

Corporate museums as heritage vehicles: a comparative analysis between family and non-family businesses

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Abstract

The heritage marketing strategy often calls for the employment of a corporate museum to represent the firm's history in the eyes of internal and external observers. However, to date there has been no attempt to identify the distinctive values underlying the use of corporate museums by family firms – as opposed to non-family firms – for nurturing customers' understanding and appreciation of the company and its products. This paper aims to address this gap and investigate the identity values that drive the establishment of corporate museums by family firms and non-family firms. Using a comparative case-study (CCS) approach, the paper examines the values underlying two examples of corporate museums promoted by two different firms, one with a high level and one with a low level of family control. The study reveals differing distinctive values between family and non-family corporate museums.

Keywords: heritage marketing, corporate heritage, milieu, longevity, transgenerational outlook, family firms

Sommario

La strategia di *heritage marketing* richiede spesso l'impiego di un museo aziendale che rappresenti la storia dell'azienda agli occhi degli osservatori interni ed esterni. Tuttavia, ad oggi, non vi è alcun tentativo di identificare i valori distintivi

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alla base dell'utilizzo dei musei aziendali da parte delle aziende familiari, rispetto alle aziende non familiari, per favorire la comprensione e l'apprezzamento dell'azienda e dei suoi prodotti da parte dei clienti. Il presente contributo mira a colmare questa lacuna e ad indagare i valori identitari alla base dell'istituzione dei musei aziendali da parte delle imprese familiari e non familiari. Avvalendosi del confronto di due casi di studio, il contributo esamina i valori alla base dei musei aziendali promossi rispettivamente da imprese con un alto livello e un basso livello di controllo familiare. Lo studio rivela diversi valori guida distintivi tra i musei aziendali familiari e non familiari.

Parole chiave: heritage marketing, corporate heritage, milieu, longevità, prospettiva transgenerazionale, imprese familiari

1. Introduction

In the current context, cultural heritage is widely recognised as a *source* and a *resource*. On the one hand, it is evidence of the past, documents our origins, is «a shared source of remembrance, understanding, identity, cohesion and creativity» (Council of Europe, 2005, Article 3.a). On the other, it is a resource from which we can draw cultural, social and economic benefits for the future (Council of Europe, 2005, Preamble; Article 2.a; Article 7.c; but also Articles 1, 3 and 5).

More specifically, when focusing on the value of cultural heritage (Golinelli, 2015), we can also identify a *production value*, that can be drawn from cultural heritage (Montella, 2009). This kind of value refers to market uses flowing from cultural heritage and profit for businesses operating in different sectors, e.g. restoration, publishing, tourism, construction, real estate business, performing arts, etc. (Grefe, 2009). Moreover, if cultural heritage is stratified through time in a specific context, it can influence a firm's value creation and competitive advantage.

In the globalised world, this innovative framework opens up new opportunities for companies with a corporate heritage rooted in the local milieu, such as those using the Made-in-Italy brand (Montella, Silvestrelli, 2020). Indeed, *genius loci* and place-specific resources are becoming production factors that qualify output and strengthen corporate reliability (Macario, Santovito, 2016). While the scientific literature on the internal and external benefits of using corporate and local heritage as marketing tools has increased significantly in the last fifteen years, no attempt has been made to date to identify the distinctive values that underpin heritage marketing strategies.

To contribute to this debate, we first discuss the contribution of different heritage marketing tools, before focusing our analysis on corporate museums.

This is for two reasons. On the one hand, their specific role is not yet sufficiently explored in the international scientific literature. On the other hand, in the current globalised context, where consumers appreciate authenticity, corporate museums and corporate archives are essential tools for counteracting invented heritage strategies. Even if corporate heritage can be reinterpreted, idealised or invented, collecting and preserving a firm's tangible and intangible heritage can prevent and contain the risk of an invented past.

In this scenario, mindful of the gaps identified in the scientific debate on this matter, the research investigates the distinctive values underlying the use of corporate heritage by family firms, as opposed to non-family firms.

The paper adopts an exploratory theory-building comparative case-study (CCS) approach within the qualitative-inductive research tradition. We selected two cases from the food industry as a significant branch of the Made-in-Italy brand that leverages a long-standing tradition and rootedness in its environment. The analysis focuses on a family-owned corporate museum (Museo Pasta Cuomo) and a non-family corporate museum (Museo Storico Perugia).

