

Marketing of Tourism E-Services in the New Economy

Paschaloudis, D., Tsourela, M.,

Technological Educational Institute of Serres, Greece,

*Corresponding author E-mail: Tsourela M.: mt@teiser.gr

Abstract: *Tourism has closely been connected to progress of ICTs for over 30 years. An increasing proportion of Internet users are buying online and tourism constantly gains a larger and larger share of the online commerce market. Obviously, the Internet is having a major impact as a source of information for tourism.*

For tourism businesses, the Internet offers the potential to make information and booking facilities available to large numbers of tourists at relatively low costs. It also provides a tool for communication between tourism suppliers, intermediaries, as well as end-consumers.

E-tourism determines the competitiveness of the organization by taking advantage of intranets for reorganizing internal processes, extranets for developing transactions with trusted partners and the Internet for interacting with all its stakeholders and customers. The e-tourism concept includes all business functions (i.e., e-commerce, e-marketing, e-finance and e-accounting, eHRM, e-procurement, eR&D, e-production) as well as e-strategy, e-planning and e-management for all sectors of the tourism industry, including tourism, travel, transport, leisure, hospitality, principals, intermediaries and public sector organizations.

Travel and tourism have been of the most popular subjects in www. Recently, the Internet evolved to web 2.0 and social media services. Social networking sites have recorded an extraordinary increase in the number of users. Travelers' use social networking sites to share comments, suggestions, advice, directions, ideas, pictures, videos, recommendations, reviews, and experiences, while developing relationships. As social networking sites are growing in popularity, businesses and organizations are looking for ways to exploit them. This paper records official Pages of European Museums through Facebook search engine. Then, it records pages characteristics in order to determine how creatively museums are using their Facebook presence, not only to attract fans, but also engage their prosumers in the creative process sharing content on the Page.

Keywords: *E-services, e-marketing, tourism, Facebook, social networking*

1. INTRODUCTION

New media technologies have offered innovative routes of communicating, structuralizing, saving and releasing information. In the web 2.0 era, environments are not static. Interactivity and participation play a key role in the functionality of this new landscape. Users are not only consumers but also the creators of online content. Dan Tapscott and Antony Williams refer to this emerging type of consumers as “prosumers” of online social networks. Moreover, social media users can upload, download and share data. They are capable of communicating and interacting with the business/organization and with one another via online platforms. The design and function of content applications can include text, images, audio and videos that meet the criteria of specific users and contexts.

“Members of the net generation may well be more literate, creative, and socially skilled than earlier generations because of their early familiarity with the Internet” (Katz and Rice, 2002, p. 225). In an age of connectivity, more and more people are essentially growing up online. Given the growing prevalence of online communities, their use as an approach to connect museums with emerging young adult audiences holds great potential. The vitality of the modern museum may lie within how it responds to innovative online outreach opportunities that address the new ways people learn and communicate.

Many museums are of course already experimenting with social media, creating profiles on social networking services such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and youTube. Museums that want to integrate social media into their prosaism have to deal with various difficulties such as reinventing themselves for the establishment of a prosumer culture. In order to truly embrace a prosumer culture, art museums must transform as institutions into entities capable of dealing with: 1) giving up their authority in order to become social entities, 2) rethinking the museum space to create an environment capable of supporting social dialogue and 3) restructuring the organization of the art museum in the interest of fluidity

2. MUSEUMS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

In museum studies literature, digital technologies and media are widely accepted and understood as means to appeal to and connect with new audiences by use of approaches based on dialogue, communities, forum and social media, user-generated content and co-creations (Lossing, 2009; Cameron & Kenderdine, 2007). Likewise, democratisation, accessibility and engagement have been emphasized in relation to digital media and technologies (Tallon & Walker, 2008; Simon, 2010).

Several museum research papers address the use, limitations and reservations of digital media and technologies both in practice and in theory. However, research regarding how digital technologies and media affect museum organisation, work processes and daily work are still very scarce, and in a Europe context almost non-existent. Darren Peacock has addressed how digital information and communication technologies act as a “catalyst for change” within the museums’ organization (Peacock, 2008, p. 334).

