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Brand Management in Cultural Institution

Study case : Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

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Abstract

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The objective of this thesis is to assess the importance of brand management in cultural institutions, through the research question “What are the main challenges that cultural institutions face in terms of brand management, and how can it play a crucial role in solving these challenges?”

Only qualitative and descriptive research was used in this dissertation, and the research data all came from secondary research. Although this method presents limitations in reliability and validity of the results, it offers important information for understanding current trends and strategies in brand management in cultural institutions.

The first part of the thesis is a comprehensive literature review, which defines the important terms of the subject, explains the history of brand management, and highlights the main challenges facing cultural institutions. The case study analysed in this thesis is that of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. By examining brand management strategies implemented by the Guggenheim, this research shows how effective brand management can strengthen reputation, build loyalty, and generate revenue.

The results of this research show the importance of a strategic and solid approach to brand management in cultural institutions.

Keywords: Brand Management, Cultural Institution, Museum, Branding, Guggenheim

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1 Introduction

For centuries, cultural institutions have played a very important role in the preservation and promotion of culture, art, and history. However, rapid social and economic changes have led to a significant transformation in the way people interact with culture.

In this context of rapid transformation, cultural institutions face a series of complex and important challenges, obstacles, and objectives. The rise of digital technology has disrupted traditional models of cultural consumption, with the emergence of new online platforms and interactive virtual experiences. These changes have altered public expectations, and also posed crucial questions about how institutions can remain relevant and accessible in a changing cultural landscape.

Faced with this constantly changing world and these challenges, the leaders of these institutions are forced to adopt management techniques, despite the reluctance often expressed by artistic administrators. Brand management is emerging as one of the essential management techniques for cultural institutions. By creating a unique identity and actively communicating with their audiences, institutions can not only attract attention and engagement, but also position themselves as essential players in today's society.

The choice of this theme stems from the growing importance of brand management within cultural institutions. Although traditionally associated with the commercial sector, brand management today plays a crucial role in the cultural domain.

This thesis therefore aims to analyze in depth the main challenges facing cultural institutions in terms of brand management and to explore how it can play a crucial role in their resolution. By highlighting best practices, emerging trends and those to avoid, this research aims to provide concrete strategic recommendations for professionals in the cultural sector.

The literature review constitutes an essential step in this research because it will make it possible to draw up an exhaustive inventory of current knowledge in the field of brand management applied to cultural institutions. By exploring academic works, case studies, books and articles, this literature review will shed light on the challenges faced by those in this field, as well as the most effective strategies to address them.

The research methodology adopted in this thesis is of paramount importance, as it will guide the exploration of the challenges of brand management in the context of cultural institutions, through a case study about the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

Three different points are studied. First, the current perception of the Guggenheim Bilbao, the importance of the museum in the cultural life of Bilbao, and how this contributes to shaping its overall cultural identity. Next, the challenges faced by the museum in terms of brand management, and how these challenges impact its brand management strategy. Finally, the importance of brand management in resolving these challenges as well as strengthening the reputation of the museum, improving its attractiveness to the public and maintaining its leading position in the cultural field.

These different subjects provide elements of discussion, and make it possible to answer the research question: “What are the main challenges that cultural institutions face in terms of brand management, and how can it play a crucial role in resolving these challenges?”

2 Literature Review

This literature review provides the basis for understanding the subject of this thesis. First of all, this chapter begins with an explanatory section of important words for understanding the subject. Next comes a short section on the history of brand management. After that, there is a section focused on the conflict caused by the presence of brand management in cultural institutions. The following section focuses on the reasons why brand management is increasingly present in cultural institutions. Finally, the last section discusses what this represents as an advantage for cultural institutions.

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 Culture

Today, the term “culture” admits a plurality of meanings and multiple uses. It is thus used in the most varied fields and makes it possible to designate very dissimilar phenomena (Verdure, C., 2003). In our case, from an economic point of view, culture can be defined as a set of values, traditions, knowledge, and practices shared within a given society or community. This definition encompasses artistic activities, intellectual productions, customs, lifestyles, languages, beliefs, and behaviors that characterize a specific human group.

2.1.2 Cultural Institutions

Cultural institutions are institutions whose recognized mission is to engage in the conservation, interpretation, and dissemination of cultural, scientific, and environmental knowledge, and to promote activities intended to inform and educate citizens on associated aspects culture, history, science, and the environment (Maletkovic, M., 2021). Examples of cultural institutions are museums, libraries, historical or botanical societies, and community cultural centers. [...] As such, cultural institutions are important actors in the promotion of

cultural understanding, intercultural dialogue, and cultural diversity, as well as in the transmission of culture between generations (Maletkovic, M., 2021).

2.1.3 Brand

Today, everything can be considered a brand, they are omnipresent in our world. A brand is something physically present, which can be recognized, touched, and felt. According to The Economic Times (2023), a trademark serves to differentiate *“a product from other similar products and allows it to charge a higher price, in exchange for a clear identity and greater confidence in its function”*. But a brand can also be related *“to a living being [with] an identity and a personality, a name, a culture, a vision, an emotion and an intelligence”*.

