

Branding the museum

An Analysis of the new National Museum in Oslo

Beatrice Carpineta



Master's thesis in Museology and Cultural Heritage Studies (30 sp)

MUSKUL 4590

Museology and Cultural Heritage Studies

Department of Cultural Studies and Oriental Languages

University of Oslo

Spring 2021

Summary

This thesis analyzes the construction of The New National Museum in Oslo as a museum brand and investigates the process of branding within the institution.

Branding and marketing approaches are becoming increasingly common within museum management, and many world-famous museums have decided to adopt branding strategies from other fields such as retail in order to answer to the continuous changes taking place in the cultural market. Oslo is one of those cities that in the past decade has undertaken a remarkable set of urban developments, among which was the construction of a new national museum. The consolidation of the previous national art museums in Oslo therefore required changes in the branding strategy and visual profile in order to redefine the museum's identity. In addition to looking into the process of branding at the National Museum in Oslo, this thesis also aims at understanding how the new brand has been perceived by the employees at the museum and how it has influenced their work. The last point of discussion of this dissertation is to find out how national identity is incorporated and presented within the new museum building and exhibitions.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor Hugo Reinert, for his cheerful, honest and precise advice, and his dedication during those difficult months of work in the pandemic period.

I would also like to thank the employees at the National Museum who have participated in my research and provided me with precious information for this dissertation. In particular, I would like to thank Cynthia Osiecki who believed in my project and encouraged her other colleagues to take part in the interview; to Peder Valle for his engaging contribution. It is reassuring to see successful young people working in national institutions. Thanks to Gudrun Eidsvik and Catherine Lorange, whom will soon be my colleagues and supervisors, for their worthy experience within the visitor experience and communications field. Thank you also to Janne Helene Arnesen and Ellisiv Brattfjord for their participation despite of their extremely busy schedules.

Thanks to my professor and tutor Marzia Varutti, who always has been supportive over the course of the master degree, and always has been available for a discussion in difficult times. To my dearest one Xiaoran, who has infinite patience to put up with me every day, to help me and support me in good and bad times, and to proofread my work! Thanks to all my good friends in and outside of Norway, who cheered for me and gave me a laugh even during the hardest times in 2020.

Lastly, thanks to my mum, the most incredible woman I know of, who taught me to be strong and to keep looking up and forward no matter what life presents you with. And Dad, you have been with me every single day, in spirit.

Keywords

National museums, branding, museum brand, marketing, identity, museology

Table of Contents

Summary	II
Acknowledgments.....	III
Keywords.....	IV
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
<i>1.1 Det Nye Nasjonalmuseet</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>1.2 Research question</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>1.3 An historical overview of the former national museum in Oslo</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>1.4 Social relevance: why the move?</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>1.5 Structure of the thesis</i>	<i>5</i>
Chapter 2. Theoretical framework	7
2.1 Museum as brand and product: concepts of branding and marketing	7
What is a brand?.....	7
The museum brand.....	9
Short history on branding and marketing in museums	10
2.2 Identity, national museums and their audiences.....	11
What is identity?	11
National museums.....	13
Audiences.....	13
2.3 Branding and institutional change: a list of case studies	14
From theory to analysis.....	16
Chapter 3. Methodology	17
3.1 Documentation methods	17

<i>3.2 Interviews and informants selection</i>	18
<i>3.3 Informants</i>	19
<i>3.4 Interview Process and Transcription</i>	20
<i>3.5 Field work</i>	21
<i>3.6 Analysis</i>	21
<i>3.7 Research ethics</i>	22
<i>3.8 Limitations</i>	22
Chapter 4. Analysis	24
4.1 Overview of the strategy	25
4.2 Marketing, graphics and promotion	26
4.3 Unity, integrity, recognizability	30
4.4 Digitalization, collections and visitors' experience	31
4.5 Architecture and the building as a landmark	32
4.6 Identity, narratives, exhibitions, accessibility	38
Chapter 5. Discussion	44
Chapter 6. Conclusions and summary	48
Bibliography and supplementary materials	51

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Det Nye Nasjonalmuseet

Central Oslo, Rådhuset plass, and Mellomstasjonen. Walking towards the popular Aker Brygge promenade along the fjord, a new building has been erected: here, before the myriad of restaurants and cafes is the new Norwegian national museum, that with its sheer size oversees Oslo's trendy port shore. Despite the fact that the building is looking neat and new, it has not been opened yet. In fact, the new museum will officially open its doors to the public in 2022, and will unify the National Gallery, the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design and the Museum for contemporary art and the National Museum for Architecture, previously all located in different buildings¹. The museum of Architecture will be under the same management; however it will keep its original exhibition spaces at its previous location. How did the museums transform into a new unified institution? On the new National Museum's website, the project is presented with the following statement:

The new museum will be a place for new ideas, inspiration, and great cultural experiences. We will make art accessible to everyone and reflect on the society and the time we live in.

(Nasjonalmuseet.no. «Det Nye Museet»)

What were the institution's premises for "making art accessible and reflect on the society and the time we live in"? By taking this statement as the point of departure for this thesis, I will analyze the construction of the new national museum in Oslo through its branding process.

1.2 Research question

The project of consolidating the national art museums in Oslo required careful planning from the museum's management. This presented a business-like approach towards the planning, building and promotion of the institution. The approach was not found in the previous national museum(s), but it was necessary in order to redefine the museum's identity within a strategic and well-planned time frame. Therefore, the museum has been referred to as a brand due to aspects such as its clear strategy, graphic presence, a strong marketing department; it

¹ Nasjonalmuseet.no. *Om Museet*.

updated its digital content and changed its narratives and objectives much alike the way any brand works. As such, The National Museum in Oslo will be called a *brand* throughout this dissertation, while the process of consolidation will be referred to as *branding*, a term that at many points has been utilized in the museum strategy and by the informants, interviewed over the research period.

This branding process will be set within the context of institutional change, and I will focus on the following questions:

Why and how has the branding process taken place at the National Museum in Oslo? What does this process of rebranding mean for the museum?

This will be understood through the analysis of the museum's strategy documents and its brand vision for the period 2020-2025. The analysis of the museum construction and its collections will also be useful to understand what direct changes have taken place due to this branding process.

In order to bring another perspective to the analysis, I will also go on to ask:

- How is the brand perceived by the staff members working at the museum and how is the brand identity and image promoted to the audience and partners?
- What place will national identity occupy in the new museum, in its exhibition and building, and in which manner will it reflect "the new society we live in" that is described in the strategy?

I will answer these questions based on existing public material such as media and newspaper articles, strategy documents and reports, as well as using materials that I have gathered myself during the research process, such as interviews with staff at the national museum and my own analysis of the site.

1.3 An historical overview of the former national museum in Oslo

The National Museum in Oslo was established by the Norwegian state only in 2003 and it consisted of four museums, each placed in different sites: the National Gallery (Tullinløkka), the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design (Oslo city center), the Museum of Contemporary Art (in the old Norwegian bank building) and The Norwegian Museum of Architecture in the

“kvadraturen” quarter in Oslo center (Amundsen 2011, 661). Initially some of these museums such as the Decorative Art and Design Museum were privately owned, while The National Gallery and the Contemporary Art Museum belonged to the state. The sites also differed in their disparate architectural styles and the different years they were established. In 1882 the National Gallery for instance, was moved from the Royal Castle to a new building designed in neo-renaissance style: this was considered the most appropriate style for establishing a monument-temple-like building to host the national art and sculpture collections (Amundsen& Elegenius 2011, 660; Sørensen 2010, 221). Its architecture was inspired from Italian Renaissance palaces *palazzi* with very iconic details such as the crown all around the flat rooftop, big windows, and airy floor heights. Together with the high staircases indoor and multiple galleries spaces, it was meant to be easily distinguished from the neighboring offices or housing, and to be recognized as a sort of temple of culture (Sørensen 2003, 187-9). At the time, the National Gallery was exhibiting the national and international art of the period: the collections consisted, for instance, of 19th century national romantic Norwegian painters, French impressionists, and Edvard Munch’s works. As the collection grew in the 1900s, the Museum of Contemporary Art was established in 1990, aimed to display Norwegian and international artists post war from 1945 onwards. The Museum of Decorative Arts and Design was instead established in 1876, however it was relocated to a brand new and expensive building in 1904: the new site was designed in neo-baroque and Art Nouveau style, with redbrick and granite as the main façade materials (Amundsen 2011, 661). In Norway, the birth of state-funded museums played an important role in the construction of public and national values, and was greatly connected to the nation building process taking place over the course of the 1800s: at that time the museum —through its collections and its monumental architecture—was meant to propose a romanticized version of the Norwegian traditions and ideals, and to participate in the make of a common identity within the nation (Eriksen 2009: 208). During the course of the 21st century, Norway has been subject to drastic societal changes: the country has become ever more multicultural and multiethnic due to a raise in people’s migration, and the passage from a homogeneous national culture to a heterogeneous one has been remarkable especially in the capital, the city of Oslo, the old Christiania (Amundsen, 2011). These factors have brought the consciousness on the national and cultural *others*, raising however other problematics about *the self* and *the nation* (Burgess, 2001). Just like the social context has changed over the years in many European countries, the museum has adapted to its social context in the same way. The concept of museum as a

“temple of culture” has slowly faded in contemporary or newly built museums, and often replaced with the ideas of participation, equality, diversity, and accessibility for the greater crowds (Sørensen 2003, 195-6). In these terms Norway decided to invest in this cultural adaptation by unifying the four “independent” art museums into a single state funded national museum in 2003. The process should base its ideals on raising knowledge of visual arts, architecture and design, increasing historical consciousness and promoting tolerance and diversity (Amundsen 2011, 662). A few years later, a whole new national museum was commissioned so as to physically unify the four museums which were sharing the same name but living still under a different roof.

The new museum was also an urban development opportunity for the city of Oslo: the new museum location in Aker Brygge is part of a bigger project undertaken by Oslo municipality “Oslo’s green-urban planning project” which sees Oslo as a *cultural axis*. The national museum is an integral part of this plan, which foresees an imaginary line that will stretch from the new Munch Museum, via the Opera house and towards Nasjonalmuseet, ending with the contemporary art museum Astrup Fearnley (Plan og bygningsetaten by utvikling, 2018).

1.4 Social relevance: *why the move?*

The making of a new national museum in Aker Brygge, at the height of Vestbanen station, was first announced in the year 2003. Since the construction plan and the funds were confirmed, this colossal project has received extensive media coverage on national newspapers, and unsurprisingly so. With an expenditure of six billion Norwegian kroner and three years delay in opening, the building has provoked different reactions by the press, art and architecture professionals and local population.

The making of this new cultural building is worth discussing due to a series of reasons. As the role of museums and their impact on urban development and tourism increases, so does the building of new museums as well as upgrades and extension of older ones. Many museums are being recognized as international emblems, often used as marketing element of a city and impacting consequently on the city’s market value and income (Van Den Bosch 2005, 502). The new national museum has therefore the potential to give a new status to Oslo as a city of culture, as well as contributing positively to the city’s economy. A similar case of museum rebuilding and rebranding has already taken place in Oslo: the new Munch Museum in Bjørvika. Much like The National Museum, the Munch Museum has undertaken a process

of rebranding in order to appeal to a broader audience; at the time, it was said that “the shift in the visual profile of one of the most important cultural institutions in the Nordic countries should not go unnoticed” (Iranowska 2019,141). As such, the case of the new National Museum in Oslo is also worth investigating.

