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**Author**

Kim Lehman, Byrom, JW

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## THE CORPORATE MUSEUM AS BRANDING DEVICE

Kim Lehman and John Byrom\*  
School of Management, University of Tasmania, Australia

Kim Lehman  
School of Management  
University of Tasmania  
Locked Bag 1316  
Launceston Tasmania 7250  
Australia  
Tel: +61 3 6324 3001  
Fax: +61 3 6324 3369  
Email: Kim.Lehman@utas.edu.au

and

Dr John Byrom\*  
School of Management  
University of Tasmania  
Locked Bag 1316  
Launceston Tasmania 7250  
Australia  
Tel: +61 3 6324 3797  
Fax: +61 3 6324 3369  
Email: john.byrom@utas.edu.au

\*Corresponding author

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# **THE CORPORATE MUSEUM AS BRANDING DEVICE**

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to explore the nature of branding in relation to the corporate museum. Corporate museums are taken here as referring to museums with managed collections which are situated within for-profit organisations.

## **Methodology/approach**

In-depth case study research was undertaken in four different organisations operating in the following industry sectors: brewing, publishing, sport and banking. Research took place in Australia and the Republic of Ireland and involved interviewing those working within the museum facility (or responsible for its operations) across organisational hierarchies. In addition, visits were made to all of the museums and detailed field notes were taken relating to the museum experience.

## **Findings**

Selected findings relating to the use of the corporate museum as a branding device are presented here, including the importance of the building as part of the brand, marketing communications issues, and the education of younger consumers. It is shown that the corporate museum had a significant role as a branding device for the organisations studied.

## **Research limitations/implications**

Given the lack of previous research in this area, the paper's findings are somewhat exploratory. However, the in-depth nature of the research across different industry sectors does not reduce their validity. There is the potential to extend this study into different industries and other national contexts, in order to see whether the findings presented here are supported elsewhere.

## **Practical implications**

For those involved in either curatorship or museum marketing, or for-profit firms with corporate museums, the paper provides a discussion of some of the key issues pertinent to branding in the corporate museum context.

## **Originality/value of paper**

Whilst a growing literature exists on the management and marketing of public or not-for-profit museums, there has been relatively little research to date on museums run by for-profit organisations. To the authors' knowledge, this paper represents one of the first attempts to assess the role of marketing and branding within corporate museums.

## **Keywords**

Corporate museum, branding, marketing communications, Australia, Ireland

## **Classification**

Research paper

## **Introduction**

Corporate museums occupy a difficult and under-researched position, straddling both the cultural and traditional world of the public museum and the profit-motivated and ever-changing business world. Nonetheless, they have become an increasingly prevalent feature of the organisational landscape, with many firms having established their own collections. Such museums typically relate to the firm itself and/or the industry within which they operate, with many examples around the world: the Guinness museum in Dublin; the BMW museum in Munich; and the Wells Fargo History Museum in San Francisco.

Using in-depth case study research this paper sets out to explore the nature of branding within the corporate museum. However, prior to presenting any findings a number of issues will be addressed in some detail. Firstly, the concepts of branding, brand identity and brand image need to be covered, to establish where corporate museums might fit in to marketing and managerial strategies. While these concepts have commonly understood parameters, they have rarely been considered in relation to museums generally, and not at all in relation to corporate museums.

Secondly, given the various forms that a museum can take, providing an overview of the history and definitions of museums is vital. The question of whether corporate museums are 'real' museums with valid collections, and what form that collection might take, is relevant here, questions that are current in the museum profession.

The final issue stems from the need to define the corporate museum and determine how such an entity relates to the wider museum sector. Briefly, corporate museums are taken here as referring to museums with managed collections which are situated within for-profit organisations. However, as will be shown below, there is little coverage of corporate museums in the literature. It is useful here, then, to consider the various facets of what makes a corporate museum and subsequently place the concept in a marketing context.