2.1.4 Branding

Branding is quite complicated to define because many definitions exist, and everyone has their own. For example, Keller (1993) describes branding as creating awareness, reputation, and importance, while Keller and Lehmann (2006) define branding as differentiating products and services designed to satisfy the same demand. According to Mogaji (2021), branding is a verb. *“It is a “doing” word—it describes an action taking place—branding. It is a process. Branding is a marketing practice in which a brand owner (not necessarily a company) takes responsibility for enhancing the experience of those they engage with. [...] The on-hold music when you phone the store, the staff uniform and shop layout are all branding strategies. A beautiful logo is part of that experience, albeit just visual. Branding is the act of shaping how a company, organization or individual is perceived.”*

2.1.5 Brand Management

Brand management is about overseeing the creation of a brand. It appears in many different, often complex, forms. It is a creative and intentional branding effort, aimed at delivering value and creating positive perceptions among stakeholders. This process generates profits over time, representing a

long-term commitment to differentiate the brand and attract and retain users. Brand management bridges the gap between the brand (the name, the physical element) and the branding (the action, the process). It ensures adding value to the brand through the creative process. Brand image does not result from chance, it is the product of a process orchestrated by a team dedicated to brand management. According to Mogaji (2021), *“brand management is a hands-on task, which involves monitoring the brand regularly to understand how well it is doing compared to competitors and measuring and evaluating the brand’s performance. [...] It involves working with other marketing stakeholders to plan and implement the advertising campaign. Brand management, however, depends on branding.”*

2.1.6 Applied To Cultural Institutions

For many years, we have been talking about brand culture, which is the representation of a brand within the cultural heritage of a country. This term invented by Daniel Bô, founder of the QualiQuanti research institute, reveals the omnipotence that certain brands have managed to obtain over time (Ynov Campus, n.d.l).

- a. “Brand,” in the context of cultural institutions, represents the distinctive identity and overall perception associated with a specific cultural entity, such as a museum, art gallery, or culturally focused educational institution. It encompasses not only the name and logo, but also the experiences, artistic values, cultural heritage, and community involvement of the institution.
- b. Branding for cultural institutions involves deliberately shaping the image of the institution. This includes visual communication, educational programs, exhibitions, events, and public interactions. Cultural branding aims to establish an emotional connection with the public, to promote cultural accessibility and to position the institution as a dynamic place of artistic and intellectual discovery.

- c. Brand management for cultural organizations involves strategic coordination and aims to maintain and strengthen the cultural identity of the organization. This includes protecting reputations, building partnerships, promoting diverse programming, managing with stakeholders, and accommodating social arts developments. Cultural brand management aims to ensure the continued relevance of the institution within the community it serves.

2.1.7 Brand-Equity

Brand equity is the additional value that a recognizable brand name adds to a product or service offering (Qualtrics, 2022). This concept translates into the fact of promoting your brand using studies and communication campaigns and brand experience management strategies. According to David Aaker, theorist and professor specializing in marketing strategies for brands, brand equity results from the combination of 5 factors:

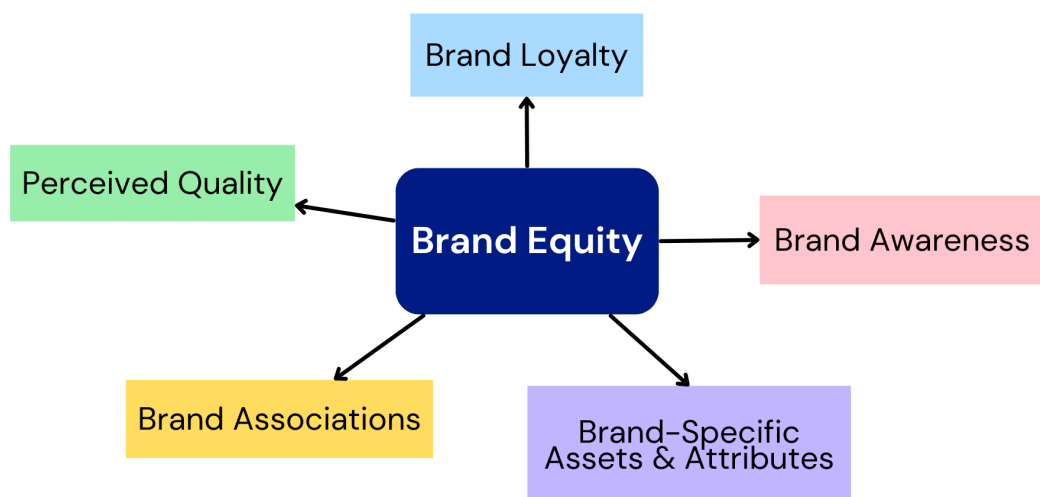


Figure 1. Five factors of Brand-Equity (Author's interpretation of Aaker model, 1990)

2.2 Where Does This Come From

2.2.1 The Origins Of Branding

Brand comes from the Proto-Germanic “brandaz” which means to burn, and originally referred to the red-hot iron brand affixed to livestock to allow the owner to be recognized at first glance and are therefore the ancestors of logos. Just as, since Antiquity, merchants and craftsmen used specific markings to distinguish their creations. Since the beginning of human history, an idea of property, as well as a trademark and recognition, has been at the heart of commercial exchanges (De Coster, M., 2022).

2.2.2 The Industrial Revolution And Its Impact

During the 18th and 19th centuries, society evolved. A lot. People face industrialization, mass production, population movements. Companies must learn to impose themselves because competition is becoming more present than ever before. One way to do this is to make yourself recognizable to the public. This gives rise to the idea of trademark. Patents are therefore no longer the only ones to be registered, trademarks are in turn, including their names, slogans, and illustrations (De Coster, M., 2022).

2.2.3 Advertising Appeared

Companies quickly realize that it is not enough just to register their trademark and affix it to their products to make themselves known. It was now essential to show off, to be noticed in the public eye. At this time, advertisements became essential means of communication. The main focus was on printed media, particularly in the written press. Advertisements could vary in size, but it quickly became crucial that they were easily recognizable as being associated with a particular brand. The logo, the chosen typography, the use of recurring keywords from one publication to another. All of this already constituted the foundations of branding at that time. In the 1920s, it was radio's turn to broadcast advertisements, and 20 years later television took over by broadcasting an

advertisement before a baseball game. At this point, brands start thinking about branding in terms of sounds and moving images (De Coster, M., 2022).