Lastly, cultural diversity and a multicultural society are two very relevant phenomenon taking place in Norway today (Amundsen 2011, 653). Being an international resident in Norway myself, I experience the cultural diversity and globalization of a city such as Oslo on a daily basis. The Norwegian policies on migration and multiculturalism, developed in the last decades, have challenged the more traditional collection narratives and the pre-existing museums’ strategies; in this sense, national museums have needed to rethink the way that national and cultural identity is presented, and consequently to rethink the way the national museum as an institution is presented (Amundsen 2001; Van Den Bosch, 2005). Therefore, by analyzing the different structural and conceptual components of the new The National Museum, it will be possible to understand what Norway’s national identity is today, and how it is represented through its building, its collections and its vision.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The second chapter is going to lay the theoretical ground to discuss my case study, concerning the examination of branding approaches and national identity within cultural institutions.

In the third chapter, I will explain the methodological approach that I used to conduct my research and the motivations behind the choice of methods.

In the fourth chapter, I will present the institution of interest, analyzing its new vision, strategy and managerial approach, its visual profile and the new narratives within the exhibitions. I will do so by using two different perspectives: on one hand, I will use the information provided by media, press and official strategy documents to show how the new brand is being presented. On the other hand, I will use the material gathered from interviews and personal observations to understand how the new museum is being experienced by the employees. This dialogue between official information and insider’s perspectives will allow me to create room for discussion at the end of this section.

Lastly, the fifth chapter will focus on drawing conclusions from the case study and highlighting personal findings.

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

In order to analyze and discuss the process of branding at The National Museum in Oslo, I will first define the concept of brand, and in specific of the *museum brand*, and how the use of branding and marketing began to be applied in museum management.

In the second part of this chapter, I will focus instead on the topics of identity and national identity within national museums. These concepts that will be useful in discussing the sub-research question “what place will national identity occupy in the new museum and how will it be represented through the collections and the building”. Through this chapter, the concepts of *brand* and *identity* are both presented in relation to the museum seen as a national and cultural institution.

In order to discuss the remolding of national identity within the new museum in Vestbanen, it will be particularly useful to place the topics of national museums and national identity within Norway and understand how they evolved from the birth of national museums in Norway to today (Erikssen, Aronsson). Lastly, I will give a short overview of today’s audiences, and how they impact the museum’s relationship with its public (Eriksen, Bosch, Runnel). This will help me to analyze and discuss the new national museum strategy. To conclude, I will provide some examples of other institutions that have undergone a significant branding process and that are therefore useful as a term of comparison for my main case institution (van Hasselt, Bosch, Aronsson).

2.1 Museum as brand and product: concepts of branding and marketing

In order to discuss the National Museum in Oslo as a cultural brand, I am going to define what a brand is, how this is related to museums and led to the formation of museum-brands, and what the historical premises for branding and marketing in museums are.

What is a brand?

A *brand* can be described as the ensemble of values and emotions experienced by the consumers and embodies the values of a company or organization; a brand also communicates credibility by standing behind the *product*, that is the item or service that can be offered on a market for sale (Hede 2007,151). According to Professor Celia Lury, a brand can be broadly referred to as “the medium of exchange between company and consumer”. (Lury, 2004). However, Lury’s work provides many alternatives to the notorious marketing

definition of brand, such as that of the “brand as an object”, that is not fixed in time or space (Lury 2004, 2), or as a media object, because it depends on media as a medium for its performance (Lury 2004, 6). A brand can also be cultural, or an “art-brand” which is defined by Martha Phillips as the mediation tools for the consumption of art, the “conceptual interface” (Phillips 2007, 187). If a brand represents the values of a company, the action of *branding* conveys the use of marketing tools in order to communicate a clear message to the targeted consumers (Hede 2007, 151).

There are many shades of brand and branding, for example *re-branding* (meant as the consolidation of an existing brand) (Hede, 2007), *brand identity* (how the organization defines and present itself, what it aims for) or brand *image* (how the consumers perceive and refer to an organization and its products) (Pusa, 2014). A crucial aspect for a brand is the decision of the brand name. A strong brand name creates *brand awareness*, in other words an easy recognition of the brand from the customer’s side; this is usually reached by using sources such as advertising, mass media or simple word of mouth (Caldwell, 2000).

Brand identity can be created through the use of “symbols” such as a logo or a slogan, as well as the brand name, essential for attracting visitors and creating associations and recognition of the brand (Pusa, 2014, 22).

The notion of *brand identity* is commonly used to define a brand’s significance and purpose. In the article “Creating Brand Identity in Art Museums”, Sofia Pusa and Liisa Uusitab place brand identity not only within marketing and management, but within the museum context too. For example, a museum’s brand identity is defined by four “dimensions”, namely product, person, symbol and organization. Brand identity —the identity of a brand— is therefore the way that an institution or an organization defines itself and expresses what its aim is (Pusa& Uusitab 2014, 19). It is often done through the brand’s main communication tool: marketing (Pusa, 2014; Caldwell, 2000).

A brand can be placed at a corporate level (corporate brand) or at the product level. Professor and branding and management specialist Anne-Marie Hede defines corporate branding as the promotion of an organization through the brand name and image (Hede 2007, 152). A brand is also promoted by marketers, who use marketing as a tool to promote and maximize congruity between the organization’s identity (the brand), and consumer perception (the brand identity) (Hede, 2007).

The museum brand

Academic work on marketing and museums (Caldwell, 2000; Pusa, 2014; Rentschler & Hede, 2007) has drawn attention to the application of marketing in museums, and the emergence of the *museum brand*. One of the first successful world-wide museums that be identified as a brand, is the Guggenheim Museum. The Guggenheim is recognized as a global brand for the adoption of brand management techniques and consumer product marketing strategies to gain name awareness and attract a wider audience (Caldwell, 2000). One of the reasons that justifies the vision of museums as brands, is the way these institutions evolve over time in order to respond to the consumer's requests and needs. For a museum, the consumer is identified as the visitor, who changes according to many variables, such as the historical period he/she lives in, the country of origin, or cultural background. Anne Mare Hede points out how museum's visitors, the audience, has changed drastically between the 20th and the 21st century: positions of the modern visitors in a museum are evolving from a passive to a more active role, and the visitors are constantly in search for the main "attraction" in their tour (Hede 2007, 153). As such, branding has become essential in promoting the museum in the modern marketplace: branding is not only important for realizing the museum's goals, but it also helps the museum to formulate its identity and image (Hede 2007, 154).

In order to provide the audience with a successful representation of the museum identity, the museum-brand needs a clear and competent leadership. This should combine and manage experienced professionals and to promote the brand, so as to contribute to the overall quality of the museum experience (Pusa 2014, 23). Consequently, the Guggenheim Museum and the Tate Gallery are two examples of successful global-museum brands (Phillips, 2007; Caldwell,2000).

These two museums have proved that, by applying branding strategies from consumer product marketing, the museum's brand identity can be used as a means of attracting a wider audience. In these two cases, it has been done through a franchising program (Caldwell, 29). The strength of a successful museum brand can be generally measured by factors such as visitor satisfaction, perceived quality of the establishment, location, brand-name association and so forth. Targeting the potential visitors is therefore an important aspect for the delivery of a suitable, interesting and satisfactory museum experience (Caldwell, 31)

Short history on branding and marketing in museums

According to cultural historian Saumarez Smith, modern museum visitors have become more similar to consumers over the last two decades. They approach museums in the way that consumers approach shops. While museums are becoming more like shops, they encourage visitors to come in and browse, spend time and money within the museum.

Smith associates such new way to live and conceive the museum as a natural result of major societal changes that have become part of our daily lives, such as the fast development of internet and technology, extreme globalization of cities, and the commercial and consumerist nature of our lives (Smith, 2006). By globalization, I refer here in particular to *cultural globalization*, a phenomenon of many facets such as hybridization of culture, fading of national cultural identities and even commercialization of culture (Scholte, 2000).

These societal changes are not only typical of the time we live in, but can be traced back to the early 1900s, when an increase of the average community education led to a new role-change in museum institutions. However, concrete changes in the way museums adapted to modern society only began to appear after the 1970s: since then, visitors started to have higher expectations and less time to spend on culture, and museums had to quickly adapt to their audiences' hectic lifestyle (Rentschler, 2007). If competing with the growth of internet and medias in our lives has challenged the museums' market, further complicated the matter the new trend of leisure parks and new themed leisure venues exploded in the 1990s.

Consequently, visitors begun to expect more from their visits at museums and cultural heritage sites as they are used to leisure time services (Runnel et Al. 2014).

As a result of these processes, it became more evident that cultural institutions had to find new strategies to attract the interest of new audiences without forgetting the main purpose of a museum: to provide education within a non-profit scenario. Therefore, museums often find themselves struggling between acting as the stakeholders for accessible education and non-profit organizations and competing with other businesses in the same market (Rentschler, 2007). For example, a clever application of marketing in cultural education has demonstrated to be an effective instrument for attracting new audiences and provide new competences to the crowds. It also became clear that a skillful marketing department within museums and cultural institutions can often contribute to success in creating a brand. Museum as a brand is a concept that came to light around 2000, and has not been thoroughly explored yet (Pusa, 2014). In the last twenty years, the notion of brand identity has started to emerge in the museum field, and museums have begun to apply brand management techniques to their cultural product: the museum itself. Nowadays marketing is essential for survival and

promotion of museums and galleries. By transforming an institution into brand, marketing techniques can convert collections and exhibitions into the core product of a museum. By doing so, they also enhance the visibility and perceived quality of the museum itself. This new type of approach is particularly noticeable in worldwide famous museum such as the British Museum in London and even more noticeably at the Guggenheim in NY with its branches in Europe (Caldwell, 2000). According to Pusa, art museums in particular have been the perfect arena for experimenting branding techniques within the cultural sector. Striving to attract both expert and non-expert visitors, world-famous art museums are more likely to develop a strong marketing department in comparison to other museums, as they tend to work more towards the branding of the institution, and the promotion of their most popular artworks. Furthermore, art museums often have the advantage of being associated with their most famous artwork, i.e. “the core product”. These keys pieces can make association between artwork-museum more immediate to the consumer (Pusa, 2014). Even though the convergence of commerce and culture, especially of marketing and branding within museums has become a more contemporary approach, this phenomenon has also attracted some criticisms from cultural historians and museologists. For instance, Saumarez Smith has expressed his pessimistic view on the excessive managerial innovation within museums: treating the museums as a platform for marketization, says Smith, can lead to effects such as the hybridization of commerce and culture, excessive incorporation of technology within the museum, or a penalization of the local sphere —supplanted instead by a vision of the global (Smith,S. 2006, 546). In his article “The Future of the Museum”, Smith takes into account the fact that cultural change is always bound to happen and that it is an unpredictable and exciting; however, the museum of the future risks to lose its integrity as a result of globalization and excessive marketization (Smith, S., 2006).

2.2 Identity, national museums and their audiences

What is identity?

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, identity as a noun is defined as “who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others”; it can also be defined as “the characteristics (...) of a person or organization that makes the public think about them in a particular way” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021).

To define identity in the 21st century is complicated, as it is a concept in continuous evolution. Academics from the most disparate fields have tried to conceptualize what identity really is. In culture studies for example, professor J. Peter Burgess has written several works on the shifting meaning of identity, culture and nation within Scandinavian countries. In *Culture and Rationality: European Frameworks of Norwegian Identity*, he focuses on the concept of identity in modern society, with particular attention to Norway. In this book, Burgess points out how identity evolution, the search for a nation's identity or *identity crisis*, are all phenomena that started to appear in the late 1800s as a result of the quick modernization process taking place in Europe in that historical period (Burgess, 2001). Modernization and globalization have always existed: global thinking can be traced back as far as a half millennium ago, especially in literature, religion and law. However a real turning point took place after the Enlightenment in the 18th century, when European philosophers such as S.R.J. Turgot or the Marquis of Condorcet conceived for the first time the idea of history of humanity as a whole (Scholte 2000: 64). This concept of "the global" is important for defining identity today, because society started to question the very meaning of one own's identity right when the awareness of others, and global started to rise. Burgess in fact identifies identity crisis as a consequence of modernity, which is generally placed between the end of 19th century and beginning of the 20th: that is when travelling became more accessible, technology such as the telegraph-telephone allowed international communication, and migration to other countries increased exponentially (Scholte, 2000). Identity is often interlaced with culture, however the line that distinguishes the two is very thin. Referring still to the Cambridge Dictionary, culture is defined as "the way of life, especially the customs and belief of a particular group of people at a particular time"². The cultural economist David Throsby also proposes in his article "Cultural Capital" an anthropological definition of culture: he describes culture as the "set of attitudes, beliefs, morals, customs, values and practices which are common to or shared by any group" (Throsby, 1999). In view of this description, identity can be easily associated with all that is the cultural sphere of a person, community or group. However identity is also being used in different contexts, such as economics, marketing and branding (see for example *brand identity* in chapter 2.1).

