Chapter 7

Findings and discussion:
Museum perspectives

Introduction

The chapter builds on the preceding, which provided valuable and in depth context for an analysis of each of the case study museums. That assessment stressed both the individuality of each museum, and their part in the Australian state museum system. It looked at a range of phenomena from the researcher’s standpoint—a ‘marketing perspective’—with a view to both describing and analysing, as well as comparing and contrasting, the case study museums and considering the role of marketing generally, and then on to electronic marketing specifically, in each museum’s strategies. This current chapter adds to this work by reporting and critically analysing the data drawn from interviews with staff from the Australian state museums in relation to the overall research aim and the research questions. While it is recognised that a researcher does not approach their research free from personal values or without bias (Bryman & Bell, 2007), this chapter does seek to elucidate a ‘museum perspective’ by focusing on the themes that became apparent within the data collected from interviews with museum staff.

As was noted in Chapter 5, a preliminary set of themes was established prior to analysis, based on a perceptual framework set out by the researcher, the research aim and research questions, and the main factors that were apparent in the literature review. These informed the structure of the interview schedule and the subsequent CAQDAS project within NVivo 7.0. However, as the analysis proceeded the preliminary structure

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1 Data from this chapter formed the basis of a refereed conference paper: Lehman, K. 2007. The role of the public in the development of the museum concept: An Australian marketing perspective. Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Arts & Cultural Management, Valencia: July.
needed to be modified as a hierarchy of themes became evident. (The hierarchical theme structure that was the result of the data analysis was given in Figure 5.1.) With a view to laying out the findings of this study in line with the narrative style taken thus far the hierarchical themes guide the structure of this chapter. The main themes are: drivers of change; the role of marketing; and electronic marketing as a strategy. Within each of these there are sub-themes that will be set out as necessary. In a similar manner to Chapter 6, this chapter will provide a summary of each of the main sections. It will also conclude in a similar manner with a combined analysis of each of the summaries. The aim of the summary analysis is to draw together the themes, and to make clear the common threads that run through the data. (The summary theme structure was provided as Figure 5.2.) This structure recognises the fact the phenomena under study here are interconnected, are the result of developments over time, and have not necessarily affected each state museum in the same way or to the same extent.

**Drivers of change**

One of the main aims of this thesis is to establish how the Australian state museums themselves perceive the twenty-first century environment in which they must operate. As part of this aim, this section sets out their views of the drivers of change in both the wider museum sector, and their own museum. All interviewees had strong opinions on this topic, and how various factors operate to shape museum activities. Chapters 2 and 3 documented the role a number of factors played in developments within museum management. Issues such as the rise of a business philosophy within the museum sector, the changing nature of the public and competition for visitors in the sector were canvassed. Subsequently, these issues came out in the interviews as sub-themes within the overall area of drivers of change. This section, then, groups the comments of interviewees into three sub-themes: a business focus; competition for visitors; and the changing public.
A business focus

As large bureaucratic organisations and long established public institutions, museums may be accused of being resistant to change, even if only subconsciously. However, the pace and breadth of change that museums have faced in recent years may have left little room for resistance. When discussing the rise of a business philosophy in the museum sector, two main sub-themes emerged. The first of these centred around the efficiencies and accountability now required of public sector and not for profit institutions. The second related to the concept of a more professional management style.

While there has been pressure on museums globally to be less dependent on traditional income models (Tobelem, 1998), there is increased pressure for public accountability and transparency regarding the government funding they do receive (Weil, 1994). That this has started with cuts to funding, what one strategic-level interviewee described as “erratic and declining government funding”, or at least competition for funding, is noted by one interviewee as a significant influence on museum activities:

As government funding becomes more and more competitive you are competing for the same pool, and… one of the major key performance indicators is the number of people you can attract through the door.

One outcome of the move to make all government instrumentalities more accountable for the funds they receive has been, for museums at least, to establish some performance measures. Though there has been considerable debate for a number of years on the issue of performance indicators for museums (Paulus, 2003; Weil, 2002), it appears that visitor numbers have become more important in this respect than previously. Indeed they have become what one interviewee described as “our quasi-profit and loss line”. A number of interviewees talked of visitor numbers as a means by which government judged the success of a museum. The same weight was not given to visitor numbers by museum staff.

The other influence seen by the interviewees, and linked closely to how accountable museums now need to be, is the move to a more professional management style. Hudson (1998) considers that the rise in professionalism among museum staff in the
latter half of the twentieth century is one of the major factors that has shaped the modern museum. This idea does not imply that previously museums were unprofessional, but rather that organisational structures, management activities and financial management, for instance, are now needing to be much more aligned with those found in for profit organisations. A senior staff member presented their position in this manner:

My job is essentially to run the business and whether you like it or not a museum is a business. It has income coming in and resources that have to come out of that income and it has outcomes that you want to achieve and I made it very clear from day one… I have no expertise in the collections base of this museum but what I saw to be my role was to make things as easy as possible for all those folk by running it and managing it efficiently so they didn’t have to faff around worrying about things like budgets and reports and financial acquittals and all this sort of thing.

Certainly there appears to be a realisation amongst the museum profession that the “more casual management practices” of the past are no longer appropriate (Weil, 2000: n.p.). The Australian state museums are large complex organisations, and given the pressures on funding noted above, they need to be managed accordingly. The director of one museum stated it thus:

I think it’s really reflecting the skill set for museum leadership, like a lot of other things it’s changing… [my museum] is, depending on how you measure it, somewhere between a $30 - $38 million business. It’s highly diverse and it’s got a big science arm and it’s got public arm, it’s got commercial arms and you’ve got to be able to do all that, but it operates in a public, political atmosphere.

As stated in Chapter 3, a director of a museum is now expected to have skills in management areas such as human and financial management, and in marketing areas such as fund raising, building audiences and garnering community support. However, the issue of whether a museum director should be someone with a museum background, or a career manager, is still debatable (Museums and Galleries Foundation of NSW, 2004). Within the data collected here there was a clear understanding that a director’s management skills are more important in the contemporary museum sector than they have been in the past. There was not support for the notion that museum managers...
necessarily needed to be career managers, but there was an implication that management was a skill that was not held by all:

A lot of the curators don’t have the business expertise that’s needed for the higher level position. I mean if they diversify and add those qualifications or add that skill to their set then that’s fine, but I think it’s really needed across the board. I think that’s where a lot of them fall down.

One of the strategic-level interviewees perhaps stated the case for those in senior positions:

Too often I think museums have either failed or gone very close to failure… because their director/chief executive viewed it as a part-time job… In fact I think there’s been quite a number of directors around the place who get close to what I call the heroic failure model, because in a sense they’re either out of their depth or things have changed but they haven’t.

There is still evidence, then, of the tensions between the curators—the traditional guardians of the museum’s collection—and the museum administrators and managers—those responsible for the museum’s financial viability (Anheier & Toepler, 1998). However, in some respects the issue of whether a museum needs a career manager or a manager with a museum background is a ‘red herring’. The point is more that museums now need professional, business-like managers and management structures. That they do is one of the reasons for the current shape of the Australian state museum system.

**Competition for visitors**

As first noted in Chapter 2, up until the latter part of the twentieth century museums had not recognised any need to consider that there was a museum visitor market. However, by the 1960s, with social and economic changes obvious, the museum sector realised it was in competition with other activities (Kotler & Kotler, 1998). In addition, museums were, at least in the larger Australian cities, clearly in competition with one another for market share (Casey & Wehner, 2001). This latter point is seen by the state museums as a valid concern when it comes to marketing their institution:

When it comes down to visitation, people can’t spend their week or don’t spend their weekend going to the art gallery and the museum and the library, for
example. …they might come to the art gallery one week and then they might not
go to the museum again for another 6 months. So we are definitely competing
against each other.

However, the concept of there being two (or more) simultaneous brands competing with
each other, in the sense found in consumer goods, was not seen as likely in the cultural
sector within which the state museums operate. Nonetheless, Australian museums now
realise that visitors to cultural institutions are not homogenous, and do customise their
marketing strategies to reach different market segments:

In the overall marketplace we do consider the other arts agencies… as
competitors… we’re also aware that our audiences are quite distinct and an art
gallery audience is quite distinct from a museum going audience.

Still, it is the broader concept of competition that the case study museums are most
concerned with. All interviewees expressed some concern that the environment in
which museums now operate had changed, and where once museums had a ‘captive’
market, they now needed to deal with a wide variety of competitors. According to the
interviewees, museums must contend with “sporting activities, the cinema, other
weekend and school holiday activities”, as well as festivals, events and pure leisure
venues such as “Dreamworld, Seaworld, the fun park experience”. The competition,
though, is not just with entertainment venues. When asked what their museum’s main
competition was one senior staff member said:

A day at the beach, mucking about, gardening, watching television, going on the
Internet. I think the museum is probably not top of mind and when they’ve done
some of their favourite things, the people may all go to the museum.