Tallon & Walker state that in a technological world, the museum visit no longer begins when a person enters the building, nor need it end when she or he leaves. The museum’s space is but one site – albeit a privileged one – in a continuum of the visitor’s imaginative universe. Unlike communication by means of traditional media (posters, catalogues, pamphlets etc.), digital media presents the possibility of transferring information from one media to another and thereby separating the information from the media. Furthermore, digital technologies and media allow remediation, meaning an intermedial relationship in which new media refashion and reshape previous media and ways of communicating. This is not for the purpose of replacing the old media, but in order to extend the possibilities within communication (Bolter & Grusin, 2000).

3. IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO THE MUSEUMS

It is obvious that as any other type of organization just the same museums show a great interest about the benefits and potentialities that social media have to offer. Participating in a e.g. Facebook means transmuting users-consumers to prosumers. According to Schick (2010) there are three dilemmas that reveal how Facebook not only questions the foundation and form of the museum, but furthermore goes on to reinforce movement toward a complete transformation. These are the museum’s establishment of social relationships with the users, the difficulty of creating objects of sociality before meaningful dialogical content can manifest itself and integrating Facebook into the museums’ daily work.

“Museums mediate among and between social groups by offering tangible means for the production and delivery of experiences according to standardized patterns and practices. Responsibility for standardizing these patterns and practices does not rest with museums alone, however, but reflects their place within a civic order that varies and changes over time” (Hein, 2000, p. 37). Museums just like online environments are model venues in a self exploration point of view. They are comprised of variables such as choice, control and ownership. These variables give the opportunity to prosumers create experiences that match their own experiences, motivate them to directly create what they want in a manner that they wish and affirm the singularity of their contribution to collective consciousness.

Socialization, information exchange, and recreation are three primary types of online activities and services that are also manifested in the museum (Falk & Dierking, 2000). Adding to the functions of a museum an interactive virtual environment, such a social media service, will result to the extension of its competencies as a public service institution. The museum’s public presence will be expanded, the accessibility will be increased, the awareness of prosumers concerning exhibitions will go up and feedback will be achieved.

Museums’ first websites were a kind of online version of brochures intended to facilitate the user’s visit to the physical museum and, on another note, to change the public’s perception of the institution to a more contemporary one. The dotcom boom in the last nineties made museum professionals start to be aware of the huge possibilities the Web could offer. Podcasting, Wikis, Blogs, RSS, Social Tagging/Folksonomy and Social Networking are new functionalities and concepts which are becoming more and more popular. Some museums have started to integrate some of these services, so an overview of how museums are currently integrating some of these tools and providing new services on their websites will be given.

Some researchers state that the participation of museums in the social networking phenomenon needs to be balanced. “Some (museums) see social networks as a convenient—and increasingly crucial—way to promote programming,” explains William Hanley in an article about the increasing presence of art museums in MySpace; but as Shelley Bernstein explains, “you can’t just use social networking sites for advertising (...) the community will see right through that” and this will thus potentially generate mistrust towards the ‘openness’ of the museum.

4. MUSEUMS AND FACEBOOK

Since the opening of private collections to the public in different parts of Europe during the latter years of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, it has been possible to start talking about the museum as an institution that is at the heart of the public realm. Therefore, the public is inherent to the concept of a museum.

Information and communication technologies have changed the concept of public space and created a redefinition of concepts and practices in areas such as the economy, politics or culture as they affect the artistic field. As Marshall McLuhan visioned in the 1960s through the Global Village concept, time, space and body no longer exist and societies are walking towards a global culture. In the Museum without Walls, Malraux's ideal form for an appropriate museum that would allow the deepening and enrichment of cultural experiences in modern society was the photographic book. The key point in Malraux's museum proposal was to make a museum accessible to all in a kind of "virtual form".