2.2.4 The Importance Since The 50s

Like everything in our society, branding must adapt to its evolution. As leisure grows in importance, car travel becomes commonplace and people seek to broaden their horizons, advertisements are being forced to take a more ambitious approach. Giant billboards are appearing, posters in the metro are multiplying, and packaging is no longer just practical, it is also becoming daring. Until now, branding was certainly used to recognize a brand, but above all it had an informative value, as evidenced by the first advertisements for Coca-Cola which highlighted the benefits of the drink. The 1950s marked the real beginning of market and consumer research. From now on, advertisements will seek to play on emotion, to create a connection with the public (De Coster, M., 2022).

2.2.5 Today,

Branding has evolved under the name brand management since it is a task in its own right to govern the image of a brand. It has further developed with the internet, social networks, and associated technologies. But the fundamental idea of branding from Antiquity has remained the same: to make yourself known and recognized (De Coster, M., 2022).

2.3 The Contradiction Between Controversy and The Omnipresence of Brand Management

Numerous articles and research work show us a great contradiction between the controversy that exists in the presence of brand management in cultural institutions and the omnipresence of brand management in our society for several centuries, even if it was not called as that at that time.

Élodie Cao-Carmichael de Baiglie-Chabroux in her article *“Personnaliser la bibliothèque. Construire une stratégie de marque et augmenter sa réputation*

#44” (2018) presents the perfect example of the omnipresence of brand management in our society for several centuries. She explains to us that when Vincent Van Gogh died, Theo, the brother of the deceased, was so devastated that he died a few months later, without having succeeded in making his brother's work known, which was ignored during his lifetime. When Theo dies, his wife Johanna discovers the fraternal correspondence, which she finds dazzling. She then sets herself a challenge: to discover the work of her brother-in-law, to put writings and paintings into perspective. Johanna Van Gogh carried out a long process of promoting Van Gogh's work: bringing together his works, exhibiting them, and showing them to as many people as possible. We all know Van Gogh – the artist – thanks to Johanna Van Gogh and her marketing and brand management activity.

Despite this type of example which proves to us that brand management and marketing have always existed in the cultural environment, the presence of brand management in cultural institutions still raises many virulent debates.

This was also shown during the speech by Isabelle Giordano, general director of UniFrance Films and journalist, during the Forum d'Avignon in Bordeaux in spring 2016, who during the introduction the debates and questions she experienced years ago and which are still relevant today, she answers: *“Advancing the world of culture and the world of business. Mix culture and economy (...), so that the artist and the manager could mix without it being a bad word. These were debates that I had when I was a student and they have not progressed much in 20 years.”* (Chabroux, E., pp. 1, 2018).

During this same event and during an interview given to a local newspaper, La Tribune, the general director of the association, Laure Kaltenbach, spoke of the pessimistic and fatalistic reactions she was confronted with during the birth of the project by quoting: *“When we submitted the idea of combining culture and economy, some responded to us: we cannot reconcile two irreconcilables.”* (Chabroux, E., pp. 1, 2018).

The historical example of Johanna Van Gogh demonstrates that brand management, in different forms, has always been present in artistic promotion. However, controversy persists, as evidenced by current debates in cultural institutions.

2.4 The Reasons For This Change

Following case studies carried out on the commercial practices of museums, Bayart and Benghozi (1993) show the changes in the way of managing the brands of cultural institutions have their roots, from the 1970s, in the introduction of commercial activities, the decline in state subsidies and the increased search for self-financing. This will lead to a diversification and complexity of the missions of cultural institutions, their objectives, their audience, their production and consequently to a modification of their identity. Over the past thirty years, this radical change in the brand management of cultural institutions has been felt more and more for various reasons. The brand audit for cultural institutions by Carsten Baumgarth, Marina Kaluza, and Nicole Lohrisch gives us a rather explicit list of these different factors: *“Museums, operas, theaters and other institutions in the artistic field are fighting for their survival due to financial pressures from the public sector, increasing competition with other cultural institutions and leisure activities and decreasing numbers of spectators/visitors”* (e.g., *Deutscher Bühnenverein 2012; EGMUS 2013; Kolb 2005*)

2.4.1 Financial Pressures In The Public Sector.

The issues of underfunding are well known, and the repercussions are felt in different aspects: conservation, collection management, research, development of the offer and outreach (Provost, G., 2019). Moreover, for three decades, it is neoliberal economic logic that has dictated their development. Consequently, issues related to financial self-sufficiency appear to be priorities. The so-called “traditional” museum is therefore gradually transforming into a cultural enterprise which operates according to communicational and commercial logics (Provost, G., 2019). In this context, brand management becomes a key strategy to

maximize spending efficiency. It consists of creating a strong and distinctive identity that attracts and retains the public, thus making it possible to optimize the impact of cultural investments.

2.4.2 Growing Competition

In a context where cultural institutions must compete with other players in the field of leisure, the imperative of differentiation becomes essential. Thus, brand management acts as an essential strategic lever to stand out and shine in a saturated market. Establishments are striving to forge memorable and attractive brands, capable of attracting the attention and loyalty of an increasingly varied and demanding audience.

2.4.3 The Drop In The Number Of Spectators And Visitors

It also constitutes a worrying reality that motivates this change. Cultural institutions are struggling to attract and retain audiences in a world where the way we consume culture is rapidly changing. Branding can help reignite interest by rebranding institutions and creating cultural experiences that match changing public expectations. By focusing on building a strong cultural brand, institutions hoped to reverse the downward trend by establishing a lasting emotional connection with their audiences. Recently, especially since the end of the pandemic, it is possible to see that this system works very well. Since we see, for example, that in France, in 2023, attendance at museums and cultural places will increase by 11.29% compared to 2022. But it is also 9.78% more than before the pandemic, in 2019, 85% more than in 2016, and almost 143% more than in the early 2000s (Admin, 2024).