The two selected companies have experienced significant changes during the twentieth century and represent different reactions to globalisation: Pasta Cuomo was founded in 1820 and stopped operating in 1939. In 2015, the latest generation of Cuomos revived the family tradition of pasta-making. Perugia was founded as a family business in 1907 and was bought by Nestlé in 1988.

This research aims to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the values underpinning heritage communication strategies?

RQ2: How do Museo Pasta Cuomo and Museo Storico Perugia communicate their heritage? What aspects do they strengthen?

RQ3: Are there any differences between the way family-owned and non-family businesses display their core values in corporate museums?

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 looks at the multi-dimensional value of corporate heritage by analysing heritage marketing as a strategic and integrated system and focusing on the specific role of corporate museums. Section 3 presents the research methodology and section 4 the research results. Section 5 discusses the main findings and suggests the theoretical and managerial implications. Finally, section 6 presents the limitations of the research and areas for further development.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Heritage marketing as a strategic and integrated system

Although the concepts of corporate identity, corporate brand and corporate marketing date back to the end of the 1990s, it was only in 2006 that the notion of corporate heritage was formally introduced in marketing studies (Balmer *et al.*, 2006). More recently, the role of the past in marketing theory and practice has been the object of further investigation in the scientific literature (Martino, 2013; Balmer, Burghausen, 2019). Scholars have analysed the relationship between past and present, history and memory, tradition and innovation, and also tackled controversial issues, such as the invented past and heritage «to fit contemporary concerns» (Brunninge, Hartmann, 2019, p. 230).

To begin with, it is necessary to be aware of what is meant by corporate heritage. First, heritage refers to what is inherited, handed down over time in an object, place, memory or story. Thus, it has both material features (if visible and tangible: for example, a site, an artefact) and intangible features (for example, a dance, a tradition, a dialect, a myth). Moreover, it is characterised by a historical depth (since it was formed over a long time) and has a high cultural value (since it testifies to and explains the distinguishing traits of the organisation to which it belongs). Corporate heritage can be divided into *endogenous* resources, matured within the boundaries of the organisation and related to the company's history and products (firm-specific heritage), and *exogenous* resources, built up within the territory in which the company has roots and is immersed (place-specific heritage). Thus, corporate heritage is different from corporate history (Wilson, 2018): whereas corporate history is retrospective and represents the past, corporate heritage values the past because of its contribution to the present and its role in the future.

Specifically, when looking at corporate heritage, scholars agree on recognising its strategic role in marketing activities and the importance of leveraging not only firm-specific but also place-specific heritage (Montemaggi, Severino, 2007; Napolitano, Marino, 2016; Napolitano *et al.*, 2018; Montella, 2018; Riviezzo *et al.*, 2021).

From an internal marketing perspective (organisational perspective), the promotion of corporate heritage influences the corporate climate positively and consolidates relational capital. Furthermore, it can strengthen corporate culture and build internal commitment and pride by increasing staff motivation and engagement in a firm's choices and decisions (Urde *et al.*, 2007; Seligson, 2010; Montella, 2014).

From the point of view of external marketing, historical know-how enriches a firm's output. Investment in the tangible and intangible assets that

distinguish a company's history and production plays a central role in strengthening the basket of attributes that qualify the products (Montella, 2009). Moreover, a focus on firm- and place-specific heritage, including symbols and values, has a positive effect on corporate identity, image and reputation. It also contributes to company positioning and branding on national and international markets, increases brand awareness and helps build long-term customer relationships and customer loyalty (Rindell *et al.*, 2015; Balmer, Chen, 2017; Pulh *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, consumers are increasingly driven by symbolic needs and steadily assign greater value to the authenticity of products and services. Finally, investment in corporate heritage can create social cohesion, increase social capital and quality of life, and generate economic outcomes for the local context. As some authors argue (Napolitano, De Nisco, 2017; Wilson, 2018; Montemaggi, 2020), it could yield benefits for place branding and marketing. The preservation and promotion of place-specific resources can generate positive externalities for the tourism industry, thus improving quality of life and promoting sustainable local development (Bernardi *et al.*, 2021).

It is worth noting that, in his 18 reflections on corporate brand and corporate identity from 1995 to the present, Balmer (2017) highlights the increasing interest in corporate heritage organisations and corporate heritage brands and identities. However, as already mentioned, not all brands with a heritage are heritage brands: «to make heritage part of a brand's value proposition is a strategic decision» (Urde *et al.*, 2007, p. 5). Indeed, corporate heritage can become a source of competitive advantage in marketing strategies only if a strategic and holistic approach is adopted (Balmer, 2013; Burghausen, Balmer, 2014; Riviezzo *et al.*, 2016).

