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MUSEUM MARKETING

BELGRADE MUSEUMS ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

Abstract:

The age of Informative Communication Technologies (ICT) has created completely new opportunities for cultural institutions, including museums, to be able to interact with an existing and potential audience, engaging them and building an online community of followers. WEB 2.0 provides blogs, sharing platforms and social networks to millions of users worldwide and has introduced new methods of online marketing. The new trends of using the most popular social networks have not bypassed the museums of Belgrade, who are managing to keep up with current developments. Therefore, this piece of research aims to analyse and evaluate the usage of Facebook and Twitter by 10 selected museums in Belgrade and provides information on their social media marketing strategy.

Keywords: WEB 2.0, social media marketing, Belgrade museums, museum communication

INTRODUCTION

In globalised and post-Fordist societies, Informative Communication Technology (ICT) tends to provide availability and a high flow of information that can be accessed easily on a daily basis. The rise of Web 2.0 has led to social media platforms, which are very different in their method of communication compared to TV, radio or publishing. Social media enables free and simple access for anyone around the world who can afford an internet connection. Compared to other types of media the main difference lies in the instant engagement of users, receiving virtual space for participation and providing instant feedback. As a result, communication takes place faster than ever before. The new trends of using the most popular social networks – Facebook and Twitter include not only individuals and private users, but also public organisations such as museums, galleries, libraries, and so on. As theatres lose their purpose without an audience and libraries are losing their readers, museums can easily become the “keepers of history” and “storers of artefacts” without visitors who can be reached by means of “museum communication”, representing the key to success for every museum around the globe. Happily, museums tend to keep up with the times and avoid sealing themselves off by making themselves accessible to their audience on different levels¹. Communication in museums takes place in several different ways and on several levels, using strategies and tactics from business and the economy; namely by using public relations, marketing and social media marketing. The basic means of communication is through exhibitions, explanations involving placing artefacts into context and by selling “information” to visitors. Additionally, communication tends to happen by means of various media such as: publications, print materials, video, TV, radio stations, newspapers, posters, billboards and the Internet². As Tomislav Šola suggested “museum communication should be research-based, truthful, creative, imaginative and innovative”³. The ICT era has definitely created new opportunities for museums to use various methods of communication, thus attracting Internet users and potential visitors and additionally creating a contemporary image of their institution. Museums are gaining a new lease on life by removing the boundaries of the classical museum-visitor relationship and are opening up to an audience, additionally by establishing a new dimension of audience engagement⁴. The “modern” museum uses social networks, blogs, websites and sharing platforms and therefore uses social media marketing. Utilisation of social media increases the visibility of the museum on the web, provides information about the museum and its programme, connects museums with their audi-

1 Maroević Ivo, *Uvod u Muzeologiju* (Zagreb, Zavod za informacijske studije, 1993), 199.

2 Savić Aleksandra “Novi život muzeja, muzeji na fejsbuku”, *Kruševački zbornik* 14, 2009, 285–289.

3 Šola Tomislav, *Marketing u muzejima ili o vrlini i kako je obznaniti*, (Zagreb, Hrvatsko muzejsko društvo, 2001), 51–53.

4 Savić Aleksandra, “Novi život muzeja, muzeji na fejsbuku”, *Kruševački zbornik* 14, 2009, 285–286.

ence and provides the opportunity to build an online community of followers. By using social media museums are also able to promote their work. However, some museums know how to “play” it even smarter, by creating more than a simple promotion and additionally applying social media marketing strategies that have a participatory role, thereby creating a relationship with internet users, engaging them to participate in discussions; to think, comment, like and share posts and eventually visit the exhibitions. The most popular museums on Facebook are the Art People Gallery, the Museum of Modern Art, the Louvre, the Royal Collection Trust, the Museum of Islamic Art, Saatchi Gallery, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Anne Frank House, the Tate and the British Museum, ranging from 5,800,000 to 678,753 Facebook page likes⁵. When it comes to Twitter, statistics are a slightly different as per the following: the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian Institute, the Tate, the Design Museum, Saatchi Gallery, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Royal Collection Trust, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the British Library and the Natural History Museum London, ranging from 5,210,000 to 770,802 Twitter followers⁶.