Attendance to museums & cultural places in France							
	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2016	2004
Numbers of visitors (in Millions)	109.514	98.401	47.764	34.338	99.230	59.701	45.621
Evolution compared to the previous year (%)	+11.29	+106.01	+39.1	-65.6	+67.22	+30.86	

The figures for 2004 and 2016 come from an Excel provided by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, and the General Directorate of Heritage. Figures from 2019 to 2023 come from the Innovation and Culture Club.

Figure 2. Attendance to museums and cultural places in France

2.4.4 Technological Advances

They are also a powerful driver of this change. Technological advances have completely changed how people engage with culture, forcing cultural institutions to adjust and try new approaches (Hambersin, M., 2016). Brand management then becomes an important tool for integrating these innovations, whether with a dynamic online presence, captivating digital experiences, or impactful cultural marketing strategies on social media. By leveraging branding, institutions aim to stay current and interesting in an increasingly digital cultural world.

2.4.5 The Desire For Greater Social And Cultural Relevance

It is the last key motivation for this major change in the brand management of cultural institutions (Faster Capital, 2024). They want to play an important role in society. They no longer simply want to be places for the conservation and presentation of arts and culture, but also to take an active and meaningful role within society with the aim of inspiring, educating, and bringing about positive social change. To do this, they use brand management as a strategy to clearly convey their mission, values and contribution to culture and society. By defining who they are and connecting with current social issues, they strengthen their position as essential cultural actors, thus attracting more attention from the public and potential partners.

2.5 The Added Value

Despite the reluctance of conservatives to brandish cultural institutions, this brings some long-term added value. The Franco-Swiss public relations agency, L'Oeil du Public, helps us understand which ones (Morf, F., 2020).

2.5.1 Better Know Your Audience And Your Non-Public

This in-depth knowledge of various audiences helps to adapt communication strategies and adjust the perceived image to the one it wishes to project so that the result is more relevant. A better understanding of your audience also

improves the cultural experience offered. By identifying the needs and preferences of the public, institutions can design more relevant and engaging programs and initiatives, thereby enriching the interaction between the public and the culture offered. For example, the Louvre Museum in Paris has succeeded in retaining its visitors by offering an immersive experience through interactive exhibitions and educational activities adapted to different audiences. In addition, this information provides a valuable guide for managing the image of the institution. By thinking about the messages sent and how they are perceived, institutions can shape an authentic and attractive image, thereby strengthening their position in the cultural landscape.

2.5.2 Create A Memorable And Positive Experience

When visitors walk through the doors of a cultural institution, their ultimate goal is to have a unique experience, transporting them out of their daily routine. At each stage of the journey leading a potential visitor to participate in a performance or discover an exhibition, it is imperative to put measures in place and present a coherent message that promotes an immersive experience. It is this positive experience that will encourage visitors to return and become ambassadors of the institution within their social network, thus creating a virtuous circle.

2.5.3 Develop A Lasting Relationship With Your Audience

If the experience is significant, it allows the cultural institution to maintain contact, which is vital to consolidate its notoriety and maintain its image. For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which maintains constant contact with its audience through online initiatives such as virtual tours, educational videos, and live discussions with curators. This notion of relationship with audiences took on increased importance in the context of the health crisis, where in-person experiences were limited. It was therefore necessary to find new ways of communicating, particularly via social networks, in order to maintain this vital link with the public. For example, the Musée d'Orsay in Paris has maintained active

engagement with its public by offering virtual tours on Instagram and encouraging online experience sharing.

2.5.4 Create A Unique Identity

This distinctive identity allows an institution to position itself in a clear and recognizable manner in the mind of the public and will therefore allow the institution to stand out from other institutions. For example, the Guggenheim Museum has successfully created a unique identity by combining its bold architecture with innovative exhibitions, allowing it to become an iconic cultural destination. However, a unique identity goes beyond simple aesthetics. It also encompasses the values, mission, and vision of the institution. For example, the Smithsonian Institution in the United States is known for its commitment to education, research, and preservation, which helps shape its distinct identity as a guardian of American culture and history.

2.6 Preliminary Conclusion

The Cambridge Dictionary defines “Preliminary” as something *“coming before a more important action or event, especially [to] introduce or prepare for it”*. He also explains that the “Conclusion” represents *“the last part of something”*.

A preliminary conclusion of a thesis is a summary of the findings and results of the study at one point in time, usually before the final analysis or full interpretation of the data is completed.

For the subject of my thesis, at this stage, we can conclude that brand management is emerging as an essential tool in the evolution of cultural institutions.

Its importance demonstrates that cultural promotion is not limited to preserving the past but requires strategic adaptation to contemporary challenges. Despite concerns about excessive commercialization, brand management remains

crucial to ensuring the longevity and relevance of cultural institutions, regardless of their size.

It is obvious that brand management offers cultural institutions the possibility of strengthening their visibility and popularity, without having to change their main identity. On the contrary, it can help them communicate to the public more effectively who they are and what sets them apart, while attracting new audiences.

In summary, no matter the size of the cultural institution, they must do brand management because it has become an essential tool to guarantee their sustainability and visibility in a saturated media landscape.

3 Research Methodology

This chapter reviews the different types of existing research methodologies and approaches, in order to explain and justify the author's methodological choice for this thesis. Additionally, limitations that could impact the study are noted, as these are factors that can influence the results and potentially make it less professional or academic.

3.1 To Research

Before we begin to discuss the different types of research methods available for writing a thesis, it is essential to clarify what the word “research” implies. The main goal of a thesis is to share, in written form, our knowledge with other people. Knowing this, a good way to define the word “research” is “a detailed study of a subject, especially with the aim of discovering (new) information or achieving (new) understanding” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.c).

3.2 Exploratory, Descriptive Or Causal Research

When starting a study or thesis, three different types of research can be chosen: exploratory research, descriptive research, and causal research. Each of them will be specifically chosen based on the desired structures, problem studies and/or thesis objectives.

