NOT FOR PROFIT MARKETING PRACTICES AND PATTERNS IN CANADA: THE CASE OF MUSEUMS

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In spite of the significant roles that cultural and heritage industries play in Canada and other developed countries, very few empirical studies have been conducted that specifically address the managerial and marketing issues that confront these organizations. In response to the increasing managerial challenges facing museums as well as the lack of research on these issues, this paper describes a study that examines empirically the marketing practices of museums. The goal of the study is to contribute much needed understanding of the extent to which marketing is being practiced in Canadian museums, as well as what marketing practices are most commonly employed.

The research utilized a survey approach in Ontario between June 16th and September 30th 2003, targeting museum managers of the province. Completed questionnaires were received from 141 museums resulting in a final response rate of 34.6%.

Data showed that marketing practices are fairly widespread in Canadian museums. Almost sixty percent (58.5%) of museums responding to the survey reported that they do quite a bit of marketing. Further, more than three-quarters of the museums (78.4%) have employees assigned to marketing responsibilities. Marketing responsibilities are most often a part of the responsibilities assumed by these employees rather than their sole focus – multi-tasking is the nature of much of their work. Targeting specific markets and developing marketing relationships are also executed by about two-thirds of the responding museums. Only about half (54%) reporting that they were successful in the marketing activities undertaken. More than half have not developed a marketing plan for their museum (52.3%). Findings suggest that museums have become much more sophisticated in their marketing practices than the somewhat dated existing literature shows.

The study provides baseline data regarding the extent of marketing and the marketing practices implemented in museums of various types (science, military and historical as well as art galleries), as well as museums of different sizes. Future research is required to build upon this baseline data in order to confirm the findings reported here as well as develop further our understanding of the practices and procedures utilized in this sector.