

ITALIAN MUSEUMS AND THE CHALLENGE OF ENGAGING A YOUNGER AUDIENCE
THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

A CASE-STUDY OF MUSEI CIVICI VENEZIANI

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Abstract

Social media holds promise for museums to enhance visitor participation, engagement with potential visitors via participatory communication and in building an online community to which to refer to. However, the integration of social media within museums practices, particularly in Italy, has been a rather cautious transition as museums are concerned with the ways social media may deteriorate traditional organizational forms of authority that cultural institutions have held. The aim of the present paper is to investigate the extent to which Italian museums can use social media to engage with a younger audience. In doing so, this study has conducted a case study analysis of Musei Civici Veneziani, by interviewing the web-content manager of the institution. Findings demonstrate that Musei Civici Veneziani continues to use a one-to-one communication model, whereby social media platforms are used solely to inform users about practical matters. The use of a one-to-one communication model, rather than a many-to-many one by Musei Civici Veneziani is due to fear of jeopardizing their role as a cultural authority. However, the present paper aims to showcase the opportunities of adopting a peer-to-peer participatory communication model as a way to effectively engage with younger audiences which allows them to become active members within the museum.

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I am counting on that.

Introduction

When museums and art galleries were established as private institutions in the 18th century, their purpose was the collection and preservation of their artefacts and artworks. Nevertheless, when, at the end of the 18th century, museums became more accessible to the public, the museums' focus shifted to serving a more general public, albeit privileged. Although conservation, preservation, and exhibition of art objects is generally the prominent goal of museums, the emphasis has moved to the audience, because ultimately, "museums without visitors are nothing other than empty halls with no purpose".¹ The shift of emphasis from the art objects' conservation to the general public caused cultural institutions to become increasingly conscious of the ways in which they could reach out to their audience. This new focus on the public led museums to re-think the ways they communicate with their public.

Traditionally museums would adopt a one-to-one or one-to-many communication model. As such, museums created and distributed knowledge about their collections to the public in a one-to one or one-to-many exchange. These models provided the framework for authoritative cultural knowledge as delivered by museum programs.² This authority originates from the collection of objects and the patrimony the museums hold. In this way, museums were recognized as the cultural authority within society and they were the ones responsible to provide the public both authoritative and authentic knowledge. However, these very models were later contested and argued to be outdated in the face of new information and communication technologies such as websites and social media platforms.³

This transformation has been crucial for museums in order to interact with their potential audiences. Through the digitalization of museums, the way in which the museums' knowledge was conveyed changed completely. Preceding the digital shift, the only way museums could engage with their public was through exhibitions, guided tours, newspapers and catalogues. with the emergence of new technologies, the number of possibilities increased substantially. Today, museums have the possibility to share their collection through online platforms allowing the audience to engage with the museums prior to the physical visit.⁴ This above demonstrates how digitalization completely reshaped cultural institutions and their relationship with the public. This change became even more tangible with the advent of social media use among museums.

In the last decade, one of the most important tools for museums to reach their audience was social network platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Today, most cultural institutions have a public profile on one or all of these platforms. Since its arrival, social networks sites have revealed

¹ Kotler, and Kotler. "Can Museums Be All Things to All People", 271.

² Russo and Watkins, Kelly, Chan. "Participatory Communication with Social Media", 23.

³ Ibid., 24.

⁴ Squarzola, "The Digital Transformation in the World of Museums", 85.

themselves to be a precious ally for museums. museums were now in possession of tools which allowed to personalize their communication with the public and thus strengthen their mutual relationship.⁵

The growing use of social media by museums attracted academic attention with many studies examining the relationship between the two. Current literature has primarily focused on positive changes brought by the adoption of such platforms by museums.⁶ Several studies focus on the effectiveness of social media in engaging visitors via participatory communication. Social media platforms became a fundamental means not only to attract visitors, but also to create a community with which museums can directly interact. Through social media technologies, both museums and cultural participants can share information, images and experience: museums have been utilizing these tools in order to facilitate a participative cultural experience.⁷ Museums can use their own voice to encourage participatory communication with individuals and communities, enabling cultural participants to be both critics and creators of a digital culture.

The effectiveness and success of social media use among museums led all cultural institutions all around the world to adopt a similar model. While most of the institutions around the world started to make use of these tools rather quickly, Italian museums are lagging behind this trend. However, comparatively speaking, this phenomenon seems not to have been that influential for the way in which Italian museums communicate with their public. According to a study carried by the Digital Innovation Observatory on Cultural Heritage and Activities, in 2019, 69% of Italian museums have institutional accounts on main social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. an increase from 2018, were such statistics were only recorded at 57%.⁸ Yet, although most of Italian museums have social network accounts, they remain relatively inactive in comparison to cultural institutions throughout the rest of the world. For instance,they do not post as much as other museums accounts around the world do, and do not use the full potential that these kinds of platforms have. Moreover, by looking at the statistics by Italian National Institute of Statistics reporting on the Italian museums it is possible to notice that the number of followers and general engagement is far lower than other cultural institutions around the world.⁹

This lack of communication through social media from Italian museums is at odd with the current situation in museum communication. The Italian National Institute of Statistics in 2017 found that

⁵ Russo and Watkins, Kelly, Chan. "Participatory Communication with Social Media", 21.

⁶ Fletcher and Lee, "Current Social Media Uses and Evaluations in American Museums.

⁷ Russo and Watkins, Kelly, Chan. "Participatory Communication with Social Media", 27-28.

⁸ "Innovazione Digitale Nei Beni E Attività Culturali", *Osservatori.Net*, 2019,

https://www.osservatori.net/it_it/osservatori/innovazione-digitale-nei-beni-e-attivita-culturali.

⁹ Broccardi, Franco. "Social Network Economy. Musei, Follower E Partecipazione." *Artribune*. February 24, 2019. Accessed April 06, 2019. <https://www.artribune.com/progettazione/new-media/2019/02/social-network-economy-musei-follower-partecipazione/>.

Italian cultural institutions have significantly increased their audience, reaching almost 120 million visitors. However, the "cultural" public consists largely of foreign tourists. Italians, especially the youth, represent a very small fraction of the visitors. In addressing this disproportion, in 2017, museums collectively reduced ticket costs for underage visitors as a way to incentivize younger generations to visit museums.¹⁰ However, this reformation was not effective enough. The underlying issue was not a financial matter but rather a lack of interest. According to the Italian National Institute of Statistics the vast majority (48% of 18-19 year olds and 45% of 20-24 year olds) do not go to the museum merely because they are not interested. From this data, it is clear that, the young segment of Italian society, do not deem visiting museums to be an enjoyable or interesting experience.¹¹

Among segments of society, museums have always placed importance in strengthening their relationship younger audience. This because young generations are a demographic that hardly visit any museum. Aware of the value in engaging the youth, museums are increasingly investing in cultivating a long-term relationship with them.¹² The emergence of social media presented a chance for museums to reach the young generations since they are the ones who use social media the most. Thus, by using these tools museums are able to partly overcome the barrier between young population and museums.¹³

In order to employ the power of social media, museums need to comprehend young adults' cultural practices, specifically the ways in which they use and share information on social media platforms. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter can be effective in attracting young adults only through a good digital strategy. Numerous studies have found that only having accounts on social medias does not mean to engage with the public: it is necessary to trigger audience motivation by means of content. However, an effective digital strategy requires a lot of study and specific competences generally not available in Italian cultural institutions.¹⁴ Among the Italian

¹⁰ R.desimone, "Musei: Aumentiamo l'Offerta Culturale," Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, accessed April 27, 2019, http://www.beniculturali.it/mibac/export/MiBAC/sito-MiBAC/Contenuti/visualizza_asset.html_1317998444.html.

¹¹ "Istat.It Communication, Culture And Trip", *Istat.It*, Accessed September 10, 2019. <https://www.istat.it/en/communication-culture-and-trip>.

¹² "Why Have Museums Forgotten The Teens?", *The Guardian*, Accessed September 20, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2011/dec/19/museums-teenagers-engagement>.

¹³ Olga Nieremberg, "The Museum's online audience", 22.

¹⁴ Broccardi, Franco. "Social Network Economy. Musei, Follower E Partecipazione." *Artribune*. February 24, 2019. Accessed April 06, 2019. <https://www.artribune.com/progettazione/new-media/2019/02/social-network-economy-musei-follower-partecipazione/>.

museums present on social media platforms, only few have implemented youth participation programs or initiative through social media platform.

As demonstrated, the growing trend of social media use by museums has been picked up all over the world. However, many Italian Museums still continue to use traditional models of communication. This calls for greater attention at exploring the Italian cultural institutions and their relationship with social media, specifically focusing on understanding the current use of Italian museums of such platforms and the underlining reasons for the lack of use of such platforms to attract young audience. Furthermore, it will also provide with recommendations for the specific institution. Thus the research question is: *to what extent can Italian museums use social media to engage with a younger audience?*. In order to address the purpose of this study, a qualitative research is carried out by focusing on a specific Italian cultural institution that is Musei Civici Veneziani in Venice.

Prior to the case study, an extensive literature review on the existent studies is conducted in chapter one. The literature examined concerns the current research on the post-digital museum and in particular social media use in museums as a way to engage with younger audiences. Firstly, the digitalization of museums is considered. Various aspects of museums which were re-shaped since the digital shift are examined to provide an in-depth analysis on the effects of the digital shift on cultural institutions. In chapter two, the post-digital as a term is elucidated and the advantages of considering museums as post-digital are presented. Chapter three illustrates the adoption of social media in museum communication. This chapter sheds light on a major debate among scholars concerning the authenticity, authority and trust. One camp argues that in spite of making use of new modes of communication, museums are still concerned with preserving their cultural authority and the accuracy and authenticity of their museums. Thus, they only use social media for unilateral communication processes (communication about the museums and its art pieces), instead of using them for interactive communication. Consequently, the challenges and doubts posed to museums by museums' professionals in the area of social media are discussed and analysed in chapter three. The final chapter provides examples of the ways in which participatory communication has been adopted by several museums as a way to effectively engage with younger audiences.

This literature review builds a solid theoretical framework to address the lack of interactive social media use by Italian museums and an analysis of its subsequent weaknesses. Following this, a qualitative research is carried out by focusing on a specific Italian cultural institution: Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia (MUVE). Before that, the methodology will be discussed, which consists of an in-depth interview with the web-content manager of Musei Civici Veneziani.

This research aims to provide new observations on the relationship between cultural institutions and social media. the scope of the present paper is to analyze the effects of integrating social media

in the museum's communication to the public. It will also provide a concrete and proactive contribution to the museums who intend to direct their work towards digital communication, especially social media platforms. Suggestions for potential improvements in communication, specific to Italian museums, are presented. An effective and interactive use of social media platforms is vital for in both communicating and advertising cultural activities and most importantly to remain relevant in today's times. This calls for conducting further research on the perceptions and preferences of the audience, and, subsequently implementing ad-hoc experiences which target the visitor's interests.

The present research will point out what the shortcomings are of the use of these kind of platforms in Italian museums and by doing so it will also expose the reasons why these shortcomings are present and how they can be overcome. It will suggest how the use of social media in Italian museums can be improved and will recommend new strategies to be implemented. A better use of social media in cultural institution can help Italian institutions to build a more transparent, inclusive and collective relationship to its audience and build a community to which they can directly interact. The issue of transparent communication is central when considering the fundamental role of museums in today society, which is undergoing enormous changes. With networking tools such as social media, museums can remain relevant and break down pretenses of authority and non-involvement. This research will also have a wider relevance: it will contribute to the wider discourse about audience engagement in today's museological practices, and the role of museums in today's society. Museums are no perceived as "temples" devoted to the mere preservation of cultural heritage, but also as a place for engagement and discussion for all members of Italian society. Social media's inclusion in museum practices is not merely a matter of "status" for marketing purposes, but they are an opportunity for museums to open up dialogues on different topics even outside museum doors and for the audience to create a community and interact with each other. ¹⁵

It is crucial to appreciate social media platforms not only as a cause of celebration or concern, but to recognize the different modes of communication they open for museums. Social media can become catalyst of new modes of communication. These new modes of communication require new forms of collaboration and interaction between academic scholars and museums' professional. That is to say, social media urge academic and professionals to enter into a new dialogue both in the museums institutions and in academic research. An interdisciplinary approach which can range from arts discipline to media and museums studies, computer engineering and design, could advance the current understanding of public communication in museums and the relationship between visitors and

¹⁵ Drotner, Schrøder. *Museum Communication and Social Media*, 7.

art objects.¹⁶ Through an interdisciplinary approach and a parallel dialogue between theory and practice, this research argues that social media has a potential for quantitative and qualitative innovations within the museum. In doing so, it also discloses how social media are transforming this particular cultural institution, and on a larger scale society itself.

Literature Review

Museums and its audience

ICOM, the international council of museums, defines a museum as “a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment”(ICOM, 2007). This characterization of museums was conceived in 20th century. Before that, during the 17th and 18th century, the spaces of collections in Europe were meant as private and contemplative places and were owned by members of the nobility.¹⁷ Thus, the access to these places was limited to the aristocratic elite of society.¹⁸ Only during the Enlightenment in the 19th century the Modern museums started to be shaped as more access was granted to the whole society, albeit still an elite. In fact, according to Hooper-Greenhill, a scholar in Museum Studies, although considered to be “open to the whole public”, museums were still exclusive towards marginal groups of society such as women, ethnic minorities and lower classes of society. Arts was considered to be a sphere separated from the other parts of life, one that was reachable only for those who had a specific taste.¹⁹

Hooper-Greenhill believes that in the 19th century museums were still regarded as the gatekeepers which had the authority to provide knowledge not only about art, but also about everything else. The modern museum was conceived to play a public role, but as part of the nation-state, a main part which entailed educating the larger part of society. Museums were charged with constructing master narratives. That is to say, they would provide the public with grand narratives, universal stories, which could be valid also outside the context of the place from which they were told.²⁰ Museums created master narratives both by constructing the present-day reality and by

¹⁶ Ibid., 8.

¹⁷ Kebleuk, *Museums, Collection and Heritage*, PowerPoint presentation, Leiden University, 2017.

