyrights and the IPR (intellectual property rights) of the cultural contents. The 80% of the revenues come from the bookshop. Moreover some of the NG brand products are sold in other commercial centres.

The overall quality of the NG offer is the direct product of the internal competition among the different Departments, in the framework of the annual planning process, that is ruled by a “bidding process”.

Each Department negotiates with all the team members a programme of activities and investments to submit to the Planning Committee that is composed by the senior management and the Dep. Directors. The Committee is in charge of setting priorities and accordingly allocate funds to the Departments.

At the external level, quality standards are guaranteed by the performance requirement of the DCMS⁹⁷, which set out performance and process indicators (e.g. visitors’ number; number of objects on display; number of exhibition spaces opened to the public; number of lent objects) to monitoring the service quality.

⁹⁶ The audioguides generate an average income of 60-80.000 £ per year.

⁹⁷ Department for Culture Media and Sport, financing body of NG.

However the quality control in the NG is substantially a voluntary process, envisaging further monitoring procedures and routines to better plan the service offer. The monitoring and evaluation system includes a routine reporting on the analysis of a wide range of information: visitors' comments; employees' comments; direct observation of visitors' behaviours. Relying only on standard surveys (face-to face; phone interviews) would risk compromising the analysis because of the majority of foreign visitors. In this respect the front office's feedbacks are crucial in order to overcome this limit in the information gathering. Moreover in order to catch up visitors' behaviours, the Information Department gathers episodic evidences on satisfaction aspects that visitors are unwilling to codify in a written document, allowing the front office to concentrate on specific issues (e.g. bookshops; a particular exhibition) for a limited time period.

The tension towards the achievement of quality standards is proven by the intense codification activity the NG has undertaken. There are three internal documents regulating the service quality: the "Ambition document" identifies the relational policy with the audience; "Core competencies" points out the knowledge and behavioural job requirements and "Access officer" contains the behavioural rules with disabled visitors.

For what concerns the add-on services managed by the NGC, their quality control is realized through daily inspections by the NGC director to check out the price fairness, the offer variety and the quality of the spaces (e.g. cleanness, furniture).

The technological element (the web approach) has a strategic relevance in the NG service providing, by focusing on the opportunity offered by new media, such as interactive screens for didactical purposes and iPhone applications. It is outstanding in this respect the organisational pride in having experimented in 2006 the first professional podcast in the UK that has been tuned in partnership with Antenna Audio and is still a reference model for other museums.

Another substantial innovative practice referred to the servicescape is the approach the NG has developed towards the collections on display, by promoting a contingent reinterpretation of the collections, that envisages the provision of additional information and services to better reconstruct the original context of the collections, such as theme conferences, concerts, readings, information panels in the language of the artists, games and recreational activities recalling the time period, the Country or the theme of the works on display. This narrative approach to the reinterpretation of the collections has been inspired by the European nature of the NG collections that are rooted in different cultural and social contexts. To this purpose the NG has established a partnership with the Linguistics University of Westminster.

The relational dimension comes to the fore as another best practice, testifying the vitality of the NG as a cultural institution. Indeed the staff members of the Information Department are constantly in training, by taking part to several

international professional networks and research groups on the museum management, cultural marketing and new media (e.g. Audiences London and Visitor Services Group), in a continuous process of learning by comparing. It seems relevant to point out that being part of these communities is not envisaged in a formal NG strategy, rather depending on the personal voluntary initiative of its managers.

The archaeological site of Mérida roots its valorisation policy in the providing of an heterogeneous set of services, including modular ticketing policy for the partial or full visit of the site; a comprehensive booking service (on the site, online, in the Consortium offices, by mail /fax); multilingual audio guide; an helpline; guided tours; overnight visits; laboratories with the schools where children may play with small-scale models of the ancient pieces; lending of educational materials to the schools, to be used during the visit (the didactic activity is supported by an intense editorial activity and the merchandising of thematic toys); licensing to private or public institutions of the monumental spaces for cultural events.

To the visit services are added the add-on services provided by the bookshop and the restaurant, both with an independent access. In particular the bookshop offer is outstanding for it promotes local handicrafts and high quality standards of the reproductions, thus supporting a strong link with the territory and the community. All the products on sale are also available for online shopping.

The management of the archaeological site of Mérida is particularly interesting for the use of service charts, not only as an informational tool but also as an actual management instrument. Indeed the service goals constitute quali-quantitative organisational development goals (e.g. receiving less than 25 complains not to have honoured the opening time; the introduction of at least 10 new objects in the bookshop per year; 20 days response time for the visitors' requests), triggering a cycle of planning, managing and monitoring (PDCA).