As one marketing manager suggested “we’re competing against any activity that will
take up spare time… leisure time”. Similarly, a strategic-level interviewee considered
that “what we’re competing with is that decision that the family makes when it sits
down and says, what are we going to do today?”. Such a sentiment was apparent across
all the interviews. In a marketing sense, all the interviewees considered their institutions
as having to compete and none appeared at all complacent about how this affected them.
All made a connection with competition and visitation, linked to the issue of accountability above. This comment is an example:

There’s a lot more competition for people’s time, energy and resources. It’s a very busy world out there, so in order of the marketing contexts, there’s a lot more information out there, there’s a lot more options out there.

Museums remain, though, cautious about the fact they compete with other forms of entertainment:

We’ll do anything and everything to enhance and broaden that engagement and compete against other forms of entertainment with the one proviso we’ll never dumb down the collection or the research being carried on.

There is an understanding that those aspects of a museum that set them apart from the competition—their point of differentiation—could be lost or damaged if they go too far towards being simply an entertainment venue. As was set out in Chapter 6, the credibility of the state museums is built on a research profile, which also supports their place as education providers, and in many respects is core to what it means to be a state museum in Australia. The interviewees confirmed this assessment.

**The changing public**

It was pointed out in Chapter 2 that it is seen as part of a modern museum’s overall social purpose to provide satisfying museum experiences in a distinctive environment, as opposed to being solely a source of information. This is reflected in the realisation that service quality is important for the museum sector (Caldwell, 2002). In many ways consumers—that is, the public—demand a greater role due to their changed relationship to producers of goods and services. They hold much more power than ever before. Museum consumers, no less so.

For example, when discussing how the general public, or more particularly, their expectations, had changed, one strategic-level interviewee considered that they were in many respects much more demanding:
In terms of exhibitions they expect slicker, more professional presentation… and they question authority. Having said that, museums do still lecture and tell people things and there’s quite an audience for that, especially among older people but younger kids want to make their own meaning. So they’re not going to read the text you write them, they’re going to create their own meaning much more than previous generations did.

A similar response was made by another strategic-level interviewee:

Far more now, they don’t expect some crappy interactive that doesn’t particularly work, they don’t expect to see and do the same things they can do on their desktop at home. They want something different… they want to be able to experience something that they can’t just do on the home computer because they’ll do it at home rather than go to the museum.

There are two implications here. One is that the public is simply more demanding of producers of any product, in that they expect a consistently high quality, and museums are not considered any differently from any other consumer product. The second implication is that there are still museum visitors who do want a relatively traditional museum experience. That is, there is a significant segment that are seeking, for example, a museum display or exhibition that leads them through a text-based narrative that illuminates items from the collection. But there is certainly another segment that wish to see technology-based, highly interactive exhibitions. Within a marketing context, then, there are different segments that make up the ‘museum visitor’ market.

This issue of technology and its effect on museums is another theme that can be found in the comments of the museum staff. It is a theme that continues throughout the data presented here and appears as a major indicator of the way the public has changed. It not only relates to the skill set of the consumer—now more technologically able—but also simply to the basic services they now perceive as ‘normal’ from both business and leisure providers. As one strategic-level interviewee noted when asked about changes to the public “the most dramatic immediate change is the impact of communications, the impact of the Internet in particular”. As noted in Chapter 4, many Australians now turn to the Internet as their primary source of information (Lloyd & Bill, 2004). Museums recognise that this is relevant in relation to how they might communicate with their
audience: “a lot more people spend time on the Web, they choose to interact differently for their own leisure time”.

Consumers are, then, better educated and more informed and expect more information to be available. Museums do recognise this, and the need to respond appropriately, with the result that they have become more engaged with their audience. This response to a changing external environment can by summarised by this comment from a strategic-level staff member: “I think this institution and other institutions are learning that… you’ve got to actually give society what they want”. There was, then, a general agreement amongst interviewees that museums needed to respond to the changes in both society and their visitors.

This need was evident in the way museums now went about their organisational tasks, for example, how the new external environment impacted on program and exhibition planning. As one strategic-level interviewee said:

People get information in different ways… museums, like education per se, have realised that people learn in different ways or take on information in different ways. So when you are forming exhibitions or displays or group products or programs, it’s not just a matter of saying here’s a bit of text and a picture, here’s the object, go for your life. It’s much more now that you have to engage all the senses so that people can lock into this information in ways that they can find accessible.

The practical outcome to this was evident in the visitation numbers. When asked how they thought their museum was responding to the changes, one strategic-level interviewee said:

I think we’re responding pretty well. We’re running now a much more eclectic range of public programs and the critical thing I think in terms of how well you’re going in terms of… are you adapting to community norms, comes in your visitations, and the visitation of this museum is going gangbusters. I think that speaks volumes.

A combination of two of the concerns that have been seen here, the push for accountability in relation to public monies, and the orientation towards meeting the
changing expectations of visitors was also something that appeared in a number of the interviews. This comment is indicative:

Our dollars are precious so we have to place them really well, so we have to know where to put the advertising and we have to know our audiences, who is coming and who isn’t coming, rather than the scatter-gun approach. Museums in the past thought they were for everybody, but of course they weren’t.

As mentioned throughout this thesis, there has been a shift in focus across the world as museums have evolved from institutions available only to an elite to broader-based public institutions. Furthermore, the public has changed and no longer can be satisfied with the same approach as that which worked for museums in the past. Clearly museums realise that they need to actively engage with what is now a broad range of visitors with the aim of offering a value museum experience to each of their different market segments.

**Summary**

The majority of interviewees were clear that the drivers of change they discussed were recent. Many staff were witness to the developments discussed here within their tenure. Those staff who had only been with their museum a few years still had knowledge of the drivers and the shape of the museum sector as it now is, and was in the past, through organisational and collegial communication channels.

Changes to the operational philosophy of the museums as organisations are perhaps easier for staff to see, and the issues of funding cuts and a more professional management style are ones that they would have to deal with every day. This certainly came out in the interviews generally, as did the resulting issue of visitation being a success measure. Visitation was closely aligned with their competitors in the comments of most interviewees. All were well aware of how museums need to be competitive, though this was not the case with one of the smaller museums, with one interviewee stating that they had:

the highest visitation per capita of any one institution in Australia and [competition] would be more of a relevant question for Sydney or whatever. Our
visitation… is normally 3 to 4 times a year where in other institutions it might be once every 2 years.

Still, all the other state museum clearly connected the need to be competitive to the nature of today’s museum visitor.

Overall, primary among the responses, then, was the recognition by museums that the main driver of change for museums in the last 25 years was their audience. This quote from an operational-level staff member provides an example of the comments:

There’s a basic philosophy shift… that happened about 15 years ago around museums, and that was that museums are here for the collections only and that the people who looked after those collections were the ones that made the decisions, and that really the public didn’t matter that much in a decision making process on what museums did.

This sentiment was also supported by a staff member at the strategic-level:

Audience. …it’s driven by audience, not just numbers but also how do we keep our relevance to our audience, so they don’t see us as these sort of dark, dusty, dingy places. They’re actually alive and vibrant places and have a relevance to my life, so that’s what I see.

It is, then, not just a matter of keeping up the numbers, or of delivering exhibitions with a high level of technology. The Australian state museums appear to be aware that there has been a number of external forces and societal changes that they do need to respond to, but the result for them is that they are required to consider the visitor’s expectations of a museum experience much more carefully than they have ever done before. Where this awareness has led them as organisations is the topic of the next section.

The role of marketing

As was discussed in Chapter 3, museums have been slow to consider marketing in an operational sense, with the term ‘marketing’ not appearing in the UK museum sector until the late 1980s (Kawashima, 1997). However, as Rentschler (2002) has set out,
over the last 25 years museums have responded to this new interest in their visitors by incorporating marketing into their organisational strategies. During this period marketing moved from the periphery to take a more central role in museum management, but the question can be asked as to whether it plays a strategic role in all museums. It is possible that marketing is simply seen just as a tactical tool for communicating in a broad sense to ‘the public’. This section aims to provide insight into the role of marketing in museum management by setting out the sub-themes apparent in the data in relation to the interviewees’ perception of the importance of marketing. These themes are marketing activities; organisational structure; and the significance of marketing.

**Marketing activities**

As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, there are various forces that have meant museums now operate in the same fashion as for profit firms. As a consequence, museums also use similar marketing communication tools and adopt similar strategies. With a view to establishing the extent the Australian state museums use such tools and strategies, interviewees were asked to comment on their own museum’s marketing activities. The responses were consistent and established the importance of considering the museums’ marketing activities as a sub-theme. In general, the evidence pointed towards a strategic role for marketing, at least in the larger institutions.

This is certainly evident in regard to branding. It is well recognised in the for profit sector that a firm’s brand affects perceptions of their product by consumers (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003). It has only recently become a consideration within cultural institutions such as museums and art galleries. The topic, though, is very much on the minds of the museum staff interviewed here. In relation to whether brand is as useful to museums as for profit businesses one strategic-level interviewee stated:

In some ways the brand is just as valuable because what the museum has and what most commercial operations are looking for in their brand is integrity, recognition, quality… All of those things are tied up with it and with museums in particular.
The role brand might play in this process for a museum was clearly articulated by many of the interviewees. As Caldwell (2000) has noted, for a museum to be considered as a choice amongst its competitors—be that other museums or the wider entertainment market—it first must be recognised by the consumer as such. The brand’s part in that recognition was seen as crucial:

I think the public need to see the brand of the museum and understand the values behind it and have an understanding of why the museum is important to them and their community as well. I think through the brand, the museum’s branding, you can communicate to people.