## **Brand: Equity, identity and image**

This paper does not seek to provide any new definitions, or revise existing definitions, of any of the concepts related to branding. However, in order to place the concept of the corporate museum, and the analysis of the strategies of the case firms in a theoretical context, it is useful to outline briefly the concepts as commonly understood.

In brief, brand refers to a combination of factors relating to a good or a service, such as its name, logo and symbols, its design and packaging, as well as its performance (Keller, 2003). As will be noted below, branding encompasses the associations that come to mind when consumers think about a brand, as well as all instances of contact that customers may have with a brand. The latter factor is significant for services such as museums, where it is particularly crucial for staff to deliver a consistent brand image (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2003).

Brand equity is perhaps more problematic. Firstly, brand equity has tended to be defined in a number of different ways for various purposes (Hoeffler and Keller, 2003). Aaker's (1991)

definition, though perhaps simplistic today, is oft-quoted and still a sound starting point. He states that brand equity is:

a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that adds to or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers (Aaker, 1991: 15).

The essence of brand equity is that it represents value to both the organisation and to its customer (Keller, 2003). The fact that brands have value raises a second issue, that of measurement. It has been recognised that though invaluable, establishing a valid brand equity measurement system is a complex task (Aaker, 1996). Still, strategies to build brand equity are now mainstream in both for-profit and not-for-profit organisations and involve the totality of the concept of branding, encompassing brand identity and brand image.

#### *Brand identity*

Brand identity involves those facets of the brand that represent the brand visually and verbally (Wheeler, 2003). Importantly, these facets are constructions of the firm concerned. Identity is a message 'sent' by the firm to the consumer, to be decoded (Nandran, 2005). Clearly this implies that problems can arise in the communication process—the consumer may well not receive the message intended by the firm. Nonetheless, firms use brand identity to establish an intended brand image.

#### *Brand image*

Brand image is, then, concerned with the perceptions of the brand in the minds of the consumer (Keller, 2003: 66). Following Nandrad's (2005) reference to the communication process above, the brand image is the message as decoded by the consumer. Brand image includes the related concepts of brand awareness and brand preference, both of which are what Rossiter and Bellman (2005: 107) call "universal campaign communication objectives", in that raising brand awareness and increasing brand preference should be the objective of all marketing communication campaigns. Firms can seek to achieve these objectives by using various marketing communication devices, such as advertising or public relations. They do so because a positive brand image can significantly enhance brand equity (Faircloth *et al.*, 2001).

#### *Corporate museums and branding*

Corporate museums are at the nexus between the two concepts of brand identity and brand image. They have the potential to be an explicit representation of the brand if they are supported by appropriate managerial strategies. They can be a device by which a firm will seek to communicate a certain image to their consumer. If the message is received by the consumer as intended then the corporate museum will have played a part in establishing a positive brand image for the firm.

### **Museums: History and definition**

The word 'museum' comes from the Greek *mouseion*, meaning a place for the Muses; a place of study and/or a library. Until relatively recently this has been a fitting description of the shape and form of museums generally. That is, until perhaps the latter half of the twentieth century

museums were open only to an elite, either by literally restricting access, or later, by making museums such imposing edifices that the general population were too intimidated to attend.

In the Middle Ages the development of the museum concept is inextricably linked to the Church, which dominated intellectual life in Europe. Monasteries housed sometimes considerable libraries, and were renowned for their scholarly pursuits. The Church was also accumulating collections of manuscripts, holy relics, and treasures, most being gifts from travellers (Murray, 1904). Arguably, the most crucial step in the development of the museum concept, in that it popularised the idea of visiting a museum, was a series of world fairs, commencing with the Great Exhibition of 1851 held in London. Coinciding with the development of mass railway travel, the Great Exhibition was accessible to a greater proportion of the average population than any event before it (Hudson, 1975).