5.4 Marketing and communication: V&A Museum

The study of the Victoria & Albert Museum marketing function supported our choice not to categorise the marketing function in the framework of the support activities, rather considering it as a core activity in the museum context. Indeed cultural marketing has specific rules, going beyond the strict boundaries pertaining to other sectors, as museum effective communication strategies are the results of a complex process where different activities are involved, such as event management, technological instruments and web communication, audience involvement, customer satisfaction surveys. The audience perspective assumes here the most outstanding role.

Audience development strategies are at the core of the V&A museum marketing approach, aiming at deepening audience participation through the

promotion of repeated visits and broadening it through the attraction of new audience triggered by the V&A museum internationally recognised brand appeal.

The V&A museum marketing approach confirms Scott's assumption of museum brand as value brand having «an enduring core purpose, which creates a long-term bond with those sectors of the population sharing the same values»⁹⁸. Indeed the aim of V&A museum policy is to promote audiences' identification in the value-set its brand condensates, as a mirroring image of the museum value itself and its socio-cultural role.

The V&A museum brand is a symbol of the museum activity and its value for visitors and other internal and external stakeholders. In order to strengthen the communicational and relational value of its brand, the V&A museum has recently revised its visual identity (design and colours); they even trained the front office to change the tone of voice when addressing visitors.

The brand development policy of the V&A museum draws on different channels, involving the whole museum management. Thus everything visitors experience is a brand manifestation, from the temporary exhibitions to the add-on services.

Moreover since 2004 the Marketing Division has set up a brand partnership strategy (e.g. with Selfridges), using the shopping centres for advertisement and even organising exhibitions. The partnership allows the V&A museum to broaden its audience by benefiting of the shopping centre's marketing chain. Conversely, the shopping centre benefits of the V&A museum brand to build up a quality image and broadening its clients thanks to the discounts applied to the "V&A Friends".

The outstanding heterogeneity of the museum collections has required a specific marketing policy to simplify the cognitive access to the museum, such as the substitution of the traditional name "Victoria and Albert" museum with the shorter V&A museum, pointing at the factors attracting the broad public rather than to those having a scientific appeal, while the use of web 2.0 platforms (facebook, twitter, youtube, blogs) addresses the simplification of access.

As a result of a process of harmonization of separate communication strategies for the different collections, the V&A museum has identified one brand, in order to establish an immediate communication of the museum image to the audience. Thus the variety and heterogeneity of the collections has become strength, rather than representing an intrinsic limit in the unitary promotion of the museum inhibiting the visitors' value identification with it.

On the other hand the simplification in the communicational area corresponds to the enrichment and diversification of museum offer, including events⁹⁹,

⁹⁸ Scott 2000, p. 35.

⁹⁹ The events are organised by a specialized team of the marketing Department and often are connected to temporary exhibitions or to the opening of a new hall. Their audience ranges from

conferences, art and craftsmanship workshops, online interactive games and temporary exhibitions that complement the V&A museum offer by addressing a wide range of themes encompassing fashion, photography and architecture. The temporary exhibitions are promoted by dedicated events, ads (at the radio, in the underground, on newspapers) as well as by word of mouth. It is the wide exhibitions and events offer the most relevant factor triggering repeated visits and attracting a broad audience.

The V&A museum has a widely articulated system of marketing campaigns to promote certain products (e.g. exhibitions) or reach out an audience target (e.g. families, corporate, overseas). Each campaign envisages a specific marketing strategy including the identification of the campaign goals, the targets, the communication channels, and the marketing mix.

We may summarise the V&A marketing model, by applying the “4Ps” framework, as follows.

PRODUCT	Permanent collection; temporary exhibitions; events; workshops; educational services for schools and Universities; stores, coffeshop; halls on rent.
PLACE	South Kensington: a well connected zone by bus, underground or airport. Prestige building, in Victorian style, close to other important museums.
PRICE	Free entrance for the permanent collection. On payment for some temporary exhibitions. The pricing aims at reaching out a broad audience including low income people.
PROMOTION	Marketing campaigns. Advertisements (magazines, radio, ads on bus, metro stations); informational materials distributed in public spaces like libraries, tourism information points; direct mail; brand partnership; new media; public relations with sponsors, funders and media.

Tab. 2. “4Ps” for the V&A marketing model

It seems particularly outstanding the analytic marketing carried out by the V&A museum to orient the process of events and exhibitions planning, implying monthly surveys outsourced to a specialised company and sample surveys for specific events or particular elements of the exhibitions.

The delivery of the questionnaires promotes visitors’ comments, emphasising their expectations, and drawing a picture of the “desired museum”. The results of the surveys feed a process of monitoring and planning.