However, it was also recognised that there is some difficulty in communicating brand to the museum visitor:

Branding… we all have a generic brand, museum. We all have specific badging, but it’s very difficult to brand other than supporting that with positioning statements and your marketing activities, which extrapolates what your point of difference is and who you are and what you’re relevance is.

This goes some way towards explaining the recent move by all the museums to conduct some form of brand audit. The majority of the case study museums appeared to understand the concept of brand and how it needed to be used within the museum sector. Therefore, they understood the need to continually revisit their brand, with a view to connecting to the changing nature of the public. Of course, with brand only a recent concern many museums are considering the issue for the first time. Nonetheless, the reasons for starting on a branding process seems clear to most. This comment from one interviewee is indicative:

We’ve actually starting a branding process… that’s reevaluating how we’re positioned in society and how we want to move forward, how we want to be perceived, how we might change some of the perceptions that a lot of the… [local public] have of our museum.

However, it is not just the external perceptions that were seen as crucial in a branding process. One theme that is evident throughout the interview data was the importance of internal marketing to the acceptance of change, and the adoption of marketing and
electronic marketing, within the museums. One operational-level staff member outlined their institution’s approach thus:

We have a lot of focus groups with our staff talking about branding and what it means and what the institution means to our staff members, because branding is staff, it’s all about people isn’t it? It not just your building… .

Another of the reasons for rebranding that was mentioned by the interviewees relates to the issue of integrating communication tools within museum marketing strategy. Though the value of an integrated approach to marketing communications has been apparent to industry since the 1990s (Kliatchko, 2005), there is still some basic errors made in the museum sector even at the basic level of marketing collateral. When discussing their museum’s previous suite of brochures one strategic-level interviewee noted that:

Content was usually fine but… each one was different [and they] had no relationship to anything else the museum was doing. So the whole rebranding exercise is to pull that together.

The integration of marketing activities is considered here to be a reflection of the part marketing now plays in the strategic direction of the Australian state museums. In line with a move towards an integrated approach to marketing communications museums have put in place new policies and procedures. There has been significant changes to past practices made, at least in the larger museums. A strategic-level interviewee set out their museum’s situation in this way:

Since the roll out of the new visual identity system and our new branding and so forth… . It’s coordinated and it makes sense. We haven’t got multi autonomous teams, spending on marketing and sending out different messages... It used to be a bit of a mess and also there were people not even in marketing who were paying for various advertising and communication.

That said, many of the interviewees at the operational level still considered there was some way to go before collateral was consistent, with one saying: “It is certainly more haphazard the way that we work at the moment”. This is a particular problem for those
museums with multiple campuses. As a staff member from one multi-campus museum noted:

That’s one of the biggest challenges that we have at the moment. We’ve now tried to bring that all back in. What’s happened previously was each museum kind of looked after themselves.

One important way that integration has been incorporated into museum marketing strategies is with the recognition that there are multiple publics for the state museums. It was stated in Chapter 3 that there are numerous publics that museums need to satisfy, and consequently to market to (Lehman, 2006). The interviewees clearly agreed with this assessment:

Stakeholders vary and they can vary from exhibition to exhibition, gallery to gallery, depending on what the museum’s doing... it’s a matter of recognising those stakeholders and also looking at, well, how am I going to communicate with these stakeholders, how do I include them in the process?

As noted above, the state museums also saw their staff and other internal publics as important. As one interviewee stated, in the past “we didn’t realise that our staff were our stakeholders, important stakeholders, all the time”. This is evidence of a change in perception. Throughout the data, the presence of a substantial range of marketing activities—branding, rebranding activities, the various integrating strategies, and marketing to their publics—are an indicator of marketing being a strategic option for museums.

**Organisational structures**

It was mentioned in Chapter 3 that a study by the Smithsonian Institution (2002a) concluded that in a museum where marketing was a senior level position—that participated in strategic planning—that museum was most likely to be successful in attracting large audiences. This market orientation meant the museum used its customers and its competitive environment to inform its strategic decisions. Where marketing fits into the organisational structures of the case study museums is, then, an important question. The perception of marketing by those museum staff interviewed
was indicative of strong support for marketing having a prominent role in the modern museum.

However, some staff from the smaller museums did not consider that the situation was as effective as it could be. When the question was posed as to whether the senior people in the museum and the Board saw marketing as integral to success, or to the future, the answer from one operational-level staff member from a smaller museum was:

I don’t know that they’ve ever stopped to consider that. My personal opinion is that perhaps because for the last 8 years there has been no formal marketing role/person, their interpretation if you were to ask them individually or collectively the same question, is they would say, oh but marketing is taken care of.

In this particular museum there was no separate marketing department and the various ‘marketing’ tasks were divided up amongst staff. This situation was considered adequate by the senior staff member interviewed, but not by the operational-level staff. All other museums had a marketing department or marketing officers with clearly established positions2.

One issue to consider when addressing the role of marketing is its participation in the decision making process. Marketing may well have a number of staff, and a significant budget, but as McLean (1993) points out, museums are not necessarily market or customer oriented just because they have a marketing department. One way to ascertain the extent to which museums incorporate the marketing concept into their organisational culture is to look at how decisions are made. A senior staff member from one of the largest multi-campus museums answered the question of marketing’s role in strategic decision-making in this manner:

Yes absolutely, really key. I expect the Marketing Manager to be continually telling me whether this is on the right track or the wrong track for the audience.

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2 The size of the marketing departments varied. In no case could they be considered as large. Predominately there was a marketing manager and perhaps only 1 or 2 marketing officers, sometimes one of them part-time. Frequently marketing included events and facilities management which meant less time spent on marketing communications or marketing strategy development.
Any exhibition proposal, any education proposal must have a marketing comment.

Consultation on this level seems to be common in the Australian state museums judging from the responses of those interviewed for this study. There is certainly a tendency to include marketing managers in the decision making process. One strategic-level interviewee made this comment in relation to this point:

One of the things I got when I arrived here is, “what have you got the marketing manager on the executive for”? And we had a discussion about the holistic role and impact of marketing….

Even when marketing is not at the level of the board or an executive, it does appear as an area that is now part of any consideration of museum policy. For example, when asked about marketing’s role in the strategic direction of the museum as a whole, this response was given by an operational-level interviewee:

We’ve sat down with a number of directors and talked about the strategic direction and how we want to portray ourselves into the community and how the community feel about us and how we can work better to promote the museum and the visitation to the museums and also to promote the collections and so on.

In the majority of the Australian state museum the planning process can be quite complicated. Decision making might involve staff from research, collection management, education, as well as functional areas such as finance and marketing. This is particularly problematic in the multi-campus museums. However, as has been noted above, there has been a move to a business-like approach to museum management, and with this comes organisational structures and processes that align with this change in philosophy. For instance, some museums have leadership teams that participate in planning sessions and senior staff with responsibility for marketing have responsibility for ensuring that in those planning sessions, marketing issues are addressed and considered. Linking back to the discussion above of the recognition of the changed role of the public, the case study museums appear to connect the marketing function to their audience and its potential strategic role. One operational-level interviewee stated how they perceived their role this way:
When it comes down to, well, can we sell it? Is it of interest? Can we leverage the museum off that? Can we sell more stuff through the shop museum maybe? So that’s where the marketing role becomes, you’ve got to have somebody who has a handle on what the audiences are feeling.

In general, the Australian state museums all considered the marketing aspects of their organisational strategies, such as choosing exhibitions and education programs. Furthermore, for the most part there were formal procedures in place within their organisational structures for this to occur.

The significance of marketing
So far, this section on the theme, the role of marketing within the Australian state museums, has considered marketing activities and the perceived place of marketing within each museum’s management as indicators of a strategic role for marketing. These sub-themes are relatively practical and grounded in museum actions and actualities. To an extent, interviewees could recount to the researcher facts in answer to questions. Following on from these, though, the interviewees then provide insight into their perception of the overall significance of marketing. In this way the theme developed in such a way as to ‘conclude’ with a more philosophical response to the role of marketing. Interviewees considered their opinion of marketing’s worth generally, as well as their perception of how it might fit into their own museum.

The fact that there have been changes to the way museums need to operate has been noted previously, but it was also a consistent topic throughout the interviews. This was true in relation to responses to questions regarding the significance of marketing to museums. This comment is illustrative:

It’s definitely growing. It’s one of those weird things where what happened, it was about 10 years ago, where right around Australia [in the museum sector], people started to be employed in positions of marketing.

Certainly one of the responses to the changing public has been to appoint marketing positions. However, as has been mentioned above, those marketing positions are now more strategically located than before. However, there is still evidence of ‘resistance’,

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or at the very least, a lack of understanding, regarding the changed status of marketing: its move to become a concern of senior museum management. One strategic-level interviewee stated their opinion in this way:

[Marketing is] really important depending on who you’re talking to. If you move away from broadcasting or giving sermons, to communicating… museums in the past used to lecture but if you communicate it’s got to be a two way process. So you really need to know who you’re talking to and what they’re thinking. Even then museums don’t communicate as much as they should, they still prefer to lecture. So marketing is absolutely key… .