During the twentieth century there were new museums established that broadened the museum concept, for example, the Museum of Modern Art in New York (in 1929). The two World Wars certainly saw many works of art and museum pieces removed from their rightful owners and many items and buildings destroyed. While post-war reconstruction was more focussed on infrastructure and social fabric, there was money available for museums. Schubert (2000) considers that this fact, along with the arrival of mass transit and the leisure culture of the 1970s, provided part of the impetus for massive change in the museum sector in Europe in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Even today, however, there are many alternative views of what constitutes a museum, and many different applications of the concept. For example, in relation to the Australian museum sector, Pigott *et al.* (1975) have pointed out that institutions calling themselves an ‘art gallery’ typically carry out the functions of a museum. Their collection is art, and indeed in Europe they would call themselves an ‘art museum’. In McLean’s opinion, museums are essentially “object-based”, with their existence depending “on their possession of a collection”: heritage centres, and historical homes are ruled out, as “the material evidence is not documented or interpreted” (1994: 191).

In the United States it appears that their definition of a museum, as noted by the American Association of Museums (AAM), relates less to a museum’s collection, and more to how the ‘business’ operates and what its purpose is. For example, a museum’s purpose must be “essentially educational in nature”, there must be a mission statement, and at least “one full-time paid professional staff member who has museum knowledge and experience” (American Association of Museums, 2002).

The essence of a museum is its collection, and the use to which it is put. The following extract from a definition of museums set out by Museums Australia, the peak professional museums industry body in Australia, sums up the position taken here:

A museum helps people understand the world by using objects and ideas to interpret the past and present and explore the future. A museum preserves and researches collections, and makes objects and information accessible in actual and virtual environments (Museums Australia, 2002: 2).

## **The corporate museum as a concept**

As has been noted, corporate museums have been little-explored in the general academic management, with Nissley and Casey's (2002) paper being one of the few works in this area, and not explored at all in the marketing and corporate branding literatures, or indeed in the museum management literature. What literature there exists is either in the form of articles in professional journals and magazines (Buchanan, 2000; Griffiths, 1999), how-to guides for practitioners (Danilov, 1992) or directories or guides for persons wishing to visit corporate museums (Danilov, 1991; Quintanilla, 1998). As such there has not been little analysis of the concept of a corporate museum, or what its role might be.

Danilov (1991; 1992) provided an overview of corporate museums which has been the only analysis until recently. Nissley and Casey (2002), though concentrating on the corporate museum as a repository of organisational memory, as a strategic asset, and while considering the concept of the politics of the exhibition, did offer a general definition. They consider corporate museums to be:

exhibition-based facilities that are owned and operated by publicly traded or privately held companies, often serving roles such as public relations and marketing (Nissley and Casey, 2002: 536).

Not only is this the extent of the consideration of the taxonomy of a corporate museum, it is primarily from a general management perspective. Consequently, it is one of the aims of this paper to set out an analysis of the corporate museum in the context of the marketing discipline.

### *The nature of a private collection*

In common with public museums, corporate museums hold a collection. However, in the first instance, a significant part of the collection relates directly to the for-profit firm that owns and manages it. That is, there may be company historical memorabilia (perhaps board meeting minutes, wage books or purchasing records), machinery now out of service, and examples of past packaging and advertising campaigns. Similarly, there could also be historical documents and portraits of the founders of the firm. The collection may not be solely historical however. In addition, corporate museums can also showcase the development of product lines, emphasising new products, with the aim of "creating a buying atmosphere for such products" (Danilov, 1991: 19).

In addition, corporate museums also promote the industry within which the firm operates. Public industrial and technical museums, in particular, do see themselves as custodians of corporate knowledge in their industry (Hopkins, 2001). Corporate museums, though privately owned, commonly also view their purpose as, at least partially, to further the public's understanding of science, technology and the industry in which the firm operates (Danilov, 1991). This frequently takes the form of historical exhibitions and displays but can also include demonstrations of current technologies.