These museums choose to build on the image of a modern institution and develop an audience by creating large online communities on social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The choice of which social network is not random. According to online statistics Facebook has around 2.1 billion monthly active users, followed by YouTube with 1.5 billion active users, Instagram with 700 million and Twitter with 320 million active users⁷.

The museums of Serbia are also using these same social networks. Statistics from 2014 suggest that Facebook is the most popular social network among museums in Serbia. Serbia has around 115 museums and approximately 70% of these are active on Facebook⁸.

EMPIRICS & METHODOLOGIES

This research aims to study and analyse the usage of social media in the role of marketing and audience engagement in ten public museums in Belgrade: the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Yugoslav History, the Museum of Theatrical Arts, the Museum of Nikola Tesla, the Museum of Applied Arts, the Museum of Jewish History, the Museum of

5 Museum Analytics, Museums with the most page likes on Facebook, <http://www.museum-analytics.org/facebook/> (accessed on September 10, 2017).

6 Museum Analytics, Museums with the most page likes on Twitter, <http://www.museum-analytics.org/twitter/> (accessed on September 10, 2017).

7 Dream Grow, Top 15 Most Popular Social Networking Sites, <https://www.dreamgrow.com/top-15-most-popular-social-networking-sites/> (accessed on September 10, 2017).

8 Muzeji rade, Muzeji i Facebook rade, <http://muzejirade.com/muzeji-i-facebook-rade/> (accessed on August 05, 2014).

Science and Technology, the Ethnographic Museum and the Museum of African Art. This paper presents the usage of social media; the networks of Facebook and Twitter, the picture sharing platform Instagram and the video-sharing platform YouTube, as well as the official museum websites used by the selected museums. The paper also presents the museum's methods of communicating with their audience, providing audience engagement which is active on social media and the way in which Information Communication Technologies influence the world of museology. The research is empirical, and specific research methods were employed: semi-structured and structured interviews, qualitative and quantitative content analysis and literature review. Empirical data was collected through content analysis and semi-constructed and structured interviews that were conducted with the employees of the aforementioned cultural institutions over a period of three months. The main hypothesis was that museums which employ appropriate and ongoing social media marketing have more public promotion, greater visibility, better interaction with visitors and therefore gain more self-generated-income than museums which do not use social media marketing, or than museums which are occasionally active on social media. Two research questions were highlighted:

- In what ways and how frequently do Belgrade museums use social media?
- Do Belgrade museums have any defined social media marketing strategy?

The research sought to discover whether museums had any employees who were engaged specifically to manage social media and budget for social media marketing, as well as how they communicated with their audience, how they engaged their audience, the facts regarding their online visibility and what kind of information was being sent to internet users.

FINDINGS

On each Facebook page and Twitter profile the museums provide basic information such as their website, location, phone number, working hours and a description of which public transport can be used to reach the museum. Some of the museums use Facebook applications such as reviews, videos, descriptions in English and Serbian. Also, some of them added links to their Twitter and Instagram accounts and YouTube channels and additionally had a Google map showing the location of the museum. Most of the posts are in the Serbian language only. All of the Facebook pages are open for following as well as users being able to send messages and write on the page's timeline. Museums have an average Facebook user rating of 4.7 (5 is the maximum). The Museum of Contemporary Art uses the event application on Facebook, and gives users the opportunity to follow events that are taking place at the museum, which can also be found on the Museum of Yugoslav History's page. The Museum of Applied Art uses applications such as notes, reviews, YouTube, events and it is also connected with the Foursquare