² Cambridge Dictionary. *Culture*, definition

National museums

Museums are important institutions for the upkeep of identity and place; they help visitors to study and contextualize their experience both from a cultural and a historical point of view (Smith, 2006). This is particularly true for national museums, which cover an important role in the representation of a country's identity and values. Historian and professor Peter Aronsson provides a possible definition of national museums as 'institutions, collections and displays claiming, articulating and representing dominant national values, myths and realities (Aronsson and Elgenius 2015,171). Aronsson however also stresses how this type of definition is full of complexities: it is important to analyze national museums within their historical and contemporary context, as well as to considering their effort to provide cultural continuity over time. In other words, national museums try to provide their society with reference material for one's culture (Aronsson 2015,172).

The establishment of national museums has been particularly important for the Scandinavian countries: for instance, the birth of national museums in Norway took place in a period where the country felt a strong need to affirm its independence and national identity. The independence of Norway from Denmark and Sweden was earned only in 1814, and it resulted in a series of nation-building projects such as the raise of national museums and the formation of public libraries (Eriksen, 2009). National museums today serve a different function than expressing a country's independence and its folkloristic traditions. They not only aim to disseminate knowledge among their audiences, but also to stimulate new perceptions, increase historical awareness and promote tolerance and diversity (Aronsson & Elgenius, 2011).

Audiences

In museological literature and museum policy documents, the common characteristic of museums's goals in modern society is to be institutions for *everyone* (Eriksen 2009, 219). Cultural heritage professor Anne Eriksen questioned the meaning of this common view, often presented in museum strategies and policies: "who is everyone? And in what way does the museum concern everyone?". Eriksen makes a consideration that in today's multicultural and multiethnic society, the respectful representation of minorities is important to enable these groups to rediscover their history and culture. This concern is particularly relevant for Norway: in addition to audiences with foreign background, minority groups -such as the Sami, have long been neglected in the national representation (Eriksen, 2009; Mathisen 2010,

295). These considerations are particularly important for the discussion of national identity. In fact the “museum for everyone” has not always been successful in representing indigenous populations or in attracting minority groups. From museum surveys and customer feedback forms undertaken at nationally relevant museums, immigrants and minority groups visit museums to a very small extent (Erisken 2009, 220). Particularly in Norway, minority groups such as the Sami have hardly ever been shown at the national museum as a part of national identity discourse, but rather displayed in ethnographic collections (Mathisen 2010, 296). People’s mobility across countries and mass immigration have contributed more to the complexity of the cosmopolitan society. To cater for such a varied, non-homogeneous cluster of cultural identities has become a challenge for museums and cultural industries: as such, museums have felt the need to find new ways to conceptualize their narratives, and to search for new tools to attract a broader audience (Bosch, 2005). The roles of museums and museum audiences have therefore changed. Most importantly the relationship between these two has changed and developed. Contrary to the traditional view of museum as a power-holding institution, the museum position has been challenged in favor of a new relationship between museums and their visitors based on the sense of the *public* (Runnel 2014, 68). Another aspect of the new audiences is that they are mainly constituted of international travelers. Mass tourism has led to another challenge for museums, which is to communicate and engage international visitors in a visit that is not too technical, but still stimulating and enriching, so to provide a sense of what the local and national identities are, and to communicate the country’s own heritage in a fast and effective way (Graburn, 1998).

2.3 Branding and institutional change: a list of case studies

The renewal of museums —and in particular national museums— is a phenomenon that took place especially in Northern Europe (Graburn 1998, 13). Museums are evolving, and while southern European countries have long been dense of well-established national museums, national museums in the Nordics are still relevant and in continuous evolution (Graburn 1998, 14). The task of representing national heritage and national identity is challenging for national museums. These institutions needed to understand and represent the reality of their contemporary societies and to cater for national visitors and international tourists (Graburn 1998, 16). Social change has forced many national institutions to revise their narratives, their image and the way they interact with their visitors. This phenomenon can be found in fast developing countries such as the Northern European ones, and more specifically in capital

cities, where globalization and large-scale immigration has affected the way that citizens look at their identities (Runnel et al, 2014).

Processes of migration, increasing use of social media and growing attention to representation of minorities are very relevant themes for countries such as Norway. According to Norwegian sociologist Aakvaag, they are part of a bigger process of institutional and organizational change. Thus, cultural institutions are contributing to institutional change by undertaking a general rebranding of their organization (Aakvaag, 2017).

In addition to social development, the museum tourism industry has exploded over the last thirty years, thanks to more accessible international travel. According to Graburn, during the 1990s, the western museum visitor was likely to search for museums that could reflect the *identity* or heritage of the visited country through their collections and architecture (Graburn, 1998). One way that museums have answered this call was to expand the space dedicated to the museum building —so that the architecture, “the envelope” as Saumarez Smith calls it, could contribute to the museum experience and enhance the visit outside of the collections spaces too (Smith, S. 2006, 547). The museum space started to become an attraction on its own, and marketing departments in museums started to promote beyond the collections and focusing more on museum as a brand. One of the most internationally renowned museum brand is the Guggenheim Museum. The institution’s wish to grow and market itself as a brand on the international market was so big that it started to open other branches, such as the Guggenheim Helsinki and the Guggenheim in Bilbao (Klonk, 2009) across the world. This last one in particular has become a true international icon thanks to its architecture, designed by Frank Gehry. Some even claim that this museum building has become such an emblem for Bilbao, a “logo”, that it is comparable to Sydney Opera House (Bosch, 2005).

Recent examples of museums that have undergone a branding process in the northern countries are the Dutch National Historical Museum and the Danish National Museum. They have both implemented the museum’s promotion through the use of social media, a newly designed website and the update of their strategies (Van Hasselt, 2011). In Norway, there is also a known case of museum branding: the **Munch Museum**. In 2014, the Munch Museum came out with a new brand strategy for 2014-15 where the goal was to rebrand the museum and to make it into a trusted and unique institution (Iranowska, 2019). One strong point during this brand strategy process was that members of the staff from all departments were involved in the procedure, making employees feel engaged and supportive. The main aspects

of the new Munch Museum strategies concerned defining a new target group of visitors and developing a new merchandise line in order to increase product sales at the internal museum shop. Having seen the positive results and the success of the new strategy, the Munch Museum decided to use the very same strategy goals at the new Munch Museum in Bjørvika in 2019 (Iranowska, 2019). Meanwhile, other local museums in Norway have undertaken a process of consolidation. Their goal was to merge museums into fewer bigger units. This process aimed at reshaping the identity of those museums involved in the consolidation by forming a whole new organization, a brand. The Norwegian National Museum was involved in this significant branding project, “the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design” in 2005, the precursor to “Nasjonalmuseet” (Mork, 2014).

From theory to analysis

This chapter serves the purpose of giving a theoretical overview over the themes that I will discuss in the discussion and conclusion chapters of this dissertation.

In the first section of this chapter, I introduced the concept of brand and of the museum as a brand, as well as providing an historical overview of branding and marketing practices within museums.

In the second part of the chapter I presented the topics of *identity* and the *national*, and how these are related to each other and are essential to national museums. The section on society and audiences has introduced societal change and globalization within the nation, the effect of these on the museum narratives in the last two decades, and the attempt of museums to adapt to new audiences. This section will be helpful when I discuss the national identity and the narratives change at the National Museum in Oslo.

To conclude, I collected some literature that links branding in museums to institutional change. This material will be particularly useful when I analyze the case study’s strategy, vision and marketing approach.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Defining an appropriate methodology has been important for approaching my research material, as the analysis of such a big institution, a national museum, required both structured analysis of data as well as certain flexibility towards the information collected. I therefore decided to use a qualitative approach, as I deemed it most appropriate for gaining an insight into the institution's structure, organization and vision.

Some key aspects for this type of approach have been the choice of documentation and the selection of my informants, aimed at reflecting as much as possible the expectations or controversies of the new museum.

3.1 Documentation methods

The research and selection of my documentation has been a difficult yet essential component for the writing process. Concrete answers to my research question and supporting documentation for my analysis were derived mostly from data gathered from my interviews with selected employees at the case study institution.

As the chosen topic was and is still extremely contemporary—at the time of writing, the case institution has not officially opened yet—it was difficult at first to find enough supporting literature and to undertake sufficient work on site. In fact, due to construction delays and restricted access to the building, I was only able to undertake observations from the outside of the building by myself, and by joining a guided tour hosted by Oslo Open House.

As for my own work, the understanding of the research question and the topic I was writing about changed over time through the research process. Even after the analysis was written, my understanding of the question changed, and I gained new perspectives and generated new concepts that I then included simultaneously in the theory and analysis. I therefore adopted *grounded theory* as a qualitative method: this way I was able to use data as the foundation of my theory. Even though I did not make entire use of grounded theory method through the whole process, I adopted many aspects of this method, in particular concerning data collection and the analysis of data. Professor Kathy Charmaz, developer of Constructivist Grounded Theory, describes grounded theory method as “a way of collecting data to build theories grounded in the data themselves” (Charmaz 2006, 3). The peculiarity of this method is in the way data are used. Instead of forcing the data to draw a theory or making a point, the theory is founded on the data we collect, and the researcher's personal analysis of these data

makes the concepts we construct. Some common traits of this theory can often be the use of coding, the constant use of comparative method, the construction of codes in order to categorize data, memo-writing aimed towards the specification or elaboration of data categories, and most importantly synchronous involvement in both data and analysis. The last point, to advance theory development during each step of data collection and analysis, is an aspect of the grounded theory method that has inspired me particularly (Charmaz 2006, 5). Another aspect of grounded theory method is that data collection is constantly reshaped in order to refine the collected data. This happens because the theory development takes place at the same time as data-gathering. Charmaz says that in grounded theory, the process and the phenomenon have the priority (Charmaz 2006, 22); “We do not force preconceived ideas and theories directly upon our data. Rather, we follow leads that we *define* in the data, or design another way of collecting data to pursue our initial interests” (Charmaz 2006, 17).

In order to gain a deeper insight on the new museum’s vision, I deemed that semi structured interviews was the most suitable approach. This type of interview method is recognizable by some key factors: the participants are asked the same questions; the questions were formulated beforehand; if the interviewee talked about a topic that was particularly relevant to me, I let it be expanded; the same time was allocated to all interviews (Gillham 2005, 70). My list of question formed the interview guide. It was also sent to the participants beforehand and functioned as a “script”: this allowed us to keep the interview within a set time frame, in my case no more than 45 minutes (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 130). However, the order of this interview guide was adjusted over the course of each interview in order to follow the natural flow of the conversation. Sørensen identifies “interviews as adjustable tools” (Sørensen 2009, 165); I found this approach particularly relevant for my interviews as my participants belonged to different departments and had different academic backgrounds. This allowed me to gather data whilst adapting the conversation according to each informant’s behaviors and responses (Strauss, 2015).

