
Editorial

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Despite the increasing role of digital tools in the contemporary society, literature has so far devoted limited attention to the use of internet within the cultural sector (Padilla-Meléndez and del Águila-Obra, 2013; Waterton, 2010). Some academics, examining how museums use the web (Fotakis and Economides, 2008), have focused on the role of technology and technological innovation in terms of value creation (Amit and Zott, 2001; del Águila-Obra et al., 2007; Lee, 2001); however, there is still much more to investigate.

Moreover, in the field of digital technologies an emerging topic in museum is the adoption of social media (SM). SM has been more and more used by entities to communicate and to build and to strengthen relationships together with their stakeholders. By doing so, organisations seek to begin a process of stakeholder engagement (SE), by realising a 'two-way communication' (Manetti, 2011; Owen et al., 2001).

As previous studies noted, there are significant differences in the diffusion of SM between museums of different countries. Indeed, within the European museums the role of SM is fairly limited (López et al., 2010; Badell, 2015; Zafiroopoulos et al., 2015) compared to American counterparts (Fletcher and Lee, 2012). Other studies focused on

the analysis of museums of a specific country (Boost, 2009; Lotina, 2014) or city (Suzić et al., 2016); others again proposed case studies (i.e., Lazzarotti et al., 2015; Pett, 2012).

Some researches explored the use of SM as tools for developing a dialogic communication between museums and online communities (Capriotti and Kuklinski, 2012) and, at the same time, for communicating the museum experience through different applications (Budge, 2017; Weilenmann et al., 2013). Other studies have recently reflected on the presence of a strategy that guides museums in the phases of introduction, use, and development of digital technologies (Bonini, 2008; De Bernardi et al., 2018). However, all these researches have been limited both from a geographical standpoint and from the digital channels observed.

In conclusion, despite the increasing interest for digital technologies and SM in museums, the topic should be more discussed and analysed in-depth (Kidd, 2011; Zafiroopoulos et al., 2015; Capriotti and Losada-Díaz, 2018). Therefore, this special issue aims to look further into this issue through contributions that address the use of digital technologies and SM in museums.

The special issue opens with the paper of Scafarto, Ricci, Della Corte and Morrone ‘Stakeholder engagement via Facebook: an analysis of world’s most popular museums’. The article starts from the consideration that SM are a tool for organisations to foster stakeholder relationship with the potential benefit to build a digital community and a dialogic engagement. Considering that museum has a long way to reach the full potential benefits of SM, the paper adds further empirical evidence on this issue. The scholars consider the use of Facebook to promote follower’s engagement using a global sample of top attended museums that are a good indicator about the overall state of the cultural industry. The research finds that the use of SM in museums is mainly linked to promotion activities and not to build a dialogic engagement with different groups. Moreover, the paper confirms that the followers’ reaction to the post activity is significantly correlated to the use of photos and other media contents. In this perspective, the success of a museum in engaging followers is linked to the semantic structure of the posts with educational and entertainment tools.

The paper of Marco Contri ‘Museums and their audience: towards dialogic communication through social media?’ analysed in the same way the engagement of followers through the SM. The article investigates whether the top three most visited museums in Europe (Louvre, British and Tate museums) with an official profile on Facebook use this platform merely as a marketing tool or if, on the contrary, they exploit its potential to establish a two-way communication. The results show, using a content analysis, that these institutions do not fully take advantage of the dialogic communication feature of Facebook. Moreover, only one museum has a daily posting activity and the majority of the posts include links and/or photos. Regarding the level of interaction, the study points out that fans mainly react to posts through the ‘like’ function, while ‘share’ and especially ‘comment’ are used to a lesser extent. As the previous article, this paper also underlines that the three most visited museums in Europe use Facebook in a phase of monologic communication with their public.

The last paper on this topic is the study of Alberto Romolini, Silvia Fissi and Elena Gori ‘Visitors engagement and social media in museums: evidence from Italy’. The research aim is to study the use of SM for visitor engagement considering the case of the top 30 of Italian visited museums. The research is based on a quantitative analysis. The results show, according with the previous papers, that, despite the increasing use and popularity in SM, the level of engagement in Italian museums is quite absent.

Consequently, while Italian museums are very popular and well-known on SM, they are not able to use them for visitor engagement.

The paper of Trombin and Veglianti ‘Influencer marketing for museums: a comparison between Italy and The Netherlands’ adopts a different point of view. In the last years, a range of time associated with Industry 4.0, studying the impact of influencer marketing in cultural contexts has become an emerging issue. The paper aims to understand better the influencer marketing strategy applied to the museums, by comparing Italy and The Netherlands. The research tries to verify that influencer marketing presents promising trends depending both from standard and local drivers. The research design presents a qualitative data analysis (QDA), suggesting a new way of analysing influencer marketing for museums and investigating the aspects influencing its development and implementation. The results suggest that the influencer marketing strategy has peculiar local features as well as the more general ones. Therefore, there is no single way all over the world to implement these strategic approaches in the museums.

The paper of Persiani, Giusti, Vannini and Landini ‘The website for a hospital museum: the Santa Maria Nuova case study’ analyses the use of website in a particular form of museum hosted in working hospitals. The article aim is to evaluate the potential use of a website in promoting the interaction and the dialogue between the Santa Maria Nuova museum and its virtual audience. In recent years, the use of website, as a digital tool, in museums is studied from different point of views. However, there is a lack regarding the research on digital technologies in hospital museum. This paper intends to fulfil this gap and to contribute to understand more in depth the web’s use in this type of cultural institutions. Data highlighted that the website is a real and a valid support system in promoting and involving users in the museum which is situated inside a working hospital.

At the end, the paper of D’Angelo ‘The value of management in the digitalisation era: evidence from an Italian museum’ analyses, through a case study, the digital transformation of a museum, the Archeological Museum of Atina and Valle di Comino, located in Italy. This study contributes to enrich the literature regarding the museum digitalisation by providing a bridge between the process of digitalisation and the importance of the managerial team. The article provides also some managerial approaches for the transformation from a traditional museum to a museum 2.0 especially in small cultural institutions. The results show that the managerial team plays a central role in the digitalisation process: a qualified museum personnel is a key component to ensure the development of museum activities and to ensure a substantial exploitation of museum heritage.

In summary, the special issue provides some theoretical and managerial papers to understand the ongoing digital transformation of museums and cultural institutions. The papers analyse the use of website, the digital transformation of the organisation and the contribution of the SM to build a digital museum.

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