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Short bio
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Cultural Management Strategies for New Audiences: The Case of the Centre Pompidou

Abstract
As cultural institutions, museums play a pivotal role in society by preserving and presenting a wide range of cultural items for anyone's benefit. In this framework, effective strategic marketing becomes imperative so that museums broaden their reach towards new -also geographically- audiences, enhance visitor experiences, and maintain their cultural relevance in a globalised and ever-changing world. While existing literature on cultural management has extensively examined the overall impact of cultural initiatives -including digital ones- on consumer behaviour, there remains a significant research gap concerning the adaptation of cultural organisations to new challenges and needs due to an increasingly interconnected world. The aim of this paper is to shed light on how museums foster cultural management strategies to reach a specific public and how these impact the audience in terms of engagement.

For this purpose, an insight into the main marketing strategies adopted by the Pompidou Museum is provided. In order to attract more visitors, the French museum increased its presence in the digital realm and released a viral film to disseminate the fact that Centre Pompidou was one of the "Big Five" museums in Paris. Moreover, because of the surge of the Chinese public and in order to fulfil its needs following the launch of the *Pompidou VIP campaign*, the museum developed a visitor's guide to the permanent collections of the museum purposely designed for Chinese users. Thus, Chinese visitors can consult that new tool through WeChat influencer marketing and Weibo official accounts, whose Chinese users number more than 1 billion daily.

Additionally, the study was enriched with 29 direct interviews with Chinese online consumers who consulted the social media of Pompidou. The data highlights that 25 digital users had gathered information on the main artworks of the museums through the Chinese social network accounts of the museum and, eventually, decided to visit the brick-and-mortar museum. Interviewees disclosed that accessing social media had thrived a sense of engagement in the collections, especially because of the informal language. Moreover, they revealed they used WeChat influencer marketing by using keywords like travel, art, French culture, and similar words. Specifically, people under 25 years old had their foremost interaction with the museum via TikTok, Instagram, and WeChat, versus people older than 50 years old who preferred the institutional website, Facebook, and YouTube.

The study suggests custom-made cultural management strategies might reach a broader public and effectively engage it. Amidst them, there are digital campaigns, social media activities,

virtual experiences, and educational programs. The findings from this research have practical implications for museums since they contribute to the broader discourse on the evolving role of museums in making collections accessible through a tailored approach to engage diverse audiences.

Introduction

Museums are key cultural institutions that are supposed to provide the public with valuable access to a plethora of historical, artistic, and cultural artefacts. These institutions safeguard significant artefacts of cultural heritage and exhibit them in ways that inform and captivate audiences. Amidst a period marked by swift globalisation and technological progress, museums encounter fresh obstacles in upholding their significance and broadening their impact. Implementing marketing strategies that cater to a wide range of audiences, including those who are geographically spread out, is a severe challenge (Abungu, 2002).

Given these challenges, the primary literature examined the response of museums to the changes brought by a globalised and ever-changing world. Prior research has noted that museum leaders have encountered numerous challenges that have evolved with time (Palviainene, 2020). According to recent studies conducted (Johnson and Sobczak, 2021; Riggio and Newstead, 2023), the rate of change is currently faster than it has been in previous times. Several authors have emphasised the imperative for museums to adapt in the face of ongoing crises, such as COVID-19, climate change, sustainability, and the demand for civic engagement (Gilis *et al.*, 2022). From a leadership standpoint, this creates the need for a continuous transformation process (Gardner, 1993; Pettersson, 2021).

In light of these transformations, the main literature extensively discusses the function of museums in society, highlighting their pivotal role in society and their significance as guardians of culture and valuable educational assets (Furferi *et al.*, 2024; Nikolaou, 2024). Museums are responsible for safeguarding collections and allowing the public to experience culture. As a result, they play a vital role in cultural education and public involvement (Black, 2012). In order to remain pertinent and easily accessible, museums must consistently adjust to evolving societal demands and technological progress (Falk and Dierking, 2016). This adaptable strategy involves incorporating digital technologies to improve the visitor experience and expand their consumer reach. Studies suggest that digital efforts substantially influence how museums connect with their visitors by facilitating interactive and customised experiences that cannot be provided through traditional experiences (Rosso, 2022).

