

# MUSEUM'S MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOOLS – RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

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**Abstract:** The aim of the article is to present the results of a quantitative survey of marketing managers in Polish museums on the marketing communication tools used in these institutions. The survey was conducted using the CAWI method in 2017 on a group of 85 marketing managers in museums. In the study, the scope of application and the importance of particular marketing communication tools for museums were established. It has been shown that advertising and Public Relations have a key role in the promotion of museums, in particular contact with the media and the organization of events. This study shows that a large group of Polish museums uses a fairly narrow range of marketing communication tools and that they only sporadically reach for modern communication tools. The article also presents the factors that have a positive and negative impact on the possibility of implementing effective marketing communication in museums.

**Keywords:** museum, marketing communication, marketing communication tools.

## 1. Introduction

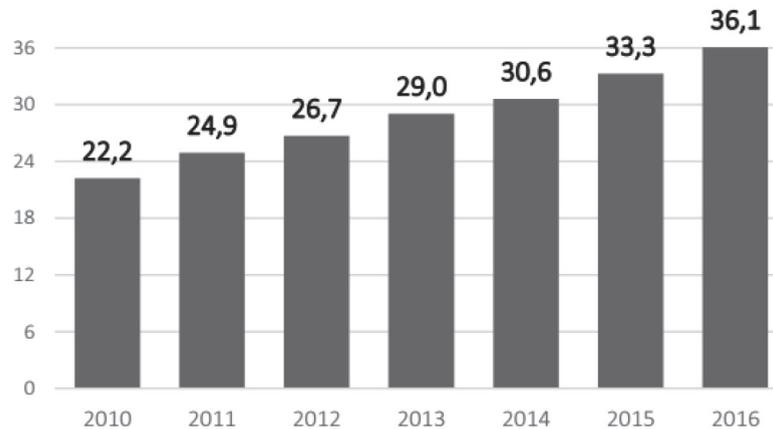
According to the statutory definition [Ustawa o muzeach 1996], a museum is a “non-profit organisation, which aims to take care of artifacts, inform about the values and content of the collected collections, propagating the essential values of history, science and Polish and world culture, shaping the cognitive and aesthetic sensitivity and facilitating contact with the collections.”

The current development of Polish museology, the most intense since the early 1990s, favors the implementation of modern management concepts in museums, including marketing. Museums – so far rarely active in the search for their audiences and establishing their market position – are forced to redefine their functions and set new strategic goals.

Due to the dynamic development of modern society and new technologies, a leading role among marketing activities – not only in the case of museums – is nowadays played by marketing communication. The key issue in its planning is the selection of current

tools and channels, corresponding to the specifics of the organization and its visitors. The purpose of this article is to present the results of research on marketing communication tools used by Polish museums.

It should be noted that there are a number of specific features that differentiate the marketing of culture (including museums) and the marketing of other products. The most important is the uniqueness of the nature of the cultural experience [Falk, Dierking 2012] and the central role of the consumer [Diggle 1986; Black 2005; Burton, Louviere, Young 2009; Reussner 2003; Gofman, Moskowitz, Metz 2011; Sobocińska 2014]. This involves significant restrictions, but also opportunities for the marketing communication of cultural institutions, including museums [Kotler, Kotler, Kotler 2008]. First, it must take into account the non-material nature of the cultural service, which unlike many other products and services is temporary and exists only in the audience's mind and experience. At the same time, the formulation of the marketing communication of cultural institutions must be strictly correlated with its public and social mission,



**Fig. 1.** Attendance at Polish museums in 2010-2016 (in millions)

Source: [Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2017].

which means putting the presentation, the exhibition of works, and its artifacts to the widest audience in first place, regardless of economic issues. Secondly, the marketing communication of museums, as well as other cultural institutions, must take into account the niche nature of art and the narrow group of its regular recipients despite the constantly growing attendance (Figure 1). This means that promotional activities have a key role in seeking a new, wider public for the museum's attractions, and at the same time they should focus on building strong relations with the existing, especially interested audience [Hood 2004; Patriarche et al. 2014; Smoleń 2013].

