

## Developing a Performance Measurement System for Arts-Based Initiatives: Action Research on Italian Corporate Museums

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**Abstract :** In academia, the investigation of the relationship between cultural heritage and corporations is ubiquitous in several fields of studies. In practice corporations are more and more integrating arts and cultural heritage in their strategies for disparate benefits, such as: to foster customer's purchase intention with authentic and aesthetic experiences, to improve their reputation towards local communities, and to motivate employees with creative thinking. There are diverse forms under which corporations set these artistic interventions, from sponsorships to arts-based training centers for employees, but scholars agree that the maximum expression of this cultural trend are corporate museums, growing in number and relevance. Corporate museums are museum-like settings, hosting artworks of corporations' history and interests. In academia they have been ascribed as strategic asset and they have been associated with diverse uses for corporations' benefits, from place for preservation of cultural heritage, to tools for public relations and cultural flagship stores. Previous studies have thus extensively but fragmentally studied the diverse benefits of corporate museum opening to corporations, with a lack of comprehensive approach and a digression on how to evaluate and report corporate museum's performances. Stepping forward, the present study aims to investigate: 1) what are the key performance measures corporate museums need to report to the associated corporations; 2) how are the key performance measures reported to the concerned corporations. This direction of study is not only suggested as future direction in academia but it has solid basis in practice, aiming to answer to the need of corporate museums' directors to account for corporate museum's activities to the concerned corporation. Coherently, at an empirical level the study relies on action research method, whose distinctive feature is to develop practical knowledge through a participatory process. This paper indeed relies on the experience of a collaborative project between the researchers and a set of corporate museums in Italy, aimed at co-developing a performance measurement system. The project involved two steps: a first step, in which researchers derived the potential performance measures from literature along with exploratory interviews; a second step, in which researchers supported the pool of corporate museums' directors in co-developing a set of key performance indicators for reporting. Preliminary empirical findings show that while scholars insist on corporate museums' capability to develop networking relations, directors insist on the role of museums as internal supplier of knowledge for innovation goals. Moreover, directors stress museums' cultural mission and outcomes as potential benefits for corporation, by remarking to include both cultural and business measures in the final tool. In addition, they give relevant attention to the wording used in humanistic terms while struggling to express all measures in economic terms. The paper aims to contribute to corporate museums' and more broadly to arts-based initiatives' literature in two directions. Firstly, it elaborates key performance measures with related indicators to report on cultural initiatives for corporations. Secondly, it provides evidence of challenges and practices to handle reporting on these initiatives, because of tensions arising from the co-existence of diverse perspectives, namely arts and business worlds.

**Keywords :** arts-based initiative, corporate museum, hybrid organization, performance measurement

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