Calling for multi-modal and multi-sensory corporate identity systems that incorporate all implementation strategies (e.g. design, communication, behaviour) and sensory means (i.e. sight, sound, scent, taste, touch), Burghausen and Balmer (2014) proposed a model based on four strategies: (1) *narrating*, e.g. through press releases, annual reports, websites, etc.; (2) *visualising*, by using visual design elements, e.g. photographs and illustrations; (3) *performing*, actualising corporate heritage identity through traditions, rituals and customs; (4) *embodying*, through the manifestation of corporate identity in objects, spaces and people. Similarly, Riviezzo *et al.* (2016) suggested an interpretative framework of four categories of heritage marketing tools: *storytelling*, *branding*, *public relations* and *organisation units*. A few years later, the authors revised the model (Napolitano *et al.*, 2018; Garofano *et al.*, 2020) and introduced a heritage marketing mix based on four different categories of storytelling through: (1) *words, images and sounds*, e.g. corporate autobiographies, press releases, historical advertising, corporate videos,

movies, brochures, websites, social networks, etc.; (2) *products and brands*, e.g. production processes, raw materials, distinctive competences, iconic products, heritage branding, visual identity, retro branding, packaging, merchandising, etc.; (3) *places*, archives, museums, foundations, factory tours, shops, etc.; (4) *celebrations and relations*, anniversary celebrations, temporary exhibitions, workshops, cultural events, etc. (tab. 1).

Tab. 1 – *The strategic and holistic approach to heritage marketing strategies and tools*

<i>Sources</i>	<i>Heritage marketing strategies/tools</i>
Burghausen and Balmer (2014)	1. Narrating 2. Visualising 3. Performing 4. Embodying
Riviezzo <i>et al.</i> (2016)	1. Storytelling 2. Branding 3. Public relations 4. Organisation units
Napolitano <i>et al.</i> (2018)	1. Storytelling through words, images, sounds 2. Storytelling through products and brands
Garofano <i>et al.</i> (2020)	3. Storytelling through places 4. Storytelling through celebrations and relations

Source: *own elaboration*

Riviezzo *et al.* (2016) also pointed out that long-lived firms approach the single tools of heritage marketing experimentally and with no integrated vision, mainly focusing on storytelling via a website, social networks and corporate videos, or on public relations through events.

As stated in the introduction, the rest of the paper focuses on corporate museums as strategic marketing tools to counteract invented heritage, which have been insufficiently explored in the scientific literature.

2.2 Corporate museums as corporate heritage vehicles

Corporate museums have rapidly spread in industrialised countries, which has led to growing interest from scholars in various disciplines (Coleman, 1943; Danilov, 1991; Nissley, Casey, 2002; Montemaggi, Severino, 2007; Montella, 2018; Napolitano *et al.*, 2018; Iannone, 2020; Riviezzo *et al.*, 2021). Nonetheless, there is still no single shared definition for them. Therefore, a description of the phenomenon, its characteristics and objectives is warranted here.

Corporate museums can be defined as museums established, governed and financed by active companies, which preserve, exhibit, and promote material evidence from an organisation's past and present activities. Thus, the corporate museum has a mission to communicate all aspects of corporate heritage and explain its multi-dimensional value. In doing so, it aims to achieve global recognition for the company in the eyes of all possible stakeholders¹, and induce in them a positive image of the company that will influence their cognitive models and behaviours.

In specific terms, the role of the museum is to illustrate to the broadest possible audience a number of elements that are of primary importance in that they contribute extensively to defining the company's identity and determining its image and reputation: the history, type and quality of the products and production processes; the advertising campaigns and the successes obtained; the knowledge and values that shaped the company mission, strategies and activities; its symbolic essence; the positive externalities generated for a wide range of stakeholders; the idiosyncrasies of the social, economic and cultural context in which the objects were created (beginning with the needs, living conditions, values, available materials and known techniques of the reference community which, therefore, are represented by these products and the company itself); roots in the local area and the role played in the formation and evolution of the local social, economic and cultural context.

Hence, corporate museums are excellent storytelling tools (Fontana, 2013; Riviezzo *et al.*, 2016).

2.2.1 Corporate heritage values

The many aspects mentioned above related to the firm- and place-specific heritage that a corporate museum can communicate to the public have a significant contribution to make to achieving a lasting competitive advantage. They can convey three specific values that identify and differentiate a company from others:

- longevity, that is, the company's historical depth, its know-how and products;
- transgenerational outlook, that is, a company's survival and development through different generations;
- rootedness in the local milieu, as both an expression and a creator of a place's culture.