In particular the planning process of the V&A museum is highly affected by the relationship the museum entertains with the DCMS, which defines precise guidelines and orients the museum programmes by financing the 50% of the budget.

20 people (e.g. for the gala dinners) to 1.000 people in the occurrence of big scale entertainment events, representing also an important fundraising opportunity.

5.5 Display management: the Etruscan Museum of Cortona (MAEC) and the Acropolis Museum

We chose the MAEC museum as a benchmark because of its peculiar double approach to display setting (a traditional approach and a more innovative one), as a result of the stratification of the Museum of the Cities on the prior Museum of the Academy.

In particular the Museum of the Cities is a museum that valorises the strong link with the territory, by documenting the excavations carried out, and reconstructing on a chronological line the political, socio-cultural and religious dynamics characterising the historical stages of the City, thus complementing the offer of the Museum of the Academy, that is rather arranged as a museum-collection with a XVIII century style.

The challenge of the MAEC display was to link the museum to the territory, redirecting the audience towards the visit of the locations object of museum narratives, thus promoting the establishment of an eco-museum.

As a consequence of this mission, the display of the Museum of the City has a modern style in order to facilitate the storyline.

The contextual information is offered in a modular way, according to an integrated approach developed on three levels: spot information that facilitates an immediate comprehension of the pieces on display; technical information that specifies the details on materials, and context information on the excavations.

The information plateau is a coherent and integrated system, which includes information panels, projections, tactile experiences, brailed maps and plastic models.

Wide glass windows acting as multimedia screens have replaced the traditional showcases, in order to set up a fluid narrative of the archaeological sites and in particular of the Etruscan necropolis. This display models reflects a modular and flexible approach to the exhibitions, by enabling changes without upsetting the whole display philosophy.

A three-months testing phase before the opening of the exhibition has been a relevant innovation of the display planning, affecting the overall display quality.

The Acropolis museum offers new cues to the investigation of best practices in display management, mainly on account of its intentional dialogue between the architecture of the new building and the environment, especially with the Parthenon, as well as its environmental concern, by approaching the climate and seismic challenges threatening the archaeological remains with a high quality building.

The display has been conceived to rebuild the original display conditions of the over 400.000 archaeological remains of the Acropolis, through an intense use of glass materials in the windows and on the floors, that allows for natural lighting, in order to ensure integrity conditions to the heritage on display. The glass basement is an open window to the archaeological excavations and contains the entrance lobby and the space for temporary exhibitions.

Glass, concrete and local marble materials complete the minimalist design of the Bernard Tschumi's architecture, setting up a neutral background for the objects on display that evokes the conceptual equilibrium and the mathematical essentialism of Greek architecture.

A careful sound engineering for sound absorption has been set out through circular cavities in the walls.

The exhibitions path creates a three-dimensional ring, which guides visitors through the permanent collections and reaches a climax with the Parthenon's frescos at the upper floor.

5.6 *Edutainment: the Quay Branly Museum*

The mission statement¹⁰⁰ of the Quay Branly Museum emphasises the educational function of the museum, which is contemporary a cultural centre and a research and educational place.

Indeed the educational offer is at the core of the performance agreement signed by the museum with the Ministry of culture, envisaging audience diversification and fidelisation as well as conservation and economic equilibrium goals.

The fidelisation policy is monitored by routine surveys carried out in outsourcing and responds to the peculiar nature of the collections and the mainly local audience. The policy is based on an articulated offer, encompassing discounts for next visits, guided tour packages, educational service, evening visits for young people and a partnership with the Paris events card.

To this aim the educational products and services design is carried out in cooperation with different departments. In particular the Department of education and communication is in charge of proposing the educational products and defining the contents in cooperation with the Department of cultural development, which supervises the production that is outsourced to an external company.

The most part of the Department's staff is young (the average age is 27) with a professional background in cultural management and marketing. That creates a lean organizational structure with highly motivated and qualified personnel.

The design and planning process regarding the didactic products and services is the result of the adoption of an approach that is typical of the "virtual museums": it envisages the establishment of an interaction between the works of art and the visitors; flexible visit paths; the contextualization of the works on display; the simultaneous use of different media (texts, images, sound and videos) in order to favour a global fruition of the exhibitions.

The richness of the educational services derives from a strong interaction between a constant research on collections and the use of new media that allow acting on every channel of the learning experience.

¹⁰⁰ Musée du quai Branly, rapport d'activité 2008.