While McLean's (1994) narrow view of 'heritage' noted above might reflect the poor reputation of independent museums in the UK, sometimes disparagingly referred to as the "heritage industry" (Merriman, 1991: 3), that the collection needs to be, in some way, documented or

interpreted is relevant in the case of corporate museums. In the context of the corporate museum then, its collection must be presented to the public in such a way as to illustrate its relevance to either the firm or related industry.

#### *A focus on the visit*

The concept of a corporate museum being a significant tourist destination is embraced by many firms (Quintanilla, 1998). Museums such as Coca-Cola World in Atlanta, Georgia and farm machinery manufacturer Deere & Co's museum in Moline, Illinois attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Many well known firms in Europe also have a long history of involvement with the corporate museum. For example, German car manufacturers BMW, Mercedes and Porsche all have museums that are visited by a considerable number of people each year, with the museums actively promoted as tourist destinations.

These museums are, as Buchanan describes, "tourist bait", providing a mix of education and entertainment that results in consumers achieving an "unprecedented intimacy with cherished brands" (2000: 119). The tone here is negative, which is perhaps related to the tensions between commerce and the collection which is in itself linked to disagreement about the purpose of museums generally. As social institutions, they have multiple, and competing, functions: to inform, to educate, to entertain, to preserve, to research; as well as to conserve (Kotler and Kotler, 1998: 34). However, in the museum sector generally the visitor has moved from the periphery to the centre of museum practice (Schubert, 2000: 70). Consequently, marketing strategies to encourage visitors are now commonplace in the museum sector.

But there is an important distinction. In essence, public museums seek to make their collections available to the *general public*. Indeed, it is a requirement of many of their funding and regulatory regimes that they do so. With corporate museums the aim is much more closely linked to their purpose, and definition. In contrast, corporate museums seek to make their collections available to both current, and potential, *consumers*.

#### *A branding tool*

An issue of concern to museum professionals is the degree to which corporate museums reflect a commercial perspective. Their concern is whether the collection's purpose is less educational—a traditional role for the museum sector—than appropriate, and more an explicit tool for self-advertisement (Danilov, 1986: 47). The museum profession does acknowledge the benefits of a commercial perspective. Both the Bass Museum in Burton upon Trent and the London Transport Museum use their museums to control their image through product licensing (Griffiths, 1999). While the concept of branding is only embryonic in the wider museum sector, it is now recognised that a number of large iconic museums such as the British Museum, the Guggenheim, the Smithsonian, and the Louvre clearly possess national and international associations in the minds of the consumer (Caldwell, 2000).

With branding now a marketing priority for organisations (Hoeffler and Keller, 2003), it is not surprising that corporate museums have been used as devices for building the brand. Indeed, this focus on promotion of the brand, mixed corporate and industry memory, is common to many corporate museums. Speight's Brewery in Dunedin, New Zealand calls its establishment the Speight's Heritage Centre, which includes "a first class informative tour through the working



brewery and museum of Speight's - a passionate part of every "Southern Man's" heart and culture" (Lion Breweries, 2006). Similarly, the Guinness museum, named the "Guinness Storehouse", states that visitors can embark on "an incredible journey throughout 250 years of brewing history, discover the pride & passion which goes into making this world-famous beer" (Guinness, 2005). In both these cases there is a clear link in the advertising copy between brand identity statements, referencing the firm's heritage as displayed in the corporate museum, and the intended brand image.

### *Brand pilgrims*

Corporate museums play one role clearly not available to other branding devices firms might employ. It could be said that many of the visitors to the BMW, Mercedes and Porsche museums noted above are what might be called 'brand pilgrims'; consumers with such a high level of brand loyalty that they will make a museum and factory/plant tour part of their holiday itinerary. Indeed, anecdotal evidence from the media supports this (Quintanilla, 1998), although the academic literature is yet to reflect the growth of this phenomenon. Brand pilgrims seek to immerse themselves in their brand. They desire to experience the history of 'their' product, perhaps see where and how it is made and view artefacts illustrating its role in the industry concerned, and therefore its relevance to society generally. Not all visitors to a corporate museum will have this level of brand loyalty. Nonetheless, visiting a corporate museum results in an intimate contact with the brand: the consumer visits the 'home' of the brand and experiences 'it' first hand. Corporate museums can, then, play an integral role in the branding strategies of a firm, both by nurturing the relationship with the evangelist consumer and reinforcing the firm's other marketing communication devices for the 'average' consumer.