¹ Owners, employees, customers, suppliers, competitors, government, influence groups, media, the general public, the local community, and the commercial and financial sectors.

In fact, a company's prestige and its products largely depend on the depth of its history. Longevity is an important differentiating and competitive advantage factor, since it testifies to the company's ability to establish virtuous long-term bonds with all types of stakeholders, move forward with balanced growth and keep space of the evolving needs of society (Giaretta, 2004; Riviezzo *et al.*, 2016).

At the same time, a transgenerational outlook is also a form of quality assurance for stakeholders, an added value. It is evidence of the ability of the company and its products to endure from generation to generation (Miller, Le Breton-Miller, 2005; Zellweger, Astrachan, 2008; De Falco, Vollero, 2015).

Finally, the company and its products can be seen as both an expression and a creator of the local milieu, which gives it an uncommon prestige and a strategic emotional charge (Bonti, 2014; Spielmann *et al.*, 2019)². All this is especially critical in the current market, where consumers attribute increasing value to the authenticity of products and services (Goulding, 2000; Carù *et al.*, 2017) and the "glocal" paradigm dominates. Therefore, the chances of success increasingly depend on different local identities based on landscape diversity and historical and cultural heritage (Porter, 1985; Becattini, 1999; Iraldo, 2002). Furthermore, the inimitable competitive advantage of Italy's image is reflected in the companies that operate there (Bertoli, Resciniti, 2013; Fondazione Symbola-Unioncamere, 2014; Futurebrand 2014-2015; Montella, Cerquetti, 2016; Napolitano, Marino, 2016). Also, the country's diverse geographical identity is a crucial resource for responding to the growing demand for non-standardised products.

An assessment of the importance and weight of the specific identity values underpinning a firm's use of corporate museums may vary depending on the characteristics of the company (starting with the ownership structure of family and non-family firms).

On the basis of these considerations, we can argue that corporate museums are one of the most effective heritage marketing tools (§ 2.1). Indeed, they highlight a company's heritage identity values. Moreover, by strategically linking present, past and future, they contribute significantly to strengthening corporate identity, reputation, and customer retention (Balmer, 2017; Balmer, Burghausen, 2019; Brunninge, Hartmann, 2019; Moussa, Barnier, 2021).

² Consequently, a company and its products are the expression of the specific heritage of the local area, which in turn is deeply embedded in them. This interrelationship is difficult to replicate elsewhere.

2.2.2 Corporate museums in Italy

Italy has a large number of corporate museums, despite having developed more slowly than in other countries such as Germany, Austria, Great Britain, and the USA³. They began to spring up in the 1980s and 1990s and were recognised as a specific type of cultural institution in the late 1990s. They have spread widely in recent years.

Italian corporate museums are mostly set up by private companies with a long-standing tradition: a long history and many years of activity across several generations of the same family. Furthermore, these companies often have a leading brand in the sector, frequently linked to the family name, and a well-defined, medium-to-high-end market position. Often, they are also deeply embedded in the local context. Finally, these companies have had a profound impact on the history of social consumption, thanks to products with intense symbolic value which help to define and promote the identity of the reference territory and, in many cases, have become Made-in-Italy icons.

They are mainly distributed in northern Italy and especially in the “industrial triangle” of the North-East, which is indicative of the history of business in the country as a whole and the development of that area. Recent data (Montella, 2018) also suggest that Italian corporate museums are run by companies mainly in the S.p.a. (*Società per azioni*) category, although many are S.r.l. (*Società a responsabilità limitata*). Furthermore, most are opened by large companies, followed by small- and medium-sized enterprises and then micro-enterprises. Lastly, the industries⁴ represented are manufacturing (more than 4 out of 5 or 84%), particularly automotive and transport (16.5%), followed by beverage (15%), food (14%), textiles and clothing (11%), furniture and design (10%)⁵.

3. Research methodology

We adopted a comparative case study (CCS) to test the research questions. A case study involves an in-depth qualitative investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Stake, 2008; Yin, 2003).

³ The many early examples of corporate museums include Cadbury World in Birmingham, opened in 1990, the Clarks Village in Bath, opened in 1993, the Swarovski Kristallwelten, created in 1995 near Innsbruck, and the World of Coca-Cola, founded in Atlanta in 1990.

