

New Business Drivers of Hong Kong Museums: The Tourism Stakeholder

Perspective

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Introduction

In contemporary society, culture has become a commodity (Hewison, 1988). Cultural tourism, as a type of tourism and as a type of business, is inevitably related to profit. Cultural assets have come to be expected to perform a broader range of economic and tourism functions, and the role of museums is evolving similarly (Bassett, 1993; Bianchini, 1990, 1993; Watson, 1991), though scholars may argue that cultural assets such as museums are more than commercial goods, especially when tourism involving heritage becomes a cultural tourism product for travellers to consume (Ho & McKercher, 2004).

From an operating perspective, accountability seems not to apply to non-profit organizations. However, non-profit entities like museums need a large amount of financial support from governments to function. Entities with the “non-profit” label generally lack the motivation to increase their profitability (Christensen & Mohr, 2003). Non-profit museums act as educational, charitable or religious organizations that benefit the world in various ways. That does not mean that non-profit entities cannot generate revenues as well as expenses. The US is witnessing the rise of the for-profit museum (Arroyo, 2012), as are many other regions, including China (Sheng & Lo, 2010). Scholars have shown that the traditional means of funding museums seem to be drying up and

non-profit organizations must become more market oriented to survive (Sullivan, 2001; Shelley & Polonsky, 2002).

Many studies have therefore focused on analysing museum tourists (Jansen-Verbeke & van Rekom, 1996; Siu et al., 2013; Schouten, 1995; Sheng & Chen, 2012). These studies closely analyzed the profile, behaviours, expectations, perception and attitudes of museums' visitors to better target museums' visitors and improve the quality of the museum experience. Sheng and Lo (2010) feel that most studies focus only on the demand side. They provide an analysis from the museum's perspective to evaluate the tourism potential of public museums as in Hangzhou. Museums' stakeholders are important in developing their tourism potential. However, it seems that the tourism perspective from the supply side has been overlooked. This research aims to uncover the constraints and challenges for museums in becoming tourism products from the tourism perspective by analysing Hong Kong as a case study.

In Hong Kong, museums are actively promoted as tourism attractions in tourism-related promotional materials. However, most well-known museums face the same problem, as illustrated in Table 1. Deficit caused by relatively large expenditure and relatively small revenues is a common problem for non-profit museums in Hong Kong.

(Please insert table 1 here)

Non-profit museums aim to educate both visitors and tourists; their low revenues are the result of relatively low visitation. It thus seems that they are not fulfilling their educational purpose. In addition, the traditional means of funding through admission fees cannot cover expenses. To generate profits, costs must be cut and revenues generated. In summary, this paper aims to investigate museums' potential to be tourism products and how to make them successful tourism products in order to satisfy their educational and touristic purposes.

Literature review

Museums and their visitors

Cultural tourism became a popular term in the field of tourism when museum visitation became a major tourist activity (Jansen-Verbeke & van Rekom, 1996). Conventional wisdom suggests that the primary purposes of museums are collection, exhibition, research and education (Li et al., 2010). Today, these traditional functions have been extended with characteristics from tourism. For example, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) (2013) defines museums as “non-profit-making, permanent institutions ... which acquire, conserve, research, communicate and exhibit, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment.” This indicates that museums have gradually acquired visitor-based roles (Sheng & Chen, 2012).

Moreover, museums also act as essential touristic guides to the history and geography of the cities or nations they represent (Stevens, 1998). Thus, museum plays an important

role in people's perception of a region from the past to the present (Siu et al., 2013). Museums are one of the most important tourism products, enhancing tourists' and local citizens' understanding of a local culture (Akbulut & Artvinli, 2011; Sheng & Lo, 2010). Because of these important functions, almost every destination around the globe promotes museums to tourists and local people alike. Branding museums can attract more visitors to a region and thus develop it as a cultural destination (Jansen-Verbeke & van Rekom, 1996).