The resistance that this interviewee had encountered perhaps harks back to the more traditional, curatorial-led museum where “the director was perceived as the keeper of objects” (Gilmore & Rentschler, 2002: 745). Such an attitude encompasses a lack of understanding of the concept of marketing, of its dyadic nature, for example. It is also symptomatic of the fact there is still some confusion about what marketing might mean for museums (Neilson, 2003). Overall, however, those interviewed here appeared to have given considerable thought to the significance of marketing to the modern museum. Importantly, this consideration was evident in both the operational and strategic-level interviewees. Firstly, this statement from a strategic-level interviewee on the significance of marketing to their museum is an example of how thinking has changed from those keepers of objects:

It’s absolutely crucial… we’re competing for people’s time and people’s interest. If we don’t market to them, we’re not informing them enough about the range of choices they could make and telling them about the great things we do. If we didn’t do any marketing we simply wouldn’t get out there.

As might be expected, those at the operational level were also convinced of the significance of marketing to the museum sector—for the most part the operational staff interviewed were marketing managers. In a similar way to the strategic staff member cited above, this interviewee equated marketing with raising awareness of their organisation’s offering, but also mentioned engagement and access:

If you’ve got as a state museum organisation with responsibility to government in terms of visitation numbers… not only in terms of visitation numbers, but in
terms of audience engagement and access... marketing plays a really key role in building awareness of what’s available.

The agreement between the strategic and operational levels in relation to the value of marketing is important because it signifies a consensus within museum administration in relation to marketing\(^3\). However, one aspect that was only mentioned by the operational staff was marketing’s internal profile and how that might be affected. The profile marketing has within a particular museum is a sub-theme that comes through a number of interviews, and relates to how the marketing staff interviewed perceived how others viewed marketing’s role. When asked about how they thought marketing might be viewed in their museum, one interviewee responded thus:

I would say at the moment we’re in a fairly strong... in terms of internal profile, we’re in a fairly strong state particularly in terms of understanding of audience and driving that understanding of audience across all of the other divisions. I think we have got a fairly high profile.

This was an important point because it was considered that having support for the idea of marketing was crucial to the success of the work marketing was doing. This indicated an understanding by the marketers of the role of internal publics noted above. In addition, interviewees were clear on another crucial aspect of museum management, that is, that support from senior management was vital:

Traditionally within the museum sector marketing units have been not well loved, you need, if you like, the support of senior management for marketing units.

Interviewees understood that there was a measure of ‘politics’ surrounding the role of marketing within the Australian state museums. This latter section, then, outlined a more philosophical response from the interviewees regarding their perception of marketing’s significance, and demonstrated that part of the reasons for marketing’s place in any one museum relates in part to how it is perceived by all the staff, from senior staff to those who operationalise marketing strategies. This is true regardless of

\(^3\) It should be stressed that the analysis presented here is not based on data from other sections of the museum, such as curators or researchers, who may very well have a different opinion.
the widespread agreement apparent that marketing is an important consideration for the modern museum.

Summary
Though this theme was primarily concerned with interviewees’ perceptions of marketing, there have been some overarching issues and concerns evident. The first is that there has been a development within museum management that has seen marketing become a significant facet of museum management. Furthermore, this development is itself related to the primary driver of change outlined in the previous section, namely the changing nature of the public, a public that has now become the focus of museum strategy. One outcome of this focus is, then, the use of marketing by the Australian state museums to communicate to their audiences, not only in a tactical manner, but in the strategic way required for building brand awareness. Throughout the analysis presented above it was evident that marketing was seen as an integral part of museum strategy. It was also clear that museum strategic-level interviewees saw marketing in an holistic light, with a role across a range of publics. This comment is indicative:

  It’s how you would communicate through marketing what your museum is about, what images do you put out, how you present the museum through all levels of communication through newspaper ads, the Web, e-news, brochures, everything that you’re involved with. What you’re are presenting to the public, the way you’re presenting to your stakeholder groups, all of that. It’s a very important part of what museums do.

Another overarching concern seen throughout this section relates to stakeholders and publics. All staff seemed to consider the issue of marketing to a range of publics as important. It was, however, the internal publics, including other staff and departments, that appears to be the most crucial in some respects. Certainly, the operational-level interviewees considered support from senior management as significant:

  Marketing can often be at the whim of the CEO and I think it’s important to have CEOs on board, and the support of the executive management team all around.

On one level, where marketing fits into the organisational charts is important. The lines of responsibility and the part marketing might play in formal processes and procedures
is seen by the interviewees as important, and largely appropriate. However, having support for marketing in a political sense—within an informal communication network—was an issue that appeared in a number of the interviewees’ responses. One of the cultural reasons why that might not be the case can be seen in the following comment on the importance of marketing given by a strategic-level interviewee with a curatorial background. While there is support for marketing, the ‘cost’ is still a potential point of conflict:

The reality is the museum can’t survive without marketing/public relations. So curatorial positions are sacrificed to have a Marketing Manager or a Public Relations Manager… and you won’t survive without it unless you’ve got that public profile and your marketing is effective... you’ll be wasting your money.

Nonetheless, overall, the Australian state museums are clearly undertaking marketing activities indicative of them having a marketing perspective, they do include marketing in their formal organisational structures, and they also exhibit a belief in the benefits marketing can bring to the museum. The last two are seen by the interviewees as important internal factors influencing museum marketing activities. However, this all relies on there being a culture within the organisation that will allow marketing to have a strategic role, as well as a tactical role. For the most part, such a culture was apparent in the case study museums, but there is no doubt that it is still a concern in some parts of most museums. Similar issues will be addressed in the next section in relation to electronic marketing’s role within marketing, and within the case study museums generally.

**Electronic marketing as a strategy**

It was noted in Chapter 4 that this thesis is concerned with the use of electronic media by museums as a marketing strategy. While it is recognised that the Internet is used by museums for research, curatorial and education objectives, it is a separate issue as to whether it is used for marketing purposes. Furthermore, within that is the question of whether it is used in a strategic manner, as part of a range of marketing activities, or in a
superficial way, for instance, with museum websites being what textbooks call ‘brochureware’ (Strauss et al., 2006; Hanson & Kalyanam, 2007). This section aims to provide an insight into what the Australian state museums are doing as regards electronic media generally, where electronic marketing fits into marketing and the organisation, and then how the interviewees perceive the significance of electronic marketing.

Electronic media and their use
As was noted in Chapter 1, the Internet has changed the way humans communicate, interact, gather information, and conduct business (Lagrosen, 2003). The use of electronic media, for the delivery of information and products, and for marketing, is now common in the for profit sector. With the aim of establishing the extent to which electronic media is used, and what its role might be, interviewees were asked to comment on a range of issues in relation to the wider museum sector, as well as their own museum. From the data there is certainly evidence that, despite the Australian state museums predominately not using any electronic media other than a website, they do view electronic media as a vital part of their communication with a changing modern audience.

Indeed, when discussing the issues of the drivers of technology generally, interviewees considered that the demands from the public were especially important. This links to the changing nature of the public, and how museums now better understand this change. This is particularly the case with issues of technology, where change can be rapid:

As these new gadgets, for want of a better word, come out I think we need to be on the front foot and develop the technology into what we’re doing. So we’re always at the front of the game.

It is, then, the expectations of the public that is one of the drivers for museums to be online, with museums acknowledging that “it’s absolutely integral to have electronic information available quickly and easily”. The repercussions of such a development are understood by museum management. For example, the traditional role of the switchboard has now declined:
Over the last 3 years the Web is by far now the way people find out what are your opening times and what exhibitions are on. We virtually now have nobody bother to ring the institution and ask questions.

Museums are also seeing a reallocation of resources behind the scenes. The use of electronic media as a means of facilitating improved information and data access in relation to collection cataloguing and research management is viewed by museums as another driver of the rise of technology within museums. As this comment from a strategic-level staff member makes clear, much of the technology is not seen by the general public:

We still do a lot of really interesting stuff in back of house that the public doesn’t see, in collection management especially. We’re driving a lot of development in software in that area, various ways of accessing data.

Arguably, this advantageous use of technology enhances the ‘reputation’ of technology, and perhaps increases its acceptance within the museum community. It is a similar situation with the interviewees’ view that technology has been driven by the fact it provides better communication. This comment from an operational-level interviewee is an example:

It’s coming from us and an understanding that electronic communication… provides us with an opportunity to be far more responsive, far more targeted in our communication and also much more cost effective.

With museum staff seeing demonstrable benefits coming from their institutions’ use of technology other projects involving technology may have an enhanced chance of success. This idea of there needing to be acceptance of technology within the museum for it to be effective is a theme that comes through the data. It is a similar situation to the role internal support for marketing plays in its effectiveness.