The didactic services are either targeted to Universities¹⁰¹ or to the broad audience¹⁰², and encompass theme guided tours and general tours of the permanent collections (*Découverte générale, Visite architecturale*); game tours (*Le secret du masque and Safari*); virtual tour on the website; podcasting of the conferences; workshops for adults and children; “ateliers” (*Du coquillage à la plume, Doudou, L’autre jouet, L’énigme de la momie péruvienne, Peindre le rêve*); theatre programmes; food tasting; concerts; and cinematic programmes.

The audio guide offer provides three permanent visit paths: “collections” presents separately the five geographical areas of the permanent collection; “familles” for the families; and a tactile path for the blinds.

Moreover the museum is developing new informational contents and communicational devices, such as multimedia programmes and “sound showers”.

Lastly the *médiathèque* hosts events, workshops and vernissages. Its main goal is to valorise the documental sources of the collections and is developed on three physical spaces (the archives, the library and the *iconothèque*) and one virtual space (the website documentation space).

5.7 Temporary exhibitions management: the MART

In the case of the MART (*Museo d’arte moderna contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto*) the exhibition planning is part of a broader scientific projects defining the museum’s strategic goals.

In particular the organisation of exhibitions is the result of the precise strategic intention to set up a cultural hub and an interaction place offering a variety cultural offer and cantered on a square.

The museum assumes a symbolic relevance for the city, by taking on a role of public space for interaction, learning and entertainment.

Indeed the wide space allows for a modular and flexible organisation of different types of events and the contemporary exhibition of almost 1.000 objects.

A substantial museum goal is the varieties in the exhibitions, aiming at fulfil the needs and expectations of the community and at promoting the tourists stay in the museum spaces (the average visit duration is a day).

¹⁰¹ The Department in charge is the Department of Research, which is in charge of the management of the Popular University, where it organises international workshops and hosts foreign researchers. The research activity is intimately connected to the educational area. It envisages the organisation of conferences and theme workshops, welcoming services for researchers, research projects funding; editorial activities and is supported by a partnership with the CNRS (National center for scientific research) for the establishment of an international research group under the coordination of the Museum.

¹⁰² The Department in charge is the Department of communication and cultural mediation.

The MART museum exhibits every year a different selection of its collections, and organises a temporary exhibition on original themes (photography, architecture, design), thus ensuring on the one hand a high turnover of the works of art on display, on the other hand a strong support of contemporary creativity. The exhibitions capitalise on the collections stock of the museum; on a parallel development of editorial activity; on the involvement of contemporary artists for temporary exhibitions in the project rooms.

A curator is in charge of the exhibitions, in tight cooperation with the technical staff and the display managers, while the physical movement of the objects is responsibility of a “registrar”, who is in charge of the displacements’ documentation and the monitoring.

The research activity feeds the exhibition cycle, which envisages the organisation of a big event per year, not as a blockbuster event but rather relating different disciplines such as literature, dance and art.

The communication activity related to temporary exhibitions is built on web communication as well as on social networking (Facebook, Twitter and Flickr).

The exhibitions arouse great interest on account of their international character, which depends on the presence of well-established artists¹⁰³ in the international arena and on the coproduction with outstanding museum institutions such as the MOMA (New York) and the V&A (London), the Quai Branly (Paris).

The environmental control of the exhibit halls is a quality standard necessary for accessing the international circuits.

The networking with other museums is not the only cooperation area of the MART museum. Indeed it has also established partnerships with private companies, such as ENI (an Italian energy service company) for the promotion of contemporary art.

To sum up the MART’s temporary exhibition management is characterised by three patterns: in-house production; partnership with other museums to ensure an international circuitation of the exhibitions and a substantial costs saving (50% of the overall costs); and the purchase of exhibits on the market.

It seems relevant to point out that the international network of the museum has been established from small free exchanges, which gave the MART museum credibility and trust.

¹⁰³ The collections contain works of art of international artists such as Marina Abramovic, Bruce Naumann, Arnulf Rainer, Hermann Nitsch, Anselm Kiefer, Richard Long, Ilya Kabakov, Andreas Gursky, Tony Cragg, Candida Hofer, Eva Marisaldi, Ryan Mendoza.

5.8 *Human resources management: Zètema*

The human resources management is a tricky management area. Its complexity in a benchmarking analysis derives from its dependence on the national regulation, which in Italy prospects a particular rigidity, affecting innovation in this area. As a consequence we had to limit our analysis to the Italian context, by choosing Zètema S.p.A, an in-house company of the Municipality of Rome managing the system of the civic museums, in order to obtain best practices transferable to the Museum hubs in the South.

The most part of the best practices depends on the private nature of Zètema and refers to lifelong learning, motivational drivers and performance assessment procedures.