To attract visitors, studies have started to focus on investigating museum visitors. Early studies found that cultural tourists and museum visitors tend to be people with high education and income, and the majority tend to be seniors (Silberberg, 1995). In addition, a lot of research found that visitors tend to claim that they go to museums to learn something new, to do something worthwhile, to look for new challenges and opportunities, to do something with their friends and relatives (Falk & Dierking, 1992; Jansen-Verbeke & van Rekom, 1996). Most of these studies are quantitative in nature. In contrast, lots of qualitative studies have started to question these results and claimed that those results are too idealistic to be true. For example, studies of the general public started to find that museum visitors do not learn a great deal (Miles, 1986). Visitors feel that they need to learn something because this is what they "should" do in a museum. Recent studies also found that museums visitors actually tend to be younger than the early studies. During the week, schools often organize museum trips for their students. On weekends, family groups dominate museum visits (Sheng & Chen, 2012).

From another perspective, O'Dell (2007) shows that in postmodern society tourists are no longer pure receivers, observers or interpreters. Instead, visitors are active experientialists and even meaningful creators and actors. Thus, visitors are more interested in active museum experiences than passive ones. Specifically, Sheng and Chen (2012) classify museum visitors' expectations into five categories: fun and leisure, cultural entertainment, personal identification, historical reminiscence and escapism. For Schouten (1995), the cornerstone of any policy on museum visitor care is, first of all, pleasure. It is a matter of providing a unique experience. Schouten states that museums need to provide exceptional, novel, informative, high-quality, understandable and emotional experiences because most people tend to separate work (learning) and leisure in order to escape from their daily routine. Developing museums as tourism products becomes necessary due to this paradoxical visitor expectation of learning-fun.

Museums as tourism products

The perception of a product is related to its ability to satisfy one's needs and wants (Kotler, 1997). For tourists, tourism products are therefore tourism experiences that must satisfy tourism needs and wants. From the marketing perspective, a tourism product is defined as whatever is promoted (Sharma, 2007). Du Cros (2001) argues that before a cultural asset is transformed into a tourism product, it is very important to assess it with regard to its market appeal and robusticity. Smith (1994) identifies five elements of tourism products, namely, service, freedom of choice, physical plant, hospitality and involvement. In the tourism product model, the four elements add value to the physical plant in the creation of tourism experiences. Xu (2010) concludes that managers need to

take a holistic view and include both core and support elements of successful tourism products in today's experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Prentice (2001) describes the experiential cultural tourism of museums, asserting that adopting the theory of experience into the museum setting could give visitors the opportunity to seek authentic experiences and in-depth understanding. Experience is the key to successful museum attractions, because it provides an emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual experience (Shaw & Ivens, 2002). Moreover, Johnson and Thomas (1998) show that museum visitor numbers are affected by a product life cycle. Changes in fashions and tastes should be responded to in order to maintain visitor attractiveness and deliver unique experiences to visitors (Johnson & Thomas, 1998).

Scholars have argued that cultural assets or non-profitable assets should develop like tourism products, an approach that can benefit both sides (Hughes, 1989; McKercher & du Cros, 2002). Through understanding tourists' needs and using marketing management, institutions are able to deliver more in-depth experiences. In turn, the tourism product approach potentially has benefits for cultural assets' goals. McKercher and du Cros (2002) find that all successful cultural tourism attractions seem to share some common features. They:

- Tell a story
- Make the asset come alive
- Make the experience participatory
- Make the experience relevant to tourists

- Focus on quality and authenticity

For McKercher and du Cros, each of these features benefits tourists, the tourism industry and cultural heritage assets. Therefore, transforming museums into tourism products must involve creating educational and recreational experiences for visitors (Kotler, 2001).

To develop museums as tourism products, cultural heritage management and tourism management need to work together. Ap and Mak (1995: 5) find that tourism and cultural assets management have different objectives as “tourism is a market driven industry and is more consumer-friendly while the cultural industry appears to be more product and supply oriented.” Alexander (1999) argues that museums must succumb to the inevitable in moving towards a more business-like model for their operations and revenue, without losing sight of conservation and connoisseurship. Thus, potential conflicts may emerge when developing museums as tourism products.