⁴ See the Ateco 2007 Classification of Economic Activity, 2022 update.

⁵ The above are followed by machinery and equipment (9%), non-metallic mineral processing (6.5%), metal products (4%), pharmaceuticals (2.5%), instruments and equipment for measuring, testing, navigation and watches (2.5%), chemicals (1%), and printing and reproduction of recorded media (1%), other (6.5%).

Case studies are particularly important to management research since they give access to a single setting through a variety of interpretive lenses, to reveal the multiple and sometimes contradictory facets of the phenomenon (De Massis, Kotlar, 2014). A CCS builds on this framework, by taking into consideration two or more examples of the same phenomenon and analysing similarities and differences across the cases. In this approach, researchers try to trace potential differences in the outcome variable among the cases back to differences in the explanatory variables. Thus, in qualitative empirical research, CCSs introduce the ability to study causal relationships among theoretical constructs. In addition, they also require the cases being examined to be comparable, in order to minimise the number of changing explanatory variables. As a consequence, cases are not randomly drawn from a population, but rather selected by researchers on the basis of the comparability requirement. However, cases need not be comparable (i.e. share the same values) in dimensions that do not affect the relationships under investigation (Kaarbo, Beasley, 1999). Indeed, researchers can tolerate cases with differing variables that have no relationship to the variables of interest.

3.1 Selection of cases

For our study, we selected two examples of corporate museums, one belonging to a family-run firm and one to a firm in which the family has only a small stake. The two cases selected were Museo Pasta Cuomo, a family-owned corporate museum, and Museo Storico Perugina, a non-family corporate museum.

Museo Pasta Cuomo belongs to Pasta Cuomo S.r.l., a pasta company located in Gragnano, near Naples, southern Italy, which began business in 1820. The other case study is Perugina, a famous chocolate manufacturer founded in Perugia in 1907, whose brand was acquired by the Nestlé Group in 1988. Both firms are important players in the food industry, however, they differ in size. Pasta Cuomo has only 3 employees and sales of around 62,000 euros at the end of 2020, whereas the Perugina factory has 613 employees.

Despite the differences in size, both brands are important representatives of the Made-in-Italy mark in the food industry.

3.2 Materials and procedures

For our analysis, we scrutinised the museums' publications, reports and

online materials, such as websites⁶ and videos (Tab. 2). We also collected visual data, such as pictures taken during visits to document the museum environments, heritage artefacts, and communication tools (Rose, 2007; Burghausen, Balmer, 2014).

Tab. 2 – *Materials*

Materials	Museo della Pasta Cuomo	Museo Storico Perugina
<i>Publications</i>	Book about the history of the firm	Not used
<i>Videos</i>	Museum VR tour	Museum video room
<i>Online materials</i>	Website, online articles	Website
<i>Pictures</i>	Pictures taken during the visit to the museum	Pictures taken during the visit to the museum
<i>Communication tools</i>	Advertising posters and billboards	Advertising posters and billboards, TV commercials

Source: *own elaboration*

Although the visits to both museums were similarly structured, they differed in certain respects. The tour of the Museo Pasta Cuomo started with a presentation by the researchers and the guides, Alfonso and Amelia Cuomo, the youngest generation of the Cuomo family, who are personally involved in the day-to-day running of their firm. On this occasion, Alfonso and Amelia also talked to the researchers about the origin of the firm, which dates back to 1820, and its development. Right from this first discussion, Alfonso and Amelia linked their firm's fortunes to the idiosyncrasies of the area in which the town of Gragnano is located. Following this introductory discussion, Alfonso and Amelia Cuomo invited the researchers to tour the museum, which is located in the same building as the ancient Pastificio Cuomo. During the visit, Alfonso and Amelia also explained that the refurbishment of the actual structure of the original factory and the historical information about the firm were made possible by the work of Silvio De Majo, Professor of Contemporary History and Economic History at Federico II University of Naples. Professor De Majo and Dr Francesca Caiazzo recovered much of the information used to document Cuomo's history. At the end of the visit, the researchers were able to explore the structure of the original factory more in depth through a VR sensor, which allowed them to view the original spaces and equipment used for pasta-making in the nineteenth century, accompanied by Antonino Cuomo's explanations. After this came a conversation between the researchers and the Cuomo siblings, discussing the remaining topics, such as

⁶ The two firms' websites can be found at <https://www.pastacuomo.com/> and <https://www.perugina.com/>.

their development plans for the firm and their cultural and philanthropic activities as representatives of their two-hundred-year-old brand.