There is, then, a role for internal marketing as part of any implementation of an electronic marketing plan. Clearly, if some aspect of technology is not accepted by the museum community then there may be a lessening of the strategy’s effectiveness. Still, this does not necessarily explain why the majority of museums do not use any form of
electronic media other than a website, some podcasts and the occasional email newsletter. This comment from a strategic-level museum staff member provides perhaps one reason. They gave this reply to a question about the use by their museum of podcasts:

"I think one of the things that I find is that we like to be in control of our information and often people see that if we’re letting people download or upload their own sort of experience and comments and that kind of stuff, we’re losing control of the data."

In some ways this is reminiscent of the conflict that can still be found, albeit under the surface, between a traditional curatorial management style and the more recent business-like style. However, one other reason for museums not using ‘cutting edge’ technology may simply be the lack of time and resources available to consider the options in detail. This rather careful response to the future of electronic media such as podcasts and mobile phone marketing is illustrative:

"I think we’re reasonably well informed about the potential and we’re probably taking a reasonably measured approach to it and again it’s what’s the best bang for the buck and what works with the groups that we want to communicate with."

While there is little evidence of extensive use of the full range of electronic media available, there is no doubt that the Australian state museums make considerable use of their websites for promotion, research and education objectives. With the multi-campus museums, organisational structure means their websites play an additional role. These museums require their websites to have both a co-ordinating, corporate-level role and campus role. This was explained by one interviewee in this way:

"The reason for the structure is that the corporate site should be involved with all the research, all the background material, all the in-depth and understanding the different artefacts, and of artefacts and materials, research... But all the campus sites... they’re marketing sites. The intention was that they were run by the marketing departments through different campuses and their responsibility was then to try use the website to create an interest in the public."
In general, all the museum websites were seen by the staff as having a role in the tactical aspects of marketing. Furthermore, uses were linked to the technology itself, with new museum activities now evident that were based purely on new capabilities:

One of the things we’ve realised about our exhibition offerings, especially, is the opportunity to promote the exhibition, support it and then to sort of archive it, so we see that there are things that we can do on our website to support that kind of activity that we couldn’t possibly do any other way and that’s unique to that kind of medium.

This is not to say that all were satisfied with the current level of activity. This sentiment was seen in the responses from operational-level staff particularly, those that had to implement strategy. For example, in one interviewee’s opinion their website was “at the moment really very much a shop window for those people who are prepared to used it”. Another considered that their website was “not really being used effectively for anything”.

Nonetheless, that the website had considerable potential was widely recognised by all staff from the Australian state museums. This was certainly the case in respect to the issue of a website’s role in brand building, which was a theme that clearly came through the data. That is, while it was largely under-utilised at present—in relation to branding, one interviewee considered their present website to be “tending to sort of sit on its own still”—it was a growing area of interest for marketing. The following statement sums up the general perceptions found in the interviews:

[Our website] has the potential to build awareness of brand… and it could really drive visitation. It could play a key role in tactical or brand campaigns, much more than it currently does.

While the potential is recognised, clearly the present situation was not seen as ideal. One of the major reasons for this, constraints with funding and resourcing, was noted above as a reason for the museums’ lack of involvement in technology generally. Despite the reality of under-utilisation, the use of at least a website by the case study museums does indicate a strong interest in electronic media, and a realisation by them
that an engagement with technology is now one of the expectations of the museum visiting public.

**Responsibilities and direction**

As has been demonstrated above, interviewees placed some importance on the relationship between marketing and its place in the organisation. The strength of marketing’s input to organisational strategies was seen as being linked to the organisational structure. In this section the sub-theme that could be seen in the data had a similar slant. In response to questions about who was responsible for their website, and what role marketing staff had in its management, overall, interviewees indicated that marketing should have a significant role in the development of the Australian state museum websites. It was evident, however, that this was not necessarily the case at present. Also evident was a difference of opinion between those who operationalised strategy and those who devised it.

What a ‘significant role’ might mean, in the context of a highly bureaucratic organisation like a museum, though, was quite broadly defined. Certainly, it was recognised by interviewees that there are a number of publics involved in a museum website, with some having their own ‘territory’ to protect. As with any program or process in a museum, these competing publics make museums more difficult to manage than for profit businesses (Kawashima, 1997). For the case study museums, this meant that political realities might sometimes over-ride the marketing department’s priorities. This remark by a strategic-level interviewee was indicative of some of the problems inherent in implementing new programs, and perhaps particularly technology-driven programs, in such an organisational climate:

> I would prefer that there were fewer people consulted…. Because, as a result of our wanting to talk to everyone and be all things for all people, we’ve ended up with a sprawling rambling website that it’s full of fantastic stuff, but it’s not representative of our organisation necessarily.

Clearly, the present situation with the management of most of the Australian state museum’s websites was not seen as ideal by all, but particularly by those, again, at the operational level. This response is indicative:
I’ve always wanted to own the websites more than the organisation has necessarily seen. I think it is a key marketing tool. However, within a museum organisation, the website also plays a number of other roles in terms of access to collections and the corporate information, so in a sense it’s not necessarily… it’s not seen as being owned by marketing.

Another operational-level interviewee described the reason why their museum’s website was not in the same department as marketing thus:

[It] was a director level decision not to have it in marketing… they didn’t want people to think within the organisation that the website was a commercial tool, [more] that it was a tool for the whole organisation… it’s really the research, and there’s a lot of databases on our website as well… so it didn’t just fit under us.

There is a clear feeling amongst the operational-level interviewees that marketing should have more of a role in their website’s strategic direction. As noted above though, there was just as clear an understanding of the reasons why the situation is as it is. Consequently, the aim was, in some respects, to do the best they could under the circumstances. The interviewee just quoted went on to describe their position in relation to where the website sat in their organisational structure:

As far as I’m concerned I’m happy for it to sit in [another] area and keep that neutrality, as long as marketing communication have a really strong role in making sure the content on the website is effective and that we’re able to then help with the direction of how we use the website and changes to how it looks.

Generally, having marketing department input into electronic media strategies was considered vital if the museums were to make full use of their website as a marketing tool. However, as one strategic-level interviewee pointed out when describing the situation in their museum, there are different levels of input:

There’s two levels of strategy. There’s… what the Web does as a major public program and that’s high level strategies. It’s in the corporate strategic plan and things. There’s the tactical level and program delivery level and that’s really driven by our Web steering committee… .
There was a noticeable division between the views of the operational and strategic-level interviewees. The sub-theme under discussion in this section relates to the question of who was responsible for strategic direction of the website, and what, if any, was marketing’s input and role. Those at the operational level generally perceived that there was much more that could be done with the website if marketing had a more significant role. This is not to say that they are not involved at present. Rather, it is perhaps that organisational structure—who is responsible for the website, other than just its technical side—has not kept up with the growth of the Web as a marketing tool. However, there were many comments that talked of current and future plans for the Web, and where marketing might then fit:

In regards to redesigning the new website I’ll have complete involvement… So, yes, I’ll have a large say in that and I’ll be very interested in having a large say in what appears on the homepage and how it structures the information.

Importantly, though, while the strategic-level interviewees did not necessarily share the view that marketing should have a more significant role in website management (at least they did not say so in the interviews), all appeared to be aware of the strategic implications of the Web and where it might best be managed within their museum. All saw electronic marketing as a significant growth area for their museum.

**The significance of electronic marketing**

Within the for profit sector, the Internet is a technology that is now considered as essential for an overall business strategy (Adam et al., 2002). The question here is whether museums view the Internet in the same way. Up to this point the two issues discussed within the theme, electronic marketing as a strategy within the Australian state museums, considered the use of electronic media, and the responsibilities and direction of the website within museum management, as indicators of a strategic use of electronic marketing. In a similar manner to the previous section on the role of marketing, these sub-themes revolved around practical museum activities. With this as a basis, the interviewees were then asked to provide insight into their thoughts about the overall significance of electronic marketing, again concluding with a more philosophical response to the issues. Consequently, interviewees considered their
perception of electronic marketing generally, as well as their opinions on how it might fit into the marketing strategies of their museum in the future.

On the whole, all the Australian state museums used their websites as at least a promotion tool. This was evident from the section above, and was seen in the assessment undertaken in Chapter 6. One operational-level interviewee described their museum’s use of their website in relation to marketing strategy in this way:

At the moment it’s not an explicit component of our marketing campaigns, other than, as I said, to ensure that there’s a two paragraph explanation of what the exhibition’s about and a couple of associated images.

Of course, even this level of use of the website is a marketing decision, though it relates more to the tactical than the strategic. One issue might be that the operational level staff see the tactical as only one facet of using a website in a marketing sense. A strategic-level staff member implied their museum’s position was quite strategic when discussing tactical uses of the Web:

We perhaps don’t do it as well as we could, should or will do, but it’s definitely in there as a conscious decision to use it as a marketing mechanism.

This contrast might relate to a different perception of marketing. If marketing is seen as advertising, then a few paragraphs and images on a website is ‘electronic marketing’. The view by marketing staff at the operational level could be that there are deeper issues involved—such as, relationship building or brand awareness—for a website to be considered as being strategically utilised for marketing the museum. One stated, for example: “I think a really good website can open up a museum’s creditability and prestige”.