Most museums around the globe still focus on traditional functions: exhibition, education and research. Recreation and fun experiences have been overlooked. Schouten (1995) finds that most professionals in this field prefer to ignore the impact of tourism. They often dislike the fact that tourism tries to commoditize their valuable collections. In addition, they often consider tourism a threat to conservation (Herreman, 1998). They feel that they are above mundane profit-making tourism. From museums’ operators’ perspective, the dilemmas between tourism and museums thus seem to be lied in the paradox between culture and consumption (Herreman, 1998).

By overlooking the impacts and benefits tourism can bring, museums become introverted institutions. Museum operators often see their customers as lovers and connoisseurs of art and history and treat them accordingly (Schouten, 1995), which creates a sense that the general public is not welcome. Schouten (1995) argues that objects in museums tend to look alike to non-specialists, and museums therefore need to provide better interpretation. Similarly, McKercher and du Cros (2002) show that a unique cultural asset is not a tourist attraction unless it is converted into a viable product for tourists' consumption. In addition, Foley and McPherson (2000) point out that the contemporary role of the museum has changed to become a setting for recreational experiences.

To achieve this, the tourism sector plays a crucial role. It is commonly agreed that tourism stakeholders are more receptive to new ideas and approaches. Increasingly, they are taking notice of cultural attractions and events as worthy potential partners in packaging and other cooperative arrangements (Silberberg, 1995). In contrast to the active role of tourism, museums and other cultural attractions take a relatively passive role in operating their property. As a result, museums cannot deliver understandable and fun experiences to visitors. This leads to other issues, including low visitation, low revenue and low knowledge gained by visitors. Studies often focus on the demand side to understand what visitors want: the supply side has been overlooked (Sheng & Lo, 2010). In addition, studies on the supply side have mainly focused on museums rather than tourism. These studies often focus on how museum operators evaluate their property and the issues they face in delivering a high-quality experience to visitors (Tufts & Milne,

1999; Sheng & Lo, 2010). However, when promoting museums as tourism attractions, tourism stakeholders become an important element. With the clashes between tourism and cultural heritage management, there is a need to understand the constraints and challenges faced by tourism stakeholders in redesigning museums as tourism products. This study can provide innovative ideas from tourism stakeholders who have rich knowledge in designing tourism products to enhance museum experiences as well as increase their revenues.

Revenue generation for museums

It could be argued that the increasing recreational experiences created by the museums industry are motivated by the prevalence of a new market-oriented ideology. This indicates the importance of revenue generation in the museums industry (Rottenberg, 2002). Currently, there are two major pressures for the museum industry: one is a decline of visitor numbers and the other is the increased need to generate income. Therefore, museums should make their services meaningful. This could attract more visitors who would pay the admission fee and make purchases in museums' retail shops. This could ensure the viability of museums (Lennon et al., 1995). There are two major revenues in museum operations, namely, earned revenue and unearned revenue. Sources that contribute to museums' earned revenue include admissions, gift shops, food and beverages sales, memberships, facility rentals and fees for research services. Unearned revenues comprise revenue not generated by the business operations of museum facilities. The main source of unearned revenue is fundraising and grants (Hall & Hall, 2007). For

Hall and Hall, generating unearned and earned revenues from various aspects could transform the museums industry from a non-profitable to a profitable one.

Moreover, Leask et al. (2002) find that heritage attractions generally fail to address revenue management techniques in their operation. The need to address seasonal and spatial limitations of demand is generally overlooked in the revenue management of heritage attractions.