¹⁸ Spiliopoulou and Mahony, Routsis, Kamposiori. “Cultural institutions in the digital age”, 287.

¹⁹ Hooper Greenhill, *Museum and interpretation of visual cultures*, 26.

²⁰ Ibid., 24.

shedding light on a memory of the past which supports the present. From these grand narratives, broad views of the world and the place of people within it emerged. According to Hooper-Greenhill, the 'nation' as a concept was majorly construed by master narratives adopted in museums.²¹

Museums' master narratives dealt with Art, Nature and Man. Museums narrative were construed by bringing together and displaying certain objects. The display of objects and art pieces was considered to be the major form of communication between the museum and the larger public. These objects were brought together, arranged, categorized and exhibited into a visual narrative. This process depended on a number of practices of inclusion or exclusion. Through these practices, Museums were able to produce certain images, while suppressing some others, and produce a view of nation's history.²² Thus, museums were considered to be responsible to educate society and to propagate national cultures.

Nevertheless, in 20th century museum's approach to audience started to change. Kenneth Hudson, an anti-museologist claims that the most important change that museums underwent in the 20th century is the belief that they exist in order to serve the public. Prior to that, museums did not have such obligation: the museum's main responsibility was towards their collection, not its audience.²³ Whereas, today, museums are considered to be public institutions, where objects and collections are made available to everyone and to serve public education.²⁴ This recent paradigm shift caused the museums to be more aware of their relationship with their audience and their communication with them. Today, museums are looking for ways to reach out to a larger audience, to forge communities.²⁵ Museums are no longer sanctuary designed merely for the preservation of objects, but places for people to learn, meet and communicate. The conventional transmission model was replaced by a constructivist learning approach. That is to say, knowledge is built through active interpretations of experience.²⁶ Thus, museum communication systems such as exhibition, public program and education became one of their primary functions of the museums along with the other core functions such as museum's collection, management and conservation.²⁷ However, all of the above were bound to undergo a radical transformation with the advent of digital technologies.

²¹ Ibid., 25.

²² Ibid., 24.

²³ Hudson, *The Museum Refuses To Stand Still*, 23.

²⁴ Feenstra, *Museums, Collection and Heritage*, PowerPoint presentation, Leiden University, 2017.

²⁵ Kotler and Kotler. "Can Museums Be All Things to All People", 273

²⁶ Nieremberg, "The Museum's online audience", 13.

²⁷ Russo and Watkins, Kelly, Chan. "How will social media affect", 3.

Digital shift in Museums

For the purpose of this paper, digital technologies have a focus on media communication. Thus, digital technologies are defined as media technologies that deal with the creation and practical use of digital or computerized devices, methods, systems. Digital technology enables immense amounts of information to be compressed on small storage devices that can be easily preserved and transported. Digitalization also quickens data transmission speeds. Digital technology has transformed how people communicate, learn, and work. Moreover, these technologies had also changed the museum itself and the exhibition spaces. Digital technologies have impacted not only on museum environments, but also on art production: the forms in which art is created, considered, created and appreciated.²⁸

Within the museum realm, digital technologies introduced new ways of expression that changed not only the nature of the object collected, the expressive methods available for displaying art objects and the management of the structure themselves, but also the communication of the museum's knowledge. This because the digital shift brought "new tools to present, collect, access (cultural artefacts), connect, explore, research, manage, and visualize data".²⁹ Thus, museums' functions such as collection, preservation, study, exhibition and communication of art objects persisted, but the ways in which these executed changed. These new digital media had allowed the museum to be everywhere and connected with all their visitors regardless of their location.³⁰ Thus, the museum as an institution underwent a radical change which is fundamental to consider when investigating the relationship between museums and social media.

Reproducibility and Mutability of Digital Materials

One of the most evident changes brought by the digital shift in museums is the reproducibility and mutability of digital materials. That is to say, once the museums' collection is brought online, it can be easily reproduced and changed by the public. One of the first phase of the digital shift occurred in 1990s when cultural institutions started to digitalize photos, documents, and collection data. Yet, this data were still stored in museums only for experts' consumption. This changed in early 2000s, when museums started to implement collection management system which made the material available to the audience via the internet.³¹ Digital technologies allowed to capture and store

²⁸ Giusti, *Museums at the Post Digital Turn*, 18.

²⁹ Grau, and Coones Rühse, "Museum and Archive on the Move", 9.

³⁰ Ridge, "Digitising Collections- Breaking through the museum walls and opening up collections to the world", interview by Adrian Murphy in person (British Museum, 2016).

³¹ Levä, "Museum going digital.", 28.

collection online. Today, everyone can have access to objects held in collections, not only a privileged segment of society.

This brings the museums' collections to life and forges new connections: collections can be enjoyed worldwide on personal devices, digital replicas can be created, new and enriching information can be added. Nevertheless, digitalization extends further than making a collection accessible for public consumption: it safeguards cultural heritage and it allows museums to build a network where like-minded museums share the same collection management system. All in all, the use of digital technologies enabled a greater access to museums' archival information. This resulted in widespread dissemination of material which was not accessible before.

Collapse of Physical Spaces

The digitalization of museums and the online reproduction of art pieces lead to another crucial change in the museums environment: the formation of museums' online presence. Most museums today have an online presence: they have a website that allows visitors to look into the museums before actually visiting it. Today, searching for information on the internet is often a first impulse: it seems less time consuming, easier and more convenient. In order to accommodate this trend museums started to develop their own websites. According to Sfintes, a scholar in Architectural Anthropology, concerned with the use of the built space and its socio-cultural impact, museums' websites are now considered to be the business card of a museum as most of visitors start their visit of a specific cultural institutions by visiting their websites. Museum websites are found to be very useful in order to attract new audiences, but also to re-attract the ones that already visited the museums. This because websites can show the whole collection, which generally cannot be shown in the physical museums. Furthermore, museum websites can also show operations that happen behind the scenes, such as restoration and conservation processes.³²

In addition to physical museums' space and the museums' websites, virtual tours are today also provided by most museums. Virtual tours give the chance of moving through the exhibition space, of zooming in and out, of looking around, up and down. Virtual tours give access to the museums' space and collections to anyone who holds an internet connection and it gives the chance to a potential visitor to see the museums' spaces and its artworks prior to the actual physical visit and without moving anything more than a thumb.³³

Giusti, scholar in history of art criticism, believes that this type of digitalization of museums brought a shift with as the spatial dimensions are of led importance and the physical space of museum

³² Sfintes, "The Architecture of Virtual Space Museums.", 239.

³³ Sfintes, "The Architecture of Virtual Space Museums.", 242.

collapses. That is to say, digital technologies enables two types of visits: the traditional one, involving the physical presence of the audience, and the audience who visit the museum remotely. This makes the physical space of museum collapsing in favour of another type of space: the web.³⁴ This does not mean that the virtual museums can replace the physical experience of visiting a museums. But, it removes the barriers between physical and online space: it allows people who are not physically able to visit the museum to still see parts of it. Furthermore, museums can also make their whole collection available, which normally cannot happen. In this way, they can expose the collection into a new light and to enlarge the museums' missions and goal beyond the physical reach. The web is not anymore considered to be an alternative to reality, it is a concrete space: an extension of the world.³⁵

All of these changes brought by the digital shift within the museums' space are essential in order to understand how communication between museums and its audience happens today. The digitalization of museums' objects and the consequent collapse of physical space gave new opportunities for museums to engage with their audience. Today, museums' collections can be enjoyed worldwide on personal devices, digital replicas can be created, new and enriching information can be add. Digitised material not only appears to give the potential visitor more desire to see "the real thing", but also make it more accessible for people who cannot physically see the museum.³⁶ This represents a huge change for museums' communication with their public. Especially, more recently, social media had given digital content, new life as it allows people to take the digital content of museums, re-interpret it and share it with their friends.

New Communication Model

The internet, and specifically social media, crucially transformed the nature of human communication. As should be evident by now, the advent of the internet, especially web 2.0 and social media also completely changed the museums' communication with its public. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are most broadly used platforms across all age groups and on a global scale. With regards to museums' communication, social media transform museums' communicative model from a transmission model drew from an institutional perspective (what the institution choose to divulge) to a user perspective (what the public want to know).³⁷ This transformed museums' communication model from a one-to-many communication model to a many-to-many model.

³⁴ Lorenzo Giusti, *Museums at the Post Digital Turn*, 31.

³⁵ Lorenzo Giusti, *Museums at the Post Digital Turn*, 17.

³⁶ Ridge, "Digitising Collections- Breaking through the museum walls and opening up collections to the world", interview by Adrian Murphy in person (British Museum, 2016).

³⁷ Drotner, Schrøder. "Museum Communication and Social Media.", 55.

Before social networking sites, museums were recognized as the cultural authority responsible to create and distribute knowledge. Whereas, today social media produces a many-to-many communication model in which social media museums can engage in participatory communication with its audience. Participatory communication entails interactions based on discussion in which both the institutions and the public can share information, perceptions and opinions. In this way, social media offers means for visitors to share their opinions about a museum or an exhibition, to interact with each other and to build a community. Visibly, these new possibilities offered by social media changed what museums communicate, to whom they communicate, where and when their communication happens and for what ends. ³⁸

³⁸ Ibid., 5.

Towards the “Post-digital” Museum

Today, twenty years after the so-called digital revolution, several scholars refer to the current times as the “post-digital” period. This term was coined in the early 2000s by Kim Cascone, an American composer of electronic music. Cascone, believed that: “The revolutionary period of the digital information age has surely passed. The tendrils of digital technology have in some way touched everyone.”³⁹ He coined the concept of post-digital in order to reflect about the aesthetic of his music. The “post-digital” aesthetic reflected upon the consequences of digital technology in electronic music. This term has to be understood as a paradigm; a tool with which one can reflect, other than something to describe. In fact, the concept of the “post-digital” does not aim at describing the period after the digital. “Post” does not stand for “after the end”; it is not a denial of the digital revolution.

David Berry, a scholar in digital humanities, discusses the “post-digital” as a “constellation”. The “post-digital constellation” is an approach that allows to understand the post-digital as an aesthetic which is disseminated by computational devices. Berry tries to comprehend how the post-digital aesthetic originated and how it should be understood from a cultural and societal point of view. Berry believes that people have a growing sense of suspicion towards the digital because the understanding of it is generally ungraspable or obfuscated for most of society.⁴⁰ Through the approach of “post-digital constellation”, Berry wants to provide an object for cultural analytics which offers connection and a sense of unity in a fragmentary digital experience.⁴¹ In doing so, the “post-digital constellation” questions the original theoretical legacy of early critical theory and explores its concepts in light of the post-digital condition.⁴² Berry does so in order to show how the digital has become embedded within our environment, the body and society. Thus, the distinction between ‘being online’ or ‘being offline’ or between ‘digital’ and ‘analogue’ today is anachronistic. For him, the post-digital has become hegemonic, and, as such, is entangled with every-day life and experience in a very complex manner. ⁴³

Florian Cramer, scholar in visual culture and autonomous practice, in his paper “What is post-digital” explains that the term “post-digital” refers to the normalization of the digital revolution and the cultural context which has been established thereafter. Post-digital refers to a period in which these technologies are no longer conceived as disruptive. This term depicts a perspective on digital information technology which does not focus on the technical innovation or advancements.⁴⁴ It

³⁹ Cascone, “The aesthetics of failure: “Post-digital””, 12.

⁴⁰ Berry, “The Postdigital constellation”, 54.

⁴¹ Ibid., 51.

⁴² Ibid., 50.

⁴³ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁴ Cramer, “What is ‘Post-digital’?”, 17.

explores the present-day condition in which the distinction between the digital and non-digital is blurred and in which the digital language everyone use every day is taken as a read. In fact, digital technologies increasingly took hold of our lives: influencing our daily behaviour and habits, effectively changing our physical and intellectual life.⁴⁵

The concept of “post-digital” as understood by Cascone, Berry, and Cramer, show how digital technologies have naturalized themselves into society, culture and everyday life. Understandably, this also applies to cultural institutions such as Museums. In fact, in museums, digital technologies have naturalized themselves and permeated every single structure. To understand digital technologies as embedded in museums’ structures extricate ourselves from the notion that digital technologies are new or revolutionary. This means that digital technologies can cease to be consider only as something to defend or advocate for.

The concept of the “post-digital” was introduced in the museums’ field in 2013 by Ross Parry, a Museum Studies’ scholar, in his article *The end of the beginning: normativity in the post-digital Museum*. According to Parry, to define museums as “post-digital” is an attempt to comprehend museums after the digital revolution.⁴⁶ As museums enter a new phase, where digital technologies have become normative, it is important to evidence this crucial moment. Defining museums as “post-digital” does not infer that digital technologies are now universally and equally adopted by all museums, but it rather traces the pervasiveness of digital technologies throughout the cultural institutions’ operations and strategies. In order to expound the term “post-digital” as applied to museums, Parry makes use of one important concept: the concept of Normativity. In fact, Parry believes that digital technologies have become more than generally implemented in museums, they have been assimilated, routinized in the museums’ activities, , in other words, they have become normative within the institution.⁴⁷

Parry believes normativity of digital technologies is more than just adoption and acceptance. Firstly, normativity is a representation in one specific context: it is perceived to be the norm in one situation, not as a global standard. Secondly, normativity is a construed term: it addresses a certain set of values which is shaped in museums. That is to say, digital technologies are considered to be a norm in a particular setting, such as museums, by a particular community who made a set of judgements. Thirdly, to infer that digital technologies have become the norm in museums also involves an “ought”. That is to say, the term normativity invoke a moral prescription, something that “should” be done.⁴⁸ Thus, according to Parry, to say that the digital technologies became the norm

⁴⁵ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁶ Parry, . "The end of the beginning".

⁴⁷ Ibid., 26

⁴⁸ Ibid., 27.

in museums imply more than asserting that digital technologies have been acknowledged and used in museums. It implies that the digital technologies have become logically wired into the museums' rationale: "the normative digital is knowingly (in this local context) to be an agent for museums to meet its goals".⁴⁹ Thus, the presence of digital media in museums are described as the norm to suggest a philosophical connotations that the digital technologies in museums did not only became standard, but they are perceived as *how things ought be*.⁵⁰

Museum Communication in the Post-digital Museum

To consider the museum as a "post-digital" institution allows to approach the use of social media in museums in a more integrative manner, rather than treating social media as "add on" to current museums' practice. This integrative manner recognizes the means of communication, interaction and exchange social media provide.⁵¹ Social media are intended to be a wide range of internet-based and mobile services that eases users' sharing of content and contribution in online communities. These platform are web-based and they quickens easy user interaction in terms of networking, share of self-created or self-edited content and relationships between similarities of interests.⁵² Today, a range of different type of social media services is present. Nevertheless, there are some common features that bring together most of them.

