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Marketing communication in creating the image of cultural institutions: the case of national museums

(Summary)

1. Research problem and justification for the study

The majority of European countries are introducing fundamental changes in the management of cultural institutions, which is related to the development of creative economies and human capital on the one hand, and the crisis of the too expensive welfare state model on the other. Changes occurring in cultural institutions concern, among other things, management and marketing (Ilczuk, 2012). The mission of contemporary museums, especially national art museums, distinguished by their rank for their valuable collections, is not only to protect cultural heritage but, above all, to promote access to their collections. Cultural participation (practice and attendance) is believed to be a prominent part of the development of European societies; therefore, museums must be perceived as offering particular value by attracting increasing numbers of visitors. As B. Lord notes, "A museum is not about objects. A museum is about people". According to G. Matt, the contemporary surrounding of cultural institutions is changing and demanding. Therefore, creating an image of the museum as a place worth visiting is crucial in attracting new audiences.

Institutions of national art museums, providing access to the most important national collections, face similar problems in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe. These are multi-departmental institutions, in most European countries funded by the state budget, which face unprecedented competition related to the availability of a whole range of diverse leisure activities (Nechita, 2014). Despite the specific characteristics of national art museums and national galleries, as well as the similarities between them in different countries, there are few studies in the academic literature devoted to comparative anal-

yses of institutions of this type. A comparison between national museums was made by P. H. Tsai and C. T. Lin (2018), however, they selected national museums with different profiles (art and history, technical, natural science, applied arts, etc.), and the purpose of their work was to define the indicators affecting the evaluation of competitive advantage of national museums. In order to function in the contemporary economy, national art museums should gain recognition and popularity among their audiences and then patrons and sponsors, which is achieved primarily through image creation. In marketing theory, the image is the perceived perception of an organization and its offer – it is the market reflection of a company's identity in the consciousness of its audiences. Marketing communications is a key instrument to reach audiences and establish long-term relationships with stakeholders through cultural institutions, including national art museums (Reussner, 2003; Black, 2005; Kotler, N. G. et al., 2008; Burton et al., 2009; Gofman et al., 2011; Sobocińska, 2014; Macalik, 2020). The use of various forms and solutions of marketing communications is the basis for creating the image of the institution.

The task that national art museums in Poland and similar institutions around the world are currently facing is to attract the attention of young audiences. The new adult segment consists of 18-29-year-olds who are often perceived as a distinct subcultural group (Campbell et al., 2015). Today, the distinctiveness of this audience group is felt even more strongly due to a generational shift. Today's new adults belong to Generation Z (people born between 1995 and 2010), which last year became the largest generation, accounting for 32% of the global population, ahead of millennials and the baby boomers generation (Batat, 2020). In the European Union population, 15 percent can be classified as Generation Z. According to Eurostat, this equates to 70,620,157 people within the borders of Europe (Eurostat, 2019). Generation Z plays a key role in society, being a large dynamic and creative human resource (Nguyen et al., 2021). Despite efforts to engage young audiences, it is still argued that new adults represent a small percentage of museum visitors in Western countries (Gofman et al., 2011). At the same time, maintaining sufficient visitor numbers to sustain the long-term future of museums, which has become a key part of their management responsibilities (Ambrose & Paine, 2012), will be impossible if they fail to reach this group.

As shown in recent research, although marketing communications in museums are constantly developing, the potential of communication tools is used to a limited extent, in a poorly integrated way, and with a lack of strategic outlook (Sobocińska, 2015; Macalik, 2020). On the other hand, marketing communications of national art museums in Poland remain an under-researched area. Taking into account that there is a need for research in the field of identifying the importance of marketing communications conducted by national art museums for shaping the image of these museums among young audiences, the purpose of the research was defined.

2. Research objectives and hypotheses

The main objective of the monograph was to identify and evaluate the importance of marketing communication activities of national art museums in Poland in shaping the image of these cultural institutions among young audiences.