Cost cutting for museums

Simply generating revenues for museums cannot make the museums industry profitable. The process of profit making for these non-profitable organizations depends on cost cutting as well as revenue generation. The cost structure of museums differs from normal organizations. It involves high fixed costs, limited marginal costs, dynamic costs and high opportunity costs (Frey & Meier, 2006). Jackson (1988) estimates a cost function for the museums industry. For Jackson, the operating costs of museums are affected by total attendance, wages, promotional expenditures, exhibition expenses, educational expenses, conservation and preservation expenses, and membership expenses. This indicates that museums' costs may vary with changes in various types of output, and with substitution between labour and capital.

In Hong Kong, the museums industry is facing high expenditures and low revenues. Minimizing cost and maximizing revenues are effective ways to make this non-profitable sector profitable. Moreover, generating revenues for non-profitable museums is a trend.

Mutual benefits need to be created for both tourism and museum management. But why is a huge number of museums still unable to earn enough revenue to cover expenses? Hong Kong's major museums are promoted as tourism products, but they fail to generate revenue to cover their expenses. With increasing tourist arrivals in Hong Kong, the unpleasant financial report from the museums means that the goals of both museums and tourism are unfulfilled. Museums' role as tourism products has not been realized in Hong Kong. Johnson and Thomas (1998) find that innovation and technology are key elements for generating revenues and cutting costs in the museums industry. Thus, innovation and technology factors should also be taken into consideration. In addition, developing cultural assets as tourism products requires perspectives from tourism. This research should provide an insight into managing museums as tourism products that offer meaningful experiences to visitors.

Method

Given the importance of embracing the concepts of tourism products in the museums industry, this study aims first to identify the challenges and constraints for tourism operators in trying to develop museums as tourism products. By doing so, this study seeks to find ways for museums to generate revenues and to cut costs by using Hong Kong as a case study. To achieve this, a qualitative approach is adopted, employing in-depth interviews to identify the potential challenges and solutions to developing museums as tourism products. Interviews are conducted with tourism stakeholders, including cultural tour operators, tour guides, Hong Kong Tourist Board (HKTB) experts, governors and scholars.

In total, 20 respondents participated in our research, eight females and 12 males ranging in age from 35 to 70. They included three tourism office executives, two tourism guides, one cultural tourism guide, five tourism professors, one congressman for the tourism sector, five tourism operators, two tourism leaders and one adviser to the tourism trade association. Interviews ran from 25 to 35 minutes and were conducted in either English or Cantonese. All data were recorded for backup. Pseudonyms were used to ensure the anonymity of all participants.

The analysis of qualitative data involves data reduction, data display and the drawing of conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In data reduction, one attempts to identify categories, themes and concepts emerging from the data. Data display refers to the organization of categories and themes. Finally, conclusions are drawn by constantly comparing data.

In this study, the researcher began by inductively open coding the data. The researcher carefully and minutely read all transcripts line-by-line and word-by-word to determine the concepts and categories that fit the data, as suggested by Strauss (1987). This open coding allows meaningful categories to emerge from that data being examined. Next, axial and selective coding are employed to transform codes into categories, labels or themes. Bayatzis (1998) refers to this process as thematic analysis. The coded data is reduced so that it can be categorized. Themes are generated inductively from raw material

Lofland et al. (2006) address the importance of memo writing in developing themes. Therefore, the researcher frequently interrupted the coding to write a theoretical note. Themes were developed through reviewing and revising the code in the context of the nature of the raw information. To ensure consistency of judgement, codes were developed at different points in time to revise them. Moreover, themes were double-checked to ensure every theme contained information from various respondents. Both common and distinct features were addressed (Bayatzis, 1998). To enhance the trustworthiness of this study, member checking was applied for a short summary of themes to ensure the analysis was based on interviewees' views and thus confirm the trustworthiness of the study (Maxwell, 2005).

Findings

Challenges in developing Hong Kong museums into tourism products

Low Attractiveness of Hong Kong Museums

All participants indicated the low attractiveness of Hong Kong museums. The major revenue for museums is from their admission fee. Museums are often promoted by the government as an education tool to its residents. Thus, local people represent a significant revenue generator for local museums. However, interviewees often mentioned that Hong Kong residents are not interested in visiting museums.

