

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

ARCHITECTURE AS BRAND IDENTITY IN HOUSE MUSEUMS: A STUDY OF GALICIAN AUTHOR'S HOUSE MUSEUMS

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INTRODUCTION

For decades, museums have been undergoing certain changes in their management systems that have allowed them to achieve objectives beyond the merely traditional ones such as the conservation, protection and exhibition of their content. An increasingly entrepreneurial approach is emerging, in many cases oriented towards marketing (Belenioti and Vassiliadis, 2017) and branding (Evans, Bridson and Rentschler, 2012; Wallace, 2016; Pusa and Uusitalo, 2014; Ferreiro-Rosende, Fuentes-Moraleda and Morere-Molinero, 2021). Museum branding allows museums not only to build their brand equity, but also to convey their brand identity, thereby fostering visitor familiarity and loyalty (Ajana, 2015), building trust to attract funding (Pusa and Uusitalo, 2014), reaching a wider audience and connecting with the community (Scott, 2000). Brand-oriented management gives importance to branding beyond the primary objective of meeting visitors' functional needs (Rentschler, Bridson and Evans, 2011), as it lays the foundation for management, strategy development and implementation of tools (Baumgarth, Kaluza and Lohrisch, 2016).

The House Museum concept brings to the original museum concept, focused on the conservation and exhibition of objects, a more intimate and personal contextualisation of the content, offering a unique and non-transferable atmosphere. This museum typology, which is not yet widely researched, is based on the direct link between building and content, turning the everyday life of a home related to an event, a specific period

or a relevant person into a public exhibition. These houses, which can be visited by the general public, usually have a great sentimental value (Lorente Lorente, 1998), sometimes becoming authentic portraits of the personality of the author who lived there (Sánchez-García, 2012). Based on the museum brand identity system proposed by Ferreiro-Rosende, Fuentes-Moraleda and Morere-Molinero, the presence of architecture as part of this system is observed, as it is considered as a product in itself and/or as a symbolic brand element. In the author's house museums, the dimension related to the person acquires special relevance and, in addition, on many occasions there is a link between the museum and the territory in which they are located (Pavoni, 2018), affirming the identity of each locality (Pérez, 2018). In this way, an obvious trinomial emerges, the link between author, house and territory.

This study arises from the need to make an academic contribution to the literature on museum branding, a phenomenon that is increasingly present in these cultural institutions and whose practical implications may be relevant for the sector. Knowing whether the brand identity in this type of museum is transmitted through the architecture can help museum managers to identify and optimise resources and actions to make the brand a differentiating element that improves the visitor's experience and positions the museum. The research questions to be answered are the following:

RQ1. Is architecture considered as a transmitting element of the brand identity of the House Museums?

RQ2. Does the architecture of a House Museum generate a recognised brand symbolism?

RQ3. Do the House Museums establish branding strategies focused on architecture?

METHODOLOGY

The main objective of the study was to analyse how the House Museums transmit their brand identity through their architecture. To this end, a qualitative research design was conducted, focusing on a qualitative approach. The next step was to define the participants of the study, whose focus was on the Galician House Museums. The methodological process was based on three main techniques. On the one hand, an exhaustive study of the documentation of the house museums was analysed, including published information, both online and on paper, highlighting the presence of architecture on a visual and written level. In addition, an on-site observation of each House Museum was carried out, observing aspects such as the guide's discourse on the visit, the signage on display, the external and internal signage, the presence of the logo in the House Museum, the services offered (restaurant, shop, library, etc.), the collection, the furniture, accessibility, etc. Finally, an open interview was performed with the managers and/or heads of each organisation (table 1), with the aim of finding out about aspects related to their internal management and, especially, how the architecture influences the transmission of their brand identity. Of the sixteen interviews carried out, twelve were conducted in person and four by e-mail.

RESULTS

Based on the relationship between building-architecture/author/territory, the in-depth interviews and the observation carried out in the House Museums, the following results were obtained.

Relationship between building and author

The relationship between building/architecture and author allows us to group the houses observed into three main groups. House museums that maintain the house and its contents practically intact and that even the author himself left his mark on the architecture. In these cases, their everyday life is shown, turning the space into an iconic place and brand symbol of the House Museum. On the other hand, there are also examples of buildings which, although they were once the author's home, over the years passed into the hands of other people. Although in these cases the façade tends to remain, there is a work of rehabilitation and musealisation which, although the visitor can hardly perceive the family atmosphere, usually shows a review of his life and, on occasions, an important collection of personal and professional belongings. Finally, there is one particular case worth mentioning, the Camilo José Cela Foundation. This renowned writer was the only one to create his Foundation during his lifetime, personally endowing each of the rooms that make up the museum with content. Although he did not live in the part of the museum that can be visited today, his mark remains in the different areas of the museum, in addition to the large number of works and personal belongings that he deposited there so that his legacy would endure over time.

Relationship between building and territory

The main link observed between the Houses and the territory is due to two factors:

The first is through the link of the building with the author himself, especially when the character is a recognised neighbour of the territory. In this case, the local population acquires a sense of belonging to the museum, favouring its identity. The second refers to the historical and not so much the emotional value of the House Museum. There are examples of House Museums located in buildings with an important heritage value that allow identification with and appreciation of their territory.

Relationship between territory and author

The relationship between author and territory is also an important factor in the discourse of the House Museums. Generally, we find a family link between the author and the territory, either because it is the town where he was born, where he lived at some stage of his life or where he finally died. The majority of the House Museums analysed belong to people with a close link to the locality in which they are located, although there are also some examples where this is not the case.

The architecture forms an essential part of the brand identity, as stated by those responsible for the House Museums analysed. The container of these museum spaces is an intrinsic part of the museum brand. The main branding strategies implemented by the House Museums through architecture are basically five: architecture in the exhibition/exhibition context, architecture in the guide's discourse, architecture in the logo, architecture in digital media and architecture in brochures.

CONCLUSIONS

The first conclusion drawn from the results of the study is that architecture, as a structural element of a museum, acquires a higher dimension in the House Museums due to its link with the author and the territory. With more or less intentionality, the structure of the House immerses visitors in a dimension that goes beyond an exhibition space, but rather transports them to a period, a familiar environment and an unknown place. The concept of the House Museum is intrinsic to an intimate and very personal atmosphere that allows the life and work of a relevant author to be contextualised, which generally also contextualises the area in which it is located. Hence the power of the building/author/territory trinomial in this typology of museums, confirming that architecture forms part of the brand identity of House museums through which their promise is transmitted (RQ1). In fact, such is its importance in House Museums that, on many occasions, it is considered a product in itself, part of the collection that can be visited inside. This building/author/territory link also sometimes generates a predisposed brand symbolism either through the design of a logo that includes some part of the architecture, through the name "House museum", or through some singular architectural element such as the façade, the balcony or a gallery that is distinctive and generates a symbolic association in the minds of neighbours and visitors. For this reason, and in response to RQ2, the possibility of generating brand symbolism through architecture is confirmed, as occurs in large museums, whose design penetrates the visual imagery and generates an unmistakable stamp. Finally, museum branding is not yet fully established in museums with limited human and financial resources. However, architecture functions as a brand transmitting element (RQ3) through elements such as the logo, present during the visit on posters and signs; in digital media, such as the website and social media (especially Facebook); in brochures, through the guide's discourse or as part of the exhibition itself. In addition, these media are often reinforced with images of the façade and unique architectural elements that are intended to reinforce the museum's appeal. Museum branding is still at an early stage in museum branding in the House Museums since, although the brand identity of each museum is clear, efforts remain superficial with very basic strategies.