The completion of the fundamental objective of the dissertation was complemented by the following specific objectives:

1. Identification and comparison of online marketing communication activities of national art museums in Poland and museums of artistic profile in selected European cities.
2. Identification of the most important determinants of marketing communication activities created by national art museums in Poland.
3. Identification and distinction of key elements creating the image of national art museums as cultural institutions in Poland.
4. Identification of the importance of marketing communication activities of national art museums in Poland in shaping their image among new adults.
5. Developing model solutions for marketing communications of national art museums in Poland (based on European solutions).

Based on the analysis of the literature data, the monograph formulated four research hypotheses, which were verified during the empirical study:

H1. The image of national art museums among young audiences studying in art faculties differs significantly from the image of national art museums as perceived by young audiences studying in non-art faculties.

H2. The image of national art museums among young audiences differs significantly across the surveyed cities in Poland.

H3. Marketing communication activities determine, in large part, the young audience's perception of national art museums in Poland.

H4. Online marketing communication activities (including social media) are a more effective tool for creating the image of national art museums than activities conducted offline.

3. The scope of the research undertaken to achieve the purpose

In order to establish the theoretical foundation for the monograph, an analysis of secondary sources was conducted. This involved searching the literature on the subject and reviewing studies conducted on the application of marketing communications in cultural institutions and formulating the image of museums.

On the other hand, to accomplish the objectives outlined in the study, it was necessary to conduct empirical research - both qualitative exploratory and quantitative – to verify the hypotheses. The research focused on marketing communication activities deployed by national art museums in Poland in comparison with marketing communications of European museums. Additionally, the study concentrated on assessing the image of national art museums in Poland as perceived by young audiences (new adults).

To achieve the primary and secondary objectives of the study and to verify the hypotheses, the research procedure, which included the following studies, was planned:

• In the first stage, a comparative analysis of online marketing communications in national art museums in Poland and comparable museums in European cities was conducted. Online marketing communications of selected museums were compared in three categories: website usability and responsiveness, online advertisements,

and social media marketing. Based on the conducted analyses, recommendations for the museums were formulated.

- In the second stage of the doctoral dissertation, individual in-depth interviews were conducted among staff responsible for marketing communications in national art museums in Poland. Interviews and transcriptions of the recordings were carried out. In the last part, the collected information was analyzed.
- At the last stage of the research, personal interviews using a paper survey questionnaire were conducted among young audiences studying in art-related and non-art-related faculties (the sample selection was purposive and the number of respondents was 1435). The collected data were analyzed using statistical methods such as descriptive statistics, Student's t-tests for independent samples, one-way ANOVA, exploratory factor analysis, and Spearman's non-parametric correlation.

4. Structure of dissertation

The overall structure of the monografh takes the form of five chapters. The first three chapters constitute a literature study encompassing domestic and foreign literature, articles from domestic and foreign scientific journals, legal acts, statistical data published by the Central Statistical Office, and other institutions conducting research related to the subject of the dissertation, as well as Internet sources. The fourth and fifth chapters constitute the empirical part of the dissertation, containing the analysis and description of the conducted research and presenting conclusions and recommendations.

The first chapter describes the functioning of cultural institutions in Poland and the European Union, the legal and economic conditions for the operation of cultural institutions in the national and European economy, the classification of cultural institutions, and the position of national art museums in this classification. These conditions are crucial for creating the image of national art museums, their mission, and marketing communications. National art museums, as public institutions organized by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, are subject to specific legal and economic determinants. Understanding these factors is essential as it constitutes the foundation for the subsequent considerations included in the dissertation.

The second chapter is dedicated to shaping the image of cultural institutions. The starting point for the reflections was to define the identity, image, and reputation of a cultural institution. The concept of public value and audience development is also considered. In the following subsections, the determinants of the image of a cultural institution and the process of its creation are analyzed using national art museums as an example.

The third chapter is based on a critical analysis of Polish and foreign scientific literature concerning the issue of marketing communication of cultural institutions. The author attempts to define marketing communication, and describe its specificity concerning cultural institutions. Then, the author analyzes the traditional and modern tools of marketing communication, as well as communication channels used by cultural institutions, the conditions of their use, and their importance in shaping the image of national art museums in Poland.