The normal exhibitions are always the same. Many schools nowadays organize different trips to museums in Hong Kong. So, when young kids grow up they are less likely to enter museums again. – Penny

Tourism operators mention that most teenagers or young adults are unlikely to pay attention to explanations in museums. They feel that exhibitions are similar to what they saw 10 years ago. They feel boring. Thus, it seems that the educational purpose of museums needs to be enhanced by attracting people to listen.

In relation to the low novelty of Hong Kong museums' exhibitions, Hong Kong residents seem to have relatively low interest in art, history and culture. Moreover, the development of Hong Kong museums is still in the beginning stage. Interviewees showed that transforming museums into products is a big challenge.

It is really hard, I think. Although society is promoting museums to educate Hong Kong residents, there is a long way to go. Hong Kong is famous for its economic development, not for its art and culture. If I lived in Paris, I might go to museums more often. It is part of the culture there. – Robert

In addition to this, the market appeal of Hong Kong's museums is relatively mediocre compared to other places famous for their museums. Most respondents add that museums in Hong Kong belong to at least secondary attractions, meaning that when Hong Kong promotes how unique it is, its museum sectors clearly are not a point to represent this, or not yet at least. Some people mentioned that the richness of local culture is relatively low and thus it is hard to attract long-haul tourists. An example is:

I feel there is nothing special to see in Hong Kong's museums. What we have in the museums are mostly local things. And I also feel Hong Kong's museums are not very special compared, for example, to Macau. So why should people come to our museums? We need to give them a reason. And currently, the reason in Hong Kong is not that strong, to be honest. – Anna

When asking the governor about the development of museums, he accepted the above and explained that the limited space in Hong Kong also influences its museums' development:

Hong Kong always has a problem of limited space. This influences many industries in Hong Kong. The development of museums needs a lot of space, which Hong Kong does not have, especially in the downtown area. – David

The fact that Mainland Chinese represent the major tourist market for Hong Kong also influences its museums' development. Many respondents mentioned that the main purpose for Mainland tourists to travel to Hong Kong is shopping. The average length of stay in Hong Kong is around four days. They do not have much time to go to museums. In addition, museums in Hong Kong are non-profit making organization; bringing Mainland tourists to museums cannot generate any profits for travel agencies. Therefore, most travel agencies do not take tours to museums. In addition to this, heritage tour operators explain museums' low revenue:

I take my specialized heritage tour to museums. Often there are less than five people in the group. They are normally accompanied by a specialized cultural tour guide. We charge our clients a relatively high price for the high quality of cultural experiences we provide. But for museums, we only pay, for example, 10 Hong Kong dollars. Most of our clients are oversea visitors. – Wendy

Generally speaking, the drawing power of Hong Kong museums is relatively low. The local culture and art is still in a developing stage. Thus, it is often hard to attract tourists and local residents.

Furthermore, another big challenge in developing museums as tourism products is government policy. An HKTB officer often mentioned that there are many restrictions on museums. These restrictions are illustrated as below.

Cultural and tourism dilemma of Hong Kong's museums

All respondents from the HKTB stated that cooperation between HKTB and museums needs to be enhanced because HKTB is actively promoting museums to tourists as well as residents. However, museums are more likely to promote themselves as cultural assets rather than attractions for tourists. This clear difference has certain impacts. Firstly, treating museums purely as cultural or educational entities places restrictions on many activities. The tourism policy maker stated that:

Museums are non-profit organizations under the Hong Kong government; any profit oriented activity is prohibited. – David

HKTB respondents felt that this policy hinders many potential activities, including educational activities and revenue generation for museums. One HKTB manager made a suggestion:

I have some clients from the Middle East who would like to enter museums after opening hours so that they can have a unique and quiet environment to learn about Hong Kong's culture. They offer a high price, but museum operators flatly refuse. They feel that museums should be open to everyone equally. They are losing a chance to cover their expenses as well as to educate people about Hong Kong. – Viola

Conventional thinking among museum operators seems to close doors for them as well as for potential collaborators. In addition, both HKTB respondents and tour operators felt that Hong Kong museum operators are generally ignorant of the current trends in tourism.