3.2 Interviews and informants selection

In autumn 2020 I started to plan my interviews in the research process. I had so far two informants who agreed to take part in the project, however in January 2021 I decided to plan some additional interviews. I struggled to gather enough literature to support my case, and after two of my initial informants withdrew due to an informant’s illness and increasing work

commitments I went on to ask for help to the museum's HR to find new candidates. Luckily, after my first interview on the 29.01.2020 with the curator Cynthia Osiecki, I received help from her to gather more informants to take part in my project. She suggested five additional candidates that in her opinion would be suitable for the interview. They work in different departments: curatorship, marketing, collection design and visitors experience.

All my interviews were planned according to the NSD Norwegian Center for Research Data. I decided to follow a step-by-step process in setting up my interviews: the initial contact was made through the HR department, which gave me the permission to contact the museum's employees further. The research and development department at the National Museum assisted me with the participants' selection: this involved determining who would be best suited for answering to my research questions according to their position and academic background. Then, personal communication with the interviewees started via email correspondence. In order to follow the NSD ethical guidelines for data collection, a short description of the project and a letter of consent were sent out to all participants, who would then decide whether to take part in the project.

Interviews have been a great way to gather relevant information on my research questions and to establish relationships with the participants. The semi structured interviews with the informants provided me with different perspectives and highlighted the crucial aspects of this make-over process. From each interview, I found the recurrent key words I was looking for, and I decided to use these to analyze the museums most striking novelties in terms of vision and strategy.

3.3 Informants

Here, I will give an overview over the selected informants that took part in my interview process. There were six informants in total, who worked in two main areas: the Exhibitions and Collections department (Samlinger) and the Education and Visitors Experience (Formidling og Publikum).

The following interviewees are from the first department:

- **Cynthia Osiecki:** curator of old masters painters, working with the collection of visual arts prior to 1800s. Interviewed on 29/01/2021;
- **Peder Valle:** collection assistant within the collection of Design and Crafts, specialized in Design history and actively working with porcelain collection at the national museum. Interviewed on 02/02/2021.

- **Janne Helene Arnesen:** collection assistant, specialized in dress and textile history. Interviewed on 3/02/2021.

The other three informants were employees from the Education and Visitors Experience departments:

- **Gudrun Eidsvik:** curator of education and visitors experience, interviewed on 5/02/2021.
- **Ellisiv Brattfjord:** senior communications advisor and web editor, interviewed on 10/02/2021.
- **Cathrine Lorange:** curator of education, head of the Visitors Experience Department (Seksjon Omvisning). Interviewed on 5/03/2021.

3.4 Interview Process and Transcription

The goal during this process was to undertake as much as a conversational type of interviews as possible in order to gather very different perspectives from each interviewee. Therefore, I drew up an interview guide with a list of open-ended questions, which was sent out to the participant prior to the interview. In the letter of consent, I asked whether I was allowed to record the interview both as an audio file and as a video file. This was particularly helpful during the transcription process because I could go back and retrieve significant pieces of information. In order to speed up the transcription process, I made use of the software NVIVO transcription³. As I carried out my interviews in both English and Norwegian, this software was particularly helpful in understanding some words or facts that I might have misheard or misunderstood during the live interview. It was also helpful in understanding how to best translate my notes from Norwegian to English during the writing process.

Working with the transcribed interviews played a big role for structuring my thesis; when re-reading the transcripts, I decided to color-code the recurrent key words that were used by my informants, and to allocate a different color for each topic (Charmez 2006, 3).

The main topics that came out from the interviews were: unity, integrity and recognizability; logo, graphics and digital; strategy, marketing and branding; architecture, building and experience; identity, narrative and accessibility. For each thematic I matched the following colors: a) blue; b) red; c) green; d) pink; e) yellow (Table 1).

This division allowed me to draw out a draft of the analysis chapter and to build on each section by associating additional material from written sources to the interviews.

³ NVivo Transcription: license acquired for the period 7.02.2021-8.05.2021

	Topics	Museum Strategy Points
Blue	Unity, integrity, recognizability	Audience and society,
Red	Digitalization, visitors experience	Build and Manage Collections
Green	Strategy, marketing, branding Logo, graphics	Organization, competences, self-earnings
Pink	Architecture, building, visitors experience	Visitor's experience, self- earnings, society
Yellow	Identity, narratives, exhibitions, accessibility	Role within museums and culture in Norway, Research

Table 1. Color coding

3.5 Field work

Closures due to pandemic closures and museum's opening delays, made it impossible to undertake field work inside the building. However, I managed to undertake some personal observation from the outside, in particular during the guided tour with the National Museum (short NM) landscape architects. Hosted by Oslo Open House on the 19-11-2020. During this visit, led by architect Kaia Schjeldsøe Berg, I learned about the architectural premises of the building, and the main concepts behind the outdoor spaces design. I also took some photos to include in my analysis, as well as writing some personal observations during the tour.

3.6 Analysis

At first, I decided to split the analysis into two sections, one where I could describe and analyze the official narratives, and another one where I would list and discuss the interviews. However, I then decided to restructure the analysis section into one. In the current analysis, I have merged the information from personal interviews and from the official documentation to create a continuous dialogue between the two perspectives. This was possible thanks to the color-coding method mentioned above, which eased a lot the organization of different topics and the general flow of the analysis.

3.7 Research ethics

Due to the secrecy of some information connected to the museum's grand opening, extreme caution had to be exercised during my data gathering. The interviewees themselves were careful in providing me with information, as we had to comply with privacy and disclosures regulations from the National Museum. Therefore, the informants were given the possibility to keep their answers or identity anonymous, or to withdraw at any point during the duration of the research (Forskningsetikk, 2018).

Before starting with the interview process, I made sure to obtain informed consent from the participants, and I aimed at maintaining a neutral standpoint when conducting open-ended interview questions (Hammer, 2017).

3.8 Limitations

The main limitation of my research was the incompleteness of field work due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the museum's construction delays. One of the biggest setbacks was probably being unable to conduct direct observation inside the museum and the galleries: since the building site was still operative, there were limited access due to potential safety hazards for visitors. Furthermore, extremely strict entrance regulations had been put in place before the official opening, making it extra difficult to access to the building for employees too without valid work reasons.

Due to travel and work restrictions, most employees have been working from home. This means that I was unable to meet them in person or on site; for this reason, all my interviews have been undertaken via the Zoom platform. This solution has generally worked fine, as videocalls could be recorded both as mp3 audio and video files. This method however presented some limitations: first, the quality of mine and the participants' personal internet connection happened to be unstable at times, resulting in loss of signal or lagging in the conversation. Having a signal loss often meant repeating parts of the interview, which inherently became longer than agreed.

Lastly, the physical distance with the informant, the technical issues and the stress of a condensed digital life for everyone made me remark how a digital interaction is unlikely to replace a face-to-face conversation. Despite the success of my interviews, I have deeply missed the direct contact with the informants, in particular the non-verbal communication and

the elements that are unique to each person, such as the tone of voice, body gestures and facial expressions.

Chapter 4. Analysis

In this chapter I will analyze The National Museum's branding process by the museum's new strategy and vision taking as a starting point. To each core point of the strategy I associated the relevant themes that were discussed in the interviews. I was able to identify thanks to the color-coding method applied to interview transcriptions. These are the themes that will serve to understand the research question "why and how has the branding process taken place at the national museum?", "how is the brand understood by the employees working at the museum, and "what is the place of national identity within the museum?".

The museum-brand will be analyzed through two ongoing perspectives: on one hand, I will use the information gathered from the national museum (strategy and vision documents) and the national press (articles and material from other medias); on the other hand, I am going to use the observations gathered from interviews and field work to gain a perspective from the inside of the institution. These two perspectives will allow me to discuss the branding process and the place of national identity within the new national museum.

The analysis will start with an overview on the new museum's strategy and vision before moving onto each specific section. The main focus will be on the practical aspects of the institution's rebranding, the impact of the museum's remake on the employees and on society and the new collections management.

For the purpose of discussion, it will be useful to reference the theory section on marketing and communication techniques in branding, and on the importance of the brand and identity. Therefore I will provide a description of the brand image—its architecture, logo and design concept, and its product (the permanent collections, the new exhibitions spaces and narratives). I will also include a short section on the impact that pandemic had on the opening of the museum.

This analysis will serve to define the key elements that form the new Norwegian national museum brand, to understand the process of rebranding at the national museum in Oslo and to place the discourse of national identity within this process. For this purpose, the opinions of professionals working in the museum (the staff responsible for the exhibitions and visitors experience) are going to be helpful in gaining an insider's view

on new brand. In contrast, the critical perspectives from the press will help to identify incongruences or problematics that have been met in the branding process.

4.1 Overview of the strategy

In view of the opening expected in 2019-2020, the staff and management at the new national museum planned a new strategy for 2020-2025. The strategy document opens with the museum's new leading values "To be open, fearless and to give recognition". Along with the six core strategy points it creates the new institution's *vision*, i.e. the institution's mission statement⁴. The new strategy has been divided in the following areas: visitors and audiences, collections management, research & academia, national placement, earnings and cultural competences. Here is a summary of the main goals for each strategy area.

Audience and society. When it comes to the museum impact on society, the first section of the strategy highlights the importance to reach out to the public by engaging this in a multidisciplinary collection, formative programs, taking part in public debate at national level as well as strengthening the museum's identity and to build a clear *brand*⁵.

Build and manage collections. In order to make the collections available to the greatest extent, new methods and technologies will be utilized: this includes the *digitization* of collections as well as the incorporation of new tools and technology within the galleries⁶.

This new approach to the collection aims to engage the public in the caring process happening behind the scenes at the museum, such as the conservation and restoration of art works, and the mounting and installation of exhibition.

Research. To become an attractive research partner, the new museum aims at incorporating academic research wherever possible in all projects. The purpose is to facilitate a national and international research environment with other cultural institutions. By the end of 2021, the museum strives to set a minimum goal on the number of academic publications, research-based exhibition, research and development collaborations and doctoral degrees⁷.

Role within museums and culture in Norway. Following up on the previous point, the NM's purpose is to become a renowned *partner* for art museums and to collaborate with cultural institutions within the nation: the museum aims at participating actively in the cultural arena

⁴ Nasjonalmuseet strategi 2020-2025, p. 6

⁵ Strategy: *publikum og samfunnet*, p.7

⁶ Strategy: *bygge og forvalte samlingen*, p.10

⁷ Strategy: *forskning*, p. 12

in Norway, by sharing the National Museum's employees expertise with other organizations, and by taking initiative for setting up collaborative projects⁸.

Self-earnings. To become an attractive professional partner, and to increase the self-earnings, the NM strives to ensure a mutual economical collaboration between the museum and its partners⁹. From the strategy document, this type of situation will be achieved through a comprehensive commercial offer by taking care of the museum's partner and acting as a host for events or collaborations.

Organization, culture and competences. When it comes to the general organization of the museum, the intent is to provide a transparent and optimal management of the establishment, with collaboration between employees and departments on an efficient sustainable resources management. The purpose of implementing internal resources and competences is then to share these with partners and audiences; in this respect the museum will work towards reaching out to a diverse audience and to encourage visitors with different age groups, ethnicity, gender and education background to get involved¹⁰.

4.2 Marketing, graphics and promotion

As a consequence to the museums unification, the museum management has somewhat changed the way that the organization works. This is particularly visible in the marketing and promotion strategies, as well as in the design makeover that involved the graphics and the museum logo.

Marketing

During my interviews, the new museum strategy as part of the rebranding has shown to be fundamental of the employees' working life. Curator Catherine Lorange talked about how different the museum management approach is today compared to ten years ago, and how the board of directors have worked to ensure that new museum strategy was clear to all the staff members. Thus during the beginning of this management switch, the employees were asked to follow and apply the main strategy goals and values through all their projects and daily work. This is an approach that is typical of businesses and corporate companies, where the core values are key to form a strong and unite business entity, i.e., the brand (Hede, 2007).