The fourth chapter describes the consecutive stages of the conducted research process and the adopted research methodology, which made it possible to achieve the outlined research objectives. The results of empirical research are presented, starting with the results of a comparative analysis of online marketing communications undertaken by Polish national art museums and European cultural institutions with similar conditions and high attendance. Then, the results of the qualitative research conducted among people responsible for marketing communications in national art museums in Poland (individual in-depth interviews) are presented. The research aim was to recognize the determinants of marketing communications in these museums. Next, the results of a quantitative study conducted among selected groups of young audiences are presented, which allowed for the verification of the outlined research hypotheses. First, the image of Polish national art museums as perceived by young audiences was analyzed. In order to check whether differences in the perception of the image of national museums by students of art-related and non-art-related faculties are statistically significant, Student t-tests for independent samples were conducted. Then, to check whether differences in the evaluation of the image of national art museums in particular cities are statistically significant, intergroup comparisons were conducted using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The research results regarding the importance of marketing communications (especially online marketing communications) for respondents' perception of the image of national art museums in Poland were also analyzed. To identify the key factors in creating a positive image of the national art museum in the opinion of young visitors, exploratory factor analysis was applied. Next, a non-parametric Spearman correlation test was used to assess the strength of the relationship between the marketing communications of museums reaching young audiences through various channels and their evaluation of the image of national art museums in Poland.

The fifth chapter presents generalizations and conclusions resulting from the conducted research procedure. Model solutions in the field of organization and financing of marketing communication activities in national museums in Poland are discussed, along with recommendations developed based on literature and empirical studies. The proposed solutions are grounded in the results of the research carried out within the adopted research procedure.

In the concluding chapter, the formulated research hypotheses were verified. The conclusion also includes the main findings on the significance of the marketing communications of national art museums in Poland for young audiences' perception of these cultural institutions.

5. Empirical results

A comparative analysis of websites, the use of online advertising, and social media promotion revealed that the websites of Polish national museums differ slightly in aesthetics and functionality from the websites of European museums. It is necessary to adapt the websites of Polish national museums by making it possible to purchase tickets online, use an online store and provide a contact form. It is recommended that

the responsiveness of the websites be improved so that people can obtain all necessary information before their visit and purchase a ticket by scrolling down the page.

Among the surveyed institutions, those that enjoy the highest attendance and have the most subscribers and reactions in social media regularly use online advertising. Social media are used by the surveyed Polish museums as inexpensive or free substitutes for paid forms of online promotion. However, the analysis showed that using social media without spending money on paid campaigns is not effective enough in expanding the audience. It is also recommended that various social media platforms be used.

As a result of the analysis of the in-depth individual interviews with marketing communication specialists in national museums in Poland, the most frequently mentioned barriers to using marketing communications by national museums in Poland were identified. The following categories of barriers were distinguished:

- Operational aspects of the activity of national museums in Poland as barriers to their application of coherent marketing communications - too many events at the same time, lack of staff, lack of clear division of responsibilities and procedures for cooperation between departments, leading to personnel conflicts, the low position of staff responsible for marketing communications in the museum hierarchy, lack of training of first contact staff members, inability to find a place for visitors' rest (restaurant or cafe), inability to provide visitors with access to museum gardens and green areas, the poor offer of museum stores.
- Financial and legislative aspects of the activity of national museums in Poland as barriers to their application of coherent marketing communications – a low level of financing of national museums in Poland with regard to expenditure on the maintenance and conservation of buildings and collections, incoherent legal regulations on obtaining subsidies, a limited budget for promotion, lack of funds for researching the audiences' needs.
- Political and ideological aspects of the activity of national museums in Poland as barriers to their use of coherent marketing communications – anachronistic legislation limiting museums' activities, the hierarchical organizational structure of the museum, lack of autonomy promoting politicization, difficult cooperation with municipal institutions, politicization being an obstacle to attracting sponsors, beliefs of museum organizers and employees about the role of museum in the modern world and the museum-consumer relationship, low awareness of the importance of communication and image.

The conducted research has shown that national art museums are specific cultural institutions in which the conditions of shaping marketing communications differ from those in other types of organizations. It should also be noted that national museums in Poland constitute a diverse group in terms of organizational structure, management system, collections, and financial capabilities, which reflects the varied quality and consistency of marketing communications applied by them. The barriers described above affect the examined institutions in different ways.