Firstly, social media web 2.0 internet-based applications. ⁵³ Web 2.0, also known as participatory web, indicates those websites that emphasize the user generated content and participatory culture. Web 2.0 indicates a shift from users as consumers to user as participants. Secondly, user-generated content is essential for every kind of social media. In fact, without the content created by social media users, without the decisions and behaviours, social media sites would cease to exist. Thirdly, individuals and groups on social media platforms create user-specific profiles. These user-specific profiles, being mostly contact information, username and picture, are the backbone functions that enable social networks connections between accounts. Without these types of information it would be difficult for users to connect with each other. Lastly, social media platforms ease the development of social networks online by connecting a profile with others one or groups. This means that social media platforms creates list of individuals that user would want to connect with and manage the interactions through that list.⁵⁴ Over the last decade, social media platform have gained an extraordinary popularity across parts of the world, class and generation. They

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Drotner, Schröder. "Museum Communication and Social Media.", 1.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Obar, and Wildman, "Social media definition", 746.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 747.

are used both by individuals, by corporate firms and by the public sectors. Today, the most used ones are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.⁵⁵

Museums are increasingly using these social media platforms in order to represent and brand themselves, their exhibitions and their collections. The emergence of these kind of platforms has provided museums with a tool to personalize their way of communicating with the public, to engage in conversations with them, and most importantly, to strengthen their mutual relationship.⁵⁶ As a result, to museums, social networks became a fundamental mean not only to attract visitors, but also to create a community with which they can directly interact. Social media can become a tool to create original and innovative partnerships with the audience. Cultural institutions using social media platforms are more concerned with interactive communication processes, rather than unilateral communication processes which inform the audience only about the museums and its objects. By means of social media, museums are able to reach a broader audience and show them insights of museums' activities and the behind the scenes. Social media encourages and support many-to-many communication which, in turn, is changing the relationship museums have with their public. In terms of museum communication, this re-orchestration means that museums has to rethink what they communicate, how and whom they communicate, when and where the interaction takes place and for which goals.

Since the use of social media by museums has become mostly the norm, several researches have been carried out concerning the relationship between the two in order to understand the aforementioned re-orchestrated features of museum communication. Most of the present literature study the approach museums are taking towards social media platforms and the positive changes brought by the presence of such platforms in museums.^{57 58 59} The study carried by Padilla-Meléndez and del Aguila-Obra in 2013 analysed the online strategies museums' use of Web and social media in order to comprehend the impact of digital technologies in museums and to help museums' professional to take more knowledgeable decisions concerning their online activities.⁶⁰ This study found that museums make use of three online strategies: *defender*, *analyser* and *prospector*. The study carried by Padilla-Meléndez and del Aguila-Obra explains how online value is created by museums and categorize their online strategies. This type of analysis is considered to be applicable to similar cultural institution as well as other service organization related to education and

⁵⁵ Drotner, Schrøder. "Museum Communication and Social Media.", 24.

⁵⁶ Russo and Watkins, Kelly, Chan. "Participatory Communication with Social Media,

⁵⁷ Adrienne Fletcher and Moon J. Lee, "Current Social Media Uses".

⁵⁸ Black, "The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums".

⁵⁹ Padilla-Meléndez and Del Águila-Obra, "Web and Social Media Usage by Museums".

⁶⁰ Padilla-Meléndez and Del Águila-Obra, "Web and Social Media Usage by Museums", 892.

entertainment . Thus, for the purpose of this paper, the division of online strategies: *defender*, *analyser and prospector* will provide a valid theoretical framework with which analysing the online strategies of Musei Civici Veneziani.

The *defender* are those museums that only make use of their websites and social media to inform their audience about practical matters of the museums such as opening times, ticket costs, etc. *Defender* only consider social media to be a complement to physical museum. These museums have low numbers of followers and engagement in social network sites. The *analyser* group of museums have more of an interactive/expansion strategy one compared to the *defender*. In fact, on their websites and social media platforms they offer chance to personalize web content and to download videos and podcasts of museums. This group has a medium number of followers on social media platforms and create high level of value creation.⁶¹ Padilla-Meléndez and del Aguila-Obra found that only one museum, MOMA (Museum of Modern Art, New York) to be part of the last group; the *prospector*. MOMA showed medium/high level of online value creation. Among the different museums present in the study, it had the highest number of followers on social media platform because it has a strong presence in all the social media platform analysed and the content created was engaging, rather than informational. In fact, the MOMA offers visitors the possibility to download mp3 guides and to design their own personal webpage of the museum by adding information that interest to them. Padilla-Meléndez and del Aguila-Obra argue that MOMA's use of digital technologies is completely reshaping the nature of relationship between museums and its audience.⁶²

Results from different studies, a decade ago, showed that most of museums made scant use of social media and websites, despite their being commonly used for participation and collaboration in other sector such as press, media and business. These findings demonstrated that most of museums were still using a fixed information transmission model of knowledge: a one-to-many transmission (i.e. museum to user).⁶³ Similarly, afterwards, in 2012, Fletcher and Lee's research analysed the current use of social media in American museums studies which kind of social media are used in American museums, to what purpose and how the use is being evaluated.⁶⁴ This study was carried by collecting 312 online surveys among American museums and nine in-depth interviews with professionals working with social media in museums. It was found that American museum professionals believed social media to be a fundamental tool for museums as it improves the speed and reach of communication efforts with the public. However, so far, American museums were still part of *defender* group.⁶⁵ This because, the 316 museums studied in Fletcher and Lee's research were

⁶¹ Padilla-Meléndez and Del Águila-Obra, "Web and Social Media Usage by Museums", 897.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ López, and Margapoti, Maragliano, Bove. "The presence of Web 2.0 tools on museum websites", 246.

⁶⁴ Fletcher and Lee, "Current Social Media Uses and Evaluations in American Museums", 512

⁶⁵ Padilla-Meléndez and Del Águila-Obra, "Web and Social Media Usage by Museums".

only involved with one way-communication strategies instead of multi-way ones to encourage participant engagement. ⁶⁶

Thus, it can be argued that, on the whole, the take up of museums to social media platforms and websites has been very slow. When compared to the rest of the web, we can see that museums have been informational, emphasizing their authenticity and authority, rather than aiming at participatory communication with their audience. This reluctance in making use of social media platforms for participatory communication stems from the doubts of many museum professional concerning issue of authenticity, authority and trust.

Debates on Museums and Social Media

Museums' Cultural Authority at stake

The new knowledge transmission mobilized by social media platform and Web 2.0 in general has been frequently considered by many museums as a threat to their cultural educational role. On platforms such as Instagram and Facebook where every users can share and voice their opinion or give meaning to art objects, museums became concerned with their cultural authority. Authority of museums stems from the importance placed on object collections and patrimony of the museum in their storage. At the emergence of public museums in 18th century, museums were often considered to be the gatekeepers of knowledge and beauty. The audience or public was relegated to a subaltern position of passive beholders.⁶⁷ Visitors in the museum space submissively received knowledge and information from the cultural institutions. Traditionally, museums' professional, who collect, store and interpret objects had the authority to provide the audience with means to interpret the art pieces. In his famous book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* Michael Foucault discusses different types of institutions which have disciplinary power. Among those, hospitals, schools and museums are considered to have the power to regulate people's behaviors.⁶⁸ Foucault believed museums to have this power as they can direct their public to see what they should see and understand what the museums want them to understand. Through this kind of control, museums provide their public with frameworks to understand themselves as individuals and the world surrounding them. ⁶⁹

Within this power relationship, communication between museums and its public happened within a one-way communication: museums create and distribute knowledge concerning their collections to the public. Evidently, this communication model could undergo radical changes with the uptake of social media in museums.⁷⁰It is argued by different authors that social media and web

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Spiliopoulou and Mahony, Routsis, Kamposiori. "Cultural institutions in the digital age", 287.

⁶⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

⁶⁹ Nixon Chen, "The disciplinary power of museums", 407.

⁷⁰ Russo and Watkins, Kelly, Chan. "Participatory Communication with Social Media", 23.

2.0 in general challenges the very nature of cultural institutions.^{71 72 73} Parry, a scholar Museum Studies, believes that this has to do with the anomic nature of the web. For him, in the web there is a complete absence or ambiguity around norms. Particularly, some of the essential principles for museums such as trust, accuracy and artifice are very difficult to fix on the web or social media. In fact, social media put a strain not only on trustworthiness, but also on distinction between professional and amateur and definition of authenticity. Social media potentially allow for every user to become authors and creators of information. This becomes problematic for museums because their role of one and only cultural authority starts to be questioned. Within social media, they are no longer the only voice present, but one among the many. This is why it does not come as a surprise that most of cultural institutions did not rush to inhabit social media space.⁷⁴

Trust, Accuracy and Authenticity

As aforementioned, for museums' professional social media also raise question on trust and accuracy. Today, social media became a very particular environment where to build trust. The fact that everyone can write and self-publish their own observations, made museums' professional skeptical about the authenticity and validity of online content created by users. One of the biggest fear preventing museums' professional to open up museum communication to a many-to-many model is the unpredictability of such participation. That is to say, they have a complete lack of trust in the community and the content they could generate.⁷⁵ Parry believes that the new scenarios brought by social media will soon prompt a new 'trust-based behavior' in which cooperation, participation, information sharing and informal agreement will be rife.⁷⁶ With regard to this, Russo et al. points out to a term that is becoming widespread: *radical trust*. *Radical trust* refers to the trust that any institutions, such as museum, library, and art gallery put in collaboration and participation within online communities.⁷⁷ Particularly, this relates to the use of social media and blogs within a cultural institution to initiate participatory communication. In this term what is implicit is a distinct lack of trust shown by these institutions towards the community, but also the admission that putting this trust in online communities is considered to be a radical gesture.

Parallel to this concern about trusting online community, there is a great concern about accuracy and truthfulness on social media platforms. This because accuracy seem to be impossible to verify on social media. Every day, on web 2.0 an enormous amount of information is being shared.

⁷¹ Kelly, "How Web 2.0 is changing".

⁷² Parry, "The Trusted Artifice".

⁷³ Drotner, Schröder. "Museum Communication and Social Media".

⁷⁴ Parry, "The Trusted Artifice", 23.

⁷⁵ Kelly, "The Connected Museum in the world of Social Media", 58.

⁷⁶ Parry, "The Trusted Artifice", 23.

⁷⁷ Russo and Watkins, Kelly, Chan. "Participatory Communication with Social Media", 25.

However, it is generally very difficult to verify whether or not this information are accurate or truthful. This is recognized to be a significant problem for cultural institutions on the web as they can no longer differentiate and preserve the accuracy for the information shared about their institution and their artwork.⁷⁸ Furthermore, social media in museums bring attention to another issue which museums' professional always cared about deeply: authenticity. Undoubtedly, as Parry argues, in museums there is a long history of proving an artwork authenticity and provenance.⁷⁹ According to Schweibenz, a scholar in Museum documentation and internet, social media platforms intensify the shifting of power between curators and users. Visitors cease to be solely passive consumers of information, and become active participants. This shift of power challenges the museum traditional thinking and presumed control over their content. Generally, this results in museums trying to control their content even on social media platforms by means of mediation and supervision of what is shared by the users.⁸⁰

According to Russo et al., the notion of authenticity is given by museums by means of arranging narratives into familiar and authoritative histories, mediating the relation between visitors and art objects. Social media become a cause of concern because of the aforementioned reproducibility and mutability of materials. The fact that every users can easily take the material shared by the museums online and re-shape it and re-interpret it made museums' professional very concerned about the accuracy and authenticity of such information. Trant, a scholar in Information Studies, argues that, in social media platforms, museums do not have at hand their traditional visual and spatial vocabulary of communication. Historically, this semiotics of museological symbols allowed museum to create an aura of authenticity which communicated to visitors the uniqueness of each art piece and the seriousness of learning experiences in museums.⁸¹ With the digital shift and the collapse of museums' spaces, museums find themselves unable to create this aura of authenticity. For this reason, museums' professional still consider social media platform within a cultural institution to be problematic.⁸²

These museums' skepticisms are at odds with younger generations' use of social media platforms. In fact, in 2014 a research about trusting user-generated content was conducted among millennials (being born between 1977 and 1995). What was found is that millennials are more apt to trust user-generated content in respect to other types of media. Particularly, millennials trust information received through user-generated content on social media or blogs 50% more than

⁷⁸ Evrard, Yves, and Anne Krebs. "The authenticity of the museum experience in the digital age", 358

⁷⁹ Parry, "The Trusted Artifice", 23.

⁸⁰ Schweibenz, Werner. "Museums and web 2.0: Some thoughts about authority", 4.

⁸¹ Trant, Jennifer. "When all you've got is "The Real Thing", 108.

⁸² Parry, "The Trusted Artifice", 24.

information from other media sources such as TVs, newspapers and magazines. They tend to trust consumers' reviews more than expert reviews. Thus, when thinking on how to engage with younger audiences in museums through social media, it is important to consider that younger audiences tend to trust user-generated content (i.e. friends posting about a certain museum), rather than the institutions' own social media platforms.

Participatory communication and young visitors

Despite the initial cautious behavior museums maintained towards social media, today, a number of cultural institutions started to use social media as part of their communication and curatorial practice to engage with their public and to encourage participation. This is especially the case when museums want to engage with younger audience. Among different section of society, museums have always been concerned with attracting and engaging with younger audience. This because, within cultural institutions, the younger generations are usually the most unrepresented and in numbers the least visitors. While being the segment of society museums are inclined to invest the most, young generations are also the main users of social media platforms. According to a research conducted at the Australian Museum in Sydney, the number of visitor using social media is increasing erratically. Specifically, teenagers were asked to finish the following sentence “Not being able to access the Web is like not being able to”. Their answers ranged from “not being able to breathe”, “not being able to live, “not being able to eat”, “not being able to talk” and “not being able to socialize”.⁸³ These answers reflect an increased presence of the online dimension within youngsters’ lives. Thus, it is self-evident that making use of social media in museums could help engaging and attracting a younger audience in order to have meaningful interactions.