Museums mostly use Facebook as a marketing tool in order to show their product/service and not as a virtual environment to interact with prosumers. Their main goal is to market themselves as good as possible by uploading information concerning present and future exhibitions and events. This way they try to motivate people visit the museum.

They tend to use Facebook as a homepage, uploading several posts once or twice a month instead of being continually present in their Facebook profile. Although, this means that their Facebook pages are not considered to static taking the form of just an "online catalogue", what they do not accomplish is dialogue with the prosumers. They fail to promote users to interact and participate.

Facebook can be used in order to reinvent a museum. Contrarily to the physic world, on Facebook the basic concerns are relationship to and the dialogue with the users. As mentioned above, in a prosumers culture, the art museum's authorized role as an institution representing the cultural heritage is challenged, since the museum's enunciation becomes only one voice among many. By being co-producers of the art museum's representation through its online Facebook profile, users themselves become representatives of the art museum. This causes a dramatic power shift between the museum and its users: "To control a museum means precisely to control the representation of a community and its highest values and truths."

Furthermore, the space of the art museum is transformed because social media break down the borders between the ritual museum space and the public space. Last but not least the art museum is encountering a new and emerging user group, to which we will from here on refer as the 'art interested'. This is a growing user group, consisting of people who for one reason or another do not physically visit the museum, but nevertheless have an interest in the museum and actively follow its activities online (Damkjær).

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Facebook is the most popular Social Network of All Ages, with more than 800 million active users. More than 50% of them, log on to Facebook in any given day. Facebook is not just a tool for museums to attract consumers but it is also a useful tool for marketing, corporate communication and public relations and has the potential to create strong and lasting relationships with customers and add value to brands in the marketplace.

However, little research effort has been devoted to investigating the use of social networks in business. Most of the previous academic research is related to the psychological and educational aspects of social networks in business and society. Effective use of Facebook pages has not been fully investigated yet.

The paper records official Pages of European Museums through Facebook search engine. Then, it records pages characteristics, like "wall", photographs, videos, posted items or notes, chosen applications, contact information, number of friends etc. The core objective of the study is to determine how creatively museums are using their Facebook presence, not only to attracts fans, but also engage their prosumers in the creative process sharing content on the Page. It appears that managerial characteristics of museums, such as the hotel class and size are positively correlated with the effective use of Facebook pages.

The museums used for the implementation of this research are the thirty four European museums that are most active on Facebook. These are LOUVRE, D'ORSEY, BRITISH, VATICAN, TATE, NATIONAL GALLERY, DESIGN MUSEUM, GALLERY D'ITALIA, HERMITAGE, LES ABBATTOIRS, GUGGENHEIM, CENTRE POMPIDOU, MADAME TUSSAUDS, OTTO-LILIENTHAL, FABERGE MUSEUM, NARIONAL MUSEUM CARDIFF, GEORGIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM, MUSEUM OF LIVERPOOL, NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, MUSEO REINA SOFIA, KUNSTHISTORISCHES MUSEUM, ACROPOLIS MUSEUM, FOLKLIFE&

ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM, MUSEUM OF GREEK FOLK ART, KAZANTZAKIS MUSEUM, THE GARAGE CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, MUNICIPAL ART GALERY OF CHANIA, THE GARAGE CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, MOSCOW MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, GALERIE AN DER PINAKOTHEK DER MODERNE, KONINKLIJK MUSEUM, DANISH MUSEUM OF ART & DESIGN, MUSEUM OF BYZANTINE CULTURE.

The research took place during October, November and December of 2011. A Facebook profile was created in order record page characteristics due to the fact that some pages are only visible to “friends”. Only official pages and not group or fan pages were marked. The data for each museum were listed in an Excel spreadsheet in order to collect all the appropriate information to proceed to the statistical analysis.