The human resources division of Zètema is a staff unit depending on the General direction unit, which is in charge of human resources management, industrial relations and organization.

The personnel operating in the museums represents 80% of the employees, characterised by a high job rotation in the different museums, although there is not a formal planning for it.

Over time the employees have developed a sense of belonging to the company, thanks to an organisational system that incentives standard behaviours and a rewarding system including fringe benefits that enhance the team spirit.

The human resource management is developed according to service and performance standards that are ensured by constant controls by supervisors.

To the planning and monitoring system is added an integrated system of human resources evaluation, which takes into account visitors' comments, supervisors' feedbacks and voluntary assessments by the museums' directors. The performance assessment is not just a formal requirement, rather representing a substantial orientation towards results and a relevant motivational driver.

Another emerging best practice is the careful planning of training exercises that are directed to the improvement of employees' skills and motivations, having a high impact on service quality. The investment in training is diversified according to the role, the skills and the professional development stage of the personnel.

5.9 *Fundraising: the Italian Trust for Cultural and Natural Heritage (FAI)*

The value of the properties managed by the Italian Trust for Cultural and Natural Heritage has increased from 55 millions in 2007 to 62 millions in 2008.

The trust has a various set of financial sources, encompassing corporate funding (35%); individual donations and bequests (35%); public funds financing specific projects (30%).

To date the Trust has 72.000 "sustaining members": the "Corporate Golden

donors”, which have established a long-term collaboration; the “Friends of FAI” and public-sustaining members contributing with long-term financing.

The Trust has adopted a wide approach to fundraising, by targeting individuals; organizations (public companies, public institutions and Foundations); but also including in this management area loans for use and other financial resources coming from the direct heritage management (e.g. entrance fees, merchandising) by the territorial offices.

The FAI governance model envisages two levels. The headquarters are in charge of the planning and control functions, as well as of the coordination activities; while the local units (led by a property manager) are in charge of the ordinary management of the heritage on the territory and are responsible for the achievement of the goals negotiated with the headquarters. The double layers of governance and the multiplicity of the stakeholders, set up a complex fundraising system, which requires specific strategies, skills and tools. In particular at the central level the fundraising strategy is mainly targeted to public institutions and private companies (Corporate Golden donors) and may be unravelled in five intervention areas:

- a) Individual fundraising (e.g. annual membership fees; causes-specific donations; heritage adoption; bequest; volunteering). The effectiveness of these programmes is strictly connected to the communication campaigns. The human resources enrolled in this area have a background in non-profit organizations.
- b) Private companies fundraising. The programme “Corporate Golden donors” aims at creating a consolidated group of funders, which is the core of the trust’s recapitalization. The programme is mainly built on the FAI directors’ personal relations. The golden donors benefit of luxury rewards (e.g. travels; events).
- c) Strategic partnership for cause related marketing projects¹⁰⁴ aims at specific restoration or valorisation actions. The unit in charge of this programme is mainly interfaced with the corporate social responsibility area of the target companies. It is in charge of innovating the project quality to attract partners. The human resources enrolled in this area have a background experience in the for profit sector.
- d) Organization of cultural activities with an entrance fee, outside the FAI locations, (e.g. cultural travels), with or without sponsorships (e.g. concerts; art workshops).
- e) Bidding processes for European and national public or private tenders.

¹⁰⁴ Cause related marketing refers to programmes designed to create a partnership between a sponsoring firm and a non-profit cause to raise money through product sales. Varadarajan and Menon define it as «the process of formulating and implementing marketing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives» (Varadarajan, Menon 1988, p. 60).

At the local level, the fundraising activities carried out by the project managers include local sponsorship of specific interventions or events; loans for use; and visit ticketing and management. In this respect the Trust has carried out a communication campaign to suggest the visitors the idea that entrance fees are donations for heritage preservation and valorisation, rather than a tax or a ticket.

5.10 *Governance and Networking: the Piceni museum network*

The origin of this museum network¹⁰⁵ dates back to 2003, when the Municipalities of Offida, Ripatransone, Montefiore dell’Aso and Monterubbiano have signed a programme agreement for the establishment of the network.

Thus, it may be classified as a formal, inter-institutional and horizontal network¹⁰⁶.

In the Piceni museum network only the upper level functions of governance and planning are integrated in the museum networking, while the single Municipalities of the network remain in charge of museum management functions at the operational level (front office; add-on services; archives; monitoring and maintenance).

The unification of the direction function creates a soft network with low coordination costs, which are mainly referred to the institutional communication policies, the governance mechanisms with the local community and the training policies, thus setting up a territorial cultural infrastructure¹⁰⁷.