Kelly, a scholar in museum learning and Groundwater-Smith, a scholar in education and professional learning, in 2009, by means of a series of studies in collaboration with the Australian Museum and different Australian high schools, demonstrated that young generations visiting museums are progressively attracted to have experiences which are relevant to them and creating experiences which show this engagement to their peers.⁸⁴ Thus, museums increasingly started to organize activities which could engage youngsters in conversation, collaboration and co-creation. In order to do this, museums started to organize activities which aim at strengthen young people’s role beyond that of audience. In this way, museums constantly change their models of participation in order to give youngsters a productive role within the museum space.⁸⁵ In social media this happen through participatory communication model. Participatory communication is a communication model based on dialogue, which entails the sharing of information, perceptions and opinions among the different users and in doing so it eases their empowerment. Participatory communication also enables the production of new knowledge and understandings. According to Cadiz, participatory communication can enhance equality between users as it puts everyone on the same level.⁸⁶

⁸³ Kelly, "How Web 2.0 is changing", 406

⁸⁴ Kelly, and Groundwater-Smith, “Revisioning the physical and on-line museum”.

⁸⁵ Stuedahl, and Smørðal. "Young Visitors’ Messing Around”, 2.

⁸⁶ Cadiz, “Communication for Empowerment”.

This model is considered to be very effective for engaging young generations in museums. There are several examples which corroborate this. The Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) has always been a pioneer of digital technologies and communication. Already in 2011, MoMA had a forum called “Talk Back”. Through this forum young people were encouraged to share and offer their opinion about their experiences of visiting MoMA and its exhibition.⁸⁷ Following this, MoMA, in collaboration with high school students, developed a site called “Red Studio” in which teens can explore issues and questions raised by their peers about the exhibitions at MoMA and more generally, about Modern Art and artists.⁸⁸ Today, MoMA has several different ongoing activities aimed at connecting and engaging with youngsters and at translating these physical MoMA-based experiences into a vibrant digital presence.⁸⁹ This page is wholly created, curated and directed by young visitors of the MoMA museum. The posts in this page varies from pictures of exhibitions, to new events happening at MoMA and content aiming at engaging with the followers of the page.⁹⁰ This page is considered to be one of the most successful teen-directed pages for museums. It can be argued that what makes it successful is the participatory communication model adopted; teenagers feel free to share their opinions concerning their experience at MoMA museum.

Another example which is in line with MoMA Teens Facebook Page, is the Galleria Nazionale Teens page on Instagram. Every year thousands of high school students visit Galleria Nazionale in Rome with their schools. Museums’ professional of Galleria Nazionale realized that young generations have different and original ways of interacting with the art pieces and the museum space in general. Thus, they created a space on Instagram in which teens can post pictures of their experiences and can interact with each other: La Galleria Nazionale Teens. The motto of the page is “Learn from teens. Teens teach us”. This page, although relatively new, has already a great following, which is promising of an increasing interest for younger generation to visit the museum. Hence, it ⁹¹

The Los Angeles Museum (Lacma) has also ventured into social media. In 2014, Lacma was the first museum to join Snapchat. Snapchat is a multimedia messaging app which allows user to send pictures and messages which are only available for twenty-four hours. It is an app which is mostly used by young generations (18-24 years old being 46.8 % of users). The popularity of the Lacma page on Snapchat increased quickly, bringing it to more than 220 thousands just in few months.. Within

⁸⁷ Russo, Angelina, and Watkins, Groundwater-Smith. "The impact of social media", 159.

⁸⁸ Red Studio. “About Red Studio”. Accessed on 25th October 2019.

<https://www.moma.org/interactives/redstudio/about/>

⁸⁹ MoMA. “Introducing Teens.MoMA.org”. August 5th 2013. Accessed on 27th October 2019.

https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2013/08/05/introducing-teens-moma-org/

⁹⁰ MoMA Teens. “MoMA Teens Facebook Page”. Accessed on 27th October 2019.

<https://www.facebook.com/momateens/>

⁹¹ La Galleria Nazionale Teens. “La Galleria Nazionale Teens’ Instagram Page”. Accessed on 20th September 2019.

<https://www.instagram.com/lagallerianazionaleteens/?hl=en>

this page pictures of the artworks are posted with one line puns. This way of communicating is very popular among youngsters, and it is indeed reflected by the popularity the page has among young people.⁹²

All of the aforementioned example shows the potential benefits that Museums can have when engaging in a participatory communication with younger audiences. In order to make young people approaching museums outside the school hours and spontaneously, it is fundamental to have social media pages which are dedicated to younger audiences and also directed by them. What seems to be the most important step to take in order to engage with a younger audience is to create a space for them, in which they can be not only participants of the museums' lives, but also co-creators. In this way, younger audiences feel empowered and they have the freedom to observe the art pieces critically, to question themselves and ask others, reflect and understand not only the museums, but each other.

These kind of initiatives through social media have also been studied more carefully by means of social experiments. In 2011, Stuedahl and Smørðal, Media studies and Education scholars, carried an experiment in which 13-year old while visiting Viking Ship Museum in Oslo were asked to explore and share reflections with mobile phones and visitor blog. Specifically, the focus group was a class of 13 years old from a school nearby the museum. The visit at the Viking Ship Museum lasted two hours, during which youngsters were provided with mobile phones with camera with which they could take pictures and videos.⁹³ Thereafter, they were asked to write some blog entries in groups. The act of writing blog entries entailed activities such as writing the text, deciding which pictures and videos to upload, how to label their material, how to edit the entries with font- types etc.⁹⁴ During the experiment, the authors observed that teens collaborate and used mobiles in interaction with each other. They inferred that the teenagers' act of taking photos and video footages with phones encouraged the collaborative activities such as aligning and assembling the social and material dimensions of the exhibition. Whereas, the act of writing blog entries lead them to participate into writing and reporting on their course.⁹⁵ Overall, according to Stuedahl and Smørðal, this experiment shows how young visitors engage more in museums activities if they participate trough media, rather than in media. Participation *in* media invites the non-professional production of media output, while participation through media gives opportunities to participate in the public debate and to produce self-representations beyond the media space. The distinction between *through* and *in* stresses the difference between participating *in* a museum visit which means to contribute or co-create within the

⁹²The New York Times. "Museums: the new Social Media darlings". 28th October 2018. Accessed 2nd November 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/30/arts/design/museums-the-new-social-media-darlings.html>

⁹³ Stuedahl, and Smørðal. "Young Visitors' 'Messing Around'", 3.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 16.

museum context and its legitimate knowledge. Whereas, participating *through* a museum visit entails young's participation in discussion beyond the museums space.⁹⁶

In 2016, a study was carried among different young students during a museum visit in the Museum of Tropical Queensland, Australia. This experiment explored the museum experiences of 58 young adults under three experimental conditions- a control group who visited the exhibition with no instructions, a no-Mobile Communication Devices group who were asked to leave their mobile communication devices before entering the museum, and a directed-Mobile Communication Device group who was provided with guidance on how to use their mobile devices during the visit. This study found that the no-MCD group spent considerably less time visiting the exhibition and had the lowest scores for mindfulness and perceived learning. Whereas, the directed-MCD group spent significantly more time in the exhibition and at exhibits with more text and had the highest scores for mindfulness and perceived learning.⁹⁷ Overall, this study supports the claim that Mobile Communication Device and social media can encourage participation and strengthen young people's role beyond that of audience.⁹⁸

These experiments show that not only youngsters are more likely to engage in participatory communication with museums social media outside museums' space. But, that they are also more likely to do that in the museum space as well. This is important to note because it furthers the argument that social media can encourage participation and strengthen young people's role beyond that of audience. These experiments show that younger audiences have more positive experience during a museum visit if they participate through media. That is to say, if they can participate to the public debate, re-interpret the objects of the visit and become co-creator of something. All in all, social media platforms in museums are shown to be a great ally for museums as they can encourage audience greater involvement both in and outside the museum's space.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁹⁷ Hughes, and Moscardo "Connecting with new audiences", 42.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 48.

Methodology

The present paper analyses a case study to answer the research question. A case study involves a detailed and intensive analysis on a single case, which can be a location, community or organization. This method is focused on the complexity and particular nature of the case in question. For this research, the case study concerns a cultural institution, Musei Civici Veneziani (MUVE). MUVE was selected based on convenience sampling, also known as availability sampling. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection that is most available to the researcher.⁹⁹ Several Italian cultural institutions were contacted for the possibility to participate in this research. Out of the preliminary sample, MUVE agreed to participate and set up an one-on-one interview with their web-content manager.

Data was collected via a semi-structured interview.¹⁰⁰ In a semi-structured interview, the researcher formulates beforehand a list of topics or questions to be covered during the interview. However, in a semi-structured interview there is a certain degree of flexibility and thus the interviewee is also encouraged to discuss topics which may not be covered by the researcher's questions. Additionally, the interview does not need to follow a strict order. Semi-structured interviews allow for a deep understanding of events, patterns and motivations.¹⁰¹ As such, this research method was chosen as it allows to gather precise and detailed information about the particular cultural institution use of social media and their intrinsic motivations and goals.

The interview was firstly translated (from Italian to English), transcribed and coded using a qualitative analysis software known as MAXQDA. Coding is one of the most central processes of this research. It entails reviewing the transcript and assigning labels to component parts which have potential significance for the research.¹⁰² The coding process began with an open coding approach which entails breaking apart, linking, conceptualizing and categorizing the information present in the interview. These labels are then grouped into different themes. Deductive coding entails creating a codebook which guides the researcher during the process of coding. In this research, a codebook was developed during the review of current literature. Whereas, some codes were created during the analysis. For this reason, both inductive and deductive coding methods were utilized for analyzing the interview. This type of coding allows to analyze and compare the underlining indicators of content which are relevant for the aim of this research and to construct a narrative.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 201.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 471.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 568

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 566

Case Study: Musei Civici Veneziani

Musei Civici Veneziani is a private cultural institution based in Venice. This institution was founded in 2008 and acts as a head of eleven museums: the Doge's Palace; the Museo Correr; the Torre dell'Orologio; Ca' Rezzonico – Museum of the eighteenth-century Venice; Palazzo Mocenigo – Centre for the History of Textiles and Costume; the Casa di Carlo Goldoni; Ca' Pesaro – International Gallery of Modern Art; Palazzo Fortuny; the Museo del Vetro di Murano (Murano glass museum); the Museo del Merletto di Burano (Burano lace museum); the Natural History Museum of Venice. The Fondazione Musei Civici is a private establishment and network of autonomous museums with a central direction. On their website, their mission is that “in addition to traditional museum activities (recovery, conservation, study, promotion), it includes a wide range of cultural activities and services: research, training, dissemination, teaching, production of temporary events, in a ceaseless dialogue with the territory and its visitors.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, their main objectives are to carry out traditional museum activities but also contribute to the advancement of the different cultural institutions by means of cultural activities.

It can be argued that Musei Civici Veneziani is still making use of a one-way communication model through which the institution, through their social media accounts, is the only one to create and distribute knowledge concerning their collections to the public. Furthermore, in every posts of Musei Civici Veneziani they refer to the link to the website of the page. This could imply that they consider social media to only be complementary to the website and the physical museums themselves. This behaviour is line with Padilla-Meléndez and del Aguila-Obra *defender group*. By looking at Musei Civici Veneziani's use of social media platform it can be assessed that their behaviour has been very wary.¹⁰⁵ The institution is more focused on emphasizing their cultural authority and authenticity of information, rather than aiming at participatory communication with their audience. In order to gain more insights concerning the use of social media in Musei Civici Veneziani, an interview with the web-content manager was held. The web-content manager of Musei Civici Veneziani is responsible for curating the web-site of MUVE and all their social media pages (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook).

Their communication takes place through different channels. They have accounts under the name *Visitmuve* on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. When looking at their social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram it is possible to see that they are part of what Padilla-Meléndez and del Aguila-Obra refer to as *defender group*. This is because they make use of their social media only to inform their audience about practical matters of the museums such as opening times, ticket

¹⁰⁴ "Fondazione Musei Civici Di Venezia," MUVE, , accessed May 27, 2019, <https://www.visitmuve.it/>

¹⁰⁵ Padilla-Meléndez and Del Águila-Obra, "Web and Social Media Usage by Museums", 892.

costs and new exhibition openings. Appendix D provide examples of the average post which can be found either on Instagram or Facebook of Musei Civici Veneziani. As it can be seen, these posts are merely informational; they communicate their followers only practical information about the museums activities and exhibitions.

Results and Discussion

This research aims to understand the extent to which Italian museums can use their social media platforms to engage with a younger audience. Musei Civici Veneziani's current use of social media platforms is analyzed. The interview questions focused on the web-content manager's job, her beliefs, and the functions of the social media platforms within the institution. Furthermore, modalities with which Musei Civici Veneziani deal with their social media and their ideas and beliefs about the institution and their communication techniques with their public are discussed.

In analyzing the interview, different themes emerged which are discussed in this section. The themes are: *the Museum as cultural authority, informational content based on authentic knowledge, control over the information shared by the users, mistrust of the younger generation in creating content*. These themes capture the fundamental points of the interview and represents a patterned meaning within the dataset. Overall, the findings of the interview supports the preliminary analysis of the MUVE social media platforms: a lack of interactive content.

Besides these themes, it important to note that the interviewee, as web-content manager responsible for eleven different institutions, reported that she does not work in a team. She is part of the press office but she is the only person responsible for digital communication, being the websites and all the social media pages. She collaborates with the different press offices of each of the eleven institutions. The process of posting on social media platform is rather laborious. In fact, every content of the posts published from the Musei Civici Veneziani has to be processed and approved by the entire communication office, the museum director of the specific institution and in some cases the curators of the exhibitions. Furthermore, when asked how her job is evaluated, she reported that the source of evaluation is the engagement: the followers comments on the museum's posts, how many times the posts have been re-shared or looked at it.