Exploratory research is a methodological approach used when knowledge about a topic is limited. It aims to explore and understand phenomena, generating initial insights and ideas rather than testing predefined hypotheses. Standard methods include literature reviews, case studies, interviews and focus groups, allowing open and flexible consideration of issues (Aggarwal, C., 2024).

Conversely, descriptive research aims to describe a situation accurately and systematically, a problem, a phenomenon, a service, or a relationship between variables. It is used to identify patterns or trends in a situation rather than to determine causal relationships. This type of research can provide insight into the

specific characteristics of a large group or situation and is often used in the form of surveys, observations, or case studies (Aggarwal, C., 2024).

Causal research is different from the other two methods because it examines which variables are involved in a problem and "why" they act in a certain way. As the experiment takes place in a controlled setting, thanks to the controlled variables, it is easier to identify cause and effect among the variables. Additionally, researchers can conduct causal research at any stage of the process, although it is usually carried out in later stages once more knowledge is known about a particular topic or situation (Qualtrics, 2023).

For this thesis, descriptive research was used, since the objective is to understand the importance of brand management through the description of already existing information and research, currently scattered in different books or websites. With the aim of creating a set that allows a clear answer to the research question "What are the main challenges that cultural institutions face in terms of brand management, and how can it play a crucial role in resolving these challenges?"

3.3 Quantitative Or Qualitative Approaches

In addition to the three types of research methodologies presented in the previous sections, it is also possible to conduct research using two different approaches: quantitative and qualitative approaches.

The choice between the two methods is very structuring for the study carried out and must be made upstream. Although, the two methods can, in certain cases, be combined.

The quantitative approach corresponds to the mobilization of generally structured data on a large number of individuals (generally greater than 100). It is useful for measuring phenomena and quantifying links between different factors. The qualitative approach corresponds to the analysis of generally unstructured material (text, speech) on a small number of individuals (generally less than 100).

It is useful for gathering complex perceptions and understanding a given situation in depth (Coron, C., 2020).

For this thesis, a qualitative approach was favoured. The choice of a qualitative approach allows the experiences, perceptions and practices related to brand management in cultural institutions to be fully explored, thus providing a nuanced and detailed understanding of the subject. Indeed, the qualitative approach allows for a nuanced understanding because it leaves participants free to express themselves and provide complex details, thus offering a diversity of experiences and points of view (Gauthier, M., 2023). The objective of this study is to understand in depth the importance of brand management in the management of cultural institutions. Using a qualitative approach, the author aims to collect detailed and relevant information that will help identify the challenges faced by institutions and the most effective brand management strategies to address them.

3.4 Ethics

Ethical research practices are fundamental to the integrity of any study. It's not just about adhering to a set of rules; it is about respecting the dignity and rights of participants, ensuring the validity of research results, and maintaining public trust in scientific research (Mabou, G., Ebasone, P., Dzudie, A., 2024). These standards are not mere procedural formalities, these are essential elements in order to protect the rights of research participants, improve the validity of research, maintain academic integrity, and reduce the frequency of fraud and accidents. But it also aims to better understand the study concept, improve the study procedure from data collection to reporting, and improve the confidentiality process.

3.5 Potential Limits

Although the research data may be numerous, a thesis may nevertheless have limits in its rendering.

First of all, there is a limit in terms of bibliographic references (Paquet, P., 2022). As the thesis is literary research, the availability of documentation has an impact on the quality of the output. The lack of documentation being tangible, the interested party will have to adapt their research using the means at their disposal.

Then, there is a limit in terms of temporality. Carrying out a study at a given time corresponds only to the data collected during this time, which can be described as time t . Therefore, the answers may no longer be valid in the near future.

Finally, there is a limit in terms of subjective interpretation of the data. Interpretation of qualitative data may vary between researchers, which may result in different conclusions or subjective interpretations of the results (Paquet, P., 2022).

4 Study Case : Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

The Guggenheim Bilbao is an extension of the famous museum of modern and contemporary art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. Located in Bilbao, a city in northern Spain, the museum has become an architectural symbol since its opening in 1997. It was designed by architect Frank Gehry. The building is often considered one of the most important and influential structures in contemporary architecture (Wikipedia Contributors, 2024). The museum houses a huge collection of modern and contemporary art. It also presents temporary exhibitions as well as pieces from the Guggenheim's permanent collection.

4.1 Current Perception of The Guggenheim Bilbao

4.1.1 “The Bilbao Effect”

The museum was opened 26 years ago, since then it has become the most influential building of modern times. He gave his name to the “Bilbao effect” or “Guggenheim effect” - a phenomenon according to which cultural facilities and spectacular architecture can influence the future of a city and enable it to recover economically through culture and tourism (Moore, R., 2017). Indeed, when the project was designed, the city was implementing a much broader urban revitalization policy, and the Guggenheim Bilbao became the spearhead of the reconversion of a city, strongly affected by deindustrialization and terrorism Basque separatist, towards a tourist economy (Géoconfluences, 2024). For the architect F. Gehry, the museum had to be *“an engine of economic renewal, an agent of economic development which would appeal to a universal audience, create a positive image and strengthen self-esteem.”* (Moore, R., 2017).

Due to its undeniable success, the example of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao was very often subsequently copied, by calling on a “starchitect” - a big name in architecture - to develop a cultural project in a context of urban reconversion, with the aim of causing a “Bilbao effect” (Géoconfluences, 2024).

However, the results are uneven. Some are relative or complete failures, like the City of Culture of Santiago de Compostela by P. Eisenman in 2011, while the experience of the Center Pompidou by D. Buren in Malaga, thought of as ephemeral, was prolonged.

4.1.2 Current Branding

To define the current brand image of the Guggenheim Bilbao, this case study is based on four key elements: its strategy, its unique value, its marketing and communications tools, and its visual identity.