Recent studies have focused on incorporating digital media into museum marketing strategies. These strategies include utilising social media platforms, virtual tours, and online instructional programmes to attract and captivate visitors (Russo *et al.*, 2008; Kefi *et al.*, 2023). Museums have found social media to be an effective means of engaging with younger and more diverse audiences. Museums can utilise this technology to provide interactive and dynamic content that can be effortlessly shared and distributed, hence enhancing their exposure and expanding their audience reach (Villaespesa, 2019). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that active participation on social media platforms can increase the number of people physically visiting a museum. This is because online interactions frequently generate curiosity and a desire to experience the museum in person (Marty, 2007). In today's digital world, museums' proficiency in utilising social media and other digital platforms is crucial. Nevertheless, accessing collections does not boil down to having access to the Internet inasmuch as digital technologies might hinder inequalities due to belonging to marginalised social groups shaped by factors such as age, educational background, and ethnicity (Mazzoni *et al.*, 2024).

Although there is an increasing amount of literature on digital interaction in museums, there is still a lack of study that precisely examines how museums customise their digital strategies to cater to the distinct demands of specific cultural groupings. Current research focuses on broad aspects of digital strategy without taking into account the cultural nuances that could impact participation and communication. The current body of research in cultural management emphasises the impact of digital efforts on consumer behaviour. Still, it lacks discussion on the precise ways in which museums modify their strategies to cater to the changing demands of their specific audiences. This study aims to address this void by investigating how museums might employ focused cultural management strategies to reach and engage specific public segments effectively. Specifically, it examines how implementing such strategies might improve tourist experiences for the Chinese audience and foster cultural involvement, focusing on utilising digital and social media platforms.

The choice to focus on Chinese online users in this research work is based on ongoing trends in worldwide travel and digital involvement. Recent data emphasise the increasing significance of Chinese tourists in global tourism. China is continuously ranked as one of the leading countries for outbound tourism by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). Every year, millions of Chinese tourists travel abroad (UNWTO, 2023). As a prominent cultural hub, Paris has experienced a significant surge in the number of Chinese tourists visiting in recent years (Paris Region, no date). Chinese tourists made up a substantial proportion of the overall international visitors to Paris in 2019, so making a significant contribution to the city's tourism sector. On the one hand, Chinese tourists (96% in 2019) indicated visiting museums amidst their top three activities in Paris; on the other hand, they did not reveal the Centre Pompidou as one of the top five attractions they visited.[1] Additionally, this research considers that the wide usage of digital platforms and social media has fundamentally transformed how travellers obtain information and interact with locations (Giotis and Papadionysiou, 2022). Chinese travellers extensively utilise social media platforms like WeChat, Weibo, and TikTok. They employ these platforms for social networking and, seeking travel inspiration, arranging trips, and sharing their travel experiences (Fangxuan, 2020).

Literature review

The advancements in technology and the fast-paced societal progress -that we are all involved in -affect anyone, including museums. 67% of the worldwide population (5,4 billion people) used the Internet in 2023 (Itu, 2024). The number of people who have gained internet access has increased by 45%, reaching an estimated 1.7 billion people from 2018. As part and parcel of society, museums need to face new challenges to navigate a comprehensive transformation in order to maintain their relevance to audiences in the twenty-first century. In order to attract new audiences, museums might improve their digital offers to meet specific cultural consumption needs. The main literature highlighted that digital technology has forced museums to adapt to societal changes and markets (Navarrete, 2013). Therefore, museums need to operate a radical shift as an imperative, regardless of whether museums are confronted with a financial crisis or not (Black, 2012). Factors such as digital and social media, collaborative consumption, and the sharing economy have an impact on how consumers participate in the process of consuming (Kapoor et al., 2017).