Themes emerged from the interview

Museum as Cultural Authority

The first theme that emerged from the analysis is the *Museum as cultural authority*. This theme is in line with the existent literature concerning the relationship between social media and museums. As different scholars argue, museums been very cautious when working with social media because they perceive them as a threat to their educational role within society. Traditionally, museums have been considered the gatekeepers of knowledge and, their professionals, the authorities, which provide the audience the means to interpret the art objects.¹⁰⁶The new communication model mobilized by

¹⁰⁶ Russo and Watkins, Kelly, Chan. "Participatory Communication with Social Media", 23

social media overturn the museum authority as every users on these platforms can become a sort of authority. This results in museums wanting to be recognized as the cultural authority also online. This is the case for Musei Civici Veneziani as the web-content manager stressed the importance of not only being the sole source providing first-hand information, but also of being recognized as the cultural authority by their followers on social media platforms.

The theme *Museum as cultural authority* was derived from an observed tendency of the interviewee to reflect and consider Musei Civici Veneziani as the one and only source of information for the audience. The web content manager discussed the role of Musei Civici Veneziani in social media as follow: “there are many activities happening at the different institutions that the public can enjoy. And we are the only one that can provide first-hand information regarding all the exhibition that are happening and all that is possible to do inside the museums”. This shows that the interviewee considers the institution to be sole authority responsible to create and distribute knowledge about the institution. By doing this, the interviewee expresses that, for her, the institution Musei Civici Veneziani still works within the traditional power-relations. The museum is identified as the institution that shape knowledge, where curators and museums’ professionals are in the position of power. As the interviewee stated “they are the only one that can provide first-hand information”. That is to say, they recognize themselves as being the only authority in power to establish canons, providing with frameworks of interpretations and constructing certain narratives.

The interviewee also stressed the importance of not only acting as a cultural authority, but also being recognized as one. When asked if the institution as a cultural authority was concerned about being substituted on the web, her answer was very eloquent: “yes it is absolutely essential for our institution to be recognized as the reliable source of information.” This showcases that the institution Musei Civici Veneziani consider social media to be a space where to re-establish their cultural authority. The web-content manager of Musei Civici Veneziani realizes that on social media platforms the power-relations between museums’ professionals and visitors can be shifted. The users can become active participant and producers of knowledge, which is considered to be a threat to institution’s cultural authority. Thus, they try to re-affirm their authority even online, by giving themselves the power of creating content, and the public the role of the receiver- merely understanding the content without questioning it.

Informational content based on authentic knowledge

The second theme, *informational content based on authentic knowledge*, was a frequent matter of discussion during the interview. This theme encapsulates different codes about the role of social media both for the institution and for the web-content manager, the institution’s current use of social

media and the past and present projects held within their social media platforms. This theme is in line with what was found by Padilla-Meléndez and Del Águila-Obra; on the whole, the take up of museums to social media platforms and websites has been very slow. Museums, such as the cultural institution in question, still take a very informational approach, emphasizing their authenticity and authority, rather than aiming at participatory communication with their audience.¹⁰⁷ That is to say, museums still want to be recognized as the bastion of authentic knowledge, so they only give their followers accurate, fair and corroborated knowledge.¹⁰⁸

This theme emerged from the web-content manager frequently referring to “informing the audience”, “scientifically correct information” and “truthful information”. The interviewee mostly expressed her interest in using social media platforms primarily to inform the audience. When asked which aims the institutions had when using social media, she answered “one of the primary objectives is certainly to inform the public. There are so many activities happening and therefore it is important for the social and general web channels to keep track and inform the public of everything that happens in the different institutions”. Thus, social media is considered to be a tool to inform the audience about the different activities and exhibitions happening in the museum. This shows that the web-content manager, as representative of Musei Civici Veneziani, strives to be accurate and authoritative on the web by providing to the audience highly informational and evidenced information.

Furthermore, from the interview it also emerged that the web-content manager considers also the followers to be interested only in being informed. This means that the web-content manager perceives the audience to be no more than receiver; they are supposed to receive the information shared by the institution without questioning it. When asked if she thought followers on social media platform meant more visitors in the physical museum, she answered: “it is developing more and more to get information and look for activities to do via social networks.”. The interviewee stressed the importance of sharing information through their social media which are truthful and objective. When asked about her personal view on social media in a cultural institution she mentioned: “what we do through our social media platform is to provide scientifically correct information but accessible to the public” and “in my opinion, social media, especially for a cultural institution, have and want to be vehicle of truthful information and reliable source for the public.” As such, the interviewee emphasizes the importance for her and for Musei Civici Veneziani to post information that are accurate and a product of a thorough investigation. Thus, out of all functions social media can have within a cultural institution, the interviewee considers informational content to be the primary one.

¹⁰⁷ Padilla-Meléndez and Del Águila-Obra, "Web and Social Media Usage by Museums".

¹⁰⁸ Parry, 'The Trusted Artifice', 23.

Control over the information shared by the users

Control over the information shared by the users was also a recurrent theme throughout the interview. This theme encapsulates several codes concerning the role of social media both for the institution and for the web-content manager and the relationship the institution maintain with their public through social media. The act of controlling the content produced and shared by the users is consistent with Schweibenz's argument discussed in the literature review. Social media platforms amplify the shifting of power between curators and users. This shift of power challenges the museum traditional control over the content and information of their museum. This results in museums, such as the one in question, expecting to control their content even on social media platforms by means of mediation and supervision of the information shared by the users.¹⁰⁹

This theme emerged from the web-content manager frequently referring to “control”, “mediate” and “use of a certain filter”. The interviewee expressed in multiple occasion the importance of controlling the information shared by the users and followers on their social media pages. When asked about having younger generation as content creator of museums' social media pages, the interviewee said: “even the example of Palazzo Grassi... they have recently created a page for teens. However, there is always mediation from the institution. I believe there always must be control of the institution”. In another instance, the interviewee stated that “then, if a person comes to visit our museum and post something that is not scientifically correct, we lose a little control, but when we see it we try to mediate and respond by saying there is a small inaccuracy”. Hence, the institution tries to exert their control over the information shared on social media not only through their accounts, but also through what the users post about the different cultural institutions they take care of. This showcases an apprehension about controlling the material shared concerning the museum in order to maintain museum's credibility and its role as a reliable source of information. Again, the web-content manager shows an understanding of Musei Civici Veneziani's audience as solely passive consumer of information, which need to be controlled especially when they attempt to become active participants.

These themes, *informational content based on authentic knowledge and control over the information shared by the users*, are in line with the general response of museums towards social media platforms. Different studies suggested that, when compared to the rest of the web, museums have been informational, emphasizing their authenticity. This is also the case for Musei Civici Veneziani as the web-content manager believes that the main function of social media is to be vehicle of reliable information. As Fletcher and Lee observed in 2012, museums were still involved a

¹⁰⁹ Schweibenz, Werner. “Museums and web 2.0: Some thoughts about authority”, 4.

transmission model of knowledge: a one-to many transmission (i.e. museum to user).¹¹⁰ In the same way, Musei Civici Veneziani still engages in a one-to many transmission model; they created and distribute knowledge about their collections and exhibitions to their followers in a one-to-one or one-to-many exchange. This behaviour towards social media places Musei Civici Veneziani in Padilla-Meléndez and Del Águila-Obra's *defender group*: they only make use of their social media to inform their audience about practical matters of the museums such as opening times, ticket costs and new exhibition.¹¹¹

Moreover, the web-content manager emphasized the importance of controlling the information shared by the users and followers on their social media pages. Especially, she mentioned that in a period in which fake news are an everyday occurrence, Musei Civici Veneziani as a cultural institution wants to ensure the accuracy and reliability of information, both from the institution to the users and vice versa. This concern of providing scientifically correct information conforms to Russo et al.' study of Museums Communication. According to Russo et al., the notion of authenticity is given by museums by means of arranging narratives into familiar and authoritative histories, mediating the relation between visitors and art objects.¹¹² Social media for museums are source of concern because cultural institutions can no longer have full control over the information shared about their institution. Consequently, as in the case of Musei Civici Veneziani, through their social media they try to control and mediate every input coming from the users. Moreover, they focus on one-way communication in which scientifically correct information are key of their communication.

It can be argued that the themes, *informational content based on authentic knowledge and control over the information shared by the users* are a consequence of the first one. Musei Civici Veneziani consider social media to be a threat to their educational and cultural role in the society. Thus, in order to maintain and establish their cultural authority even through social media, they do not engage with the public by means of participatory communication. This because participatory communication would imply the sharing of information and perceptions of different users. Which, for Musei Civici Veneziani could lead to misinterpretation of their heritage or inaccurate information about their institution. Thus, in order to avoid this threat, they use their social media as an extension of the website or the physical museum: they make sure that every piece of information shared over their social media cannot be argued against as it is "scientifically objective". This control over the information concerning the museum extend also to the content created by users and visitors of the museums as they control every posts created by the users which concern their eleven institutions.

¹¹⁰ Fletcher and Lee, "Current Social Media Uses and Evaluations in American Museums"

¹¹¹ Padilla-Meléndez and Del Águila-Obra, "Web and Social Media Usage by Museums", 892.

¹¹² Russo and Watkins, Kelly, Chan. "Participatory Communication with Social Media", 21.

Mistrust of young generations

The fourth theme, *mistrust of young generations* in creating content, was derived from an observed reluctance of the interviewee to give space to younger audience for producing content. At the beginning of the interview the participant stated that: “Contests have been made in the past, to encourage the interaction of the general public, with an eye to the young public because when they are the ones that use Instagram the most.” However, when asked more specific questions about it, the interviewee said: “They take a risk... when a cultural institution decides to land on social media and maybe involve a young audience it is always risky”. She then added “because it is easy when one is young to write wrong things or with a partial point of view concerning to what is the cultural heritage that belongs to the institution itself”. This reveals a lack of trust to initiate participatory communication with a younger audience. The interviewee explained that it stems from a fear that younger generation would share information that are inaccurate imprecise. The interviewee, on a number of occasions, expressed her doubts in giving space to younger audience, which results into a behavior on social media which is merely informational.

The last theme, *mistrust of the younger generation in creating content*, is considered to be fundamental for this research. It unveils the underlining reasons for which Musei Civici Veneziani, with its eleven institutions, has been reluctant in engaging in participatory communication with their audience, especially younger generations. The interviewee expressed a complete lack of trust in the younger generation and the content they could generate. As Parry argued, social media are a very particular environment where to build trust because everyone can write and self-publish their own observations.¹¹³ This fear was real and tangible throughout the interview as the web-content manager clearly expressed her skepticism in giving voice to their followers, especially younger generations. It stemmed from the unpredictability of such participation and lead the institution to refuse to open up communication to a participatory communication.

I believe that this fear clearly illustrates the barrier of Musei Civici Veneziani in engaging with a younger audience. The web-content manager herself stated that after informing the audience, the function of their social media is to engage with younger generations. Thus, it is evident that there is an interest in cultivating such a relationship. In order to do so, Musei Civici Veneziani needs to firstly break down pretenses of authority and non-involvement with their audience. That is to say, the institution needs to abandon the regressing view that museums are merely temples devoted to preservation of cultural heritage. Musei Civici Veneziani has to embrace the idea that it is also a place of fruition and valorization of this cultural heritage. In order to valorize and benefit from this cultural

¹¹³ Parry, ‘The Trusted Artifice’.

heritage, museums have to strive for interactions with their audience, especially the younger generations.

Recommendations

Museums as cultural institutions have an education function which usually targets a younger audience. Precisely for the educational role which cultural institutions strive for, museums' professionals have to apprehend that educational functions cannot prescind from the modalities with which younger generations communicate and interpret the information they receive. These modalities depend on the historical context one is placed in. As argued by Erstad, a Communication scholar, today youngsters use digital forms of communication which creates a curiosity-driven and interest-based approach to knowledge. This media literacy acquired through social media stresses the fact that youth's media use is not passive, but it involves an active act of re-shaping cultural meanings. Thus, museums' professionals have to keep up with the new modalities of learning among young generations and starts to strive for interaction with them.¹¹⁴

Giving young generation the possibility to share their opinions, views and considerations, implies the building of trust in the young generations and the valuable addition they can have within their institutions. This is because building trust on social media can prove rather challenging –there is a lack of accountability and transparency.¹¹⁵ This causes difficulties both for museums and users as every one of them can be authors and creators. Despite this, it is clear that trust is critical for the success of social media platforms. To develop trust online, museums have to give their users a challenging, interesting and interactive experience, as well as enable them to make critical judgments about the museum and their visits there. For the case-study of this research, trust has a crucial role in opening up a dialogue between Musei Civici Veneziani and younger generations. This means that new trust-based behavior has to be implemented within the institution. This new trust-based behavior sees cooperation, information sharing and informal agreement are key to build this trust.

Only after pretenses of cultural authority are overcome and a new trust-based behavior is implemented, Musei Civici Veneziani can begin to engage with younger generations through their social media platforms. After reviewing current literature and results obtained in this interview, findings suggest that the most effective way for Italian museums to use social media to engage with a younger audience is through a *peer-to-peer participatory communication*. Participatory communication is centered on dialogue, which entails the sharing of information, perceptions and opinions amongst users. This model facilitates the empowerment of their users. Empowerment is fundamental for younger generations as it provides them with autonomy and self-determination in

¹¹⁴ Stuedahl, and Smørðal. "Young Visitors' 'Messing Around'", 3.

¹¹⁵ Parry, 'The Trusted Artifice', 19.

representing their interpretations and opinions. Users can act on their own authority, rather than through the museum's. Within this framework, the younger audience is able to perceive themselves as a part of the museum, creating a space for themselves rather than being confined with a predetermined one.

Moving towards participatory communication is a fundamental step in attracting and engaging a younger audience. As argued by Erstad, youngsters use digital forms of communication which create a curiosity-driven and interest-based approach to knowledge. Digital technologies have brought a new way of interacting and learning. These modalities focus on picking, cutting, copying, pasting and merging semiotic resources into new digital and multimodal texts. Through these acts, younger generations re-contextualize and re-interpret works in ways that for them are more meaningful and eloquent.¹¹⁶ Thus, for youngsters, the possibility of re-representing the content in their own ways is crucial in developing their engagement with the museum. Within a cultural institution, this can be achieved through participatory communication - through a setting in which younger generations have the freedom to interact and share their views about specific exhibitions, or artworks.