The Guggenheim Bilbao's current branding is based on the original New York institution while combining characteristic elements that represent its regional context and particular history.

4.1.2.1 Strategy

The Guggenheim Bilbao adopts a strategy that aims to collect and preserve modern and contemporary art, and presenting it from multiple perspectives to appeal to a wide and diverse audience. The objective of the Guggenheim Bilbao is to offer an innovative and visitor-centered experience, while highlighting its artistic heritage as well as its importance in local and international culture. This strategy integrates the museum's vision as a European leader in cultural innovation and experience creation. It plays a huge role in the development of new cultural, artistic, and educational projects for the benefit of the Guggenheim Foundation as well as the economy of the Basque Country. Furthermore, the purpose of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is formulated as follows: *"To inspire and open new perspectives through art and its values"* (Guggenheim Bilbao, n.d.i).

4.1.2.2 Unique Value

The unique value of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao lies in its ability to present modern and contemporary art in a way that goes beyond traditional boundaries, while embodying the very essence of the vitality and diversity of the Basque

Country. Its world-renowned art collection, coupled with its iconic architecture, creates a distinct and memorable experience (Guggenheim Bilbao, n.d.i).

Its value also comes from its business philosophy anchored in its fundamental principles which will thus shape its distinctive identity within the global cultural landscape. These values, which support all the museum's actions, reflect its commitment to different key points (Guggenheim Bilbao, n.d.i) :

- Art: Each work is preserved and presented with an awareness of its intangible value.
- The artistic community: The museum acts as a stimulus and a meeting place, promoting integration and collaboration with other institutions, artists, and local initiatives.
- Quality: Commitment to quality translates into a continuous search for improvement and improvement.
- Visitors: By identifying and responding to the changing needs of its visitors, the museum aims to provide an enriching and memorable experience for all.
- Education: The museum is committed to facilitating knowledge and understanding of modern and contemporary art through educational experiences adapted to all audiences.
- The economy: The Guggenheim is largely self-financing with the aim of contributing to the local and regional economy.
- Collaboration: It promotes collaboration with other museums of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, convinced of the benefits resulting from the synergies generated by relationships.

- **Society:** The museum is a symbol of the vitality of the Basque Country, contributing to urban and economic regeneration.
- **Staff:** The museum encourages a work environment based on honesty, trust, integrity, and accountability, recognizing the unique value and contributions of each individual.
- **Diversity and equality:** It is committed to promoting respect for diversity and equal opportunities for all, thus promoting an inclusive and equitable environment.

4.1.2.3 Marketing And Communication Tools

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, like most popular cultural institutions, has maintained a close relationship, for many years, with trendy communication tools such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube to promote its activity (AsierOdriozola, 2011). Since COVID-19 and the impact it has had on cultural activities requiring a physical presence, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is expanding its reach and influence through technology and digital (Microsoft Prensa, 2021). This aims to maintain interaction with visitors, schools and “Friends of the Museum”. A clear example is the #GuggenheimBilbaoLive initiative which shared 55 videos about the exhibitions and other aspects of the museum, as well as children's video workshops and dramatized storytelling sessions in English, generating 2.3 million views and over 90 000 positive interactions. With more than 2 million visits in 2020, the museum's website and social networks continue to grow, reaching 1.4 million followers on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, with a high level of interaction (Microsoft Prensa, 2021).

The Education Department of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao has started a profound digital transformation of the activities organized, significantly increasing participation. Nearly 2,000 schoolchildren participated in online activities, such as creative workshops or live virtual tours that allow primary and secondary students, national and international, to access the building as well as works from the collection and temporary exhibitions of the museum.

For the Collective of Friends of the Museum, online conferences replaced in-person visits. They address interesting and lesser-known aspects of the functioning of the Museum, such as the architecture of the Museum and the works found outside, how an exhibition is organized, the conservation of works of art, or how the building maintenance (Microsoft Prensa, 2021).

“All these videos help to build loyalty, in times of restrictions, to an essential group for the Museum who represent its roots in the closest environment,” explains Diego Cenzano, technical director of Digital Transformation (Microsoft Prensa, 2021).

Guggenheim Bilbao's marketing highlights its unique cultural offering, its commitment to innovation and its central role in the Guggenheim network. Targeted campaigns attract different audiences, while highlighting its influence in the field of contemporary art.

4.1.2.4 Visual Identity

The visual identity of the Guggenheim Bilbao is based on a recognizable logo that merges elements of the parent institution in New York with elements specific to Bilbao (Dover, C., 2013). This visual identity is displayed on all the museum's communication media, thus reinforcing its recognition and visual identity. Although the logo and the font on which it is based now appear to be an integral part of the institution's visual identity, their use as central elements of the foundation's identity is relatively recent. Over the decades, the Guggenheim's graphic presence has evolved with the foundation itself, reflecting changing styles and institutional needs.

According to Marcia Fardella, director of the Guggenheim's graphic design department, the museum previously used a mix of fonts until the late 1960s, when it adopted the current font entirely. The first identity specifically designed for the Guggenheim appears to have been developed by Vignelli Associates when the Frank Lloyd Wright building reopened in 1992 after a major renovation (Dover, C., 2013).

In 1996, Abbott Miller's Design/Writing/Research company was tasked with re-imagining Guggenheim Magazine, a publication then produced by the foundation. During the Wright Building's 50th anniversary in 2009, the Guggenheim's branding evolved further, with an inventive logo proposal based on the shape of the museum structure itself, designed by New York design firm 2×4. This capitalized logo was later used for the museum and for its website revamp (Dover, C., 2013).