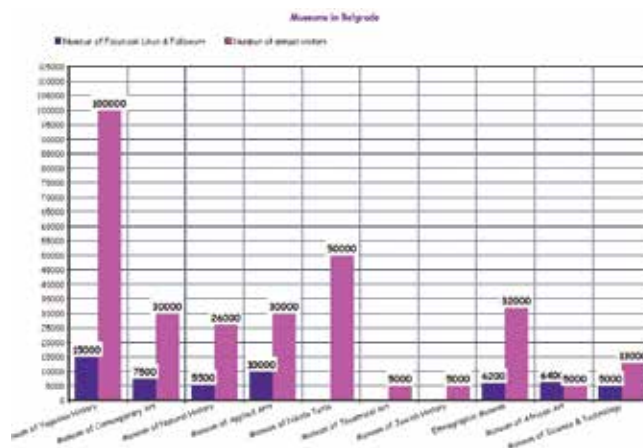
location-based application. It can be noted that the social media managers at the museums are aware of the potential of social networks. Together with descriptions and applications they are able to increase their museum's visibility and inform followers of what is happening in the museum with the help of the event application. Additionally, the museum managers are able to be informed of the opinions of their visitors by using the review application. Museums often use their logo as their profile picture and have changing background photos, sometimes representing the photo of the building, the museum's artefacts or exhibition posters, which are useful for illustrating who they are via their visual identity. All of the museums are active on social networks; the Museum of Yugoslav History, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Museum of African Art and the Museum of Natural History publish posts and photos more often. Their social media marketing strategies consist of giving information related to their exhibitions, creating events, sharing photos from these events and guided tours, photos related to their artefacts. Some of the museums work with press releases, some sharing posts and asking questions as an attempt to engage with their followers, inviting comments and encouraging them to express their opinion. It should be noted that there are likes and shares on Facebook, however comments and retweets are lacking. During conversations with museum employee I discovered that the museums do not have a budget for social media marketing and they make no financial investment in social media strategy. The aforementioned museums do not have a written or pre-planned social media marketing strategy. However, they do have some ideas on how to present information to their followers and manage their Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages. In addition, the museums do not have employees who are exclusively responsible for managing the museum's social media profiles and accounts. Most of the people who manage the social media activities are either in PR or they are curators. As a result they are not able to concentrate exclusively on social media marketing. Only one museum employee replied that they were familiar with the term "crowdsourcing", Mirjana Slavković from the Museum of Yugoslav History. Furthermore all of the respondents replied that they have never used it as a marketing strategy to engage their audience, which is not quite factual. On the 19th of July, 2014 I attended the conference "Museum of Image-Nation" at the Belgrade Youth Centre, where one of the lecturers was Ana Panić, curator of the Museum of Yugoslav History. During this conference I learned that they had utilised crowdsourcing but were just unfamiliar with the terminology for that particular marketing strategy. For one exhibition on the culture of Yugoslavia, the museum asked visitors to bring in old artefacts and contribute to the exhibition itself. In addition, as already noted, the Museum of African Art asked visitors to send in their photos while playing a Mankala game that would later be published on their website; another form of crowdsourcing. After social networks, blogs are the most popular phenomenon of Web 2.0 as means to provide information and communication with users. These can be used free of charge (depending on the platform) and can additionally be integrated into the museum's website. Blogs can help increase the promotion and visibility of the museums on the web and can

also improve organic SEO. Only the Museum of Yugoslav History has a blog on its website and cooperates with a blog “Bajskultura”. “Bajskultura” aims to raise awareness regarding the Museum of Yugoslav History and WWII tangible heritage in New Belgrade. “Bajskultura” offers guided bicycle tours for both locals and foreigners. Unfortunately none of the other museums use blogs.

- 80% of the museums have permanent displays; exceptions being the Natural History Museum and the Museum of Theatrical Arts due to a lack of space.
- 100% of the museums offer activities such as workshops, debates, guided tours, concerts and screenings as part of the museum product offer. Most of the museum activities are free of charge.
- 40% of the museums have a separate shop, while 80% sell publications, bags and similar items, except for the Jewish Historical Museum and the Museum of Theatrical Arts that define themselves as totally non-profit.
- 60% of the museums have just one building which they use. The rest, such as the Yugoslav History Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Museum of Science and Technology and the Ethnographic Museum consist of between two and four buildings.
- 70% of the museums sell entrance tickets, except for the Jewish Historical Museum and the Museum of Theatrical Arts owing to their museum policy.
- 100% of the museums are financially supported by the state.
- 100% of the museums use private funding for particular projects.
- 0% of the museums have marketing sectors, since those are publicly supported cultural institutions.
- 0% of the museums have a dedicated position for a marketing manager.
- 0% of the museums have an annual budget for marketing.
- 70% of the museums have an individual (sometimes two people) who are responsible for public relations. Three of the museums, the Jewish Historical Museum, the Museum of Theatrical Arts and the Nikola Tesla Museum do not have a person holding that position. Nikola Tesla Museum enlists the services of a PR person for special occasions only.
- 100% of the museums create their marketing budget for particular projects from the annual state donation or private donations for that particular event. Mostly it comes down to advertising on TV or posters, brochures and billboards on the street.
- 100% of the museums have websites; 90% of them have bilingual websites in English and Serbian, with the exception of the Museum of Theatrical Arts and Museum of Science and Technology, which only offers Serbian.