However, as shown by different studies, merely providing a space for younger generations to interact and share their opinions is not sufficient. As shown by the example of MoMA and Galleria Nazionale Teens, it is also fundamental to employ a peer-to-peer approach.¹¹⁷ This means to create social media spaces of the institutions which are teen-directed in which they decide what to post and which information to share with the public. This approach was shown to be very successful. Younger generations should be made part of the process of formulating new ways to develop engagement on social media platforms for the museum to remain contemporary and relevant.

This *peer-to-peer approach* reinforces Stuedahl and Smørðal's concept of operating *through* media, rather than *in* media. The distinction between *through* and *in* lies in the difference between participating *in* a museum visit which means to contribute or co-create within the museum context and its legitimate knowledge. Whereas, participating *through* a museum visit entails young's participation in discussion beyond the museum's space.¹¹⁸ Participatory peer-to-peer communication gives younger generations the opportunities to participate in museum *through* social media. They are given the space to participate in public debates and to re-contextualize the content museums provide them with. In this way, they take the museum's visit beyond the museum's space and to their peers who never visited those institutions.

¹¹⁶ Stuedahl, and Smørðal. "Young Visitors' 'Messing Around'", 5.

¹¹⁷ MoMA Teens. "MoMA Teens Facebook Page". Accessed on 27th October 2019.
<https://www.facebook.com/momateens/>

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 17.

Furthermore, *peer-to-peer participatory communication* moves away from the idea that digital technologies are something to celebrate or be concerned with. In the post-digital museum, digital technologies have naturalized themselves into the museum's environment. There is no longer the need to focus on these types of technologies as something new or revolutionary. It is possible to go beyond the mere use of technologies in museums, and to shift the focus from these instruments to the user. This is perfectly reflected by the peer-to-peer participatory communication model. Through this model the users, their relationship with social media platform and their re-interpretation of cultural heritage become the focal point of museums' communication.

In the case of Musei Civici Veneziani, a *peer-to-peer participatory communication model* could be easily implemented in their communication. As previously discussed, Musei Civici Veneziani has a lot of educational activities for younger generations. Among those, there is one which already have a strong participatory drive. This project is called "Musei in Gioco". This project is a summer camp lasting three weeks during which teenagers visit every institution MUVE and complete a number of different activities in each museums.¹¹⁹ Within this program, teenagers are also asked to share their opinion about the visits and to re-interpret the content of those with a participatory approach and the utmost attention to relationships, group activities and entertainment.

My recommendation would be to engage the teenagers who participate in this program in creating content for their peers. They could create an account which is directed by teenagers who participate in this program. In this way, the teenagers are not only participants but also act as co-creators of content. This approach empowers younger generations and gives autonomy and self-determination. They are able to share and voice their opinions about the activities performed during the program and engage with their peers who are outside of this space, taking the activities the museum's space and encouraging fellow peers to visit cultural institutions. This solution for MUVE could be implemented in the near future as it is not very disruptive and does not change their communication system.

However, I believe, in the long term, Musei Civici Veneziani's communication has to undergo more radical changes. Specifically, the web-content manager is the only professional that take care of the social media pages for eleven different institutions. Within a one-to-many communication model this is easily achieved as it primarily requires inform the audience about openings of different exhibitions, costs and other practical information. However, when considering a participatory communication model, the number of professionals responsible for social media communication must increase. Musei Civici Veneziani should invest in a larger and more diverse team of professional who

¹¹⁹ "Fondazione Musei Civici Di Venezia," MUVE, , accessed May 27, 2019, <https://www.visitmuve.it/>

are not only from an Art History and Cultural Heritage background, but also in communication and digital marketing.

Furthermore, the web-content manager discussed the ways in which the content posted online is processed. The content of each post published from the Musei Civici Veneziani has to be processed and approved by the entire communication office, as well as the museum director of the specific institution and in some cases the curators of the exhibitions. This process involves several steps and parties and thus proves rather time-consuming. In improving the efficiency of this process, I propose the following. The content web-content manager should have more autonomy and authority over the content created for their social media but still working within frameworks that are in line with the press office. Social media are par-excellence the space of fast-paced communication. Thus, the web-content manager must be able to make quick decisions about the content to without having to deal with unnecessary delays.

Conclusion

This research aimed to identify effective ways in which Italian museums can engage with a younger audience through social media platforms. Based on a case-study analysis of Musei Civici Veneziani , findings suggest that a *peer-to-peer participatory communication* approach would be optimal to more effectively engage with a younger generation through social media channels. A *peer-to-peer participatory communication approach provides the younger generation with self-determination in representing their interpretations and opinions and thus are provided with both flexibility and autonomy. As such, younger audiences are able to play an active role within the museum, creating a space for themselves rather than being confined to a predetermined one.*

The present study firstly provided an in-depth overview of the current literature concerning both the relationship between museums and digital technologies and, more specifically, the relationship between museums and social media. This, consequently, brought to light the ways social media affected the museum as a cultural institution and its implications.

The integration of social media within the museum has brought about significant changes. Firstly, today, museums' collection are not only made accessible to everyone, but every users can reproduce and change the material provided by museums. Secondly, museums' arrival in the online space made the physical space breakdown. Today, visitors are able to "visit" the museum without physically being there by browsing through the museum's website. Thirdly, the museums' communication approach shifted from a one-to-one communication model, in which the museum is the sole distributor of information to the public, to a many-to-many communication model, where the audience and museum engage in a two-way communication. Thereafter, the literature review focused on the term "post-digital museum". The term "post-digital" considers digital technologies not universally and equally adopted by all museums, but as pervasive throughout the cultural institutions' operations and strategies.. "Post-digital" enables to comprehend the normalization of digital technologies and to approach the use of social media in a more integrative way.

The analysis of the current literature also shed light on an ongoing debate between museums' professionals concerning the use of social media. Many museums regard social media as a threat to the role the museum has within society: cultural authority. Within such a role, the museum has strict control over content created and diffused on social media. Lastly, the literature considered illustrative examples of museums which effectively engage and attract younger audiences by moving away from a playing as the sole cultural authority figure and incorporated the role of users by enabling them to become both critics and creators of digital content on the museums' social media platforms.

The study's analysis was further supported by a case study of Musei Civici Veneneziani through an interview with the web-content manager of the museum. Findings from the interview were in line

with the literature as Musei Civici Veneziani demonstrated to use social media only as an informational platform and thus engaging in a one-to-one communication model. Findings from the interview demonstrated that the institution is still concerned about their role as a cultural authority within society and therefore do not trust younger generations to create content on behalf of the institution as this may risk the spread of inaccurate information.

Taking into consideration both current literature and findings from the case study, the present research proposes the adoption of *peer-to-peer communication model* as a way for Musei Civici Veneziani to more effectively engage its younger audiences. The proposal for the shift to a *peer-to-peer communication model* is not limited to Musei Civici Veneziani. On the contrary, the study argues that Musei Civici Veneziani depicts the common role that is adopted by Italian museums as a whole. If Italian museums seek to remain relevant and innovative institution they need to act as a partner, colleague, learner and service-provider. In order to do so, Italian museums must move beyond their traditional conceptions of the museum as a “temple” and open itself to new kinds of engagements and interactions. The challenge is not only to integrate social media in museum practices, but also to implement a new set of symbols, language and vocabulary which is relevant for younger audiences.

However, what was shown by this research is that in order to do so museums in Italy must cease to consider social media platforms only as a cause of celebration or concern. In embodying a post-digital perspective, museums can recognize how social media can serve as a catalyst of new modes of communication and truly understand means of communication, interaction and exchange social media provide. Specific to Italian museums, this entails overcoming the perception that social media will diminish the cognitive and educational abilities of the traditional museums, but rather as a platform that can create more inclusive and diverse community.

To conclude, this research adds to the current literature about the relationship between museums and social media providing a new perspective on engaging a younger audience through means of peer-to-peer participatory communication. However, it is crucial to remember that these results and recommendations derive from an analysis which only took into consideration the institution Musei Civici Veneziani bounded to the city of Venice and its related cultural components. This represents a limitation for the study. Thus, it would be appropriate for future research to broaden this investigation to different settings. As seen throughout this research, social media requires more holistic approaches to communications as they challenge the traditional physical space of museum, the distinction between on site and online communication, and the distinction between real and potential visitor. This means that further researches concerning this subject ask for new kind of collaboration and cooperation between academic researchers and professionals both inside and

outside the Museum. I believe that in order to comprehend and make full use of social media as a communicative tools in museums a dialogue across disciplines need to be developed.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Original interview transcript (Italian)

I: La mia tesi riguarda l'uso dei social media nei musei cioè come si possono attrarre dei visitatori più giovani rispetto alla media che viene mostrata dalle statistiche. Quindi lei è il web-content manager dei Musei Civici Veneziani? Cosa comporta un lavoro del genere?

G: noi siamo un'istituzione che è diversa rispetto alle altre. Questa fondazione gestisce ben undici sedi museali. Tendenzialmente le istituzioni museali hanno una o due sedi, questo è un sistema che ne gestisce diverse: ciascuno poi con la sua peculiarità. Ca' Pesaro che è più orientata all'arte moderna contemporanea, museo di storia naturale, museo del vetro, museo del merletto che hanno le loro tematiche particolari e poi Ca' Rezzonico, insomma diverse istituzioni che rientrano nel cappello di fondazione musei civici di Venezia. Io nello specifico mi occupo dell'aggiornamento dei contenuti di tutti i siti perché c'è un sito web visitmuve.it che è il sito web generale e poi ciascuna sede ha un sito web specifico. Quindi poi in collaborazione con i colleghi delle varie istituzioni vengono costantemente aggiornate le varie pagine del sito con gli eventi in corso, le mostre in corso e i cambiamenti eventuali dei percorsi espositivi e avvisi per il pubblico insomma tutte le informazioni utili per il pubblico per poi fare la visita e informazioni per gli studiosi. Quindi informazioni sulla biblioteca, possibilità di collaborazione x le tesi con la fondazione. Insomma tutto quello che riguarda il mondo musei civici di Venezia. Poi nello specifico, io gestisco i canali social visitmuve, che sono i canali social generali quindi pagina Facebook, Twitter, Instagram e un canale YouTube. Poi ciascun museo ha la sua pagina Facebook e Twitter, alcuni stanno attivando negli ultimi mesi Instagram, nello specifico Ca' Pesaro, museo Fortuny, Palazzo Ducale e museo del vetro.

I: Lavorate insieme anche per le pagine social media?

G: Sì le pagine specifiche dei musei sono gestite dal personale interno dei musei, ovviamente in collaborazione con l'ufficio centrale che io rappresento.

I: quindi lei è parte di un team?

G: Io faccio parte del team dell'ufficio di comunicazione però da sola mi occupo dei social media.

I: Quindi concretamente per esempio: c'è una nuova esibizione a ca pesaro come quella che sta aprendo ora...breathless che sta venendo sponsorizzata su instagram... Lei si occupa con i social media di museo ca pesaro di creare i post per quella esibizione?

G: Sì però i contenuti sono stati elaborati e approvati da tutto l'ufficio comunicazione quindi c'è una responsabile, un addetto stampa e che in accordo con il direttore del museo e nel caso specifico che hai menzionato i curatori delle mostre elaborano i testi che fanno parto del comunicato stampa, da cui poi noi elaboriamo i contenuti per i social network.

I: ecco quindi c'è una collaborazione con i curatori delle varie esibizioni

G: esatto, non è magari una collaborazione diretta, ma mediata dall'ufficio stampa, dal responsabile dell'ufficio comunicazione, dal responsabile del museo però a cascata i contenuti arrivano anche alla nostra funzione social

I: un'altra domanda sempre riguardante il suo lavoro a musei civici veneziani ... mi chiedevo se ci sono degli obiettivi specifici come web-content manager di posizione e in generale per il MUVE?

G: allora uno degli obiettivi primari è senz'altro informare il pubblico perché le attività sono tantissime e quindi è importante per i canali social e web generali dare traccia e informazioni di tutto quello che accade nelle varie istituzioni. Questo è il nostro obiettivo primario, poi come obiettivi secondari c'è quello di aumentare il coinvolgimento del pubblico... Sono stati fatti dei contest in passato, per favorire l'interazione del pubblico in generale, con un occhio di riguardo al pubblico giovane perché quando si utilizzano soprattutto instagram ci si rivolge ad un pubblico che è tendenzialmente più giovane rispetto a quello che legge i quotidiani o utilizza altri tipi di media.

I: E infatti questa era una domanda che avevo per più tardi ma gliela pongo ora... ho visto che sul website del visitmuve c'è molta enfasi sull'educazione, sui giovani e su attività per loro.. mi chiedevo se è appunto un obiettivo per i social media anche?

G: Sì senz'altro, c'è il dipartimento educativo che sta portando avanti dei progetti che riguarda non solo il coinvolgimento dei giovani e le loro famiglie, ma anche il coinvolgimento di stranieri.. è stata portata avanti un'attività molto interessante che prevede integrazione di persone straniere che vivono in Italia e quindi un maggiore coinvolgimento di questo pubblico all'interno del museo e poi queste attività sono state documentate tramite video che sono stati pubblicati sul nostro canale youtube. Quindi resta testimonianza di queste attività che viene portata avanti.

I: Molto interessante, quale pensi sia lo scopo di piattaforme come facebook, instagram e twitter per un istituzione culturale?

G: viviamo in un periodo in cui c'è molta attenzione alla veridicità della comunicazione.. Il tema delle fake news è sotto gli occhi di tutti e secondo me i canali social di un istituzione culturale vogliono essere dei canali che sono veicolo di informazioni veritiere e affidabili per il pubblico in un momento in cui ciò che si legge sui social spesso non corrisponde magari alla realtà o è frutto di una visione parziale o di una certa ideologia. I musei civici di venezia sono a servizio di tutta la comunità e quindi questa è un informazione che vogliamo far passare attraverso i nostri canali: che appunto ci sono tante attività di cui il pubblico può usufruire e vogliamo dare informazioni di prima mano al pubblico attraverso i nostri canali social riguardo tutti gli eventi che si possono usufruire, tutto quello che è possibile fare dentro ai musei. Quindi, diciamo una panoramica oggettiva di tutte quelle che sono le possibilità per la comunità.