## **Methodology**

In order to ascertain the nature of the corporate museum, including questions relating to its marketing and branding practices, qualitative in-depth case study research was undertaken across four organisations in the first half of 2006. The case study approach has become widely used in the social sciences and can provide much insightful information into organisational roles and procedures, offering a particular richness of detail of processes in context (Hartley, 1994). As Johnston *et al.* (1999: 203) state:

[c]ase study research consists of a detailed investigation that attempts to provide an analysis of the context and processes in the phenomenon under study.

The four organisations were drawn from different sectors: brewing, publishing, sport and banking; in two national contexts, those of Australia and the Republic of Ireland. Table 1 provides summary information on the organisations studied. As can be seen, the foundation of the museums had all been in the last decade or so, reflecting a more recent interest amongst organisations to document and preserve elements of their history for display to the general public (Quintanilla, 1998). It is also important to note that a critical factor driving case selection entailed the presence of a managed collection within the museum facility: for the purposes of this study, the narrower definitions of "museum" (as opposed to the visitor centre or similar) provided by McLean (1994) and Museums Australia (2002) were followed.

Take in Table 1

Within the case study approach, a variety of methods were made use of. The principal method that was adopted involved the in-depth interviewing of staff employed within museums or otherwise responsible for their operation. A semi-structured approach to interviewing was utilised. This was considered to be most appropriate, as it allows a more closely focused discussion to take place (Robson, 1993). Following Keats (2000), a schedule of pertinent themes was drawn up, though it was recognised that departures from this were probable. This type of interviewing is beneficial as it “[encourages] respondents to express experience, attitudes, needs and ideas” (Wright, 1996: 59) and allows comparisons across companies to be drawn. Interviews typically lasted for 1 hour on average, were recorded on to tape and were subsequently transcribed into a standard word processing package. Analysis of the interview data was carried out using content analysis techniques, which involved the identification of key themes and the illustration of these through selected excerpts and quotations. Interview transcripts were read by both members of the research team, and were revisited on occasions subsequent to the initial analysis, in order to gain an in-depth picture of the themes and topics that were discussed and that had emerged (Robson and Hedges, 1993).

Other methods were also used as part of the case study research. Analysis of written comments by visitors, where available, took place, as did tours of the museum facilities. The latter were supported by the taking of comprehensive field notes and photographs, which documented and related pertinent elements of the museum experience. In addition, analysis of marketing materials relating to the museums and the firm’s brands and current marketing campaigns were assessed as part of the case study research.

## **Findings**

In this section, the findings from the case study research, as they relate to issues of marketing and branding, are presented. Given the limitations of space, selected findings only are presented here, with the aim being to consider in more detail further aspects in subsequent publications.

### *Reasons for museum establishment*

Various reasons were apparent for the establishment of museums within the firms under study. All shared the common reason of wishing to preserve aspects of organisational history, typically because large archives were present within the firm which, prior to the foundation of the museums, had not been documented or catalogued. The role of a museum ‘champion’, who had either encouraged the establishment of the museum or who had retained various artefacts from the organisation’s past, was also apparent in two of the organisations studied. As the curator of the Essendon Football Club Hall of Fame emphasised:

a fellow called Brian Donohoe... was very active in wanting to see the heritage of the club in a place where people could come and look at it. So Brian Donohoe was actually the guy responsible for driving the whole idea of the Hall of Fame.