The museum networking favours the interaction among the different territorial stakeholders and their perception of a systemic cultural offer.

The museums’ networking affects differently the level of functional integration, the governance profile and the offer integration.

The functional integration consists in the management at the network level of the following activity clusters: the strategic planning and budgeting; the conservation and maintenance (until 2009 there was a “network conservator” for specific conservation projects), by co-developing a system of environmental control and homogeneous inventory systems; the research activities that are carried out in partnership with research centres; the sharing of specialized input and processes to take advantage of economy of scale, such as the contracting

¹⁰⁵ The inter-institutional cooperation realized through networking may be defined as the relational non competitive texture connecting autonomous entities without any control or unitary direction. «A network [is] as a pattern of more or less lasting linkages between nodes, where the nodes represent different organisational units. These units may be firm or divisions within firms. The linkages may be uni- or bidirectional, representing flows of products (goods and services), sharing of resources, relations of ownership or other forms of control, lines of cooperation and communication» (Grandori 1999, p. 8).

¹⁰⁶ Meneguzzo, Senese 2005; Bagdadli, Meneguzzo 2002.

¹⁰⁷ Scandizzo 1996.

out and reporting processes that are managed by an inter-territorial network Office based in Offida; the service standards; the marketing function (there is a museum network website that has a reserved access section and assumes the role of management tool with inventory information).

The offer integration envisages a common networking pricing policy, and the promotion of a card for the access to all the museums of the network.

The public ownership of the museums promotes the governance profile¹⁰⁸, by favouring the integration among the museums, the community and the public and private stakeholders, thus promoting the outward orientation of the public administration¹⁰⁹ and the interaction among the PA, the market and the civil society¹¹⁰.

Indeed at the network level the actions are developed on the ground of a continuous dialogue between the museums direction and the Municipalities, where the cultural and tourism planning is tightly connected with museum planning.

In a multi-level governance framework, the Piceni museum network operates according to the principle of subsidiarity, by assuming the role of professional institution in the museum sector experimenting innovative management processes at both the Province and the Region level. Indeed it is an inter-provincial museum network that is part of the museum card of the Marche Region.

The integration with the private sector has been developed on the ground of a strong identification of the museum with the socio-economic texture, which favoured the establishment of local partnerships for different projects¹¹¹. These local partnerships share the common goal of local development and local identity, mobilizing community involvement. Indeed the community has voluntarily cooperated to enrich the local offer, by organising craftsmanship workshops and other entertainment initiatives. Moreover the museum network has set up sensibilization and community involvement initiatives, such as workshops on the local history and welcoming services.

As a result the museums of the network are identified as social public spaces. Indeed they are the headquarters of local educational and tourism Associations.

¹⁰⁸ Pierre 2000; Cepiku 2004.

¹⁰⁹ Meneguzzo 1995.

¹¹⁰ Reichard 2001; Meneguzzo 1995; Rhodes 1996; Kooiman, van Vliet 1993.

¹¹¹ e.g. "Museum and territory" that has been awarded in 2008 by Federculture with a prize for the management culture and other museum initiatives connecting the permanent ethnographic collections to temporary exhibitions of local craftsmanship as well as other temporary exhibitions.

6. *Concluding remarks: the drivers of change*

Our discussion was meant to reveal emergent innovative processes and products able to align museums to the underlying consequences of a vast, fast changing, often overwhelming and frequently puzzling task environment.

In this hectic context of transformation and restyling of the traditional museum role, we intercepted some best practices that may substantially respond to the museums' need to strive for intentionality and survival¹¹².

In this framework we assumed that the relevant processes are not exogenously given, so we selected them according with the results of a scenario analysis on the museum hubs in the South of Italy, which pointed out critical management areas.

The analysis of 12 benchmark partners on 10 relevant activity clusters at the European and the Italian level has revealed that competitive strategies and innovative museum offer depend on hard and soft investments; distinctive resources building; organic management systems and museum offer quality and innovation.

Each best practice ought to be interpreted in the organic framework of the museum value creation system, because it affects interrelated management areas and activity clusters (see tab. 3).

The first cluster of best practices is referred to investments in space and design. The tangible item of the museum container is assessed as a key factor attracting visitors. Indeed it has been widely acknowledged the museum tendency to expose stunning architectural containers as value brand as well as their collections¹¹³.

It is an issue of creating and positioning in the urban context an appropriate structure for multi-sensory and multi-attribute experience¹¹⁴, as well as providing an aesthetic appeal for the community to interact in a trusted civic space that is the result of a thick relational network including public actors and other relevant stakeholders.