However, there is certainly a sense within the data that the issue of using a website as a marketing tool, whether that be at the tactical or strategic level, is of increasing importance. All the Australian state museums said they were currently reviewing their website, either as part of an overall branding program or as a separate process. There is still, though, some evidence of the tactical/strategic dichotomy in these plans. This
comment from one strategic-level interviewee has the Web as primarily a marketing communication tool: “The Web is a high priority for the museum… we see it as a vital part of communication”. This view is not shared by all. Other strategic-level staff saw their website as having a wider role within the museum. For example:

So the strategic role is as important, it’s… gaining importance, it’s as important as most of the other public programs and to some extent… it may become the most important thing in terms of the number of people that it gets to.

There is a link here to visitation that is interesting. The idea that virtual visitors are an appropriate market segment to target is not one that is widely held, as was noted in Chapter 6’s assessment. But to target such a market segment implies that the website is being used in a more strategic way. Another strategic-level interviewee went further with their view of what museums could do with their website:

We talk about marketing the organisation through using our website, but one thing I’m interested in is actually marketing our website as a product.

In this view, the museum website could be more than a support tool, and be a destination in its own right. It would have an audience that may never visit the physical site. As noted in Chapter 4, such museum websites do not have to be ‘virtual museums’ with ‘virtual exhibits’. As it happens, there are museum visitors that already do not ever visit the physical site. The difference here, though, is that attracting the virtual visitor is seen by these last interviewees as a strategic plan, and not a tactical circumstance.

Still, many of the Australian state museums are some way from using their websites in such a strategic marketing manner. One was quite scathing in their assessment of their museum’s website:

At the moment that’s really not satisfactory and I really don’t want to point people towards our website because it is so awful.

Another was more diplomatic: “I don’t think in a marketing context we at all utilise that [the website] to it’s maximum”. But, as it was mentioned above, all the case study museums were involved in some process to review their website. Judging from their
comments in the interviews, many were perhaps more concentrated on providing access to information and therefore getting the structure right. Others had a more brand-oriented, and hence more strategic, view of the issues. This statement from a strategic-level interviewee reflects such as view:

In the broader sense [the website] has to reflect the image and brand of the museum, so that’s why we’re going through this changing look and feel, to match, to harmonise with the rest of the museum.

There was, then, a general agreement amongst the museum staff interviewed that the Web was an area with considerable potential for use as a marketing tool, with perhaps a greater understanding evident from the operational-level staff of the strategic potential. Significantly, throughout the data there was, again, the perception that for the website to be fully utilised strategically there needed to be support from senior management:

It’s not just the CEO, it’s the whole of senior management in saying, yes this is a priority, because whether we like or not, we can reach a lot more visitors by the Web… Having that recognised sometimes is a bit difficult because obviously people through the door… we can see the physical benefit of that.

A similar sentiment was found in the data in relation to the place of marketing within museum management. Here, then, the use of electronic marketing as a strategy within the Australian state museum’s overall marketing plans is not only linked to the support the website has within the museum, it is also linked to the acceptance of the medium by senior management. In the face of more ‘concrete’ tools, that might not be likely.

Summary
This section on electronic marketing as a strategy has made clear that there has been a development within museum management that has seen electronic marketing become an accepted tool within marketing communication. As was the case with the role of marketing, this development is linked to the primary driver of change outlined in the first section of this chapter, that is, the changing nature of the public within an overall societal change. The use by the Australian state museums of a website to communicate with their audiences, be that in a tactical or strategic way, is on the increase. Within this background there are a number of themes that emerge from the data.
Firstly, as noted in the section on the sub-theme, electronic media and their use, a perceived issues that was stopping the Australian state museums from implementing more strategic use of their website was funding and resources. As noted by one interviewee:

So it’s a really major area and we all know it, all the directors know it as well, so it’s just a matter of resourcing and funding that part of the organisation.

Indeed, the lack of resources is seen as an issue as regards any use of new technology, such as SMS and podcasting. It is sometimes easy to forget that the state museums are having to compete for funds from government as not for profit cultural organisations, and simultaneously offer the public, now with high expectations in respect to technology and the Web in particular, a satisfying museum experience. One smaller museum had this to say regarding their plans to upgrade their website:

Our website redevelopment came about because we recognised the need that we needed to re-do it and we put in for a funding initiative to actually get the funding to do it. Had that not been successful, I’m not quite sure what would have happened.

In other words, this museum received a grant from their state government to fund their website redevelopment. Without the grant presumably the website would have remained as it was or been incrementally revised. Inherent in this issue of resources is the importance of museums having support from senior management, and in this case, their funding public. As was the case with marketing generally, the idea of a website having utility in a marketing sense does need to be championed amongst museum management. As noted by one operational-level interviewee, it is a question of:

whether the CEO or the Director or any of those high level managers see the need for that technology… if they’re quite up to date with what’s happening elsewhere, they would be pushing that within their own organisation.

In some respects the significance of electronic marketing within the Australian state museums does relate to the acceptance of the website as a marketing tool by the various
publics. The operational level staff clearly see the need for museums to make better, more strategic, use of the all forms of electronic media to communicate with what is an increasingly more sophisticated audience. A theme apparent throughout the data is the different views of what constitutes strategic or tactical use of the websites. At a minimum, though, the operational level staff see a strategically utilised website as vital, not only to deliver marketing communications, but to play a part in relationship building, in establishing brand awareness, and in moving towards connecting to the virtual visitor. Those at a strategic level do not necessarily disagree with this position. They do appear, however, to be required to deal with a wide range of competing interests, and a lack of resources. There seems little doubt, though, that the developments in technology as it relates to marketing have been swift and museums are only now developing plans to make strategic use of electronic marketing.

Summary analysis

The aim of this summary analysis is to investigate any common threads and overarching themes that run through the data set out in the preceding sections, which were structured around the hierarchical themes: the drivers of change; the role of marketing; and electronic marketing as a strategy. Throughout the analysis presented in those three sections it was apparent that there have been significant societal changes that have affected the way museums need to operate and what constitutes their audience. Consequently, marketing is now seen as essential, with an integrated approach to the museums’ communication with their publics becoming a standard part of museum management. Furthermore, changes in the museums’ market, combined with the rise of marketing as a strategy, is making the use of electronic communication more important than in the past. There has, then, been an evolution in the museum sector that has resulted in a range of responses from the Australian state museums.

As it happens, while there have been differences in museum responses, to an extent these have been more a product of their corporate and subsequent organisational structure based on the decisions of their respective state government. (This issue will be
considered in Chapter 8.) There are, however, other differences to be found, but these largely relate to the different perceptions held by operational level staff and the strategic level staff interviewed. While this is an issue not under consideration in this study, it could be postulated that the differences simply relate to the responsibilities of the respective levels: the strategic-level is concerned with strategic issues, and so on.

In the data under consideration in this chapter there are more commonalities to be seen then not. For example, the forces that appear to have shaped the Australian state museums’ approach to their audience, and of relevance to this study, their consequent approach to marketing and then to electronic marketing, have been external to the museums and largely societal in nature. The effects of issues such as the changing nature of the public and resourcing constraints are felt across all museums. Similarly, the factors that influence how the case study museums might respond are to be seen across all as well: for instance, the acceptance of technology by staff generally, and the status of marketing and electronic marketing within each museum. The actual museums’ responses to both the external forces and the internal factors evident in the data are also to be seen throughout the interview responses. Interviewees commonly talked of customer focus and internal marketing as being significant influences in relation to their electronic marketing strategies.

The following sections, then, presents the common threads—in the form of a summary theme structure—that was evident from the analysis of the hierarchical themes given above. The discussion is set out in line with that summary theme structure: external forces; internal factors; and museum responses. In the end, these themes reflect the common concerns of the interviewees in relation to the factors that influence the extent to which the Australian state museums now incorporate electronic marketing strategies into their overall marketing activities.

**External forces**
The position taken here is that there have been external developments that have triggered responses from museums. The role that forces external to the Australian state museums have played in the shape of the museums today, is, like all the issues
considered by the interviewees, a complex and interconnected one. In addition, what constitutes an external force is arguable, as is the precise definition of those chosen. Still, the three main forces that appear, from the data presented here, to have played the most significant part in the way museums view marketing and electronic marketing are the changing public, societal trends and resourcing issues.

The changing public
Of all the issues addressed within this study, the changes that have been apparent with the general public is both the most ubiquitous and the most complex. As stated in Chapter 2, the public has been changing throughout the 200 years or so that public museums have been in existence. They have moved through various stages, from simply being educated, to wanting to be informed, to desiring entertainment, and now to perhaps seeking engagement. The result of this in the twenty-first century is that the expectations of the public have changed and museums have had to keep pace:

I think [the public] expect to have things shown that they want to see, I mean the curators have always necessarily looked at what their collection houses and puts on exhibitions and public programs according to what they want. I think there’s more a shift now to meet the demands of the public and what they actually want.

However, it is more complicated than that. The public is now better educated and is more aware of technology, of what it can do, and importantly, which of the product category suppliers that they may be interested in is providing the most appropriate service. Their knowledge base, then, combines with their position as informed consumers to give them significant power to shape museum activities. It is not simply that museums need to run a few focus groups and make some modification to product design accordingly. For the Australian state museums to engage with the ‘new’ public they need to be placing the museum visitor, their customer in effect, at the centre of their activities. This is no more evident than with technology, as noted by one interviewee when talking of the drivers of change in museums:

It’s primarily technology I think… meaning a lot more people spend time on the Web. They choose to interact differently for their own leisure time.
Where technology fits into the external forces shaping museums is not straightforward. Certainly, it is a driver in relation to the skills and interests of the public. However, it is also part of a wider set of societal changes.