A similar individual could also be identified at The Mercury Print Museum who had maintained aspects of the corporate memory. The Bank of Ireland Arts Centre, on the other hand, had been founded as a space for emerging performers and artists, alongside which elements of corporate and industry history could be presented in an attached museum. This museum had also benefited

at inception from regeneration of the adjacent Temple Bar area, with tax breaks and other assistance available from government for improvement of the urban form.

At the Boag's Centre for Beer Lovers, the need to reinforce brand image through the museum was cited by the managing director as an explicit reason for its establishment:

so one of the primary reasons for the visitors centre, and the strategy behind the person's experience when they go to the visitors centre, was to try and maximise this recall of Boag's and what Boag's represented... in our advertising we talk about quality so it [the museum] had to be a quality product, our history had to be laid out... Boag's also stands for a whole lot of other things over time and the museum is really our attempt to show people what we were, where we've come from and the way things have changed in the brewing industry as well.

This need to communicate elements of the brand was also apparent amongst other staff within the company who were involved with the museum. Uniquely amongst the companies researched, responsibility for the centre lay with a brand and product manager (as opposed to a curator or general manager, for example), who emphasised that the museum is:

intended to create a greater link between the customer and the product so ultimately they drink more of our product and become more attached to drinking our beers no matter what short term promotional activity is going on.

### *The building as brand*

Apparent from both the interviews with museum staff and tours of the museum facilities was the significance of the buildings within which the museums are situated. Figure 1, which illustrates the exteriors of the four museums, shows that the museums are situated in relatively historic buildings, which frequently act as sufficiently interesting 'drawcards' for potential consumers, regardless of the contents within. All had a direct physical link to the broader organisation of which they were part. In terms of the Boag's Centre for Beer Lovers, for example – as shown in Figure 1(a), the museum is housed in one of the oldest buildings in the city, an old hotel adjacent to the brewery, which had been purchased by the firm in the 1980s. Visitors typically visit the museum as part of a factory tour. The Mercury Print Museum (Figure 1(b)) is situated in a visually striking Georgian building in Hobart, Ingle Hall, next door to the editorial and production sections of the newspaper; while the Essendon Football Club Hall of Fame at Windy Hill (Figure 1(c)) is alongside the administration offices and is where that team played its games "until 1991... for 70 seasons... it is the spiritual home, it's where a lot of adults will have all their memories of the club" (curator, Essendon Football Club Hall of Fame). Finally, as shown in Figure 1(d), the Bank of Ireland Arts Centre is located in a building which, prior to full union with Great Britain in 1801, was the armoury of the Parliament of Ireland; the bank having purchased the complex of Georgian buildings in the 19th century.

As such, the museums of all the organisations studied serve to communicate aspects of their history to consumers; reinforcing the heritage aspects of the brand was seen by interviewees as being central. This is supported by the researchers' analysis of the current marketing communication materials. The following quote from an employee of The Mercury Print Museum serves to highlight the value of the building in encouraging people 'through the door' and thence to interact with the corporate space within, acting in some ways in the same manner as the shop window of a retail outlet does:

it would have been hard without this building, it would have been very difficult. I can't imagine developing it even in The Mercury space next door. I don't know where we would have put it quite frankly... having this Georgian building is a great bonus. It just really fits, it's the atmosphere... a lot of people... they see the building from outside and they say, 'what's in there?'

The centrality of this element of the museum's brand was such that the logo associated with this particular museum, as manifested on giftware, promotional literature, and exterior signage, for example, included a stylised representation of the exterior of the building; instead of the actual masthead of the newspaper which is the typical visual manifestation of the brand within that sector.