On the one hand the architectural container of historical museums (e.g. the Vatican Museums) calls for conservation and valorisation to the same extent of their collections; on the other hand the architectural planning becomes a priority for the new museum constructions, in the framework of a competition that is progressively entailing the aesthetic (visual and sensory) museum experience components, beside the recreational, learning and educational experiences¹¹⁵.

¹¹² Korn 2007.

¹¹³ Frey 1998; Pulh 2006.

¹¹⁴ Davis 2008.

¹¹⁵ Kotler, Kotler 2000; Kim 2009.

Best practices	Museum Activities										
	Planned conservation	Repository	Display services	Servicespace	Edutainment	Exhibitions and events	Marketing	HRM	Fund raising	Networking	
Investments	Space & design	x	x			x					
	Soft Infrastructures		x	x							
	Technology	x	x		x		x				
Building Distinctive Resources	Back office motivation/ front office branding							x			
	Financial resources				x				x		
	Relational resources				x				x	x	
	Organic monitoring systems (PDCA)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Management effectiveness	Empowerment incentive system								x		
	Substantial Planning		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
	Market orientation			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Product innovation		x	x	x	x	x					

Tab. 3. Museum best practices and affected activity clusters

The relevance of the space comes loudly to the fore in the case of the MART museum, where a wide square is the fulcrum of the whole museum activities.

On the other hand the investments in soft infrastructures (i.e. the servicescape and the display service) and the technological investments in new media and monitoring systems, have a consistent impact on the perceived museum experience, by facilitating visitors arousal and satisfaction.

The second best practice cluster concerns the process of building up distinctive human, financial, relational and informational resources.

As museums are a knowledge-intense sector and a value brand¹¹⁶, human resources play a central role in service providing. In this regard the motivational and training policies are a key factor of success for competitive museums.

In this respect most of the analysis of the best-in-class museums pointed out the relevance of the custodians, as a powerfully committed modern interface with visitors as well as crucial points of the collection care and information providing. Conversely, a cultural management background is a best practice on the front of the quality of the back office personnel.

With respect to financing, building up distinctive resources implies acting on a diversified fundraising portfolio, which includes, as suggested by the Italian Trust for cultural and natural heritage, the management of income-generating add-on services. Looking for innovative fundraising solutions requires a management system that incentivises the quest for efficient solutions as a baseline condition. This principle is especially pointed out in the British context, where the museum financing body (the Department for Culture Media and Sport) sets a fund expenditure ceiling that forces museums to look for innovative financial solutions.

This funding paradigm is strictly connected to the empowerment system. Making people responsible as “process owners” and decision-makers¹¹⁷ emphasizes the orientation towards visitors’ satisfaction, which in turn ought to be the foundation of funds allocation.

Although the private or public nature of museums has a role in defining the margins of autonomy, a system of “funding agreement” where the fund allocation depends on the performance assessment and the different museum units compete for funds, by following the rules of an inter-departmental bidding process (such as in the case of the National Gallery), may upgrade the effectiveness of the overall organisation.

In this framework an effective monitoring system ought to be set up, on the ground of an organic information system dealing with visitors, behaviours, and performances, that is a common organisational asset orientating the overall museum management.

The benchmarking analysis pointed out that a best-in-class fundraising system requires to build on an often informal relational network, by attracting

¹¹⁶ Scott 2007.

¹¹⁷ Frey 1998.

potential patrons and sponsors through quality projects but also fidelising and involving them in the decision-making process, as making them responsible is the only way to make them take action.

Moreover the benchmarking demonstrated that an efficient museums management is also built on a partnership strategy with other museums that enables risk sharing as well as the valorisation of collections through co-production and exchanges in the international arena.

As museum experience depends on meaning-making, inclusion, and access, adopting a relational approach is even more necessary in respect to visitors, which need to be strategically engaged as legitimators of the museums' cultural value, in order to build up a sustainable audience base¹¹⁸. In this respect the relational resources are the key to create long-term bonds with the community sharing the same museum value, thus creating museum value-brands.

All these best practices are bound into a crossing activity management: a substantial long-term strategic planning that involves all the museum units in a detailed definition of goals, behaviours and organisational expectations and capitalisations.

As a result of our analysis the museum best practices may be condensed into a broad view of market orientation, encompassing visitors, patrons, employees, sponsors, and public stakeholders. This market-orientation shapes the museum mission and its role in the light of governance.

Our analysis of the best-in-class museum practices at the European level, has assessed that there is an emerging contemporary museum model, alleviating the concern for what seemed to be just a chaotic ensemble of efforts to cope with new pressures for accountability and results.