The visit to Museo Storico Perugina was more structured. It began in the video room, where the researchers could view an exhibition of advertising posters and billboards designed by Seneca (corporate art director in the futurist tradition) and some of the main Perugina products. Following this, a specialist guide gave an oral presentation of the history of Perugina – in particular, the story of Luisa Spagnoli, one of the founders, and her partner Francesco Buitoni – and the company's products and manufacturing processes. The guide also explained how Perugina's progress helped develop the economy of local communities. After the oral presentation, a video presentation showed the company's story and core values (modernity, attention to detail, elegance), its target markets and audiences, the manufacturing process and the communication strategies. Visitors were then invited to taste some of the main Perugina products, view the permanent collection, and finally tour the different sections of the factory along a raised glass walkway.

4. Research results

Before inspecting the values underpinning a firm's use of the corporate museum as a heritage marketing tool, we look at the history of these corporate museums themselves.

4.1 Museo della Pasta Cuomo

Museo della Pasta Cuomo was set up in 2020 in the historic building of Pastificio Cuomo, in Via Roma, in the heart of Gragnano. This building now also houses a restaurant and a guest house. The location in Via Roma played a crucial role in the early days of the company, since it was strategically built to exploit wind flow for drying the wheat grains from which the pasta was produced. Gragnano, especially Via Roma, was home to all the local pasta makers, and Gragnano itself became the pasta capital of Italy and the world. Of the many pasta producers in Gragnano, the Cuomo family boasts a two-hundred-year history that makes them the oldest pasta makers in the world. However, the company stopped doing business in 1939, until the latest generation of Cuomos, siblings Amelia, Alfonso and Anna, decided in 2015 to reclaim their ancestors' tradition of pasta-making. Until then, they had had unrelated jobs, mostly as management consultants. They say their initial reason for returning home was so they could renovate the original Pastificio Cuomo building to leverage the financial value of the property. However, the

experience they had gathered working abroad for years and their intuition prompted them to revive the Cuomo pasta brand and supplement this traditional activity with several auxiliary schemes to make the brand even stronger. The idea of setting up a museum to put on display the story of Pasta Cuomo came after the young siblings met Silvio De Majo, who offered to put together the information about the company, from its beginnings in 1820. Silvio De Majo, Professor Emeritus of History at Federico II University of Naples, had a purely academic curiosity about the events occurring in the Cuomos' history. He and Dr Francesca Caiazzo, a researcher at the same University, were able to collect a great deal of evidence about the Cuomo history and put together a narratively engaging book containing a selection of these events and documents. The valuable information found in the book gave the Cuomo siblings the idea of using it to create a corporate museum.

Museo della Pasta, along with a number of archaeological finds – such as grain funnels, window wells for ventilation and the only cylindrical mill and vertical steam pasta factory in the world – also has a space with VR visors for virtually exploring the ancient factory.

The museum also displays the communication strategies the brand has adopted in recent years. The Cuomo siblings proudly explain that, since their involvement in the family firm, they have made considerable use of irony and satire in their advertising messages, including as a means of tackling important social topics. They say they can afford to use sarcasm in their communication campaigns, because of the incredible longevity of their brand, which should speak for itself.

4.2 Museo Storico Perugina

Museo Storico Perugina is a museum with no independent legal status. It is an operational unit of Nestlé Italia S.p.a. and is managed by the Marketing – External Relations Unit.

This museum was established in the Nestlé Perugina plant in Perugia in 1997, in the 90th anniversary year of the company's founding. The museum underwent expansion and restyling in preparation for the centenary. Specifically, the exhibition was expanded to include the period since 1988, when Perugina was taken over by Nestlé and the museum was incorporated into the “Casa del Cioccolato”, which also includes the chocolate factory, the Chocolate School and the Perugina Gift Shop.

The aim of the museum is to provide documentary evidence of the company's history, to enhance the appeal of Perugina products in the eyes of customers and other audiences. It also does this by underlining the evolution

of Perugina brand products through the years and the changes in the socio-economic context: from luxurious gift items, distributed in polished packaging with an intrinsic artistic value and sold at prestigious pastry shops, to mass-produced goods carried by large retailers since the 1950s with modest, practical packaging.

The museum also focuses on the communication strategies adopted by the company throughout its history, underlining the pioneering nature of the initial advertising campaigns and the effectiveness of the design quality and TV commercials with innovative endorsements.