## 2. Research methodology

The research results presented in the article are a part of a research project conducted in 2015-2018, whose aim was to identify the activities of museums in the field of marketing communication and the scope of their integration in the aspect of building beneficial relationships with the environment, in particular with the public.

The survey was conducted in the second quarter of 2017 using the Internet survey method (the CAWI method – Computer-Assisted Web Interview). The subjects of the study were marketing managers in museums, and aimed to complete a full sample. In connection with various data on the number of museums in Poland, it was decided to study 519

museum units operating under the statute agreed with the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, functioning in Poland at the turn of 2015 and 2016<sup>1</sup>.

Finally, 85 correctly filled in, anonymous questionnaires were obtained. The group of museums that created the research sample constitutes 16% of the total population. Table 1 shows the exact characteristics of the sample. The sample structure reflects approximately the diversity of the structure of the entire group of Polish museums.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the research sample – quantitative study of museum marketing managers

Feature	Value of the feature	Number of units	% of units
1	2	3	4
Location	village or town to 50,000 inhabitants	39	46%
	town between 50,000 to 200,000 inhabitants	21	25%
	town between 200,000 do 500,000 inhabitants	7	8%
	city over 500,000 inhabitants	18	21%
Type of operator	self-government	65	76%
	State	13	15%
	co-run	6	7%
	private	1	1%
	Church	–	–
	University	–	–

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the total number of museums in Poland differs in various studies. In this study, 519 were considered as the general number of museums in Poland operating in Poland, at the beginning of 2016 (at the start of the research), and with a statute or regulations agreed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. For more info: *Muzea w Polsce – raport opracowany przez Narodowy Instytut Muzealnictwa i Ochrony Zbiorów*, stan na 30.06.2016, <http://nck.pl/badania/raporty/raport-muzea-w-polsce> [accessed: 10-02-2018].

Tablea 1, cont.

1	2	3	4
Museum type	Regional	21	25%
	Interdisciplinary	16	19%
	Historical	12	14%
	Artistic	6	7%
	open-air	5	6%
	Interior	4	5%
	Ethnographic	4	5%
	War crimes	3	4%
	Archeological	2	2%
	Other	1	1%
	not specified	4	5%
Number of branches	one	51	61%
	Two	18	
	Three	3	4%
	Four and more	12	14%
Employment size	up to 10 employees	19	23%
	between 11 and 50 employees	38	45%
	between 51 and 100 employees	14	17%
	over 100 employees	13	15%
Annual attendance*	up to 10,000	25	30%
	between 11,000 and 50,000	27	32%
	between 51,000 and 150,000	15	18%
	between 151,000 and 250,000	4	5%
	between 251,000 and 500,000	8	10%
over 500,000	5	6%	
Entry In the State Museum Register	entered	53	63%
	not entered	31	37%

\* Data from 2016.

Source: own study based on quantitative research of marketing managers in museums (a total of 85).

The questionnaire was prepared on the basis of a previously conducted individual in-depth interview (IDI) among marketing managers in museums. The form contained various types of questions, including filtering, single-choice, multiple-choice, semi-open, open questions and based on the Likert scale. The key findings of the study are presented below.

### 3. Museum marketing communication tools – results of research

According to the obtained research results, promotion is the only element of the marketing mix on which marketing managers in museums have a decisive influence (Figure 2).

Therefore among the key tasks of departments or people responsible in museums for marketing the following were mentioned:

- activities in the area of widely interpreted media relations,
- running a website and social media (41%),
- organization of events in the museum (28%),
- design and printing of promotional materials (mainly POS materials and other advertising materials) and publications (18%),
- gaining sponsors and patrons, fundraising (12%).

However, the most commonly used marketing communication tools are **advertising and Public Relations**. The most frequently used forms of advertising were: publishing advertising, advertising in various parts of the city and region, advertising in the local press, outdoor advertising in an urban space, internet advertising, advertising in the museum's headquarters and radio advertising. The forms of advertising used by museums have a rather local range – for example, advertising in the nationwide press applies to less than every third museum, and television advertising – only every fourth museum. The preferred channels of advertising communication are the Internet and external channels (Table 2).