6. FINDINGS

The Facebook characteristics found in these museums are Number of friends, wall comments (from the museum), wall comments (from users), like, user produced content, exhibitions, phone number, parking, email, location, working hours, public transportation, website, map, ticket value, route instructions, “welcome” (application for the welcoming of users), Facebook notes, Blog RSS Feed Reader, Twitter link, Twitter App, Extended Info, Flash Player, Photographs, application photos I like, videos, links, LINK FLICKR, Application MY FLICKR, LINK YOUTUBE, Application YOUTUBE BOX, WIKIPEDIA, application “was here”, journal, “talk about it, SKYPE, recommendation, publications, SKYPE, Application 4CAST WEATHER, gowalla, yelp, ABOUT US, What's on, apocalyptic tracks, foursquare, DAILYMOTION, MOBILE, MY SPACE, DELICIOUS, questions, EMAIL SIGNUP, SCVNGR.

The first four characteristics wall comments (from the museum), wall comments (from users), user produced content and likes are the ones that all museums had with an exception of Vatican and National Museum of Cardiff that have neither and kind of wall comments nor user produced content. Concerning information data about the museum such as website, phone number, email, parking, map, working hours, ticket value, public transportation and route instructions it seems that almost all reaching a percentage of 94% include these elements in their Facebook profile. The only two factors that profiles mostly lack are parking and email. Even though through Facebook museums try turn to advantage information and communication technologies they still don't use email accounts as mean of communication. As far as “welcome” only four (D'ORSEY, NATIONAL GALLERY, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, MOSCOW MUSEUM OF MODERN ART) out of all museums possess this characteristic. 78% of the museums have Facebook notes and 64% have Blog RSS Feed Reader. Even though Twitter link, Twitter App. And Extended Info are considered to be two of the most important elements of Facebook that help not only in the attraction of fans but also to the stickiness, so that fans keep coming back and may even share the content on the Page it seems that museums do not really take advantage of them. Only 18% of them have Twitter link, 12% of them Twitter App. And 9% of them Extended Info.

Flash Player possesses an percentage of 76%, Photographs- application photos I like- videos reach 83%, links (LINK FLICKR, LINK YOUTUBE etc) 17%, Applications (Application MY FLICKR, Application YOUTUBE BOX, application “was here”, Application 4CAST WEATHER etc) reach only a percentage of 8%, WIKIPEDIA employs 27%, journal 5%. Not even one of the museums has a Skype account, one more clue that uncovers the slow integration of new technologies in the function and daily routine of museums.

“Talk about it” holds the remarkable percentage of 100% and Recommendations 96%. Almost all museums include in their Facebook pages these characteristics and not unfairly. These characteristics are two of the most known ones via Facebook users, along with “I like”. Museums tend to mainly use the most known and most widely used characteristics maybe because they want the ones that they will use to be familiar with most of the potential users.

Table 1: Origin and Number of friends of the museums

NAME OF THE MUSEUM	Country	Number of fans/friends
LOUVRE	France	421364
D'ORSEY	France	7183
BRITISH	UK	155664
VATICAN	Vatican	853
TATE	UK	328581
NATIONAL GALLERY	UK	65194
DESIGN MUSEUM	UK	144661
GALLERY D'ITALIA	Italy	4275
HERMITAGE – Italy	Holland	3186
HERMITAGE - Holland	Russia	11106
LES ABBATTOIRS	France	8927
GUGGENHEIM	Spain	47818
CENTRE POMPIDOU	France	185210
MADAME TUSSAUDS	UK	106811
OTTO-LILIENTHAL	Germany	101
FABERGE MUSEUM	Germany	1
NARIONAL MUSEUM CARDIFF	UK	105
GEORGIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM	Georgia	12023
MUSEUM OF LIVERPOOL	UK	2217
NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY	UK	20075
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM	UK	142445
MUSEO REINA SOFIA	Spain	96789
KUNSTHISTORISCHES MUSEUM	Vienna	6538
ACROPOLIS MUSEUM	Belgium	3441
FOLKLIFE& ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM	Denmark	1969
MUSEUM OF GREEK FOLK ART	GREECE	1385
KAZANTZAKIS MUSEUM	GREECE	308464
THE GARAGE CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART	GREECE	465
MUNICIPAL ART GALERY OF CHANIA	GREECE	1279
MOSCOW MUSEUM OF MODERN ART	GREECE	4774
GALERIE AN DER PINAKOTHEK DER MODERNE	GREECE	580
KONINKLIJK MUSEUM	RUSSIA	24990
DANISH MUSEUM OF ART & DESIGN	RUSSIA	11063
MUSEUM OF BYZANTINE CULTURE	GERMANY	936