5. Discussion

The corporate museums of Cuomo and Perugina differ in several respects that reflect the different nature of the two companies. First, the museums differ in the focus placed on the entrepreneur. Much attention is devoted at Museo della Pasta Cuomo not only to the history of the firm, but also to the history of the family of entrepreneurs who have run the business over the years. One of the walls in the museum features the Cuomo family tree, starting from the oldest known ancestor, Gasparo Cuomo, born in 1699, down to the youngest generation represented by Amelia, Alfonso and Anna.

On the other hand, at Museo Storico Perugina, less space is devoted to the family of entrepreneurs after the first generation. The events concerning the foundation of the company by Luisa Spagnoli and Francesco Buitoni are described during tours of the museum. However, subsequent generations of the family who owned the company are not mentioned, nor is any space dedicated to them in the museum.

In the Cuomo museum, the tour mainly revolves around the production processes traditionally employed by the ancestors. Visitors are shown the original equipment and tools used to make pasta, and the virtual reality tour presents the structure of the original three-storey factory.

At the Perugina museum, historical videos illustrate the evolution of the production process and some of the machinery used in the past is on display. There is also a special section where it is possible to see inside different parts of the factory through a raised glass floor. However, most of the exhibition centres around the history of the company, the inspiring principles, the iconic products, and the communication campaigns.

According to the aim of this study, one of the differences between the cases stands out here, namely the nature and direction of the company's relationship with the local environment. Since their beginnings and up to the present day, the two companies have had different relationships with their

respective local areas. More specifically, Pasta Cuomo has been heavily dependent on the surrounding environment, especially because of the favourable geographical conditions provided by the Gragnano area. As it is sheltered by the Lattari Mountains, Gragnano traps wind and conveys it in such a way as to favour the drying process of wheat used to produce pasta. This characteristic led to the development of the pasta industry, making Gragnano the pasta capital with numerous pasta businesses in the area. In these conditions, even a long-established pasta maker like Cuomo undeniably relies on its local area, not only because of the topology, but also because of the location-based competitive advantage (Dunning, 1988) created by being embedded in an industrial district specialised in making pasta (Claver-Cortés *et al.*, 2019). This regional cluster provides its constituent actors with improved know-how and organisational capabilities (Porter, 2000). Shared knowledge and physical closeness also enable rapid formal and informal communication to take place between firms, creating an ideal atmosphere for quickly reacting to changes and organisational and environmental issues (Cooke, 1999). The locational advantage also stems from social embeddedness and lower transaction costs due to relationships of trust among co-localised firms (Tallman *et al.*, 2004).

In the case of Perugia, exchanges with the environment flow in the opposite direction. Historically, it was the business activities of Perugia that generated positive local externalities for the entire area in which the original factory was located. Right from its beginnings, this company's operations and success contributed to the economic development of the surrounding area, probably in part because of the nature of chocolate making, which is essentially place-independent. As a consequence, it is more than likely that any random inhabitant of Perugia will have some kind of tie (by kinship, friendship, or other relationships) to the Perugia brand. Umbrian communities, which have traditionally been subject to more economic isolation than other more developed areas of the country, have benefited from the positive spillovers of Perugia's successful entrepreneurial activity, which has spread more capabilities and opportunities than any direct government investment would (Audretsch, Keilbach, 2008).

In light of these considerations, we can argue that the two corporate museums manifest in different ways the three values identified in § 2.2.1, namely, longevity, transgenerational outlook, and rootedness in the local milieu (Tab. 3).

This study shows that the values underpinning Cuomo's adoption of the corporate museum are mainly the firm's longevity and the continuity of family traditions over a long period of time. The museum stems from the efforts of the family's younger generations, who implicitly felt they had been vested

by their ancestors with a duty to preserve the activity that is closely linked to the family's identity, while striving to innovate the tradition and switch towards a more professionalised and modern management of the business. The corporate museum is evidence of how the firm benefited and continues to benefit from its embeddedness in the local environment.