⁸ Strategy: *rolle i museums og kultur i Norge*, p. 11

⁹ Strategy: *egeninntjenning*, p.9

¹⁰ Strategy: *organisasjon, kultur og kompetanse*, p.8

Curator Lorange and collection assistant Janne Helene Arnesen remarked on how marketing four different museum sites has been very challenging in the past, and how unity is now an essential value for the new management. The two informants both said that by consolidating the previous art museums into one, it became easier to market the national museum as a single institution, and to create a stronger visual profile, i.e. the *brand image* (Pusa 2014). The brand image was mainly achieved through the complete remake of graphics and logos, as well as creating a stronger media identity and presence.

As ascertained by museums such as the Guggenheim, marketing and branding are two essential tools for bringing visibility to organizations (Caldwell, 2000). According to Pusa, “the promotion of museums, as apart of marketing, is important in order not only to attract audiences but also to build relationships with employees, sponsors and other interest groups” (Pusa 2014, 24). Consequently, marketing is an important aspect for the national museum to attract new business partners. In the strategy for 2020-25, it is stated in several points the increasing importance that the museum wants to collaborate with partners and other institutions. On the dedicated section on the official website “samarbeidspartnere”, the museum advertises itself as “the largest art museum within the Nordic regions” and a “vital meeting place for the public”; the page ends with promoting the collaboration with the national museum as a unique opportunity, and offering several packages tailored for small or large businesses¹¹.

Logo and graphics

A coherent brand image helps an organization to be easily recognized and simplifies the promotion and marketing of the product (Caldwell 2000; Lury 2004). The creation of a new logo and graphic identity meant a lot for the new national museum. They captured the attention of the national news since the first day it was publicized. In February 2021, the new museum logo was affixed on the museum’s façade that led to general excitement among the press. “This is the National Museum’s new logo and visual profile” (Borud, 2021) is one of the opening titles on the national newspaper Aftenposten, which reports the significant moment when the new sign was unpacked and hanged up on the exterior museum walls. The aim of this article however is not to provide us with basic information on the new logo and the physical act of labelling the building: instead, journalist Heidi Borud discussed the

¹¹ Nasjonalmuseet.no: Samarbeidspartnere

new identity of the museum. Her interviews with the graphic designer Are Kleivan (Metric Design partner), and Tord Krogtoft (marketing director at NM) stressed on how the institution is drawing a clearer picture of the museum's new brand identity and image through the new font, graphics and logo (Ill.1). Krogtoft pointed out that the logo's main function is to make the institution easily recognizable and to become a sign that everybody recognizes at first glance. It therefore needs to be clear and have definite graphics (Borud, 2021).

The design agency Metric was chosen to remake the museum logo and come up with a new set of graphic elements in order to create a fresher, contemporary-looking graphic identity. These elements were the name feature, the font family, profile colors, pictograms, a graphic system as well as the new logo¹². Informant Peder Valle remembered that before approving the current logo, the design agency came out with a very different proposal which consisted in a flash pink colored font inspired by the Tate Gallery logo. However, it was not approved by the museum's board of directors and designers, leaning instead towards something slightly more formal, yet modern.

Evidently from the mood boards and projects plan on Metric agency's website¹³, this new "graphic system" will be featured in every area of the museum. In particular, the utilized font is going to be used in areas such as the brochures, the explanatory text in the galleries, the main direction signs, floors, wardrobes and toilet signs, outdoor banner, and even marking on the souvenirs at the shop (Ill.2). The motto for the new visual and graphic identity has been chosen to "close the distance between the art and the audience"¹⁴. This search for a closer, intimate experience with the displayed art within the museum can be noticed directly in the new fonts. The graphic designers from Metric have been inspired by the works in the museum collections and have come up with two new fonts designed exclusively for the National Museum: the *Museet Sans* and *Museet Serif*¹⁵.

As Kleivan argued in an interview with Aftenposten:

"One of the unique things about an art museum is the opportunity and the feeling of getting really close to the art. To be present, to see the details, to smell. This insight

¹² Nasjonalmuseet nye visuelle identitet <https://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/aktuelt/2019/Nasjonalmuseets-visuelle-identitet/>

¹³ Metric Design: Nasjonalmuseet <https://www.metricdesign.no/work/visual-identity-for-nasjonalmuseet>

¹⁴ Metric Design: visual identity for the National Museum. <https://www.metricdesign.no/posts/the-national-museum>

¹⁵ Metric Design. Work: Nasjonalmuseet. <https://www.metricdesign.no/work/visual-identity-for-nasjonalmuseet>

forms the basis for the new logo symbol, where we literally go all the way to the museum's name feature"¹⁶(Are Kleivan, Design partner at Metric).

In the interview with Borud for Aftenposten, Kleivan also explained how making distance between art and audience smaller constitutes the very basic idea of the new identity. It was therefore crucial to make this identity both popular and uncontroversial. At the same time, the logo cannot say too much about the museum's content, said Kleivan, like a logo in general should not say everything about a business: therefore, Metric Design chose to make a monogram based on a section of one of the museum's name features, as if to illustrate only a detail of what the new museum is (Borud, 2021). Strengthening visual identity and building a clear brand is one of the core objectives illustrated in the vision and strategy 2020-2025 for the National Museum. The renewal of fundamental graphic elements and symbols such as the logo and the brand name make an important contribution to the branding process; the logo in this case becomes a symbol for the new museum, as it embodies the brand core identity and produces brand name awareness (Pusa,2014); (Caldwell,2000).



Ill.1) National Museum's new logo. Source: Metricdesign.no. Credits: Metric design & Display Type Foundry

¹⁶ Are Kleivan for «Nasjonalmuseet nye visuelle identitet»
<https://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/aktuelt/2019/Nasjonalmuseets-visuelle-identitet/>



III. 2) National Museum's indoor signage, detail. Source: Metricdesign.no. Credits: Metric design & Display Type Foundry

4.3 Unity, integrity, recognizability

The unification of the previous art museums in Oslo has been a major point of discussion during my interviews. All informants have remarked how important it has been to establish a sense of unity in the new museum.

According to the collection assistant Peder Valle, the main point of this consolidation has been aiming a general economization of the museum. Having a strong, unified and recognizable brand can ease the marketing teams during the promotion process (Hede 2007). By merging the former museums argues Valle, the new institution called for a general rebranding. This way the museum will become structurally unified, but also economically more efficient: by drawing the focus onto a central institution, it will be easier to send a message of integrity and recognizability to the audience.

In this way, it is also likely to attract bigger crowds and to shape a stronger identity, said Valle. A right use of the brand name, logo, location and other branding symbols, can contribute to a successful marketing and create brand association whilst increasing visits (Pusa 2014).

Janne Helene Arnesen is another collection assistant who works in the design departments, for the National Museum since 2013. She has therefore experienced the managerial shift that took place at the museum since it was consolidated. Arnesen reflected on how the unification of the museum was generally perceived as a welcoming event by the staff, and that she personally experienced it as a physical union of forces. This positive attitude towards the new museum management had a positive impact among departments said Arnesen. In the past, the physical separation of offices, workshops and galleries was reflected in the way the employees used to work; now, thanks to a single core location, the communication and exchange of advice and expertise has become remarkably easier among departments (Arnesen, 2021).

4.4 Digitalization, collections and visitors' experience

When it comes to managing collection and enhancing visitors' experience, the new strategy emphasizes explicitly on digitalization within the collection management. The aim is to create a more interactive environment between the museum and its audience, and to engage the public with the work taking place backstage at the museum. In this context, the museum has worked towards creating a stronger media presence as a part of digitalization and of the branding process. Web editor Ellisiv Brattfjord talked about how the museum digital presence has developed considerably over the last two years. The official website has been updated and the museum starts to use social media channels such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram to establish its media presence.

Cathrine Lorange explained how some of the guided tours and visitors experience will benefit from the new technology tools that will be featured in the galleries. Examples of these are a whole new set of audio guides for visitors, and the incorporation of interactive digital tools (f.ex. touch pads and videos) within the exhibition spaces.

What came out from the interviews was how the hardship that the museum endured during the pandemic, and the full closure of the establishments, helped and sped up the process of digitalization at the museum. Social media have therefore become an important aspect of the museum, both under a marketing point of view and for attracting the attention of potential visitors.

Curator Gudrun Eidsvik reflected upon the importance of digital tool for the future of the museum, as these have a potential to reach out to new generations:

“When it comes to the passage to a new identity, rebranding is based on ambition and will reach a much larger, more diverse and a younger audience. Therefore we (started to) use digital aids, and the pandemic has in a way set the pace for investing digitally”.

By establishing an official media presence, the museum is able to keep the audience up to date on ongoing events, art installations and exhibitions, but also to entice potential new audiences to pay a visit. Two examples of social media aids used by the National Museum are the daily Instagram-stories that focus on artworks and individual artists¹⁷, and sharing informational videos on the national museum’s Facebook page¹⁸ and the YouTube channel¹⁹. In these videos for instance, the moving process from the old to the new museum was documented and during the first Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, the marketing department came out with two rubrics “Creative quarantine” and “Collection time” (*samlingsstund*). Curator Eidsvik explained how employees from all departments were asked to contribute to these two projects, which consisted in a video publication from a different employee each week, talking about a topic of their choice —usually within their expertise. These rubrics were successful for two reasons: they got the staff involved in promoting their profession and expertise during the hardest months of the pandemic, while at the same time involving the audiences in the “backstage” life of the museum.

4.5 Architecture and the building as a landmark

Tradition and innovation through materials

The new National Museum oversees the shores of Aker Brygge, a touristic port and Oslo municipality square Rådhusplassen. The museum building is enormous and promotes itself as the biggest cultural building in all the Nordic countries²⁰. In the book *The National Museum in Oslo: the construction of a Landmark* the construction process has been

¹⁷ Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nasjonalmuseet/?hl=en>

¹⁸ Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/nasjonalmuseet/>

¹⁹ YouTube official channel: <https://www.youtube.com/nasjonalmuseet>

²⁰ Nasjonalmuseet official website <https://www.nasjonalmuseet.no>

thoroughly documented by the photographer Ken Opprann. Through his 115.000 photographs he provided an insight into the difficulties and architectural ambitions of the construction project since the beginning of 2014; the project has been so big and challenging that he defines it as a “monumental building” (Opprann, 2020). The museum has already been attributed landmark status ²¹ brings high hopes for the National Museum future: much like the Guggenheim in Bilbao, the Opera House in Sydney and the British Museum in London that have become a symbol, a “logo” for these cities (Caldwell, 2000), the new national museum will aspire to be the symbol of Oslo.

The museum has been designed by the German architect Klaus Schuwerk, who was inspired from the German-American modernist Mies van der Rohe, the designer of the Neue National gallery in Berlin (Bye, 2019), and is built on two levels: the lower level starts from the courtyard, where visitors are welcomed in through the main entrance and the external café area. The upper level of the construction instead, creates a connection with the existing neighboring buildings on the shore such as the city hall and the Akershus Fortress. On the top section of the building, is the Lyshallen (“the Light Hall”), it is made of marble glass, a translucent material that will contrast the grey slate covering the main museum body²². Birgitte Bye in an article on Museumsnytt described the museum architecture as being characterized by an “antique” *solidity* and a modern *airiness*. Bye wrote that the main idea here, is that the first two floors should form a solid base that provides steadiness for the building, a solid shelter against all kind of weathers, and durability over the years (Bye,2019).

While the planning execution of the main museum block was linear, there were some issues in the first phase of the Lyshallen’s construction: this provoked some heated confrontations between the architect Kleihues, the press and the museum. Initially, the Lyshallen was meant to be an alabaster hall, but due to the porosity and the high cost of the material it was decided instead to use marble glass, specially recycled glass panels from Germany (Henriksen, 2016).

