

Beyond the Climb: TAIPEI 101 on the Global Stage

In January 2026, American climber Alex Honnold made history by free soloing TAIPEI 101 during a live global broadcast on Netflix. He reached the top in 91 minutes, without any safety ropes. Through live streaming, global audiences watched Honnold climb higher and higher while seeing the city view of Taipei. All in all, this event created a rare “triple-win” situation: Honnold achieved his dream, Netflix gained a large audience, and Taiwan captured global attention at a minimal cost. Beyond the success, it stands as a powerful lesson in balancing creative marketing with social responsibility.

One of the most impressive parts of the event was the brilliant city marketing strategy behind it. TAIPEI 101 Chairperson Janet Chia made a smart decision to replace all flags around the building with Taiwan’s national flag. This simple yet clever strategy ensured Taiwan’s flag would appear naturally in shots from any camera angle. Without spending huge amounts of money on advertising, Taiwan’s visual identity successfully reached viewers in 190 countries. In addition, images of Chia holding a pineapple while praying went viral,



attracting curiosity about local customs. This unexpected cultural exchange showed the world that Taiwan has unique folk traditions as well as modern skyscrapers.

However, such exposure also raises ethical concerns. Free solo climbing is extremely dangerous. Live broadcasts might make risky behavior look acceptable and weaken public awareness of the effort and training required, possibly encouraging unsafe imitation. This reminds us that city marketing is not just about “being seen.” Therefore, balancing international attention with public safety and media responsibility will be a key concern for similar future events.