Take in Figure 1

### *Marketing communications*

Reflecting the prevalence of electronic modes of communication, all museums had a web presence with background information on opening hours, admission prices, the nature of the collections and other relevant details. The presence of corporate brand imagery differed across the four organisations, however. Whilst all the museums included the logos of the organisations to which they belonged, it was the Boag's Centre for Beer Lovers which aligned most closely the museum with the branding and marketing message of the product. This most probably reflects the underlying reason for that museum's establishment, namely to link the history of the company with qualitative aspects of the product, as discussed above, thus maximising brand equity. The company's website, along with its advertising campaigns, emphasises the history inherent in the firm and its products, thereby providing an appropriate complement to the heritage aspects of the museum. Most communications were targeted at tourists from other states in Australia and overseas and involved the distribution of flyers across the state's network of tourist information centres and brochure exchange facilities. Additionally, aspects of service quality aided in the communication of the 'right' message to those on factory tours. As the managing director noted:

the dress standard of our employees: they have got to look their best, they can't look scruffy. We're talking about a premium product, we're talking about a premium image so we applied quite a big cost in making sure that everyone's got appropriate equipment and it's clean and it's neat and it's tidy. So you see workers there they look as though they're working in a clean premium sort of process. The whole cultural thing from the company point of view is very important.

For the other organisations, the major marketing communications activities were centred on advertisements in the print media. Not surprisingly, The Mercury Print Museum placed its advertisements in the publication to which it was associated, which meant that, given its traditional circulation, only those in the southern part of the state of Tasmania would be reached by such messages. Essendon Football Club Hall of Fame focused its advertising on the local press, and, interestingly, on an older market segment, as the curator explained:

The way that I promote is through two trade newspapers called the *The Probian*... [and] another magazine called *Cota News*, Council of the Ageing news, and the reason we target Probus and COTA is because these people are retired and because they're a

member of COTA or a member of Probus, they're involved in regular activities. They're looking for places to continually go to; so by targeting these people, we have busy groups of audiences, a captive audience coming in to visit us all the time.

Given that this particular organisation includes a large supporter or membership base, marketing communications also took place through the medium of direct mail. The obvious loyalty to the organisation inherent in this particular target market suggests that such communications are an appropriate way of nurturing interaction with the Essendon Football Club brand, interactions which are highly likely to encourage visits from 'brand pilgrims', as discussed above.

#### *Younger consumers and education*

Three out of the four museums studied emphasised the significance of educating younger consumers as part of the museum's operations; the exception being the brewing museum, which is understandable given the age restrictions placed on alcohol consumption. As part of their marketing activities, staff approached schools in their local areas to encourage teachers to arrange visits to their museums. Whilst a wish to interact with the broader community was evident as a reason for such visits, it was also apparent that 'capturing' the younger consumer was a key part of the remaining museums' operations. The marketing manager of the Bank of Ireland Arts Centre, for instance, stressed the role that schoolchildren could play in encouraging other family members to visit:

what we were trying to do was to get into a younger market, so that you would have maybe 10 to 12 year olds coming into the museum for school tours and then they'd go home and tell their mums and dads, 'you should go and have a look at that', or 'look at that building', or whatever... you know the way kids are quite influential when they get home

Although this interviewee did not link directly a visit to the museum with the uptake of financial products and services, she could see the value in reaching consumers at an early age, noting that, "you're not allowed to go into the schools and sell accounts. You've got to get other ways to do it".

The manager of The Mercury Print Museum considered that building loyalty to the brand was important:

Young and future readers is a key thing, trying to get more young people familiar with newspapers, hopefully building up the future readership. Also the relationship with schools, education of the teachers specifically, getting the Mercury profiled in classrooms is a key part of it. So the schools come in... and we'll certainly promote all the other things we've produced. We give them flyers on all of our [educational] kits and things and we get a lot of pick up from them so I guess that is very much from that point of view a branding thing.

With younger age schoolchildren, however, it was noted that:

Well the branding is certainly there... with younger groups, though, I think we're a little bit more cautious about pushing too much the corporate logo and more looking at the whole issue of the industry generally.