The fusion of the results of quantitative and qualitative research made it possible to conduct a detailed and in-depth analysis of the set research goal. The empirical research also served to verify the research hypotheses posed in the study.

The first hypothesis was that the image of national art museums as perceived by young audiences studying art-related faculties differs significantly from the image of

national art museums as perceived by young audiences studying in non-art-related faculties. Due to the complexity of the museum image construct, 12 aspects of the museum image were examined using a semantic differential, and then the results were subjected to Student's t-test for independent samples. Statistically significant differences appeared in the case of 7 out of 12 indicators, which means that the first hypothesis may be regarded as positively verified in seven aspects and negatively verified in the remaining five aspects. Statistically significant differences indicate that, through their marketing communications, national art museums in Poland are better at reaching art students, who perceive them as significantly ($p \leq 0.01$) more popular, worth visiting, interesting, and well located. However, they consider the surveyed museums as significantly less modern than the other group of respondents believes. It is surprising that in five aspects no significant differences were found between the two groups of respondents, and the remaining differences, although significant, are not great. It was assumed that the image of national art museums would be stronger and more positive among respondents interested in art. Meanwhile, even among this group of respondents, the image of national art museums in their cities is more neutral than positive and not very strong. Museums do not appeal to young audiences as friendly and egalitarian places; at the same time, respondents do not perceive them as elite or prestigious institutions. On the other hand, the lack of negative perception of the museums surveyed is a good starting point and encouragement to intensify activities aimed at communicating with young visitors, regardless of their interests.

The second hypothesis stated that young audiences' perception of national art museums differed significantly across the studied cities in Poland. Intergroup comparisons made through a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the differences between national museums in different cities in Poland were statistically significant, while Tukey's HSD test post hoc allowed us to divide Polish national art museums into groups between which statistically significant differences in respondents' assessments of their image most frequently occurred. The most positively perceived museums are the National Museum in Krakow and the National Museum in Warsaw, followed by the National Museum in Wrocław and the National Museum in Poznań. The group with the weakest image is the National Museum in Kielce, the National Museum in Szczecin, and the National Museum in Gdańsk. The research results allowed us to positively verify the second hypothesis.

The third hypothesis was that marketing communications is significant for young audiences' perception of national art museums in Poland. Exploratory factor analysis revealed that variables related to marketing communication constitute key factors for creating a positive museum image in the opinion of young visitors. In contrast, Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation indicated a very weak ($0.0 < |r| \leq 0.1$) or weak ($0.1 < |r| \leq 0.3$) correlation between the studied variables. However, even though the correlation is weak, it is statistically significant. Additionally, the image of the studied museums in young audiences' eyes is also positive, but rather weak (neutral). Therefore, it should be concluded that hypothesis three was verified positively.

The fourth hypothesis was that online marketing communications (including social media) is a more effective tool for creating the image of national art museums among young audiences than offline marketing communications. According to the study, 75.5% of art students and 79.7% of non-art students use online sources when planning a visit to a museum, and 60.4% of art students and 58.6% of non-art students search for infor-

mation about current events at the national art museum in their city online. Therefore, it could be assumed that hypothesis four is true.

However, at the same time, it was assumed that young audiences obtain information about the studied museums from social media, yet only 20.8% of art students and 10.9% of non-art students use the social media profiles of national art museums. Moreover, it was assumed that online marketing communications are a more effective tool for creating the image of national art museums than offline activities. However, Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation showed the strongest ($0.3<|r|≤0.5$) - statistically significant ($p ≤ 0.001$) relationship between the image of national museums and their outdoor advertising, printed materials distributed by museums, and advertising in public transport. Only in the next place were national museums' campaigns in social media and online advertising, which means that this hypothesis was verified negatively.

The research conducted in this monograph has helped to determine the importance of marketing communications of national art museums in Poland in creating their image among new adults, to compare online marketing communications of national art museums in Poland and comparable art museums in selected European cities, and to identify determinants of creating marketing communications by Polish national art museums. This made it possible to discover barriers to applying marketing communications by these institutions, but also to distinguish good practices and to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

Keywords: museum marketing, marketing communications, museum image, national art museums.

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