The National Museum’s landscape architecture has been carefully planned by the Norwegian architects- studio Ostengen & Bergo to fit in with Kleihues&Schuwerk winning design project of the main museum site. The idea behind the Museumsplassen (the Museum Square) right in front of the museum’s main entrance is to create a sheltered space between the

²¹ Visit Oslo official website <https://www.visitoslo.com/en/your-oslo/new-architecture/on-the-horizon/new-national-museum/>

²² Klaus Schuwerk architect: project description from Kleihues+Schuwerk office

Vestbanen stasjon and the museum's front façade. This would allow visitors to queue while taking a good look at the museum's architecture, and forms a passage leading to the shop and café²³. In other words, the museum square has been developed to function as a mingling area for everybody, be it a visitor, a local or a passerby.

During the guided tour of the National museum's landscape architecture with Oslo Open House, architect Kaia Scheldsøe Berg revealed a particular detail of the building's outer walls. On each façade, a set of ivy plants had been sown, and they had already reached a height of 2.5 meters (Pict. 3). The guide asked the group to imagine the museum edifice once the climbing ivy would be covering the entire facades of the museum, changing color and mutating form according to the season. The integration of plants and raw materials in the museum architecture is a recurrent element of the building and can be traced in the museum square (where an oak tree has been sawn), and in the choice of materials used for the structure: stone and wood.

What emerged from my interviews was how the design of the institution wanted to create a connection between the national materials and the feeling of the national identity in the structure. An interesting aspect observed by Valle is in what way these materials should be easily connected to the national. The specific use of Norwegian slate stone on the building's façade and inside areas for instance can be related to the Norwegian territory. Thus, the use of Oppdal slate stone is supposed to recall the Norwegian mountains, and provoke a sensation of "relaxation" and "natural", as well as a sense of solidity (Valle)(Pic.4). A similar design approach, mentioned Valle, was used by the Opera theatre in Bjørvika: the use of Italian marble as the main construction material, was meant to create a link with what was represented inside, that is Italian opera. Valle also reflected upon the vision of the new National Museum, and he compared it with Oslo Opera House. Much like the Opera has become a reference point for people and for the geography of the city, the National Museum hopes to acquire a similar role within the Norwegian capital.

In Bye's article in "Museumsnytt", the discussion around the use of nationally sourced material was also brought up to discuss how the National Museum would be perceived from the exterior.

Yes, Bye says, the Oppdal slate and marble glass are yes connected to the national territory—but in a way they are also going to last for a very long time, making the museum a future-oriented institution. Bye calls the NM a *hybrid* building: even though the overall aspect of

²³ Østengen & Bergo arkitekt

the building is generally perceived as low key (for example there are no classical columns or high staircases leading to the entrance such as the traditionalist view of temple of culture), it still has a monumental feeling to it (Bye, 2019). From Valle's description of the museum building, the use of local raw material could be linked to the very essence of Norway, while the use of the word "hybrid" that Bye used in her article could be interpreted as a compromise between old traditions and a new representation of the national. However, some commentaries on these architectural choices have a different interpretation. Architect Torp Fredrik argues that the old National Gallery was placed in a much more appropriate building, because it could offer some qualities that the new museum lacks —such as a strong connection with the historical building, cultural identity, and surrounding green areas in Tullinløkka quarter (Torp, 2018).



Ill. 3) Climbing plants on the museum's outer facades. Personal pict.19.09.2020



Ill.4) Oppdal slate stone, texture detail. Pers. picture 19.09.2020

Construction and pandemic

The grand opening of the new National Museum has been delayed due to a series of unfortunate events, most of which were out of the museum's control. Originally the museum was due to open in 2020, but already in November 2019 it was clear that the opening would have been postponed. In fact, the delays of two essential deliveries (security doors and technical facilities) led the construction company Statsbygg to postpone the end of the works, planned then for 2021 (Torp, 2018).

In addition to structural delay, there have also been other delay in the interior features of the museum, in particular with gallery spaces and security such as emergency exits. Janne Helene Arnesen has explained how for instance the security doors were produced in Bodø and both the National Museum and the new Munch Museum placed an order with the same company, resulting in delivery delays for both institutions. The temperature control within exhibition room has also been problematic, meaning that overall, the artworks and specimens could not

be moved into the new spaces until they could offer an appropriate environment. In addition to construction delays, 2020 was also affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which was a considerable setback for the grand opening and for the construction progress. “Working in this context has been difficult” says Arnesen, “it feels silly to sit with ready printed labels and etiquettes for one and half a year before opening, as during that time the exhibition may change”.

Two of the other informants however shared a common view on the beneficial aspects of having an extra year before the museum’s opening. Peder Valle pointed out when it comes to the employees working directly with the collections, the delay actually meant gaining an extra year to be finished with the display work. Valle informed me that employees started to move in the new offices at the end of 2019, and even though the artworks and specimens couldn’t be moved in the new building yet, the curatorial section had the chance to start settling in the new environment. As he said, “even though the Covid-19 pandemic led to a forced general closure of all activities, and remote working, curators and collection workers had extra time to properly work on the exhibitions details and to focus on the public’s high expectations”.

Curator Gudrund Eidsvik also stressed how important it has been to acquire an extra year of time for working on the marketing strategies: Eidsvik noted that during the pandemic the employees within the marketing department had the chance to refine their promotional strategies in view of the grand opening. At the same time the curators could collaborate with the visitors’ experience department to improve the exhibitions design, as well as perfecting the new “high tech” tools that will be incorporated in the gallery spaces. “To make the audiences happy and to meet their high expectations is a big responsibility”, concluded Gudrun, “and with an extra year of hard work the museum could work further in order to make sure all the budget was properly used and that the grand opening will be a memorable event”.

4.6 Identity, narratives, exhibitions, accessibility

Identity and accessibility

According to the new museum strategy for 2020-25, the new museum should be “open”, “inclusive” and “accessible” to everyone. During the interview process, these objectives were reinstated in several points by my informants, and concerned several aspects of the museum such as the openness of building, the accessibility of exhibitions content, and the inclusiveness of the museum program.

In order to attract and include as diverse an audience as possible, the new NM has adopted a strategy called “ABC method” (Activity-Based Costing): curator Gudrun Eidsvik explained how this costing and inventory derived method is based on the use of target groups, and it is becoming more common within national business companies or media companies such as NRK. In the case of the National Museum in Oslo, this method has been used to define the most disparate target groups in order to understand their needs, to find out how to attract them and how to cater the museum visit for them. Eidsvik explained how for each group the employees defined a typical person for that category, for example, “a 30-year-old man that works as a physiotherapist and likes beer and football”. The goal in this case is to convey objects to this person in a new way and see if he-she thinks it is interesting at all, and to understand what triggers or not his or her interest. The whole point of defining “target groups” is to try and reach as much as possible those categories of people that normally would not go to the museum. This strategy will be also used for communicating the stories in the permanent collections and generally to enhance the visitors’ experience at the museum. Ellisiv Brattfjrd, communication advisor and web editor at the NM, also described how people will hopefully experience the new spaces as a second home not only for the purpose of a visit: “the new museum will be for everyone, and all identities will be allowed to come in and feel at home”. Two main contributing factors to the museum’s openness will be the exhibitions and activity program and the building.

When describing the museum building (its structure, management and location), the informants used words such as “open” and “comfortable” and “inclusive”, indicating a place where most people should feel welcomed in and outside of the visiting purpose.

For example, curator of education and visitor experience Cathrine Lorange imagined the museum as a location where passersby come in to have a look, spend some time at the museum’s caf and library, or purposefully visit the place and see some art. Lorange even

drew an analogy between the museum's indoor spaces, such as the library, and a house living room. A quaint yet researched atmosphere has been created in order to provoke tranquility and invite people to rest, study and reflection.

“While the museum rooms will create social spaces, the architecture will make a space for pauses”, she told me. Thus the sitting spaces around that are incorporated in the museum's façade, the new museum library and the shop on the first floor will have an important role in attracting people outside of the museum crowd.

Permanent collections

What should a national museum collect? (Elton, 2020). This is the question that has long been discussed among the curators working at the National Museum in Vestbanen. Planned to host the masses, the space inside the museum is enormous: 10000msq, with 80 gallery rooms that will be able to host up to 5000 works. In the NM strategy for 2020-2025, the goals to develop and manage the collections are stated clearly: the aim is to make the enormous collection accessible and available to the greatest extent. As previously mentioned, the museum will invest in new technologies within the galleries to provide visitors with a more engaging visit, as well as developing the digitization of collections and make them available online. The museum also seeks for an active collaboration with other professional institutions -both at a national and international level, in particular when it comes to competence development and loaning of artworks²⁴.

How will the exhibition areas look? The permanent collection is going to be distributed over two floors in chronological order. My first informant curator Cynthia Osiecki provided me with an overview over the organization of the collections and how they will be distributed over the floors. The ground floor will display the former Museum of Decorative Arts and Design Museum collection, organized timewise from the Middle Ages to the contemporary, including the first plaster casts inherited from the original museum, now forming the new Sculpture Museum. The National Gallery collection will start on the second floor, with 58 covering visual art from the 15th century, including 1600s Dutch art, Norwegian landscape painters from the 1800s -such as Dahl and Tidemand, ending with French impressionists and the museum's unique collection of Edward Munch. The temporary exhibitions instead, will find their arena in the Lyshallen on the upper floor. Its 2400msq of exhibition space will allow the museum to use this space both as a single exhibition area, or as three independent

²⁴ Nasjonalmuseet strategy 2020-2025. *Bygge og forvalte samlingen*, p.10.

sections. As emerged from the NM annual report from 2018, the Lyshallen is going to be inaugurated along with the opening exhibition: here, states the report, visitors will be able to experience contemporary Norwegian art, “designed to appeal both to visitors with prior knowledge of contemporary art and visitors who may be encountering this kind of art for the first time”²⁵.

The organization of the permanent collections has received some harsh criticisms from Fredrik Torp, one of the major exponents of the group “Aksjonen Redd Nasjonalgalleriet” (Save the National Gallery Action). According to Torp, the Chronological and very coherent way of displaying the collection through a long series of rooms lacks a comprehensible communication system. Break areas makes it possible to orientate oneself, creating the feeling of an impenetrable maze (Ill.5): “We had expected more creative and inviting solutions in a new national museum” (Torp, 2018). Another aspect of the new museum that Torp criticizes, is the (presumed) lack of space for new artworks acquisitions or donations. On the contrary, according to informant Osiecki, the new way of displaying the works will allow more archive and storage, as the works will be constantly shifting between the museum’s own art pieces and borrowed specimens.

Ill.5) Nasjonalmuseet 2nd floor : rooms plan overview. Sourced from Nationalmuseet/Museumsnytt

New narratives

In order to adapt the narratives to a modern and varied audience, the museum curators will work on the inclusion of new themes and artists aimed at representing the current social and cultural sphere in Norway. Much of this work will be done through reshaping the narratives in the galleries, and the way that each work will be narrated and set into context.