He did place this against a backdrop of declining newspaper readership generally and a wish to encourage younger consumers to consider the nature of the contemporary media industry. The materials each tour participant received as part of their school's visit reflected this, with materials relating to the newspaper, such as special issues and branded merchandise, being

handed out along with information on the recycling of newspapers and other issues concerning their production.

## **Conclusions**

From the discussion presented in this paper, it is apparent that the corporate museum has an important role to play as a branding device. Significantly, in the organisations studied, to a lesser or greater degree all personnel considered the corporate museum to have a role in brand building. Boag's perhaps provided the strongest support for that role, but even when brand building in the other firms was not explicit, it was evident in managerial actions. Findings here also provide evidence for the use of the corporate museum as a branding device in a number of other ways, including the use of the museum's building—its 'spiritual home'—as part of the brand, as a marketing communication tool—where the corporate museum is clearly linked to the corporate marketing material, and as a means of educating the consumers of the future.

Given the lack of previous research in this area, this paper's findings are somewhat exploratory. However, the in-depth nature of the research across different industry sectors strengthens their validity and their practical application. For those involved in either museum marketing, or for-profit firms with corporate museums, the findings set out here provide a discussion of some of the key issues pertinent to branding in the corporate museum context.

It is suggested that further research in the area of corporate museums could be employed in different industries and national contexts. There is the potential to develop a fuller picture of the marketing and branding practices of corporate museums, as well as more general questions regarding the management of such facilities, including questions as to their establishment, funding, and their place in the organisational structure. Such research should be concerned with facilities within smaller organisations, as well as the more 'iconic' examples from sectors such as brewing and automobile manufacturing. The paucity of research in this area also means that investigations amongst consumers would also be appropriate. For example, studies into what motivates 'brand pilgrim' consumers, introduced above, to visit a corporate museum would be of particular value.

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**Table 1** Summary information on the case study organisations

<b>Name of museum</b>	<b>Industry sector</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Year of foundation</b>
Boag's Centre for Beer Lovers	Brewing	Launceston, Tasmania, Australia	2002
The Mercury Print Museum	Publishing	Hobart, Tasmania, Australia	1999
Essendon Football Club Hall of Fame	Sport	Essendon, Victoria, Australia	1996
Bank of Ireland Arts Centre	Banking	Dublin, Ireland	1995

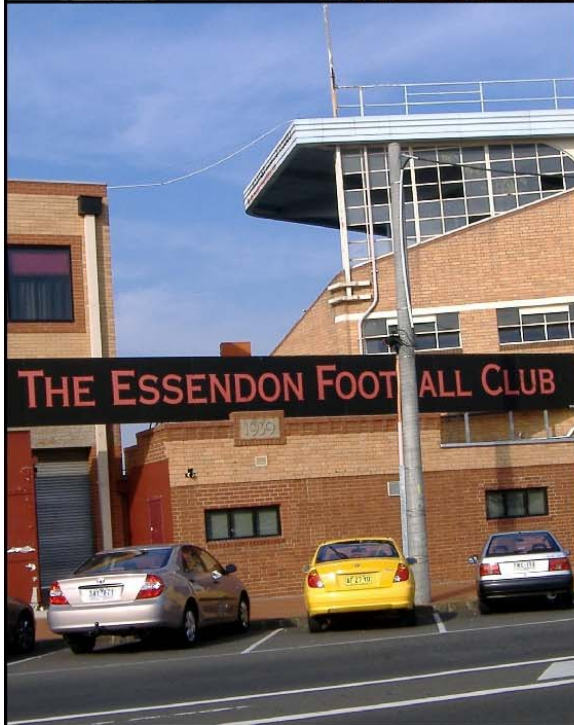
(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



**Figure 1** The site of the corporate museum

- (a) Boag's Centre for Beer Lovers, Launceston, Tasmania
- (b) The Mercury Museum, Hobart, Tasmania
- (c) Essendon Football Club Hall of Fame, Essendon, Victoria
- (d) Bank of Ireland Arts Centre, Dublin