- 80% of the museums use social networks and sharing platforms. The Jewish Historical Museum and the Museum of Nikola Tesla do not use social networks or sharing platforms.
- 80% of the museums use Facebook but only 50% of them have an official Twitter profile, namely the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Yugoslav History, the Museum of African Art and the Museum of Science and Technology.
- 90% of the museums do not have a blog. Only the Museum of Yugoslav History has a blog and it is also currently cooperating with the blog "Bajskultura".
- 80% of the respondents replied that they use YouTube. Only the Museum of Nikola Tesla and the Jewish Historical Museum do not.
- 100% of the museums do not have a written social media marketing strategy. However, museums such as the Yugoslav History Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Natural Science Museum, the Museum of Applied Art and the Museum of African Art have ideas on how to present information and manage a Facebook page.
- 20% of the museums use Facebook ads.
- 50% of the museums use Instagram, namely the Museum of Yugoslav History, the Museum of Applied Art, the Museum of natural History, the Museum of African Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade (MoCAB).
- 100% of the museums can be found on Foursquare.
- 100% of the museums which are on Facebook have official pages and utilise the Facebook events application.
- 0% of these active museums use the live videos option on Facebook and Instagram.
- 90% of these active museums use chatbot on Facebook.
- 10% of the respondents replied that they are familiar with the term "crowdsourcing".
- 100% of respondents replied that they have never used crowdsourcing in their marketing strategy.
- 80% of the respondents replied that they had attended innovative courses for marketing, PR and fundraising.
- 100% of the respondents think there should be more employees in museums exclusively responsible for marketing, PR and social media marketing.
- 60% of the museums are doing evaluations in the form of polls, a guest-book, conversations with visitors and tourist guides.

I have found that the hypothesis is not 100% applicable in the case of Belgrade museums. This is because several of the sample results do not correspond. It seems that for some museums their use of social media marketing does not directly affect their visibility, their number of visitors or their annual income. I have concluded that certain other aspects, not exclusively related to social media marketing, are directly related to museum visitation, such as an appealing museum product, brand and reputation. This can be seen through examples of the most popular museums in Belgrade – Nikola Tesla Museum and the Museum of Yugoslav History – both of whom undertake the “marketing of personality”. That is, both Nikola Tesla and Josip Broz Tito were respected and well-known names, not just in Serbia but also worldwide, and the target group of these museums ranges from children to elderly visitors, and from locals to international tourists. Furthermore, I would like to mention that some of these museums have increased their visitation rate between 20% and 60% since 2014 (when I initially conducted the research). Additionally, in this period, the museums have increased their online presence and visibility and have improved social media marketing. According to museum employees, the increased number of visits is a result of an increase of tourism in Belgrade – especially in museums such as Yugoslav History and Nikola Tesla where 50% of the visitors are foreigners – as well as a result of ongoing social media marketing. Taking part in annual festivals such as the Museum Night and similar events definitely boosts museum visitation, especially at the smaller museums. The main building of the Museum of Contemporary Art finally opened its doors on October 20th, 2017 after several years of renovations. Over the period of a month the museum attracted approximately 70,000 local and foreign visitors.



The relationship between Facebook popularity and annual visitation among museums in Belgrade in 2016/2017 and 2014

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted, it can be concluded that marketing sectors are almost non-existent in Belgrade museums, also that marketing represents a smaller segment of their public relations activities.