Cynthia Osiecki explained how the curatorial approach in the galleries is changing in comparison to the previous National Gallery in Tullinløkka. Firstly, there will be some works in the permanent collections that will constantly rotate in order to make space for less known works from the archive or to leave the place to some “guest-works” loaned from other museums. This approach is part of the new collection strategy, which puts a lot of emphasis on collaboration with other cultural institutions and museums within the country. It also

²⁵ NM annual report 2018, pp.10-12

encourages the establishment of a network for temporary mutual exchange of artworks between partners²⁶. Another point concerning the new curatorial approach was brought up by the curator Gudrund Eidsvik, on the so-called “highlight” art works, i.e., mainstream and most popular art pieces at the museum such as Munch’s *Madonna* and *Scream*, or works by 1800s national romantic landscape painters such as Dahl, Tidemand and Gude. According to Gudrun, these painters will still get the attention they deserve, in order to cater for those who expect to see them (for instance international tourists or less frequent Norwegian visitors), but the curators will make sure to include new secondary works and narratives to satisfy the curiosity of frequent visitors too. New stories that will focus on the historical context around the work rather than on the artist only will be introduced. This was a recurrent point in my interviews, as three out of my six informants talked about the shift from artist-based collections to curating artwork-based stories, focusing particularly on the context (historical, social) around each work. This approach is important for defining a new meaning and place of national identity. According to Cathrine Lorange, this new context-based way of looking at the works would enable visitors to reflect on stories about the *national* and *identity* from different perspectives. These national stories, said Lorange, have been taught in a certain way for years, and it is time to rethink the way the museum answers to questions such as “what is a nation? What does it mean to be Norwegian today?”. In this respect Lorange also added that the way of presenting these narratives will be positively affected by a new guided-tours approach, which will put a lot of emphasis on themes such as nation, nationality and identity. In other words, the national museum will place the discourse of Norwegian national identity within a wider context. By incorporating new narratives such as art during the Danish dominion, referred to as the “Danish-Norwegian” period by Lorange. The aim is to break away from a conservative “fact box” type of representation and to leave room for debate. With the new focus on guided tours and communication, Lorange argued, the museum wants to stress on the importance on the narrative-history storytelling, and answer to very concrete questions in the galleries such as “What was art concerned with during that period? What was the artwork’s context? What sold well at the time?”. Hence the verbal approach, the debate and the personal reflection between the museum, the artworks and the audience become an integral part of the new communication and visitor’s experience strategy. This is where the unification of teamwork, and the staff expertise will be useful in finding out what were the gaps and deficiencies in the previous collections, and working on a

²⁶ NM Strategy: *Samlingen*, p.10

modernized, truthful representation of national identity. The question of identity and national identity is still relevant in Norway today. In the theory chapter two, I referred to identity crisis as a consequence of modernization, and how this is typical of multicultural and fast developing cities, such as Oslo (Burgess, 2001). Furthermore, I have showed how national museums are useful to provide a frame of reference for one own's culture, heritage and identity (Aronsson, 2015). The National Museum wants to work on trying to integrate and represent a less abstract reality of what Norway is today, and what are the *identities* that contribute to its culture. The first attempt of the museum in tackling this point, is done through the opening exhibition “Jeg kaller det kunst” (I call it art) (Ill.6). This exhibition will showcase the work of 150 contemporary artists from all over Norway, whom through different forms of art (painting, video, theatre, music) will exhibit their view on themes such as identity, belonging, nationality and democracy²⁷.

When it comes to the permanent collections, the museum will incorporate those groups that were poorly represented in the previous art museums, such as Norwegian female artists and Norwegian indigenous groups such as the Sami. Janne Helene Arnesen remarked how trying to fill these gaps has showed to be more demanding than the museum staff thought. “The audience will find something old and something new in our collections. However, filling the gaps of the museum collection doesn't just mean to acquire for instance, an artifact that has a Sami motif on it”, says Arnesen, “the focus should be on the Sami identity itself and how that artifact or artwork best represent that identity”. This shows how the changing role of national museums is still an ongoing process, aiming towards a tangible reflection of a country's population as well as awareness and respect towards diversity (Aronsson & Elgenius, 2011).

Ill. 6 “Jeg kaller det kunst” Exhibition poster.

²⁷ Nasjonalmuseet: *Jeg kaller det kunst*. Exhibition promo

Chapter 5. Discussion

Through the analysis of the National Museum in Oslo I was able to gather different aspects of the construction and establishment of a new museum brand.

What emerged from the press, literature and from the museum's official documentation has provided me with a broad sense of how the museum is being branded, and how it is promoted on the national cultural market.

On the other hand, through the interviews undertaken with the museum staff, I have had the opportunity to gain an insider's perspective on the museum's new vision, as well as an understanding of how the new museum and its branding process are being perceived by the employees. Furthermore, the interviews were particularly useful in understanding what the place of national identity will be within the new museum.

Strategy and vision

The new strategy sets some clear and strategic goals to be reached by the museum in the first half decade from its opening. These goals focus particularly on the position of the museum in connection to other cultural institutions in Norway, highlighting its potential as an attractive partner for collaboration. In the new strategy document, the museum is marketing itself to become a primary business partner at a national level, publicizing its "highly professional staff, its academic resources, new technologies and interactive collections". In my view all these elements come together in an image of the museum as a prestigious institution to work with and will help increase the financial earnings through collaborative work. By building business collaboration and thus receiving positive publicity from associate art institutions, the museum is likely to draw attention and consequently to attract more visitors. In addition to partnerships, increasing focus is also placed on a strong media and communication department and on a diverse and interactive visitors experience program. By defining target groups among potential visitors, the new museum is trying to cater the exhibitions, guided tours and activity programs for a new and diverse crowd.

The National Museum brand

In the analysis I have shown several aspects in what define Oslo National Museum as a brand, such as the consolidation of several smaller museums into one institution, the creation

of a new visual identity and image, a clearer management strategy and overall a more unified and economically stronger organization.

The remake of a visual and graphic identity in particular comes across as a very important aspect of the new national museum: in addition to a purposefully designed modern building, a consistent set of graphics contributed to the making of a coherent image of the institution, while the new logo brought a key element for making the brand easily recognizable.

The font used for the main logo on the museum's façade is traceable in other components of the museum such as the general signage, brochures, labels and explanatory text in the galleries and on the official museum website. My informants agreed that this new consistent graphic system is fundamental to show the institution's integrity, to set a clear brand image but also to make it appealing and easier to promote. Furthermore, a clear font and a recognizable logo can become an immediate object of retail: if consider the Tate gallery in London, we can immediately picture the iconic logo, much like the stylized Greek temple has become the symbol of the British Museum. These simple yet effective logos are powerful because they are easy to remember and to connect to the building. The new National Museum's new logo has a big potential to become iconic and to be incorporated in the museum's retail and merchandise. It can be argued that this sense of graphic coherence was lacking in the previous museum, and it was one of the driving reasons for undertaking the process of branding.

Narratives and the National

Thanks to a well thought-after curatorial program, the permanent collections will present new narratives and will adapt to the interests and expectations of a modern Norway. By including work done by female artists as well as Sami artists and artefacts in the permanent collection, the museum is making new curatorial choices and trying to reshape the meaning of the national museum. The collections will be also communicated differently compared to the old museum, meaning that a new scheme for guided tours is going to be put in place. Guides at the NM will be required to focus more on the storytelling of each work in order to give a more comprehensive historical context for each artist and new audio guides, along with interactive tools, will be an integrated part of the museum visit.

An immersive building

In the analysis of the museum, I focused on how the building and its structural concept are connected to the new museum's vision.

The presentation of the national museum's architecture provided by the architects' firm Kleihues+Schuwerk, gives the impression of an ambitious, innovative museum building: from the architectural plans, the museum appears well integrated with the surrounding city landscape, yet still standing out with its unique textures and materials.

The main material utilized in the construction —slate stone— is a raw material that is easily traceable in Norwegian nature, and therefore locally sourced.

By using these materials, the new museum's architecture tries to create a connection between the museum, the Norwegian territory and the raw elements that constitute Norway, a link that will be hopefully grasped by the unfamiliar visitor.

The incorporation of “green elements” such as the ivy plants growing up the outer walls, and the oak tree in the museum square, will contribute to bringing life to the museum building: the apparently static, heavy grey façades facing the waterfront will merge with the climbing plants that will change shape and color according to the seasons. This is a rather different picture than the one presented by the press: a museum building that is integrated with nature and in constant motion. Perhaps it would be appropriate to see this picture as an analogy of Norwegian society: on one hand a community that is in constant evolution, composed of people coming from different backgrounds, investing in urban development; on the other hand, a society that recognizes the importance of nature within the city and respects it.

From the inside, the building offers different atmospheres and scenarios on each floor, and the chronological succession of rooms for the permanent collections creates contrast with the bright airy exhibition space in the Lyshallen or with the collected atmosphere in the library.

The new museum space is conceived as an open, welcoming site: under an architectural point of view the building has been provided with several resting areas both outdoor and indoor.

My informants were clear on how the museum aspires to become a meeting point within Oslo city center, and how the Opera house in Oslo was an inspiration for the concept of “immersive building”, as well as a point of reference, a landmark.

Pandemic and digitalization

Even though a general digitalization of the museum was already planned in the strategy, the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 helped somewhat to accelerate this process. The unfortunate coincidence of the museum's closure and moving period with the pandemic pushed the museum towards finding new ways to keep the audience and followers engaged with what was taking place at the museum. Despite the closed doors, the members of staff

from various museum departments managed to show some fragments of their working life at the museum. They produced insight videos on individual works to keep stimulating interest in the audience through secondary projects such as “creative quarantine” and “collection time”. This type of initiative functioned as a promotional campaign over the past year, as the museum was expecting to reopen to the public within 2021. Another point raised during the interviews, is how the extra time that the pandemic has forced upon employees has not been perceived as negative: on the contrary, the staff felt that they gained more time to perfect their work in preparation for the grand opening.

Chapter 6. Conclusions and summary

In this dissertation I analyzed the new National Museum in Oslo as a cultural brand, and I started by asking why and how the construction of a new museum and the process of branding had taken place in the first place.

From the museum strategy for 2020-25, it was possible to understand how the consolidation of the art museums into a single site would provide a solid base for working as one unified institution. Furthermore, the new building graphic design would contribute to the marketing and the promotion of a coherent brand image.

I showed that branding in museums is not an isolated phenomenon, and the corporate brand approach has already been successfully experimented within other museums world-wide. The consolidation of the previous art museums in Oslo into a single organization, can be considered a brand making process, where the united forces of all museum departments work towards the success of the same institution.

I have also considered how branding is often a contributing aspect of institutional change, which is bound to happen in a society with mass migration, and fast urban and technological development. Therefore, brands and museum brands tried to adapt to these changes, and the Norwegian national museum made an attempt in rethinking and modernizing the organization accordingly. Through the NM strategy it was possible to see how the managerial and curatorial aspects of the museum considered it appropriate to renew the image and the themes within the museum.

From the interviews undertaken with the museum staff at the NM, it was possible to understand how the strategy shift was experienced by the employees working in different departments. There was a consensus that the unification of the museums generated a feeling of unity among the departments and employees. In comparison to the previous management, the staff is now able to work towards the same goal as a stronger team thanks to the shared offices and workshops. The staff also looked at this remake as a general economization of the museum, among other things, through the new strategic location on the port and the creation of business partnerships with other cultural institutions across Norway.

Lastly, I have looked into how the topics of *identity* and *national identity* are still relevant today for the Norwegian national museum. These are traceable both in the museum architecture, with its design materials and in the museum collections.

The curatorial departments have worked towards reviewing the way in which such themes are represented and shown in the museum collections: in order to draw a more contemporary picture of national identity within the museum, the permanent collections will build new narratives that will focus on truthful historical context and on a major inclusion of minority groups and female art representation.

Furthermore, the opening exhibition “Jeg kaller det kunst” will act as an arena for showcasing what Norwegian art is today, and what the new identities within the nation are.

Relevance

The research on The New National Museum in Oslo is relevant because it has the potential to set an example for institution branding of other public funded projects. In Scandinavia, Norway in particular, it could be seen as a pilot project for the rebranding of regional or national museums (see for instance Mork’s presentation on branding and merging museums in Norway in 2014).

The branding strategy of a national museum could be applied more generally to the public service such as theatres and public libraries. For example, in the last decade there has been an increasing trend of institution change and rebranding in Norway, and only in the capital a series of very large-scale projects have been completed such as the Opera House, the new Munch Museum and a new Deichmansk national library. The rationale behind the rebranding of these places is to engage visitors, promote and insemminate the knowledge within culture and the arts.

The same type of branding approach could also be applied more generally to the international branding a city, or even a country (Quin Sun, Audhesh & Tieslau 2016). This sort of branding exercise is shown to enhance the image of a city, increase citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural area, and ultimately boost tourism. One great example is the European capital of culture program: for example, in 2019 one of the two nominees was Matera in Southern Italy. This town of population 60.000 managed to boost tourism by 31% in 2019 compared to 2014 (Padula 2020).