In this new paradigm, museums are not just preservers of the past¹¹⁹ but open cultural institutions dialoguing with the contemporary community. Indeed in the case of some best-in-class museums we have assessed that museums strive for retaining contemporary audience that may feel detached from an old-fashioned institution, but even sustain contemporary creativity in the temporary exhibitions (MART) as well as in their merchandising policy (National Gallery).

In this framework museum service chart is not only a report tool for the market, but also a management tool stimulating a constant tension to innovation.

On the other hand museum product innovation takes advantage of the technological achievements in the field of new media and virtual technologies, but it may also entail the traditional museum functions, such as education.

The holistic view resulting from the analysis of the interconnections among the best practices may be better charted by the following table, illustrating how each best practice is related to several functions, according to a systemic approach.

¹¹⁸ Scott 2009.

¹¹⁹ Frey 1998.

Planned conservation	Repository	Display services	Servicespace	Entertainment	Exhibitions and events	Marketing	HRM	Fundraising	Governance/Networking
Risk Chart for each work of art	Strategic planning of the risks associated to the state of conservation and vulnerability			Scientific cooperation arrangements with research institutes			Specialised maintenance and restoration teams. Monitoring Committee for sub-contacted interventions		Multilevel governance for extraordinary interventions
Digitization of the works of art; computerised monitoring systems	Containers with high technological standards	Repositories as display areas. Lending policy			High turnover of collections		Skills, relational quality & value sharing with all the organization.	Lending policy	
Display approach coherent with the collections	Modular and flexible structure	Lightening design to valorise the collections in their original setting	Multi-level information panels for different targets			Display planning functional to the desired visit experience			Museum as a showcase of a complex territorial offer
Servicespace		Data on visitors' complaints and suggestions		Technological and interactive information facilities. Podcasts, Iphone applications, web 2.0	Wide entrance as a meeting place to plan the visit	Bookshop, restaurant, bar. Merchandising and branding. Online booking. Service Chart. Overnight visits	Multilingual front-office with high relational capacities. Duty integration (information). Lifelong training	Theatre and conference rooms to host fundraising events. Audio-guides as quality service and income generating.	
Edutainment		Options of modular tours	Diversified audio-guides: Educational spaces	Educational programmes for educators	Virtual exhibitions; Seminars and conferences; Theatrical/musical/cinematic programmes	Edutainment policy	Professional background: cultural mng/ marketing.		
Exhibitions and events		Environmental standards; Modular exhibition space (public square)		Multimedia offer for a contextualised interpretation of the exhibit		Editorial projects; Wide range of exhibits for day-long stops			Co-production with international museums and brands. Creativity policies
Marketing		Branding centry, Web 2.0		Free entrance as a motivator without cultural motivations	Exhibitions and events at low prices for repeated access	Diversified prices and promotion channels for a multi-attribute product	Audience development strategies as a response to routine marketing surveys		Brand partnership with shopping malls or other not-related organisation
HRM	Conferences for personnel on the collections		Integrated evaluation system	Organisation-wide multilevel training		Fringe benefits and team bonus. Job rotation and career opportunities	Planning & control of human resources performances		Goals negotiations; Co-planning among the different Departments
Fund raising			Donations box at the entrance			Benefits for Patrons; Membership cards	Fundraising as a philosophy cultural and social motivations; Trust building; Equipment for bidding	Sponsorship; Lending museums' spaces for private initiatives; Diversified funding policies	Project-related community based funding; Institutional communication; Fundraisers involvement; Long term partnerships
Governance/Networking	Networking of the high level functions		Integration of service standards	Partnership with Research centres		Co-branding; Offer of external and internal communication channels and tools			Involving local communities; External integration with the territory

Tab. 4. The Best practices functional interconnections

Pointing out best practices does not mean that museum management may be split into watertight compartment, nor that being excellent in one area implies an excellent overall result. Indeed the main criticality in the proposition of a best-in-class model of museum management relies in the challenge to face the complexity of the systemic interrelations, making the whole museum successful.

If a new paradigm is at stake, we may assume that museums today are creating “blue markets”¹²⁰, by integrating their traditional role with the new service orientation, becoming public interaction spaces offering entertainment opportunities.

As a result of our review of museum best practices, we maintain that museums as a whole are handing off their traditional contemplative dress, by wearing a more entertainment style and assuming the role of interactive cultural markets providing a “total experience”, and exercising on visitors the same magnetism as commercial centres and entertainment parks¹²¹.

The analysis of museum innovation processes in the framework of the cultural sectors’ convergence may be an interesting development of this research.

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¹²⁰ Kim, Mauborgne 2005.

¹²¹ Desmoulin 2005.

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