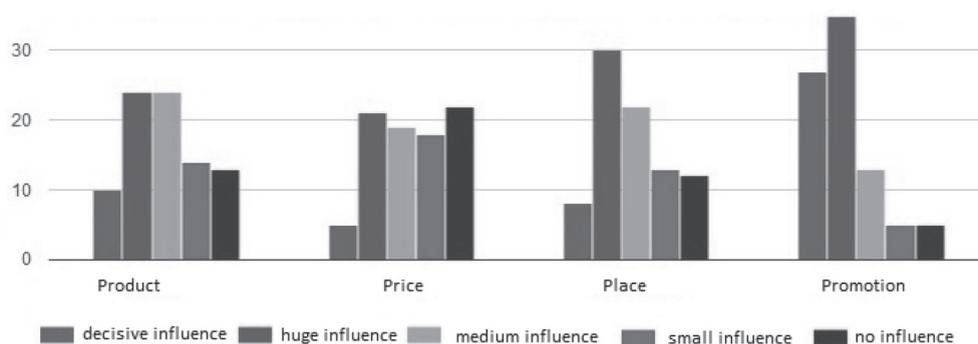


Fig. 2. Declared influence of museum marketing managers on particular elements of the marketing mix

Source: own study based on quantitative research (a total of 85).

**Table 2.** Applied forms of museum promotion by frequency of use

Form of promotion	Frequency of use		
	often used (>50%)	rarely used (<50% and <15%)	occasionally used (<15%)
Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>publishing advertising (folders, leaflets, inserts etc.) – 88%</li> <li>advertising in various parts of the city and region – like other cultural institutions – 83%</li> <li>advertising in the local press – 77%</li> <li>outdoor advertising in urban space – 77%</li> <li>internet advertising – 76%</li> <li>advertising in the museums’ headquarters – 76%</li> <li>radio advertising – 51%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>advertising in the national press – 32%</li> <li>TV advertising – 26%</li> </ul>	–
Personal sales	–	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presentations at fair and trade shows – 49%</li> <li>other presentations and demonstrations – 34%</li> <li>presentation of the offered product by the seller – 16%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>business meetings – 9.5%</li> </ul>
Sales promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>occasional price reductions, rebates – 61%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>bonuses, gifts, gadgets – 38%</li> <li>contests and lotteries – 37%</li> <li>coupons – 18%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>loyalty programs – 11%</li> </ul>
Direct marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on line contact – mailings, newsletters – 68%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>catalogue sale – 42%</li> <li>telephone contact – 36%</li> <li>online shopping – 30%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>direct contact – 2%</li> </ul>
Public Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>media relations (press conferences, interviews, sponsored articles, Press releases, reports) – 95%</li> <li>organization of events – 80%</li> <li>social media activities – 76%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>social activity – CSR, employee volunteering etc. – 39%</li> </ul>	–

Source: own study based on quantitative research of marketing managers in museums (a total of 85).

**Table 3.** The most important forms of museum promotion in the opinion of managers – by number of indications

THE MOST IMPORTANT FORMS OF MUSEUM PROMOTION												
media relations	social media	events	ADVERTISEMENT					CONTACTS			social activity	cooperation with partners
			internet	external	publishing	press	radio	online	personal	telephone		
56	42	27	27	16	11	10	7	15	5	2	4	2

Source: own study based on quantitative research of marketing managers in museums (a total of 85).

Particularly intense advertising in local media occurs in the case of museums operating in small towns.