Looking back at the research process, there are certain areas in my research that weren't considered. The limitation of my field work due to the pandemic and to the restricted access to the building meant that most of my data came from the interviews and observations undertaken from the exterior of the museum. It would have been helpful to pay a physical visit to the inside areas and to gather personal annotations in the exhibition spaces.

Furthermore, my interviews were limited to the staff members at the museum. It could have been interesting to expand the research by doing some surveys on how Oslo locals have experienced the make of this new museum, and what were their expectations. Lastly, it could be exciting to undertake further research on the impact of this new museum brand after a few years from opening, and to determine whether the strategy for 2020-25 was in fact successful. The success of such strategy could be measured for instance in the number of visitors, an increase of international visits or in ticket sales for the exhibitions.

It could also be determined whether the new program managed to involve a more diverse audience, with different cultural and education background. Lastly, the biggest success would be to which extent the museum had an impact on the national arts and culture sphere, and how many national collaboration and partners the National Museum has acquired.

Bibliography and supplementary materials

Aakvaag, Gunnar. 2017 “Institutional Change in Norway: the importance of the public sphere”. In *Institutional Change in the Public Sphere: Views of the Nordic Model* (ed. Englestad, F; Larsen, H; Rogstad, J; Steen-Johnsen, K.), 71-97, Warsaw: De Gruyter Open Poland.

Amundsen, Arne Bugge. 2011 "National Museums in Norway". *Linköping Electronic Conference Proceedings*. ISSN 1650-3686, (64) s. 653-666.

Aronczyk, Melissa. 2013. *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*. Oxford: Oxford university press.

Aronsson, Peter. 2015 “National Museums as Cultural Institutions”. In *National Museums and Nation-building in Europe 1750-2010*, (Ed. Elgenius G., Aronsson P), 167-196.

Aronsson, Peter. 2011a. “Explaining national museums: exploring comparative approaches to the study of national museums”, in *National Museums: New Studies from Around the World*, (ed. Simon J. Knell, Peter Aronsson and Arne B. Amundsen), 29-54. London: Routledge.

Bosch, Annette van den. 2005. “Museums. Constructing a public culture in the global age”. In *Third Text*, Vol.19(1): 81-90.

Burgess, J.Peter. 2001. *Culture and Rationality: European Frameworks of Norwegian Identity*. 19-37. Høyskoleforslaget: Kristiansand.

Caldwell, Niall.G. 2000. “The Emergence of Museum Brands”. *International Journal of Arts Management* , SPRING 2000-04.01, Vol. 2(3): 28-34. Montréal: HEC.

Cambridge Dictionary. 2021. "Identity". Accessed 20.05.2021
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/identity>

Cambridge Dictionary. 2021. "Culture". Accessed 20.05.2021.
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/culture>

Charmez, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory. A practical guide through Qualitative analysis.* London: Sage Publications.

Eriksen, Anne. 2009. *Museum. En Kulturhistorie.* Oslo: Pax Forlag.

Forskningsetikk, 2018. Forskningsetiske retningslinjer for samfunnsvitenskap, humaniora, juss og teologi. Published 4.12.2018.
<https://www.forskningsetikk.no/retningslinjer/hum-sam/forskningsetiske-retningslinjer-for-samfunnsvitenskap-humaniora-juss-og-teologi/>

Gillham, Bill. 2005. *Research interviewing: the range of techniques.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Graburn, Nelson. 1998. "A Quest for Identity". *Museum International*, vol.50, (3): 13-18. <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.uio.no/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/1468-0033.00156>

Hammer, Marilyn J. 2017. "Ethical Considerations for Data Collection Using Surveys". In *Oncology nursing forum*. Vol.44, (2):157-159.

Iranowska, Joanna. 2019. "Copying as Museum Branding". In *Museum as Cultures of Copies: The Crafting of Artefacts and Autenticity*, (ed. Brita Brenna, Hans D. Chrsitensen), 131-142. Oxon: Routledge.

Klonk, Charlotte. 2009. *Spaces of Experience. Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000.* 135-171; 173- 211. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Kvale, Steinar and Svend Brinkmann. 2009. *Interviews. Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. 2nd edition. Los Angeles: Sage.

Lury, Celia. 2004. *Brands: The logos of the global economy*. London: Routledge.

Mathisen, Silje Opdahl. 2010. "Likt men likevel forskjellig. Om representasjon av samisk identitet og forhistorie i samiske museer og majoritetsmuseer". *Samling og museum: kapitler av museenes historie, praksis og ideologi*. 295-306. Oslo: Novus forlag.

Mork, Paal. "Branding merging museums. The Norwegian consolidation of museums". Presentation, unpublished manuscript, last edited 23.11.2014, PDF file.

http://mpr.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2018/12/ICOM_MPR_2014_P._Mork_Branding_merging_museums.pdf

Opprann, Ken. 2020. *Nasjonalmuseet – et monumentalbygg blir til*. Oslo: Forlaget press.

Padula, G., 2020. THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MATERA EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2019. [online] Available at: <<http://www.cityo.com>>

Phillips, Marta; O'Reilly, Daragh. 2007. "Major case study: Rethinking Tate Modern as an art museum brand". In *Museum Marketing*, (ed. Ruth Rentschler; Anne M. Hede), 186-192. Oxford, Elsevier Ltd.

Poulot, Dominique. 2015. "The Changing Roles of Art Museums". *National Museums and Nation-building in Europe 1750-2010*, (ed. Gabriella Elgenius, Peter Aronsson), 89-113. Oxon: Routledge.

Pusa, Sofia; Uusitalo, Liisa. 2014. "Creating Brand Identity in Art Museums: A Case Study". In *International Journal of Arts Management*, Vol. 17, (1): 18-30.

Rentschler, Ruth; **Hede**, Anne Marie. 2007. *Museum Marketing*. 12-19; 151-159. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd.

Runnel,Pille; Lepik, Krista; Lotina, Linda. 2014. “Constructing National Identity. A National Museum Visitor’s Perspective”. In *The International Journal of the Inclusive Museum*. Vol 6, (4): 67-75. Champaign: Common Ground Publishing.

Scholte, Jan Aart. 2000. *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*. London: Macmillan.

Scott, Carol. 2007. “Branding Museums”. In *Museum marketing*, (ed. Ruth Rentschelr; Anne M. Hede), 169-183. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd.

Smith Saumarez Charles. 2006. “The Future of the Museum”. *A Companion to Museum Studies* (ed. Sharon Macdonald), 543-554. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Sun, Qin; Paswan, **Audhesh**, K; **Tieslau**, Margie. 2016. “Country Resources, Country Image and Exports: Country Branding and International Marketing Implications”. In *Journal of Global Marketing*, Vol. 29 (4): 223-246. New York: Routledge.

Sørensen, Einer. 2003. “Templer for Musene. Museumsarkitektur”. In *Museer i fortid og nåtid*, (ed. by Arne Bugge Amundsen; Brita Brenna), 187-207. Oslo: Novus Forlag.

Throsby, David. 1999. “Cultural Capital”. In *Journal of Cultural Economics*, Vol. 23 (1/3): 3-12. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Van Hasselt, Gwenny. 2011. “The Dutch National Historical Museum. A National museum for the XXI century”. *National Museums: New Studies from around the world*. (Ed. Simon J.Knell, Peter Aronsson, Arne Bugge), 313-324. London: Routledge.

Extra material related to plans and strategy

Nasjonalmuseet strategi 2020-2025 og målområder. Document received via email communication the 15.01.2021 from Head of Research and Development Talette Rørvik Simonsen.

Nasjonalmuseet annual report 2018, Chair of the Board. Accessed 16.04.2021.

https://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/contentassets/98adac84980c4555ae99de8a5ed00e80/rsmelding2018_eng.pdf

Metric design company, new logo for NM. Last accessed 24.05.2021.

<https://www.metricdesign.no/work/visual-identity-for-nasjonalmuseet>

Kleihues+Kleihues architect firm for the National Museum.

<https://kleihues.com/national-museum-of-art-architecture-and-design-oslo-norway/?lang=en>

Material from media

Borud, Heidi. 18.11.2019 «Åpningen av den nye Nasjonalmuseet er utsatt et halvt år».

Aftenposten.

<https://www.aftenposten.no/kultur/i/0nq5AG/aapningen-av-det-nye-nasjonalmuseet-er-utsatt-et-halvt-aar>

Borud, Heidi. 24/02/2021. «Dette Er Nasjonalmuseets ny logo». Aftenposten.

<https://www.aftenposten.no/kultur/i/zg8mn4/dette-er-nasjonalmuseets-nye-logo-og-visuelle-profil>

Bye, Birgitte. 25/11/2019. «Hva slags bygning er det nye nasjonalmuseet?». Museumsnytt.

<https://museumsnytt.no/hva-slags-bygning-er-det-nye-nasjonalmuseet/>

Elton, Lars. 21/06/2020. Anmeldelse «En samling blir til». Dagsavisen.

<https://www.dagsavisen.no/kultur/2020/06/21/anmeldelse-en-samling-blir-til-nasjonalmuseet-sparker-fra-seg-i-debattens-hete/>

Henriksen, Arve. 1/09/2016. «Denne lysflaten kan bli Oslos nye flyrtårn». Aftenposten.

<https://www.aftenposten.no/oslo/i/mpqp0/denne-lysflaten-kan-bli-oslos-nye-fyrtaarn>

Torp, F. 6/01/2018. «Kritikken mot Nasjonalmuseet: Stortinget må på banen». Aftenposten.

<https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/i/bKzze5/kritikken-mot-nasjonalmuseet-stortinget-maa-paa-banen>

Plan og by utvikling 2020 Oslo Kommune. «Oslo som Kulturaksen».

https://www.oslo.kommune.no/getfile.php/13266706-1516867794/Tjenester%20og%20tilbud/Politikk%20og%20administrasjon/Etater%20C%20foretak%20og%20ombud/Plan-%20og%20bygningsetaten/Byutvikling%20i%20Oslo_2018.pdf

Lists of Illustrations

Ill.1

National Museum's new logo. Source: Metricdesign.no. Credits: Metric design & Display Type Foundry

Ill.2

National museum indoor signage, detail. Source: Metricdesign.no. Credits: Metric design & Display Type Foundry

Ill.3

Climbing plants on the museum's outer facades. Personal pict.19.09.2020

Ill.4

Oppdal slate stone, detail. Pers. Picture 19.09.2020

Ill.5

Nasjonalmuseet 2nd floor : rooms plan overview. Sourced from Nationalmuseet/Museumsnytt.

Ill. 6

Poster for «Jeg Kaller det Kunst», opening exhibition 2022. Source: Mynewdesk.com/no Nasjonalmuseet/ Mediebank. Credits: Neue graphic design.

Interviews

Cynthia Osiecki: Kurator, Avd. Samling. 29/01/2021

Peder Valle: Samlingmedarbeider, Avd. Samling. 02/02/2021

Gudrun Eidsvik: Kurator Formidling, Avd. Formidling og Publikum. 5/02/2021

Janne Helene Arnesen: Samlingsmedarbeider, Avd. Samling. 3/02/2021

Ellisiv Brattfjord: Senior Kommunikasjonsrådgiver, Avd. Formidling og Publikum (Seksjon Publikumsopplevelse). 10/02/2021

Cathrine Lorange. Seksjonsleder Formidling og Publikum, seksjon omvisning. 05/03/2021

Field Work

Oslo Open House «Landskap Rund Nasjonalmuseet». Guided tour with Architect Kaia Scheldsøe Berg from Ostengen and Bergo. 19/09/2020.

<https://www.openhouseoslo.org/?portfolio=landskap-rundt-nasjonalmuseet>