**Societal trends**

The issue of what constitutes a societal trend or change is certainly a complicated matter. For example, as just stated, technology is an area that crosses the arbitrary boundaries set out here. So, while it is recognised that the awareness of the possibilities of technology is part of what is a facet of the changed public, there are other repercussions for museums of technology. As a societal trend, technology cuts across what the public expects, what the museums consequently need to do, and what they are capable of doing. This is recognised by the Australian state museums, as this comment illustrates:

> These days using the Web, using SMS, is the way young people communicate. The idea of writing letters and putting stamps on envelopes is virtually alien to them and I think that’s just a trend of society, and again if you’re going to engage in that society you’ve got to be part of it.

In a similar way to how technology informs museum activities, changes to lifestyles has meant a rethinking of traditional museum views on their role. The general public is now made up of informed consumers, which, combined with the variety of venues, institutions and other information and entertainment options available, places the Australian state museums in a very competitive marketplace. The idea of museums competing for visitors is relatively recent, but guides modern museum marketing strategies. One operational-level interviewee commented that:

> You’ve got to have a relevance today, you’ve got to have attractors, you’re out there competing with sporting activities, the cinema, other weekend and school holiday activities.

These same forces mean the Australian state museums must involve themselves to some extent in electronic media and electronic communication with their audience. The fact is that their competition (in the broadest sense) makes use of Web technology to not only provide product and content, but to strategically market to their target audiences. The
need for the case study museums to participate in what can be costly electronic programs exacerbates one final external force that influences museums’ activities, the ever-reducing government funding.

**Resourcing issues**

As was noted previously, the Australian state museums face simultaneous pressure from government to be accountable and use funds efficiently, and pressure from the visiting public to meet their expectations for a meaningful museum experience in the face of free market competition. The need to drive up visitation as a measure of efficiency and effectiveness also combines with the requirement to generate additional income streams. The overall situation is seen by one strategic-level interviewee in this way:

> The museum sector is terribly under-resourced and a lot of people are just struggling to cope with having to do what they do.

In respect of the marketing function within museums, the resourcing issue does not just come down to dollar amounts. For example, in the past, one of the advantages of using electronic marketing was said to be that it did not cost as much as other communication tools (Harridge-March, 2004). In many of the case study museums, though, there are simply not enough staff in marketing departments. As one operational-level staff member stated:

> In an ideal world you’d probably want a relationship marketing coordinator, who sort of looks after loyalty programs, online communication. It’s not something we have at the moment.

In fact, there may only be a marketing manager and one or two other staff, who may be involved in public relations and event management. So, for museums the question could be, as one interviewee asked, “is there somebody who can actually change something on the website?” As purely a practical matter, however, not having the budget to allocate to the museum’s website was consistently given as one of the most significant reasons why the Australian state museums were not as active on the Web as the interviewees would have liked. The developments in Web technology and the level of interactivity now expected by the public was seen to make funding even more crucial:
You can do direct marketing, niche marketing, by mail, and electronic. To me it’s the same fundamentals, but of course with Web 2.0, etc, it’s a lot more interactive and of course you need to have resources to manage all of that.

Like the other external forces seen above, resourcing issues have an impact on museums which, working through a number of internal factors, informs their responses. The internal factors are discussed in the next section.

**Internal factors**

The factors internal to the Australian state museums to be outlined in this section were prominent within the data, and considered by the interviewees as significant influences on how museums devised their marketing strategies. They can be viewed as filters through which the external forces noted above informed museum responses. Furthermore, they relate closely to the style of organisation concerned, as they are both facets of organisational, or corporate, culture. For the museums this is significant because it means that they are capable of being changed with appropriate strategies.

As with those external forces, the internal factors are interconnected and cross over into each other and the forces themselves. As has already been seen, issues such as the public and technology play a role in many areas of museum activity. Nonetheless, the internal factors addressed below, acceptance of technology and the status of marketing and electronic marketing, are considered here as crucial factors that can determine the success of the museum’s marketing strategies, and have a bearing on how each museum interacts with its audience.

**Acceptance of technology**

As stated above, technology is both a societal trend and a facet of the changing general public. Therefore, it concerns what the public expects, what responses the museums need to make, and what they might be able to do. Within the museums, though, this latter point is influenced by the acceptance of technology, not only in relation to the Web, but generally. As with any long-established cultural institution there will be resistance to change, and technology is certainly an instigator of change. The point is usefully summarised by this comment from a strategic-level staff member:
I think as well it’s fair to say museums generally are not known as radical institutions of change. There’s a very precious view prevails in a lot of museums and they’re a bit conservative. I think as well there’s almost a sense of fear… . Oh my God, if we start telling people what we’re about you’ve got to keep telling them regularly, and update it and do we really want to do this?

The fear of change, and the fear of technology, are clearly issues museum management must address, given the swift pace of change in their marketplace. In relation to the kinds of Web-based technology now needing to be utilised, the Australian state museums face, in some cases, considerable barriers to implementing electronic marketing strategies. This comment from a strategic-level interviewee illustrates the point:

Some of my colleagues would hardly know how to open a website, let alone what Web 2.0 is up to, or what podcasting actually means.

There was, however, a sense coming through the data that there was great potential for the Web to be instrumental in communicating to new audiences. This was related to delivering content to the virtual museum visitor mentioned previously, as well as using the museum website and other electronic media to build relationships with all the different market segments. Strategic uses of the websites, such as brand building, were noted as being vital for the Australian state museum’s long-term viability. The operational-level staff, in particular, were of the opinion that the acceptance of the technology would be instrumental in the success of any planned electronic marketing strategy. This comment is an example:

Once [staff] understand how it all works and the potential for it, that will be a wonderful thing and I think you’ve got buy-in across the board internally, it would be a much easier element to use.

For the purposes of this thesis, there are, then, two parts to the issue of acceptance of technology. The first is simply that museum staff need to have the understanding and knowledge of the various technologies available for them to be deemed ‘useful’. The second part is that the technology then needs to be seen to be applicable to marketing. That is, convincing internal publics, such as curators, but also funding agents, of the utility of technology like the museum’s website as a legitimate marketing tool is necessary before marketing strategies are likely to be successfully operationalised.
Status of marketing and electronic marketing

The status of marketing, and within that function, electronic marketing, refers to a range of issues that arose throughout the interviews with staff from the Australian state museums. The data illustrate that there is a similarity between marketing and electronic marketing, in relation to why it has risen in significance; how it now sits in the organisational structure, and what it needs before it can be used to its fullest. Further, the status of marketing and electronic marketing has a bearing on whether electronic marketing strategies would not just be successfully implemented, but even make it past the discussion stage.

As was not surprising, marketing was seen as important by all those interviewed, but equally, they all recognised that others in their organisation did not necessarily see the value. This links to the resourcing issues discussed above, and perhaps to the tension between the research and curatorial areas of the museum and the management and marketing staff. One operational-level interviewee expressed the following opinion:

Some people that I haven’t got around to meeting yet or we haven’t had to work with, have this idea that we’re sitting on a pile of money that’s been taken away from them.

How the museum views marketing is a serious concern for those at the operational level particularly. Their perceptions were that, for the most part, marketing was poorly understood, as one made plain: “I’d certainly be lying even to suggest that every single person within this particular institution understood the full merits of marketing”.

Within the marketing function, electronic marketing was seen to be in a similar position. That is, there was a lack of understanding of the concept of electronic marketing, but not only amongst the wider museum staff. The following operational staff member also considered that there was a lack of understanding amongst marketing staff as well:

Understanding within the team with what electronic marketing is, within the marketing team, knowledge of electronic technology, ownership within the
organisation, of who is responsible for electronic communication tools. Some of ours sit in other departments and other divisions which makes the whole development process very complicated.

The issue of ‘ownership’ of both electronic marketing and marketing generally was an issue that was seen as a determinant of the Australian state museums being involved in strategic marketing activities. Where marketing fitted into the organisational structure was certainly seen by museum staff as important to the status of marketing. Whether marketing had input into strategy development, or representation at board or executive group levels, was considered a vital question. Similar sentiments were expressed in relation to electronic marketing. The operational-level staff all felt that they needed to have a responsibility for the website in order for it to be used as a strategic marketing tool.

In many ways, however, the status of marketing and electronic marketing is a matter of organisational culture. As has been seen, marketing needs senior management support, as does any plan to implement a complex project such as a museum website. One strategic-level interviewee, when asked about the acceptance of electronic marketing tools, said that “it’s the culture, the culture comes from the staff, the Director, the Board. I think that’s what’s important”. It was mentioned above that it is significant that the internal factors set out in this section relate to corporate culture, as such organisational behaviours are capable of change. It may be that changing is a necessary response to allow the Australian state museums to compete in the twenty first century marketplace.