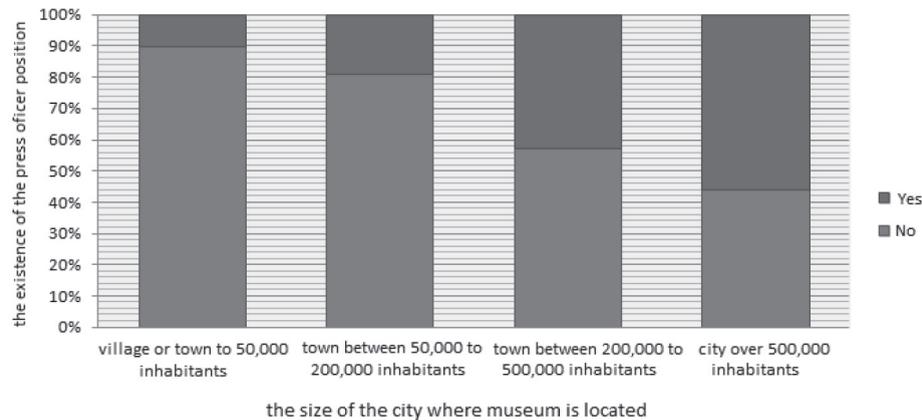
The range of sales promotion tools used by museums is quite narrow. They are mainly limited to occasional price reductions and rebates (61% of museums), and bonuses and gifts (38%). Only slightly more than 10% of museums use loyalty programs. 20% of museums do not use any form of sales promotion.

Forms of personal sales are also rarely used, they are limited to various types of presentations and demonstrations, including trade fairs. A similarly narrow range of tools is in the case of direct marketing where museums mainly use online contact (68%).

It should be noted that 30% of museums do not use any form of personal sales, and nearly 20% – any form of sales promotion and direct marketing. The use of personal sales tools is more intense for museums located in smaller towns.

We can talk about the frequent coexistence of the three most important tools in the opinion of managers of marketing communication, namely media relations, social media and event organization (Table 3). Such a set is especially favored by managers from museums in medium-sized cities.

According to the results of research, Public Relations, in particular the implementation of contacts with the media, is the priority activity of people/



**Figure 3.** The existence of the press officer position and the size of the city where museum is located

Source: own study based on quantitative research of marketing managers in museums (a total of 85).

departments involved in marketing in museums. The vast majority of managers indicate contact with the media and the organization of events, as well as cooperation with partners and social activity, as the most important forms of museum promotion. The most popular forms of PR implementation are: organization of events (used in 80% of surveyed museums) and activity in social media, which is carried out by three-quarters of the examined museums.

Despite the important priority of activities in the area of media relations in almost all of the surveyed institutions, only every a fourth of them have the position of press officer or another position entirely responsible for contacts with the media. The larger the city where the museum's headquarters are located, the more often the museum has a press officer (Figure 3). The position of Press Officer exists primarily in large museums, those employing between 51 and 100, and more than 100 employees.

Only 3 out of the 85 examined museums do not have any social media accounts. The most popular social media is Facebook (nearly 95%), YouTube (more than half of museums), followed by Instagram (34%) and Twitter (23%). In the case of 63% of museums, social media accounts are run by the marketing department. In the case of the next 24%, these accounts are co-run by the marketing department and another museum department. None of the surveyed museums use an external agency in this field.

Empirical research has resulted in the conclusion that Polish museums use a fairly narrow range of mostly traditional marketing communication tools and channels, although in many of these institutions the scope of using the tools and channels of the so-called promotion mix is systematically and dynamically expanding.

It should also be noted that museums prefer certain channels of communication with the audience. They can be divided into tools and channels aimed at the general public and those used to maintain relations with regular visitors.

Marketing communication addressed to a potential audience is to support sales conversion and to encourage people who do not visit the museum normally to take advantage of its attractions. It is based primarily on Public Relations activities and, consequently, on the interest of journalists and the public. At the same time, it should be stated that entities operating on the cultural market are privileged in their media relations capabilities, as the media are particularly interested in information from this sector. The visitors of the museum also indicate information obtained from the media as crucial in making purchasing decisions connected with culture.

Using above all free promotion opportunities like barter media cooperation is also influenced by the relatively low marketing budgets of institutions in the field of "high culture", which significantly limit the use of forms of paid advertising, although it must be admitted that the frequency of their use is increasing.