Publications hold a percentage of 57%, gowalla 59%, yelp 63%, What's on 3%, apocalyptic tracks 9%. The following characteristics: SCVNGR, EMAIL SIGNUP, Questions, DELICIOUS, MY SPACE, MOBILE, DAILYMOTION, foursquare, apocalyptic tracks and ABOUT US lie between 2 and 6%. Very low percentages showing that are not very widely used characteristics form museums.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Analyzing the use of online communities, museums can move their presence further amongst dedicated audiences and make themselves more familiar to largely untapped demographics. Making space for the individual is one aim of museums that is reflected in the principles that govern exchange within the Internet community. Within the formal structure of the museum, online communities can be used to help people make connections between personal experiences and prior knowledge. Exchanging these insights can contribute to meaning-making processes and forms of perceptual awareness that may also help others interpret an exhibit on display.

This fundamental change in thinking about what the role and character of the museum is, and what it can possibly become, may seem frightening to most museums, because it breaks with the traditional perception of the foundation for their existence and therefore threatens with chaos or even a total cessation of the very existence of the museums themselves.

It results from the research that even the museums do have an active Facebook account, they do not include neither many applications nor relevant contents that would upgrade the profile, attract fans, increase stickiness and create an environment that users will keep coming back over and over again and even share the content on the Page. Museums can be characterized as “weak” and perhaps in a smashing majority failed in their attempts to use Facebook.

Further research

In this paper the research is limited in just calculating percentages for every characteristic. This can be continued by categorizing the museums by type and make correlations of characteristics. The outcomes will reveal whether there is a difference or not to the usage and type of the characteristics in each type of museums.

References

- Bolter, J. & Grusin, R. (2000). *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Cameron, F. & Kenderdine, S.(Eds.) (2007). *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage – A Critical Discourse*. Cambridge, MA & London: The MIT Press.
- Falk, D. & Dierking, L. (2000). *Learning from Museums*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Hein, H. (2000). *The Museum in Transition*. Washington & London: Smithsonian.
- Hetherington, Kevin “Museum” in Theory, Culture & Society, Problematizing Global Knowledge: Special Issue, London : *SAGE Publications*, Vol. 23(2–3), March-May 2006), pp.597-603
- Kamal Othman, Helen Petrie & Christopher Power, Understanding Visitors’ Experiences with Multimedia Guides in Cultural Spaces, *Transforming culture in the digital age international conference*, Tartu 2010
- Katz, J.E. & Rice R.E, (2002). *Social Consequences of Internet Use*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Løssing, A.S.W. (Eds.) (2009). *Digital Museums formidlingi Brugerperspektiv*. Copenhagen: The Heritage Agency of Denmark.
- Malraux, Andre (1978), “*Museum without Walls*”, in *The Voices of Silence*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- McLuhan and Bruce R. Powers . *The Global Village. Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century*. Marshall, Oxford University Press
- Peacock, D. (2008). Making Ways for Change: Museums, Disruptive Technologies and Organisational Change. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 333-351.
- Schick Lea, katrine Damkjær, (2010). Can you be Friends with an art Museum? rethinking the art Museum through Facebook. *Transforming culture in the digital age international conference*, Tartu
- Simon, N. (2010). *The Participatory Museum*. Santa Cruz, CA: Museum 2.0.
- Tallon, L. & Walker, K. (2008). *Digital Technologies and the Museum Experience – handheld guides and other media*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.