Tab. 3 – *Values underpinning corporate museums: display strategies*

Values	<i>Museo della Pasta Cuomo</i>	<i>Museo Storico Perugina</i>
<i>Longevity</i>	Focus on the continuity of family traditions over a long period of time (e.g. the production processes traditionally employed by their ancestors)	Focus on the evolution of production processes and the brand per se (e.g. iconic historic products, communication campaigns, etc.)
<i>Transgenerational outlook</i>	Keen focus on the history of the family of entrepreneurs	Little focus on the family of entrepreneurs after the first generation
<i>Rootedness in the local milieu</i>	From the local environment to the firm	From the firm to the local environment

Source: *own elaboration*

Museo Storico Perugina, on the other hand, demonstrates a greater focus on the strength of the brand per se, as an entity that is independent of the founding family's reputation. Although the brand was initially injected with vitality by dynamic entrepreneurs, who built a profitable company from nothing, Perugina soon took on a life of its own and outlived its creators, while nurturing the local environment with its successes. At the same time, the corporate museum is a way of displaying the array of iconic products that the brand has been able to elevate from the status of generic chocolates and sweets. The corporate museum also serves as a means of displaying the source of the light that the brand casts over the local environment.

A side-by-side analysis of these two cases allows us to connect these value differences to the amount of control the family has in the firms' ownership. Pasta Cuomo is controlled by the Cuomo family, whereas Perugina is currently just one brand within the portfolio of brands of Nestlé Italia Spa, a listed Italian company with a fragmented ownership structure and part of the Nestlé Group. According to our assumptions, the extent to which the firm is family-run is closely tied to the value differences underpinning adoption of a corporate museum. Family involvement in ownership and business activities has been linked in previous studies to a transgenerational outlook of family members (Zellweger *et al.*, 2012), and the strength of the bidirectional links between the firm's and the family's reputation (Deephouse, Jaskiewicz, 2013). More generally, in this type of firm, the entrepreneurs' focus on socio-emotional wealth (SEW), i.e. the affective endowment of family owners (Gomez-Mejia *et al.*, 2011) often prevails over financial wealth (Berrone *et*

al., 2012; Swab *et al.*, 2020). With regards to this, Berrone *et al.* (2012, p. 260) said that «given its pivotal utility to family principals, any threat to SEW means that the family is in a “loss mode” and, therefore, will make strategic choices that will avoid these potential SEW losses even if achieving this objective might come at the expense of other principals (e.g., institutional investors) who do not share in these SEW utilities». This is an important distinction from non-family firms, in which managers care almost exclusively about avoiding financial losses, irrespective of considerations about SEW, which is a family firm-specific construct (Swab *et al.*, 2020). According to the authors, this premise helps explain the differences found in the values underpinning the adoption of corporate museums by Pasta Cuomo and Perugia, which exemplify the different perspectives triggering the use of the same marketing tool.

6. Conclusions

This study helps to clarify the extent to which the intentions behind heritage marketing strategies are essential to determining their implementation and potential effects. It provides progress on current knowledge about the use of corporate museums as value drivers of firms, beyond their role as a marketing tool (Lehman, Byrom, 2006) and promoter of brand authenticity (Carù *et al.*, 2017; Bertoli *et al.*, 2016). More specifically, we show that corporate museums can vary in terms of what values they express and to what degree they do so, and provide qualitative evidence about the manifestation of three possible value dimensions, which have so far never been analysed: the longevity of a firm, its transgenerational outlook, and its relationships with the local environment. In addition, our paper also contributes to the literature on family businesses (Teal *et al.*, 2003), by showing how the family nature of a firm can affect implementation of marketing strategies and the use of heritage marketing tools.

Further investigation is needed to investigate aspects that have been overlooked or given little space in this present research. First, future studies could complement this data with direct interviews with the representatives of firms or museum managers in order to determine their explicit motivations. In addition, further investigations could focus directly on the effects on customers of value differences in adoption, by using ad-hoc surveys to collect customers' perceptions through standardised scales. Furthermore, our study is limited to the food sector, which is a staple of the “Made in Italy” brand. In the future, this limitation could be overcome by studies conducted in different sectors or by cross-sectorial studies. An additional aspect we have not considered in this study is whether the phase in the brand life-cycle can influence

the way in which firms adopt a corporate museum to display their history. For instance, in the case of Pasta Cuomo, adoption of the corporate museum may have been driven by the fact that the brand was in a phase of revival, with the younger generation striving to breathe new life into it after a hiatus of decades. In addition, our study focuses on value differences between the museums of family-run and non-family firms, while it places less emphasis on the role of corporate museums as marketing tools. Therefore, further investigation is warranted in order to explore the extent to which the expected benefits from corporate museums match the actual benefits gained. Finally, although the qualitative framework adopted in this research appeared more suited to scratching beneath the surface and inspecting the values expressed by specific marketing strategies, quantitative studies could expand on this seminal contribution by investigating value differences in a broader sample of firms randomly extracted from a population, in order to provide statistical evidence for our conclusions.

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