I: quindi c'è un po questa preoccupazione di assicurarsi che il ruolo del muve come autorità culturale non sia sostituito? E che il pubblico sappia che le informazioni siano di prima mano?

G: si assolutamente è fondamentale.

I: perché per esempio la galleria nazionale di roma ha una pagina (galleria nazionale teens) in cui solo i teenager possono pubblicare post di qualsiasi tipo (informativi, parlando di opere ecc)... Cosa ne pensa di pagine di questo tipo?

G: Corrono un rischio, quando un istituzione culturale decide di sbarcare sui social media e magari di coinvolgere un pubblico giovane. Quello che facciamo noi attraverso i nostri canali è di dare informazioni scientificamente corrette però accessibili al pubblico. Poi, se una persona viene a visitare il nostro museo e pubblica qualcosa che non è scientificamente corretto li perdiamo un po il controllo però quando lo vediamo cerchiamo di mediare e di rispondere dicendo c'è una piccola inesattezza, in realtà è così, sempre mantenendo un tono pacato.

I: quindi questo per lei è un pericolo dei social media? Per le istituzioni culturali?

G: Anche l'esempio di palazzo grassi che ha creato da poco una pagina per i teens. C'è comunque mediazione dell'istituzione. Ci deve essere controllo da parte dell'istituzione perché è facile

secondo me quando si è giovani scrivere cose errate o con un punto di vista parziale su quello che è il patrimonio culturale che appartiene all'istituzione stessa.

I: Una domanda più specifica, io non sono un esperta quindi mi rivolgo a lei, come viene valutato il lavoro dei social media? Per esempio va bene ci si pone degli obiettivi, però poi a livello pratico si è fatto un buon lavoro quando?

G: una volta venivano valutati molto i mi piace della pagina, o i followers. Ora il focus si sta spostando sempre di più verso l'engagement quindi si ottiene un buon risultato quando c'è una buona interazione da parte del pubblico, quando il post è stato visto, il tweet retwittato, magari commentato, quello è un buon risultato. Commentato magari anche negativamente, una specifica mostra può anche non piacere e ciò succede soprattutto quando c'è un'esibizione contemporanea. Noi abbiamo un progetto che si chiama muve contemporaneo che viene fatto in contemporanea con la biennale e questo tipo di contaminazioni fanno sorgere dubbi nel pubblico. Però penso che l'importante sia interagire: una persona può dire non mi piace questa esibizione, mi urta che, non sono d'accordo. Però cerchiamo solo di mantenere l'interazione solo con persone che cercano un dialogo. Se una persona commenta dicendo "mi fa schifo" è uno statment forte ma sterile, quindi cerchiamo di interagire cercando di capire perché non sia piaciuto.

I: Quindi voi come pagina rispondete?

G: sì, se non sono provocazioni sterili, cerchiamo di capire perché non sia stata apprezzata e cerchiamo di coinvolgere altre persone che hanno commentato il post cercando un dibattito

I: Quindi l'engagement è la cosa che più valutate oggi?

G: sì assolutamente

I: un'altra domanda, lei pensa che questo engagement poi si traduca in numero di visitatori fisici o no?

G: Secondo me sì, ora abbiamo iniziato a sottoporre dei survey ai visitatori e chiediamo loro come sono venuti a conoscenza dell'evento o della mostra. Molti rispondono i social media, quindi c'è una maggioranza di persone che si informa attraverso i social media sugli eventi e attività che sono

in corso magari nella zona e periodo di loro interesse. Quindi penso di sì, una conversione c'è e non è ancora forte come può essere la carta stampata o una pagina web però comunque si sta sviluppando sempre di più ad informarsi e cercare attività da fare tramite social network. Anche un dato importante è la conversione di visite al sito web: cerchiamo di mettere link sui post facebook o instagram. La comunicazione lì è molto sintetica, mentre sul website ci si può espandere e si rimanda per approfondimenti.

I: Ultima domanda riguardante i suoi progetti, quali sono in questi momenti?

G: Muve mestre ora: organizzazione di mostre e attività nell'entroterra. Quindi queste notizie prima trovavano uno spazio nel website, però ora sta crescendo l'esigenza di creare una piattaforma per questo tipo di iniziative che stanno diventando sempre più importanti. Quindi stiamo pianificando di aprire nuove pagine social. Un altro progetto da poco concluso è la realizzazione dei siti web multilingua per ciascuna istituzione. Già italiano e inglese era implementato per tutti i siti. Tra poco saranno disponibili dei mini siti in francese, tedesco e spagnolo, dove si possono recuperare le informazioni di base per la visita e per orientarsi nella scelta delle istituzioni da visitare.

I: e progetti futuri?

G: a parte muve mestre, niente.

I: Il suo preferito fino ad oggi?

G: mi sono piaciuti molto i contest che abbiamo organizzato su instagram. Abbiamo lasciato piena libertà espressiva ai partecipanti ed è stato bello vedere come le persone hanno interagito con le mostre e sono arrivati anche dei fotografi professionisti. È stato bello vedere i vari punti di vista e prospettive nell'interagire con la mostra e creare poi dei contenuti social.

I: quindi le interessano progetti in cui il pubblico interagisce sui social equando anche loro diventano creatori di contenuti?

G: sì mi diverto molto quando il pubblico diventa un produttore di contenuti più che receiver di informazioni. Sempre però con un certo filtro.

I: Quindi pensa che le pagine si volgeranno a piu contenuti di questo tipo per interagire con un pubblico piu giovane o solo informativi?

G: no per ora manteniamo questo ruolo, non è semplice cambiare il nostro ruolo, ma magari in futuro ne possiamo riparlare.

I: perfetto, grazie mille!

G: Grazie a te!

Appendix B. Translated interview transcript (English)

Interviewer: My thesis concerns the use of social media in museums, focusing particularly on how younger visitors can be engaged with museums. As we know the average in Italy of young people visiting museum is low, thus I am trying to understand what can be done to engage and attract more of them... You're the web-content manager of Muve, what does that job entail? Do you manage the website (visitmuve.it) and the social media pages (facebook, twitter, Instagram)? How do you operate concretely?

Professor Sabbatini: We are an institution which is different from the others. This Foundation manages eleven museums. Normal institutions tend to have one or two locations, whereas this is a system that manages several of them: each with its own peculiarity. Ca pesaro, which is more oriented towards Contemporary art and Modern art, a museum of Natural History, a Glass museum, Merletto museums. All of them have their own particular themes: different institutions that are part of Fondazione Civica dei Musei Veneziani. I specifically take care of updating the content of all the sites. There is a visitmuve.it website which is the general website and then each museum have a specific website. In collaboration with colleagues from the various institutions, the various pages of the site are constantly updated with current events, current exhibitions and possible changes to the ongoing exhibitions and important announcements to the public, in other words all the information useful for the public to visit the museums, but also information for scholars and thesis students: information on the library, opportunity for collaborations for theses with the foundation. In short, everything that concerns the civic museums of Venice. Then specifically, I manage the @visitmuve social channels, which are the general social channels: Facebook page, Twitter, Instagram and a Youtube Channel. Then each museum has its own Facebook and Twitter pages, some are creating profile on Instagram in the last few months, specifically Ca Pesaro, Fortuny Museum, Palazzo Ducale and glass museum.

Interviewer: Do you work together for social media pages too?

Professor Sabbatini: Yes the specific pages of the museums are managed by the internal staff of the museums, obviously in collaboration with the central office that I am part of

Interviewer: So are you part of a team?

Professor Sabbatini: I am part of the communication office team, but I am the only one that takes care of social media pages.

Interviewer: So, for example. Let's say there is a new exhibition at Ca Pesaro such as the one that is opening now: "breathless"... Do you deal with the social media of museum Ca Pesaro to create posts for that exhibition?

Professor Sabbatini: Yes, however, the contents have been processed and approved by the entire communication office, so there is a manager, a press officer who, in agreement with the museum director and in the specific case you mentioned, the curators of the exhibitions elaborate the texts. These texts are part of the press release, from which we then process the contents for social networks.

Interviewer: So, you work in collaboration also with the curators of the exhibitions?

Professor Sabbatini: Exactly, maybe it is not a direct collaboration because it is mediated by the press office, by the head of the communication office, by the museum manager but in cascade the contents also reach me and social media.

Interviewer: Another question always concerning his work at Musei Civici Veneziani: What are the institution's goals in using social media?

Professor Sabbatini: One of the primary objectives is certainly to inform the public. There are so many activities happening and therefore it is important for the social and general web channels to keep track and inform the public of everything that happens in the different institutions. This is our primary goal, then as secondary objectives is to increase the involvement of the public ... Contests

have been made in the past, to encourage the interaction of the general public, with an eye to the young public because when they are the ones that use Instagram the most. Thus, we realize we are talking to an audience that is tendentially younger than the one who reads newspapers or uses other types of media.

Interviewer: This was a question I had for later but I'll go for it now... I saw that on the website of the visitmuve there is a lot of emphasis on education, on young people and on activities for them .. I was wondering if it is indeed a goal for social media too?

Professor Sabbatini: Yes, of course, there is the educational department that is carrying out projects that involve not only engaging with young people and their families, but also engaging foreigners. A very interesting activity has been carried out which includes integration of foreigner people living in Italy and therefore a greater involvement of this public within the museum and then these activities have been documented through videos that have been published on our Youtube channel. So it remains a testimony of these activities that is carried out.

Interviewer: Very interesting, but do you have any specific activity on social media which is targeting for young generations?

Professor Sabbatini: No, at the moment no.

Interviewer: Okay, what do you think is the purpose of platforms like Facebook, Instagram and twitter for an institution?

Professor Sabbatini: We live in a period in which there is a lot of attention to the veracity of the communication...The theme of the fake news is visible to everybody and in my opinion social media, especially of a cultural institution have and want to be vehicle of truthful information and reliable source for the public. At a time when what we read on social media often does not correspond to reality or is the result of a partial vision or a certain ideology. Musei Civici Veneziani are at the service of the whole community and, this is an information that we want to pass on through our social media: there are many activities happening at the different institutions that the public can enjoy. And we are the only one that can provide first-hand information regarding all the exhibition that are happening and all that is possible to do inside the museums to the public through our social media. So, we can give them an objective overview of all the possibilities for the community.

Interviewer: So there is a bit of concern to make sure that the role of the Musei Civici Veneziani as a cultural authority is not substitute? And that the public knows that the information is first-hand?

Professor Sabbatini: yes it is absolutely essential for our institution to be the reliable source of information.

Interviewer: The national gallery in Rome has a page (national teens gallery) where only teenagers can publish posts of any kind (informative, talking about works, etc.) ... What do you think of such pages?

Professor Sabbatini: They take a risk... when a cultural institution decides to land on social media and maybe involve a young audience it is always risky. What we do through our social media platform is to provide scientifically correct information but accessible to the public. Then, if a person comes to visit our museum and post something that is not scientifically correct, we lose a little control, but when we see it we try to mediate and respond by saying there is a small inaccuracy, in reality it is different, always maintaining a calm tone.

Interviewer: So, for you the fact that people could post inaccurate information is what makes social media dangerous? For cultural institutions?

Professor Sabbatini: Even the example of Palazzo Grassi... they have recently created a page for teens. However, there is always of the institution. I believe there always must be control of the institution because it is easy when one is young to write wrong things or with a partial point of view concerning what is the cultural heritage that belongs to the institution itself.

Interviewer: A more specific question: how is the work of social media evaluated? For example, it is okay to set goals, but then on a practical level you consider to have done a good job when?

Professor Sabbatini: Once the evaluation measure was the number of likes on the page, or the followers. Now, the focus is shifting more and more towards engagement so you get a good result when there is a good interaction with the public, when the post was seen, the tweet retweeted, maybe commented, that is a good result. Perhaps even negative comments; a specific exhibition may not be liked... and this happens especially when there is a contemporary exhibition. We have a

project called MUVE-Contemporary that is organized simultaneously with Biennale. This type of contamination raises doubts in the public. But I think the important thing is to interact: a person can say “I don't like this performance”, “it hurts me” , “I don't agree”. But we always try to maintain interaction only with people seeking dialogue. If a person comments saying "it disgusts me", this is a strong, but sterile statement, so we mostly do not answer to that kind of provocations.

Interviewer: So MUVE as a page answer to people's comments?

Professor Sabbatini: yes, if they are not sterile provocations. We try to understand why it was not appreciated and try to involve other people who have commented on the post looking for a debate.

Interviewer: So engagement is the most valued thing today?

Professor Sabbatini: yes absolutely.

Interviewer: Another question, do you think this engagement then translates into number of physical visitors or not?

Professor Sabbatini: In my opinion yes, we have now begun to ask visitors to fill in a survey after they visited the different institutions and ask them how they came to know about the event or exhibition. Many respond through social media. Thus, there is a majority of people who get information through social media on the events and activities that are happening, perhaps in the area and are of interest to them. So I think so: there is a conversion and it is not yet as strong as it may be the printed paper or a web page but still... it is developing more and more to get information and look for activities to do via social networks. Also an important fact is the conversion of visits to the website: we try to put links on posts on Facebook or Instagram. Communication is very concise, while on the website it is possible to expand and refer for further information.

Interviewer: Last question regarding your projects, what are they in these moments?

Professor Sabbatini: Now we have MUVE Mestre. It is an organization of exhibitions and activities in the hinterland. So this news firstly found a space on the website, but now the need to create a platform for this kind of initiatives that are becoming increasingly important. So we're planning to open new social pages. Another recently completed project is the creation of multilingual websites

for each institution. Italian and English was implemented for all sites already. Soon small sites will be available in French, German and Spanish, where basic information for the visit can be retrieved and to guide you in choosing the institutions to visit.

Interviewer: and future projects?

Professor Sabbatini: apart from Muve Mestre.. nothing for now.

Interviewer: Your favorite to until now?

Professor Sabbatini: I really liked the contests we organized on Instagram. We left full freedom of expression to the participants and it was nice to see how people interacted with the exhibitions and their ideas about it. It was nice to see the various points of view and perspectives in interacting with the exhibition and then creating social content.