4.2 Challenges Faced

4.2.1 Reputation Management

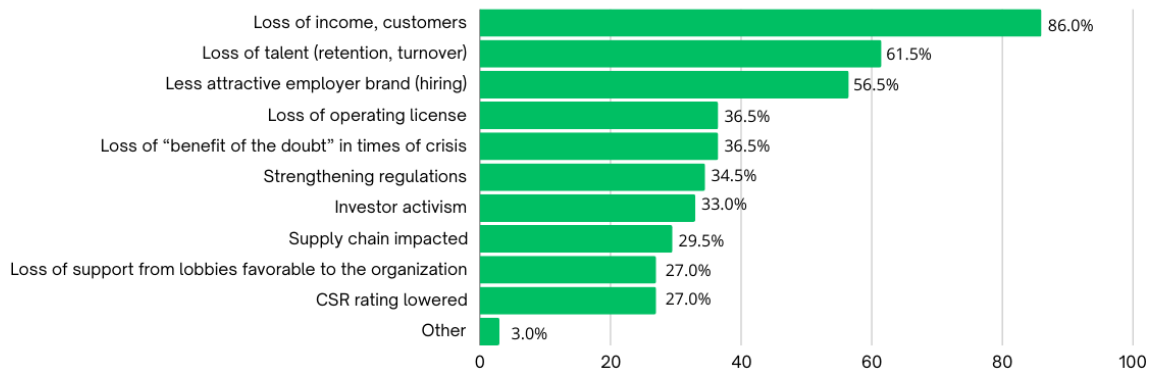
Reputation has a significant impact on business. It causes a positive or negative exponential effect (Fissi, S. Gori, E. Romolini, A., 2023).

Active reputation management and public relations play an important role in building trust and credibility with stakeholders such as consumers and investors (Bernier, V., 2024). A positive reputation can have a favourable impact on purchasing decisions, attracting new customers, and retaining existing customers. On the other hand, a lack of interest in reputation management can lead to harmful consequences, ranging from loss of customers to legal problems to lasting damage to the brand image.

According to the WTW Global Reputational Risk Management study, a majority of risk managers surveyed believe that their companies are likely to suffer significant losses due to a deterioration in their reputation (Asselin, C., 2022). Loss of revenue and customer flight are identified as the main risks arising from this reputational damage.

However, as shown in the chart, the consequences of reputational damage can impact a business as a whole. This may manifest through potential difficulties in recruiting and retaining talent, a less attractive employer brand, loss of operating licenses or stricter regulation in the sector (Asselin, C., 2022).

Impacts of a reputation crisis



Source: WTW Global Reputation Risk Management Survey Report, 2021

Figure 3. Impacts of a reputation crisis (Author's interpretation of WTW Global Reputation Risk Management Survey Report, 2021)

Identifying the challenges of preserving and enhancing the museum's reputation involves considering several aspects.

Previous research has mainly highlighted the various strategies to manage and enhance their reputation (Fissi, S. Gori, E. Romolini, A., 2023). However, each study highlights a specific aspect related to engagement, use of digital technologies or social media platforms. First of all, it is important to maintain a positive and unique image of the museum in the public's mind. Additionally, active public relations management and social media monitoring are essential to quickly respond to public concerns and comments, maintaining a favourable reputation and managing potential crises. Finally, effective management of museum reputation requires constant monitoring of brand image, regular assessment of visitor opinions, and close attention to market developments and cultural trends.

4.2.2 Evolution Of Public Expectations

The challenge for the museum lies in its ability to make its content accessible to a wider audience. This allows information related to works of art to be easier to access and usable with the aim of reinforcing its unique character to a wider audience. The objective is to remain in tune with the concerns and interests of the public, thus improving the cultural and educational impact of the establishment's exhibitions and other projects (Habib, M., Mengin, A., 2015).

With this in mind, informal education, mixing entertainment and learning, becomes important for the public, to make the experience more fun. This expectation aims to promote children's autonomy and to introduce new mediations and museographic innovations to captivate visitors of all ages. In addition, public expectations have evolved since teachers play an essential role in developing students' curiosity and their openness to the outside world, thus accentuating the educational, cultural, and pedagogical issues of school trips (Habib, M., Mengin, A., 2015).

Public expectations are also evolving towards a demand for a cultural approach and interactive experiences. Visitors want to be involved in the creation of projects and the imagination of exhibitions, and to live experiences.

Furthermore, the growing diversity of visiting methods and public interests requires constant adaptation. Visitors are looking for answers to the questions they have, as well as an experience that encourages them to think and participate in public debate (Habib, M., Mengin, A., 2015).

Innovation is therefore an important challenge to meet these changing needs.

4.2.3 Local And International Competition

How to differentiate yourself from other museums? This is one of the questions facing all these institutions. Competition, whether local or international, is one of the biggest challenges for businesses in general.

In an ever-changing cultural world, where cultural institutions are in constant competition to attract public attention and interest, and to maintain the relevance and appeal of the institution.

At the local level, the museum faces competition from other cultural institutions located in the Basque Country region and in the city of Bilbao itself, such as the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum or the Euskal Museoa Bilbao Basque Museum

(Tripadvisor, n.d.k). These local competitors can offer similar exhibitions and events to attract locals and tourists.

Internationally, the Guggenheim Bilbao also faces competition from other major cultural institutions around the world. Iconic museums in the largest cities, attracting worldwide attention, such as New York, London, Paris, Rome, and Amsterdam (Home exchange, 2023), compete to attract tourists and art lovers from around the world.

4.3 Brand Management as A Solution

4.3.1 Manage Reputation

4.3.1.1 Maintain a Positive Image

Maintaining a positive image despite challenges requires a strong reputation management strategy. The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao deploys several strategies to achieve this goal.

The museum develops and implements communication strategies, through its social networks, which reflect its values and objectives while communicating effectively with its audiences (Bernier, V., 2024). Additionally, the museum also uses its media relations to promote positive stories and manage media coverage, ensuring its image is presented favourably. It also maintains strong relationships with its key stakeholders, including customers, employees, partners, and the community, to strengthen its reputation and engagement.