However, when it comes to marketing communication addressed to the current audience, its main task is to maintain and strengthen relationships with them. As research has shown, in this case key are two communication channels – firstly social media, and secondly, especially in the case of museums located in big cities – various types of direct marketing in particular the Internet: newsletters and mailings. The research conducted on the museum audiences confirms that this is an effective activity characterized by a relatively high responsiveness rate, of course with the assumption of having an appropriate database and

professional data management, which has not yet been achieved in many museums in Poland.

There are also some trends associated with the use of marketing communication tools. The most important impact on the scope of these tools and the degree of their professionalization is the location – museums based in large urban centers are more likely to use above the line marketing communication tools, whereas museums from rural and small towns place more emphasis on tools below the line, different types of direct contact and cooperation with other institutions operating in the region, including local media. Museum managers in small towns are also more confident in recognizing the brand of their museum in the local community, while those from large cities declare their greater recognition among tourists. It was found that the degree of professionalization and integration of communication activities is slightly higher in museums operating in large cities, which can be associated with greater access to professional staff, training and advertising agencies.

#### 4. Conclusion

In summing up, the key conditions for museums to implement effective marketing communications activities were identified. These can be divided into non-marketing factors and factors related to shaping the marketing function in the museum. The most important, identified in the empirical research carried out, conditions for effective communication activities of non-marketing nature are:

- **location of the museum** – understood mainly as the size of the local community; mainly influences the selection of marketing communications tools and channels, but also the degree of professionalization of marketing activities (the larger the city, the greater the advertising opportunities and training for employees, the wider access to the agency, the smaller importance of direct relations),
- **the size of the museum** – larger (in the sense of the size of the headquarters, general employment and collections) museums usually have a wider scope of activities in the field of marketing communication,
- **type of operator** – more professional activities run by large state institutions, obliged to more long-term planning, and private facilities which, due to purely commercial activities, are more focused on business goals forcing them to long-term and strategic planning,
- **financial possibilities of the museum** – this shapes the amount of the marketing budget, and thus also the possibilities of shaping marketing communication tools and their selection,

- **the way the institution is managed** – museums managed in a modern, strategic way, are characterized by a deeper understanding of the role of the marketing function in the organization.

On the other hand, the following factors directly related to the marketing function which have the greatest impact on shaping the effective communication activities of the museum, have been identified:

- **organization of marketing** – as research has shown, too few marketing employees, their dependence and the lack of trust of their superiors, negatively affect the shape of marketing communication of the museum,
- **strategic approach** – strategic shaping of the overall marketing function in the museum is an absolute determinant of shaping professional communication activities,
- **the use of information technology** – including in particular marketing research and the collection and use of recipient databases.

The research carried out allows us to conclude that a large group of Polish museums uses a fairly narrow range of marketing communication tools, and that – except for heavily exploited social media – these institutions only sporadically reach for modern communication tools. It should also be noted that the marketing communication of museums is rarely strategic and integrated. Nevertheless, in the case of many museums one can see attempts to integrate communication in a wider and wider manner, demonstrating the intense dynamics of changes in this area.

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## NARZĘDZIA KOMUNIKACJI MARKETINGOWEJ MUZEÓW – REZULTATY BADAŃ EMPIRYCZNYCH

**Streszczenie:** Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie wyników przeprowadzonych wśród menedżerów marketingu w polskich muzeach badania ilościowego na temat narzędzi komunikacji marketingowej wykorzystywanych w tych instytucjach. Badanie przeprowadzono metodą CAWI w 2017 roku na grupie 85 osób. Ustalono zakres zastosowania i znaczenie poszczególnych narzędzi komunikacji marketingowej dla muzeów. Jak ustalono, reklama i *public relations* (przede wszystkim kontakt z mediami i organizacja wydarzeń) odgrywają kluczową rolę w promocji muzeów. Badania wykazały również, że duża grupa polskich muzeów stosuje dość wąski katalog narzędzi komunikacji marketingowej i tylko sporadycznie sięga po tak zwane nowoczesne narzędzia komunikacji. W artykule przedstawiono również czynniki, które mają pozytywny i negatywny wpływ na możliwość wdrażania w muzeach skutecznej komunikacji marketingowej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** muzeum, komunikacja marketingowa, narzędzia komunikacji marketingowej.