Examples are shown below:

The Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibitions (MICE) industry becomes a trend in Hong Kong. We often receive requests from clients who want to hold a special event in a museum. Museum operators do not think this is a good idea, even

though most events are held in the low season or outside of museums' normal opening hours. – Robert

Collaborators have often asked us whether they could do some sponsorship marketing inside museums. They would like to do something to help promote Hong Kong culture as well as to improve their image. Again, the response is always a 'no' from the museum. They often tell us that museums are cultural assets, not products. – Sandra

The above examples show that museum operators do not realize the potential benefits that tourism would like to provide.

Possible ways to generate revenue for museums as tourism products

In developing Hong Kong's museums into tourism products, the main objective is to satisfy tourists' needs. The following explains this in detail.

Enhancing tourists' experiences and attractive themes

Enhancing experiences is a key idea to provide reasons for people to visit museums. A variety of available experiences lengthens the time people spend in museums, thus increasing the overall experience of learning from museums.

Respondents suggested that masterpieces or unique exhibitions are essential:

The Terracotta Army exhibition during the summer of 2012 was a great success. It not only attracted many local people, but also a lot of tourists from nearby regions. It was fun, interesting and meaningful. – Dan

Some respondents felt that it is hard to find such unique exhibitions in Hong Kong itself. Some thought there are possibilities to show Hong Kong's uniqueness:

When Hong Kong was returned to China, every province in China gave a special gift to Hong Kong to celebrate the handover. Those gifts are masterpieces from different parts of China, but they are rarely seen together. Currently, these pieces are scattered across several museums in Hong Kong. I suggest we should bring them together. – Anna

One of the challenges for Hong Kong's museums with their fixed exhibitions, as mentioned previously, is that people have little reason to make repeat visits. Thus, some respondents suggested that museums in Hong Kong should change their exhibitions or provide interesting workshops to stimulate repeat visitation. They could also provide special themed exhibitions during festivals.

HKTB is currently organizing a lot of events for different festivals. Museums could also take part in these activities. – Patrick

Different tourists require different services. Some respondents suggested that tailor-made niche museums tours organized by museums could give tourists an in-depth understanding of their exhibits and generate revenue:

Most tour guides who bring tours to museums are not specialized in museums and culture. Their delivery is limited or even wrong. In addition, most tours are large and organized by travel agencies. I feel tailor-made tours would be great. Museums have lots of experts who understand culture and their museums. It would also a good opportunity to earn some revenue for museums. – Wendy

The tourism leader emphasized that due to the success of filmmaking and staged experience and patriotic nostalgia, there is great potential for the territory to design a thematic performance and exhibition relating to anti-drug heroes like Lin Zexu using museums' existing facilities. The movie star Jacky Chan, who has been an ambassador for tourism in Hong Kong and has produced films about that period, could be consulted on this idea. More resources should be used to elaborate the idea, such as a consultation study. Someone like Jacky Chan would certainly ensure strong local and Mainland China demand for such a well-staged tourism product since it combines attractive elements – tourism, exhibitions, education and patriotism. Maritime-related museums are a potential site to be retro-fitted for the suggested theme.

Another interviewee suggested that Hong Kong should capitalize on its assets – the English language and show experience – to develop cultural products in museums. For

instance, most existing knowledge about acupuncture, which is a well-known and ancient traditional medical practice in China, has been confined to the Chinese language. Given the strong training in the English language and stage experience in Hong Kong, Hong Kong people are in a better position to translate, interpret and stage such a cultural product and put it in cultural museums. Provision of exhibitions, shows and trial experiences of acupuncture in museums could be unique attractions for western tourists. Of course, support from local government and traditional Chinese medical associations would be necessary.