**Museum responses**

What the Australian state museums could do, or should do, in relation to the external forces and internal factors noted above is the subject of this section. It is, however, the perceptions of those interviewed that is being presented. Furthermore, it is their perceptions of the factors that influence the extent to which those museums incorporate electronic marketing strategies into their overall marketing activities. The question for those interviewed was what responses should the museums exhibit for electronic marketing strategies to be successfully implemented. In the perceptions of the
interviewees, the museums are all subject to the external forces noted above: the changing public; societal trends; and resourcing issues. Similarly, the internal factors of acceptance of technology and the status of marketing and electronic marketing were both considered to be determinants felt across the sector. Once again, the two museum responses discussed here—level of customer focus and internal marketing—are interconnected to each other, and then back to the external forces and internal factors.

Level of customer focus
How likely a museum is to involve itself in a strategic use of its website, as an example of electronic marketing, in part relates to their level of customer focus. The extent to which the museums have taken account of the realities of the modern museum visiting public, and indeed those that do not visit, was seen to be a driver by the museum staff. It was a common opinion amongst the interviewees that museums now needed to deliver to the changing public a museum experience that, at a minimum, meets their expectations. This was particularly the situation in relation to technology. As one operational-level staff member stated it:

Museums or organisations that choose not to go with that technology are just shooting themselves in the foot I think.

From comments such as this it can be seen that there is a link between museums’ understanding of the changing public and them having appropriate responses. There is also a clear realisation that the demands of the public drive much of the way museums now need to operate. As this next comment illustrates, this is also true of the museums’ Web presence:

From a public perspective, the people demand it and if they’ve got visitors who come into their museum and want a certain experience and their website isn’t reflecting that then that would be pushing the change in their organisations as well.

Customer focus is seen to include the concept of market segmentation as well. The Australian state museums, for the most part, had a clear view of their various audiences, and how best to connect to them. It was evident that they understood the concept of there being different segments with different needs, and delivered accordingly. There
was also the recognition of there being numerous and varied publics that museums now needed to consider.

The idea that the type or structure of a museum might influence the extent to which they were involved in electronic marketing was canvassed with the interviewees. This is a question that could be raised within the Australian state museums, given their different corporate structures, and the fact some are traditional natural history museums. As has been noted in Chapter 6, it appeared from an analysis of the secondary data that the nature of the museum did not have a bearing on whether they exhibited a marketing focus or were using their website as a strategic marketing tool. This assessment is supported by the interview data. As one strategic-level interviewee suggested:

> You could have the most old-fashioned museum and historical collection but if it’s technically savvy and interested in its audiences it will use electronic communication.

It is, then, more a question of the internal factors discussed, combined with an audience-focussed philosophy, that drives museums to use electronic media to communicate with their market. It is much more a matter of corporate culture, of the status of marketing and electronic marketing, that determines the museums’ approach. As one strategic-level interviewee noted, the inward focus of the traditional museum must change, and did so in their museum:

> I think [the museum’s] culture has a huge… and to the extent to which it is inwardly or externally focused… part of the issues of culture in this place… it had an incredible inward focus, and that left it, in general, vulnerable…. .

Overall, how much of a customer focus a museum might have—how much it is concerned with the world outside its buildings—was clearly seen by the museum staff interviewed as a significant driver of the level of involvement in marketing generally, and in the strategic use of electronic marketing strategies specifically.

*Internal marketing*
The fact that museums are now aware of there being multiple publics, which includes internal groups such as staff and volunteers, was first mentioned in Chapter 3. It was then discussed above in relation to the range of marketing activities the Australian state museum now engage in. It was stated that the case study museums also now see their staff and other internal publics as very important stakeholders. It is worth repeating the statement of one interviewee quoted previously: “[in the past] we didn’t realise that our staff were our stakeholders, important stakeholders, all the time”. The significance of this changed attitude is apparent when looking back through the themes set out in this chapter, and the subsequent summary analysis.

Along with a customer focus, the factor that has the most influence on the extent to which the Australian state museums incorporate electronic marketing strategies into their overall marketing activities, as seen by the interviewees, is the support of the internal publics. Relating to corporate culture issues, and senior management, board and executive group support, the opinion that little could occur without everybody ‘being on board’ was clear from the data. Certainly, the importance of senior level support was seen as crucial:

Whether the CEO or the Director or any of those high level managers see the need for that technology as well… if they’re quite up to date with what’s happening elsewhere, they would be pushing that within their own organisation. But the need for support across all levels of the museum was seen as just as important. There was a distinct understanding of the part museum staff could play in the marketing of museum products:

Keeping [museum staff] informed with the information… about all the exhibitions that are going on so it’s there if somebody says, what’s going on in the museum? or I understand you’re working in the museum… they’re a marketing tool.

Some museums, notably the larger ones, had instituted policies to facilitate better communication:

Staff internally… we are working under a new kind of management philosophy that encourages communication between lots of different levels and the hierarchy… .

Chapter 7 – Findings and discussion: Museum perspectives
It was seen, though, that there needed to be more proactive measure taken on internal marketing. There was a clear call for more staff education programs, and more internal marketing generally, as a way of removing the barriers to implementation of marketing and electronic marketing projects currently perceived within the museums.

Interestingly, marketing operational staff saw a role for themselves:

That’s a really good area for marketing to get involved with, the curators and the staff, and talk to them about our role in the branding and our role within the organisation as well and helping them to understand what we do and also to then get an understanding of what they do.

The topics that needed to be communicated through internal marketing programs cover many of the issues discussed in this chapter. That is, staff need to be informed of the changing public and how they now impact museum management. The issue of acceptance of technology is clearly important. For marketing operational staff in particular, the need to have all areas of the museum having a good understanding of what marketing is, and its value in a museum context, is paramount. With electronic marketing the need is similar, to understand the technology and why it is needed in relation to the expectations of the changing public, and then how it can be utilised for strategic marketing purposes. The concept of internal marketing is certainly seen as a challenge by the Australian state museum staff interviewed, but is vital to bring the museums into line with their competitors.

**Conclusion**

This chapter sought to put forward a ‘museum perspective’ by focusing on the themes evident within the data collected from interviews with museum staff. The aim of this approach was to build on the ‘marketing perspective’ set out in Chapter 6 by reporting on and critically analysing the interview data within a framework laid out by the overall research aim and the research questions. Adopting the narrative style used throughout this thesis, this chapter presented the findings and discussion in a structure based on the hierarchical themes. Within that hierarchy there were three main themes: drivers of
change; the role of marketing; and electronic marketing as a strategy. Within each of these there were sub-themes in evidence. The issues that came out in the interviews as sub-themes within the overall area of drivers of change were: a business focus; competition for visitors; and the changing public. For the second main theme, the role of marketing, the sub-themes were: marketing activities; organisational structure; and the significance of marketing. In the final main theme, electronic marketing as a strategy, the sub-themes apparent were: electronic media and their use; responsibilities and direction; and the significance of electronic marketing. All three of the main themes, and their sub-themes were summarised, with a view to providing an overview of each in relation to the overall research aim and the research questions.

In a structure also adopted in Chapter 6, this chapter concluded with a summary analysis section. This section was, in part, a combined analysis of the main theme summaries. However, the central role of the summary analysis was to draw together the themes, and to elaborate on the common threads that ran through the data. These common threads were grouped into three main themes— external forces; internal factors; and museum responses—which were evident from the analysis of the hierarchical themes noted above. This chapter set these out in the form of a summary theme structure with sub-themes analysed and discussed. Within the theme, external forces, issues such as the changing nature of the public, societal trends and resourcing constraints, which were perceived by the interviewees to have shaped the Australian state museums’ approach to their audience, appeared to have been felt across all the museums. Similarly, in the second thread, internal factors, issues such as the acceptance of technology by staff generally, and the status of marketing and electronic marketing within each museum, were seen to be evident in the responses from all the case study museums. Following discussion of the external forces and internal factors, the summary analysis outlined the museum responses, with interviewees noting customer focus and internal marketing as being the most significant influences in relation to the implementation of electronic marketing strategies. Using this summary analysis to present the common threads was an approach that recognised the fact that the phenomena under study in this thesis are clearly interconnected, have developed over
time, and may not have affected the quite disparate Australian state museums in the same manner.

The common threads were considered here as themes that reflected the concerns of the interviewees in relation to the factors that influence the extent to which the Australian state museums now incorporate electronic marketing strategies into their overall marketing activities. In general, analysis of the data from the Australian state museums indicated that they exhibited strong support for the concept of marketing and electronic marketing in relation to, first, their consideration of the drivers of change in the museum sector, and second, their understanding of their audience and how they had changed. This was apparent in their perception of the subsequent responses required by museums. The level of customer focus a museum might have was certainly seen by the museum staff interviewed as a significant influence on the extent they exhibited a marketing focus, and on their strategic use of electronic marketing strategies. Similarly, the concept of internal marketing—to educate and inform staff about marketing and electronic marketing—was seen by the Australian state museum staff interviewed as being crucial if museums were to incorporate successfully electronic marketing strategies into their overall marketing activities, and therefore, to survive in the technologically aware marketplace they now find themselves in the twenty first century.