Interviewer: Thus, are you interested in projects in which the public interact on social media and also become content creators?

Professor Sabbatini: I have a lot of fun when the public becomes a content creator more than an information receiver. But always with a certain filter.

Interviewer: So do you think that the pages you take care of will turn to more engaging content to interact with a younger audience or just informational ones?

Professor Sabbatini: no, for now we want to keep this role: to inform our community. It is not not easy to change our role... but maybe we can talk about it again in the future.

Interviewer: Perfect, thank you very much for your time!

Professor Sabbatini: Don't worry, you're welcome!

Appendix C Coded interview

Codice	Segmenti codificati
Information about the institution	We are an institution which is different from the others. This Foundation manages eleven museums. Normal institutions tend to have one or two locations, whereas this is

a system that manages several of them: each with its own peculiarity. Ca pesaro, which is more oriented towards Contemporary art and Modern art, a museum of Natural History, a Glass museum, Merletto museums. All of them have their own particular themes: different institutions that are part of Fondazione Civica dei Musei Veneziani.
Translation interview: 1: 528 - 1: 1038 (0)

Museum communication\Goals of social media

In collaboration with colleagues from the various institutions, the various pages of the site are constantly updated with current events, current exhibitions and possible changes to the ongoing exhibitions and important announcements to the public, in other words all the information useful for the public to visit the museums, but also information for scholars and thesis students: information on the library, opportunity for collaborations for theses with the foundation
Translation interview: 1: 1217 - 1: 1698 (0)

There are so many activities happening and therefore it is important for the social and general web channels to keep track and inform the public of everything that happens in the different institutions. This is our primary goal, then as secondary objectives is to increase the involvement of the public .
Translation interview: 2: 472 - 2: 781 (0)

So it remains a testimony of these activities that is carried out.
Translation interview: 2: 1891 - 2: 1956 (0)

Interviewer: So there is a bit of concern to make sure that the role of the Musei Civici Veneziani as a cultural authority is not substitute? And that the public knows that the information is first-hand?
Professor Sabbatini: yes it is absolutely essential for our institution to be the reliable source of information
Translation interview: 3: 0 - 3: 319 (0)

Museum communication\Goals of social media\Museum as cultural authority

especially of a cultural institution have and want to be vehicle of truthful information and reliable source for the public.
Translation interview: 2: 2461 - 2: 2585 (0)

At a time when what we read on social media often does not correspond to reality or is the result of a partial vision or a certain ideology. Musei Civici Veneziani are at the service of the whole community and, this is an information that we want to pass on through our social media: there are many activities happening at the different institutions that the public can enjoy.
Translation interview: 2: 2587 - 2: 2970 (0)

And we are the only one that can provide first-hand information regarding all the exhibition that are happening and all that is possible to do inside the museums.
Translation interview: 2: 2972 - 2: 3135 (0)

Interviewer: So there is a bit of concern to make sure that the role of the Musei Civici Veneziani as a cultural authority is not substitute? And that the public knows that the information is first-hand?
Professor Sabbatini: yes it is absolutely essential for our institution to be the reliable source of information.
Translation interview: 3: 0 - 3: 322 (0)

Museum communication\Goals of social media\Informational content

. In short, everything that concerns the civic museums of Venice.
Translation interview: 1: 1699 - 1: 1764 (0)

ave been documented through videos that have been published on our Youtube channel. So it remains a testimony of these activities that is carried out.
Translation interview: 2: 1805 - 2: 1956 (0)

cultural institution have and want to be vehicle of truthful information and reliable source for the public
Translation interview: 2: 2477 - 2: 2584 (0)

Musei Civici Veneziani are at the service of the whole community and, this is an information that we want to pass on through our social media: there are many activities happening at the different institutions that the public can enjoy
Translation interview: 2: 2730 - 2: 2969 (0)

there is a majority of people who get information through social media on the events and activities that are happening, perhaps in the area and are of interest to them. So I think so: there is a conversion and it is not yet as strong as it may be the printed paper or a web page but still... it is developing more and more to get information and look for activities to do via social networks
Translation interview: 4: 410 - 4: 806 (0)

Now we have MUVE Mestre. It is an organization of exhibitions and activities in the hinterland. So this news firstly found a space on the website, but now the need to create a platform for this kind of initiatives that are becoming increasingly important. So we're planning to open new social page
Translation interview: 4: 1156 - 4: 1458 (0)

Professor Sabbatini: no, for now we want to keep this role: to inform our community. It is not not easy to change our role... but maybe we can talk about it again in the future.
Translation interview: 4: 2758 - 4: 2934 (0)

Museum communication\Goals of social media\Informational content\Authenticity of information

At a time when what we read on social media often does not correspond to reality or is the result of a partial vision or a certain ideology.
Translation interview: 2: 2587 - 2: 2728 (0)

o, we can give them an objective overview of all the possibilities for the community.
Translation interview: 2: 3179 - 2: 3265 (0)

hat we do through our social media platform is to provide scientifically correct information but accessible to the public

Translation interview: 3: 693 - 3: 815 (0)

elive there always must be control of the institution because it is easy when one is young to write wrong things or with a partial point of view concerning what is the cultural heritage that belongs to the institution itself.
Translation interview: 3: 1399 - 3: 1627 (0)

Museum communication\Goals of social media\Control

rocessed and approved by the entire communication office, so there is a manager, a press officer who, in agreement with the museum director and in the specific case you mentioned, the curators of the exhibitions elaborate the texts. These texts are part of the press release, from which we then process the contents for social networks.
Translation interview: 1: 2821 - 1: 3164 (0)

Exactly, maybe it is not a direct collaboration because it is mediated by the press office, by the head of the communication office,
Translation interview: 2: 21 - 2: 155 (0)

Then, if a person comes to visit our museum and post something that is not scientifically correct, we lose a little control, but when we see it we try to mediate and respond by saying there is a small inaccuracy, in reality it is different, always maintaining a calm tone.
Translation interview: 3: 818 - 3: 1096 (0)

nterviewer: So, for you the fact that people could post inaccurate information is what makes social media dangerous? For cultural institutions?
Professor Sabbatini: Even the example of Palazzo Grassi... they have recently created a page for teens. However, there is always of the institution. I believe there always must be control of the institution
Translation interview: 3: 1099 - 3: 1454 (0)

I have a lot of fun when the public becomes a content creator more than an information receiver. But always with a certain filter.
Translation interview: 4: 2461 - 4: 2592 (0)

Museum communication\Goals of social media\Control\Trust

The theme of the fake news is visible to everybody and in my opinion social media, especially of a cultural institution have and want to be vehicle of truthful information and reliable source for the public. At a time when what we read on social media often does not correspond to reality or is the result of a partial vision or a certain ideology. Musei Civici Veneziani are at the service of the whole community
Translation interview: 2: 2376 - 2: 2796 (0)

because it is easy when one is young to write wrong things or with a partial point of view concerning what is the cultural heritage that belongs to the institution itself.
Translation interview: 3: 1455 - 3: 1628 (0)

Interviewer: So do you think that the pages you take care of will turn to more engaging content to interact with a younger audience or just informational ones?

	<p>Professor Sabbatini: no, for now we want to keep this role: to inform our community. Translation interview: 4: 2595 - 4: 2842 (0)</p>
<p>Museum communication\Interactive content</p>	<p>Contests have been made in the past, to encourage the interaction of the general public, with an eye to the young public because when they are the ones that use Instagram the most. Thus, we realize we are talking to an audience that is tendentially younger than the one who reads newspapers or uses other types of media. Translation interview: 2: 787 - 2: 1112 (0)</p> <p>Once the evaluation measure was the number of likes on the page, or the followers. Now, the focus is shifting more and more towards engagement so you get a good result when there is a good interaction with the public, when the post was seen, the tweet retweeted, maybe commented, that is a good result. Perhaps even negative comments; a specific exhibition may not be liked... and this happens especially when there is a contemporary exhibition. Translation interview: 3: 1847 - 3: 2297 (0)</p> <p>I really liked the contests we organized on Instagram. We left full freedom of expression to the participants and it was nice to see how people interacted with the exhibitions and their ideas about it. It was nice to see the various points of view and perspectives in interacting with the exhibition and then creating social content. Translation interview: 4: 1967 - 4: 2305 (0)</p> <p>nterviewer: Thus, are you interested in projects in which the public interact on social media and also become content creators? Professor Sabbatini: I have a lot of fun when the public becomes a content creator more than an information receiver Translation interview: 4: 2309 - 4: 2557 (0)</p>
<p>Museum communication\Attracting young generations</p>	<p>with an eye to the young public because when they are the ones that use Instagram the most. Thus, we realize we are talking to an audience that is tendentially younger than the one who reads newspapers or uses other types of media. Translation interview: 2: 876 - 2: 1113 (0)</p> <p>Interviewer: Very interesting, but do you have any specific activity on social media which is targeting for young generations? Professor Sabbatini: No, at the moment no. Translation interview: 2: 1959 - 2: 2131 (0)</p>
<p>Museum communication\Past projects</p>	<p>Contests have been made in the past, to encourage the interaction of the general public, with an eye to the young public because when they are the ones that use Instagram the most. Thus, we realize we are talking to an audience that is tendentially younger than the one who reads newspapers or uses other types of media. Translation interview: 2: 787 - 2: 1113 (0)</p>

es, of course, there is the educational department that is carrying out projects that involve not only engaging with young people and their families, but also engaging foreigners. A very interesting activity has been carried out which includes integration of foreigner people living in Italy and therefore a greater involvement of this public within the museum and then these activities have been documented through videos that have been published on our Youtube channel
Translation interview: 2: 1410 - 2: 1888 (0)

Web-content manager job description

I specifically take care of updating the content of all the sites. There is a visitmuve.it website which is the general website and then each museum have a specific website. In collaboration with colleagues from the various institutions, the various pages of the site are constantly updated with current events, current exhibitions and possible changes to the ongoing exhibitions and important announcements to the public, in other words all the information useful for the public to visit the museums, but also information for scholars and thesis students: information on the library, opportunity for collaborations for theses with the foundation. I
Translation interview: 1: 1040 - 1: 1701 (0)

Yes the specific pages of the museums are managed by the internal staff of the museums, obviously in collaboration with the central office that I am part of
Translation interview: 1: 2207 - 1: 2364 (0)

I am part of the communication office team, but I am the only one that takes care of social media pages.
Translation interview: 1: 2429 - 1: 2534 (0)

Interviewer: A more specific question: how is the work of social media evaluated? For example, it is okay to set goals, but then on a practical level you consider to have done a good job when?
Professor Sabbatini: Once the evaluation measure was the number of likes on the page, or the followers. Now, the focus is shifting more and more towards engagement so you get a good result when there is a good interaction with the public, when the post was seen, the tweet retweeted, maybe commented, that is a good result. Perhaps even negative comments; a specific exhibition may not be liked... and this happens especially when there is a contemporary exhibition
Translation interview: 3: 1630 - 3: 2296 (0)

Now we have MUVE Mestre. It is an organization of exhibitions and activities in the hinterland. So this news firstly found a space on the website, but now the need to create a platform for this kind of initiatives that are becoming increasingly important. So we're planning to open new social pages. Another recently completed project is the creation of multilingual websites for each institution. Italian and English was implemented for all sites already. Soon

small sites will be available in French, German and Spanish, where basic information for the visit can be retrieved and to guide you in choosing the institutions to visit.
 Translation interview: 4: 1156 - 4: 1800 (0)

Web-content manager job description\Process of posting

however, the contents have been processed and approved by the entire communication office, so there is a manager, a press officer who, in agreement with the museum director and in the specific case you mentioned, the curators of the exhibitions elaborate the texts. These texts are part of the press release, from which we then process the contents for social networks.

Translation interview: 1: 2788 - 1: 3165 (0)

Exactly, maybe it is not a direct collaboration because it is mediated by the press office, by the head of the communication office, by the museum manager but in cascade the contents also reach me and social media.

Translation interview: 2: 21 - 2: 238 (0)

Appendix D: Example of MUVE posts on social media



Visit Muve Instagram Oage, Casa di Carlo Goldoni, published on 21st august 2019, accessed on 20th october 2019



MU VE Fondazione Musei Civici Venezia Page Liked · October 31 ·

The new opening hours of the Musei Civici of Venice are starting tomorrow. Check the website of each venue to be up to date.

www.visitmuve.it/en
#visitMUVE
Ph from IG @squareofitaly

62 1 Comment 5 Shares

Like Comment Share

Most Relevant

Caterina Zara Non sono d'accordo con gli orari. All'estero i musei chiudono in tarda serata!

Like Reply · 1w

Write a comment...

Fondazione Musei Civici Veneziani Facebook Page, Opening hours of the Museum, published on 31st October 2019, accessed on 20th November 2019.



MU VE visitmuve · Following

BREATHLESS. London Art Now Opens today at Ca' Pesaro - International Gallery of Modern Art the exhibition dedicated to the young and contemporary London cultural landscape. Mostly unpublished productions and site-specific interventions, from painting to sculpture, from video to photography, to installation, to performance.

Link in bio > Mostre in corso / Current exhibitions
#BreathlessVenice #visitmuve #SenzaRespiro #LondonArtNow #UKItalyCulture #capesaro #mostra #Exhibition #contemporaryart #artecontemporanea #Venezia #Venice #visitVenice @Arch Fotografico Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia PH Thomas Arank

Liked by museocapesaro and 149 others

OCTOBER 19

Add a comment... Post

Visit Muve Instagram Page, Opening of a new exhibition at Ca' Pesaro, published on 19th October 2019, accessed on 20th October 2019.



Fondazione Musei Civici Venezia

November 6 at 1:20 PM · 🌐



"YUN HYONG-KEUN. A retrospective" until 24 November at [Palazzo Fortuny](#)

The first European retrospective dedicated to one of the most important post-World War II Korean artists.

Shapes, colors and processes tend to be as simple as possible, to represent an infinite and inexplicable abyss.

<http://bit.ly/YHKFortuny...> See More



Fondazione Musei Civici Veneziani Facebook Page, Opening of a new exhibition at Palazzo Fortuny, published on 6th November 2019, accessed on 20th November 2019.