Make policy more flexible

Most tourism stakeholders felt that restrictions are the biggest challenge. They thus strongly suggested that the government should make policy more flexible:

I think policy restricts lots of possibilities. It seems that policy assumes that profit oriented is wrong. Why can we not have a win-win situation? The world is changing, but the government still decides what can be done. – Sandra

Almost all respondents stated that if government policy became more flexible, museums could rent their big spaces to business. They could seek sponsorship from business. They also could cooperate with business for special events. This would be mutually beneficial to museums and business.

Other suggestions

Most respondents mentioned that well-designed souvenirs, restaurants and so on provide different sources of revenue to museums in Hong Kong. Differentiated prices could also be useful, as used by other countries:

Egypt designates different prices for locals and tourists. This is a useful idea for Hong Kong. – Des

Possible methods to cut costs for museums as tourism products

Most tourism experts feel that it is hard for them to think about cost cutting for museums. Their major expertise is in promoting and designing tourism products. Some, however, offer a few valuable suggestions from the tourism perspective. Firstly, like most tourism products, museums suffer from seasonality. It was commonly agreed by respondents that seasonal opening of certain parts of exhibitions might help to lower costs. Technology was mentioned by some respondents. They often felt that successful examples of tourism and hospitality properties might also be applicable to museums. For example:

Hotels also have high fixed costs, as museums do. Recently, lots of hotels have been trying to cut their costs with an environmentally friendly approach. For example, they invest in high technology to recycle and lower the expense of air conditioning. I think this might also be an option for museums. – Tom

Discussion and Conclusions

This study illustrates the challenges and constraints for tourism stakeholders in developing Hong Kong museums as tourism products as well as providing methods to make museums as successful tourism products. By doing this it also could help Hong Kong museums to solve their deficit problem. Revenue generation and cost cutting strategies are thus noted for highlighting the mutual benefits of tourism and cultural asset management.

This study confirms that tourism stakeholders are more receptive to new ideas and approaches (Silberberg, 1995). In contrast, changing the perceptions of museum operators is a big obstacle to the redesigning of museums as tourism products. It is surprising that conventional thinking has been governed by museums policy in Hong Kong. This ensures that museum operators have the power to reject any profit-making activities inside museums. This discourse thus builds a dichotomy between museums and tourism, with museums has more powers to decide what they want to offer to tourism. This unequal relationship thus becomes the biggest challenges to tourism stakeholders in Hong Kong. It indicates policy should therefore be more flexible to adapt to the social changes brought about by tourism.

Tourism potential of Hong Kong museums is relatively low, because of low novelty of Hong Kong museums' exhibition, stereotypes of Hong Kong and low visitation from both tourists and local residents

It is obvious that local residents should be a major source of potential visitors for museums in Hong Kong. Fun and more frequent unique exhibitions will increase visitation from local residents as well as educate them with cultural activities. Hong Kong's image has always been that of an economically driven city. Hong Kong is eager to add cultural products to diversify their images. Therefore, museum as well as cultural tourism visitation should be improved in Hong Kong since these assets are important for local residents to understand their own culture (Akbulut & Artvinli, 2011).

It is commonly found that unique experiences are considered desirable by both locals and tourists. Also, active visitation is replacing the traditional passive visitation. Therefore, innovation, creativity and high technology should be considered in order to deliver a special museum experience.

Limitations and future research

From a methodological point of view, qualitative study entails certain limitations. Qualitative research focuses on a small amount of individual people's ideas. Representative bias might therefore exist and findings are to be viewed bearing this limitation in mind. In addition, this research only focuses on tourism stakeholders. It might be interesting to provide views of both museum and tourism personnel in evaluating the tourism value of museums. In addition, the measurement here depends greatly on the researchers' judgement, meaning that researcher bias is a potential issue. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research is thus recommended to provide more relevant suggestions. Moreover, this study indicates that tourism operators are not

able to advise on cost cutting for museums. Future research is suggested in order to fully understand how to cut museums' expenses.

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