The relationship between PR and marketing sectors in Belgrade museums



The relationship between PR and marketing sectors in museums worldwide

The museum staff are aware of the potential of social media marketing, however, there are not enough employees within the institutions to be wholly responsible for this practice and this fact affects the appropriate and ongoing usage of social media. Belgrade museums do not have a defined and written social media marketing strategy, and this also has an effect on their online visibility. It should not be forgotten that the role of marketing is to attract more visitors and make more income, which is crucial for the ongoing existence of the museums. Visitors to Belgrade museums can be divided into several groups: individual visits – educated people who have their personal interests visiting an exhibition and receiving information and informal education; adult group visits – adults coming with friends who are interested in seeing an exhibition, finding out more about a particular topic and enjoying their leisure time; family visits – adults with their children; organised groups-tourists with guides; students – high school pupils and elementary school pupils; people with special needs. These groups are the museums' available or existing audience, and should be their focus. The goal of museum marketing is to find out who these people are and what they like and dislike about the museum setting, other museum activities and additionally what they want to see in museums. This could be done by taking email addresses from visitors, answering polls and adding email sign ups on museum websites. Sending email invitations to visitors and personal invitations to other cultural organisations in the city, sponsors and stakeholders would provide more of a personal touch and represents the right

way to communicate with the existing audience. Also, social media marketing is the perfect means to inform existing followers about what is going on at a museum. Caring for the existing audience is the first step in high-quality marketing. The second step is reaching out to the non-existing or so called non-audience. The existing audience usually consists of educated and interested people who have a desire to consume culture on a regular basis, while the non-existing audience usually consists of people who may read about an exhibition in the newspaper, on the internet or hear about it on TV but don't feel there is a reason or a need to visit and consume culture or art. This type of audience is not easy to reach but potential definitely exists⁹, especially on the web and among internet users. According to the Bureau for Statistics in Serbia, excluding Kosovo and Metohija, 65% of households in Serbia own computers and have an Internet connection¹⁰; 53% of households in Serbia uses Internet via phone (3G network)¹¹; 72% of people in Serbia use the internet for communication (email messages and texting); 64% for downloading documents, photos, movies, music and videogames; 42,% for chatting on forums and websites; 26.4% use the Internet for education, courses and finding information connected with education and culture¹². Around 3,700,000 people in Serbia use Facebook, 1,200,000 use Instagram¹³, considerably less (350,000) use Twitter and LinkedIn and around 50,000 use Foursquare¹⁴. This information suggests that over 1,201,200 people are culture consumers on the web and therefore they represent potential museum visitors, not to mention that Serbia hosts around 2,5 million foreign visitors annually and a number of these people are certain to be interested in culture¹⁵.

Today's museums should be open for everyone in the public arena – from the oldest to the youngest. Museums around the world are much more progressive in the field of communication and marketing than the museums in Belgrade. Belgrade museums are aware that times have changed and that they should be working more on communication with their audience. Communication across social media opens new doors for reaching a broader internet audience, allowing museums, as well as other cultural institutions to keep up with modern times by using social

9 Digl Kit, *Marketing u umetnosti* (Beograd, Clio, 1998), 27.

10 Zavod za statistiku, *Upotreba informaciono-komunikacionih tehnologija u Republici Srbiji 2017*, <http://www.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/repository/documents/00/02/59/76/ICT2017s.pdf> (accessed on December 1, 2017).

11 Zavod za statistiku, *Upotreba informaciono-komunikacionih tehnologija u Republici Srbiji 2017*, <http://www.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/repository/documents/00/02/59/76/ICT2017s.pdf> (accessed on December 1, 2017).

12 Radovanović Danica, "Internet paradigma, struktura i dinamika onlajn društvenih mreža: Fejsbuk i mladi u Srbiji", *Pančevačko čitalište* 17, 20–26.

13 Ellecta Digital, *Instagram U Srbiji-Svi smo tu*, <https://ellectadigital.rs/instagram-u-srbiji-svi-smo-tu/> (accessed on December 1, 2017).

14 *Društvene mreže, "Najpopularnije stranice u Srbiji"*, <https://društenemreze.rs/> (accessed on July 13, 2017).

15 According to the Tourist Organization of Serbia.

media as a tool for audience engagement. In summary, social media marketing in museums in Belgrade needs improvement and more creative ideas that can be based on successful examples from other museums and cultural institutions worldwide. The museums can create a better position on social networks and reach potential visitors by increasing their social media marketing from an average to a much higher level and by following the latest trends in social media usage from 2017.

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