The Guggenheim Bilbao conducts continuous branding monitoring online and offline, through the use of analytics tools to understand audience perceptions and adjust strategies accordingly (Bernier, V., 2024). Furthermore, this is why crisis management expertise is deployed to prepare and respond quickly and effectively to potentially damaging situations, thus minimizing the negative impact on the museum's reputation.

4.3.1.2 Example Of Controversy

Originally, when architectural plans for the museum were revealed, the building's design sparked controversy among artists and the local art community (McLaughlin, K., Waldek, S., 2023). Some artists have expressed concerns that the museum's curved walls and innovative architecture may not be suitable for displaying artwork, calling into question the functionality of the venue.

To resolve this controversy, the museum held information sessions and open discussions with artists and the community with the aim of explaining in detail its views on architecture and the unique artistic experience it brings (McLaughlin, K., Waldek, S., 2023). The museum therefore managed to allay concerns and reach stakeholders, by highlighting the aesthetic and functional aspects of the building. It was through this proactive approach that the museum turned the controversy into an opportunity to strengthen the museum's reputation.

4.3.2 Meet Public Expectations

Adapting to changing public expectations is important to maintaining the relevance and appeal of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

This offers a wide range of tickets to meet the needs of different types of customers, thus meeting the personalized needs of each visitor (Guggenheim Bilbao, n.d.g).

In addition, the Guggenheim Bilbao is implementing several loyalty programs to increase returns and strengthen ties with its different audiences. The "Follower", "Friends" and "Corporate Member" communities each offer exclusive benefits adapted to the needs and preferences of their members, such as entry without queuing, preferential tickets for certain activities, access to exclusive online content, or even enjoy trips, visits, and exclusive activities (Guggenheim Bilbao, n.d.e).

As mentioned in the previous section, public expectations have evolved enormously. More particularly, towards a more interactive access direction. This is why the Guggenheim Bilbao developed the “LEARN” educational project (Guggenheim Bilbao, n.d.h). Aimed at everyone - schools, families, adults, vulnerable communities, young artists, etc. - the educational project is organized according to the target audiences and their specific needs and interests. It encompasses a wide range of programs, activities and resources intended to raise awareness and appreciation of the Museum's artistic programming, its architecture, as well as modern and contemporary art and culture at large.

When it comes to handling visitor comments and criticism, the museum strives to take an active approach by listening carefully to visitor feedback and responding constructively. Feedback collection tools are put in place, and people are responsible for analysing the comments in order to identify the positive and negative points. This approach ensures an enriching experience for all visitors.

4.3.3 Differentiate Yourself from The Competition

Competitive differentiation is crucial for the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao to maintain its leadership position in a competitive environment.

The Guggenheim Bilbao uses consistent and striking communication strategies to highlight its exhibitions and its brand. Innovative advertising campaigns and strategic media partnerships help to strengthen the visibility and notoriety of the museum. For example, in 2018 the museum received a gold award from the Association of Advertising Media of Spain (AMPE), in the Television section, for the advertisement made on the occasion of its 20th anniversary, entitled “I come from Bilbao.” (Guggenheim Bilbao, n.d.f). In addition, this is the first time that a museum has received an AMPE award. By winning this award, it allowed the museum to strengthen its reputation as well as attract more visitors and financial support.

The museum also uses social media to promote its brand and its exhibitions. Engaging content and regular interactions with followers help maintain audience

interest and attract new visitors. For example, it puts the museum's collection online in an effort to connect with artists and art enthusiasts (Publications Office of the European Union, 2020). It also posts high-resolution videos and images of artwork to social media in collaboration with the Google Street View service and provides a community forum through Facebook, Twitter, and Google. In this way, everyone can access open cultural data online and enjoy the art of the museum.

The Guggenheim Bilbao collaborates with other cultural institutions, emerging artists, and local businesses to enrich its offering and offer unique experiences to visitors (Guggenheim Bilbao, n.d.e). By collaborating with museums or theaters, such as the Arriaga Theater, it offers, in these institutions, discounts to these visitors. It also offers benefits to local students by partnering with Basque universities. These partnerships strengthen the museum's position as an important cultural destination.

In a competitive environment, innovation is essential. The museum regularly offers exhibitions and educational programs, such as the LEARN program, to captivate and retain a diverse audience.

Finally, the Guggenheim Bilbao stands out by offering free access to those under 18 (Guggenheim Bilbao, n.d.g), which is a rare initiative in the cultural world. This accessibility policy reinforces the inclusiveness of the museum and attracts a wider audience, particularly families and young people.

5 Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis has highlighted the brand management challenges that cultural institutions face, and the essential role it plays in solving these challenges. Through an analysis of literature, case studies and existing data, the trends, practices, and strategies of these institutions could be identified.

The research method used in this study allowed for the collection and analysis of a wide range of sources. Although this approach has some advantages, particularly in terms of time and cost, it also raises questions about the reliability and validity of the results. However, by carefully selecting sources and cross-referencing data from different perspectives, we were able to alleviate these concerns and produce robust and relevant conclusions.

The results of this research have therefore highlighted several major challenges that cultural institutions face, such as increased competition, budgetary constraints and changing public expectations. These challenges are increased by the rapid evolution of digital technology. Which makes it all the more crucial for institutions to develop effective and unique brand strategies.

By observing these challenges, it was found that brand management can play an important role in solving them. Indeed, strong brand management can serve as a strong point in a saturated cultural landscape. This offers the institution a particular competitive advantage. Additionally, effective brand management can help strengthen the institution's relationship with its audience, retain visitors, and attract new market segments. Brand management also encompasses many aspects such as fundamental values, strategies and even the promotion of the institution. Therefore, to be truly effective, brand management must be integrated at all levels of the institution.

In summary, this thesis offers insight into the role of brand management in the context of cultural institutions. Through brand management, institutions can overcome current challenges and succeed in an extremely competitive cultural environment.

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