

## Chapter 4

# Digital Marketing and Service Strategies for Sustainable Development of Visual Culture: A Case Study of M+ Museum in Hong Kong

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Sustainability is an increasingly important topic internationally, but scant studies focus on the sustainability strategies of niche art museums, especially in Asia. Therefore, this study explores sustainable development strategies for niche art museums, with the M+ Museum of Visual Arts in Hong Kong as the case. The authors apply the PEST analysis to examine external influences on the sustainability of M+ based on the three pillars of sustainability to reveal the current problems of M+. The findings indicate the main sustainability problems of M+ include limited publicity, overpricing, lack of public cultural literacy, and limited coverage of social activities. Thus, the authors suggest strategies centered on building a multifunctional online community, including expanding online services for members, designing and selling electronic peripherals, developing online visual culture education programs, pushing events regularly, establishing a materials mall, inviting artists into the digital community, and designing a VR collection display.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Hong Kong is a city that encourages sustainable development, aiming to strike a balance between environmental, social, and economic needs to maintain a high quality of life (Chung et al., 2020; Ho et al.,

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2018). At the same time, Hong Kong, as one of Asia's cultural centers, is rooted in traditional Chinese culture and builds bridges between East and West (Hong Kong Cultural, Sports, and Tourism Bureau, 2022). With a total of about 60 museums as of December 2022, Hong Kong has become an important hub for public cultural industries (Wong & Chiu, 2023; Deng et al., 2022), with the global responsibility of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 11.4 to encourage the preservation of the world's cultural and natural heritage (Xu et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2022; Zuo et al., 2023). UNESCO (2020) recommends unleashing the power of culture, from improving education through cultural activities to enhancing social justice and promoting sustainability on multiple dimensions.

Given that the main task of museums is to "preserve cultural resources and make them available to present and future generations" (Moldavanova, 2014), they are considered entities with "a key role in shaping a sustainable future" (Blagoeva-Yarkova, 2012). However, there are many types of museums in Hong Kong (Jiang et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2017), and different types of museums in sustainability may require different goals and actions. The contribution of niche art and culture museums to sustainability is often overlooked compared to traditional subject museums (e.g., history and science museums). Therefore, this study focuses on the existing sustainability strategies and potential problems of niche art and culture museums in Hong Kong and suggests corresponding technical recommendations.

To better understand the sustainable development strategies of niche art and culture museums, this study selected the M+ Museum of Visual Culture in Hong Kong, one of the world's largest museums of visual culture under the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority and exhibited art and design collections from the 20th to the 21st century. While fulfilling its function of promoting and educating the visual arts, M+ has formulated a series of sustainability goals and action plans, aspiring to contribute to sustainable development (M+ Museum, 2021). Since M+ already has a more established vision and action plan in the area of sustainability, and it is one of the largest visual arts museums in Asia, it was selected for this case study.

A framework that can identify opportunities and threats is essential for organizations "to develop, implement, control, and improve sustainability strategies" to enhance their sustainability performance (Baumgartner, 2013). We apply PEST as the basic framework for external environment analysis (Jiang et al., 2023) to reveal the external opportunities and threats to M+ sustainability. Further, we analyze the status and sustainability issues within M+ with the three pillars of sustainability to highlight the contribution of niche art museums to sustainability and future development. Our findings then provide suggestions for the sustainability of niche art museums to promote sustainable development by combining digital and commercial approaches. Based on the fiercely competitive environment of the West Kowloon Cultural District (Wong & Chiu, 2023), M+ faces many opportunities and challenges for sustainable development in the context of the rapid advancement of digital technology and the continuous expansion of its application areas. Therefore, it is critical to review M+'s current external environment and sustainability vision and actions to meet the needs and expectations of sustainable development in its environmental, social, and economic aspects.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Visual Cultural Museum and Value**

As the main institution for collections, museums play the role of collection, promotion, education, and research (Peng, 2022). Museums can be classified into different types, focusing on history, science, art,

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