Previous research studied the ever-changing reaction of museums to the influences of globalisation and technological progress. Studies reveal that museum have traditionally encountered a range of changing obstacles. Recent research indicates that the rate of these changes has increased, requiring museums to adjust more quickly (Johnson and Sobczak, 2021;

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[1] The most visited attractions from 2011 to 2019 are the Eiffel Tour, the Louvre Museum, Notre Dame, Arc de Triomphe, and (alternatevitly) Sacre Coeur and Versailles.

Riggio and Newstead, 2023). Literature has emphasised the significance of museums tackling present-day crises, such as public health pandemia, e.g., the COVID-19, environmental issues, and the increasing demand for social inclusion and community involvement (Gilis *et al.*, 2022). The combination of these variables indicates the need for continuous change in museum leadership and operations in order to uphold cultural significance and engage the public (Gardner, 1993; Pettersson, 2021).

Despite the importance of this topic, the current body of literature on cultural management has thoroughly explored the strategies of museums and the broad influence of those cultural initiatives, including digital ones, on consumer behaviour. Nevertheless, there is still a notable research gap when it comes to studying museums adapting to the changing challenges and demands of specific audiences in an increasingly interconnected world. This paper aims to examine the actions museums formulate and the cultural management strategies they embrace in order to effectively involve targeted audiences, as well as the subsequent impact of these on that audience in terms of engagement. The topic of this research is of the utmost importance since museums play a fundamental role in the preservation and dissemination of culture for anyone's benefit, requiring ongoing adjustments to remain relevant and establish significant relationships with their audiences (Drotner and Schroeder, 2010; Simon, 2010; Kidd, 2016; Corona, 2020).

Authors highlighted that, in order to ensure anyone's benefit, museums enhance participation and inclusivity by customising their offers, such as programmes and displays, to cater to the distinct needs and interests also of specific audiences, thereby fostering purposed cultural management strategies (Sandell, 2007; Falk and Dierking, 2016). Other studies pointed out that utilising digital technology in a flexible manner and designing interactive and participatory experiences may engage a wide range of visitor groups. Therefore, addressing digital inclusion requires customised strategies to cater to the specific needs of a group (Simon, 2010).

Museums are progressively employing social media platforms to optimise their cultural management strategies and target specific audiences. Recent research has demonstrated that museums encounter difficulties in efficiently utilising social media platforms as a result of financial limitations and constraints in human resources (Furini *et al.*, 2022; Gounopoulos and Vassou, 2022). In order to promote engagement with online users, museums are investigating cutting-edge approaches, such as employing machine learning algorithms to forecast the effectiveness of tweets and optimise their communication on social media platforms like Twitter (Emerson and Gomes de, 2020; Nieto McAvoy and Kidd, 2024). In addition, museums are utilising platforms such as Instagram to broaden the reach of their artwork and exhibitions beyond physical limitations. They emphasise storytelling and aesthetic presentation to attract and captivate people (Furini *et al.*, 2022). Museums may enhance their appeal as tourist sites and attract more visitors by actively managing their presence on social media.

Methodology

This study focuses on the case study of the Centre Georges Pompidou (briefly referred to as Pompidou). This research employs qualitative data to examine the impact of the cultural management practices implemented by the museum on audience engagement. The data was gathered through direct interviews with 29 visitors who used the museum's social media platform. The study excluded participants who did not finish the interview. In addition, only individuals who came from China and consulted Pompidou's social media were allowed to participate in the research. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and readily consented to provide anonymous contributions to this research.

In the first phase, the interviews with visitors were conducted after the museum visit, according to a conversation format. Prior to conducting interviews, a series of 10 questions was printed.

During the second phase and the process of questioning, detailed records were kept on the essential facts. It was hypothesised that this procedure could extend the conversation, considering that writing at the same speed as the speaker is necessary to prevent any information from being overlooked. Nevertheless, the method increased the likelihood of ending the interviews prematurely. As a result, an audio recorder was used. Before its deployment, individuals were adequately informed, and their express consent was obtained for its utilisation. Data collection occurred using written notes and an audio recorder simultaneously to address the potential hazards arising from technology concerns -such as low battery, full memory, or excessive noise.

After the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed using the Amberscript online tool to improve the data collected from the conversations and the associated notes. The data was analysed using the Nvivo software, which allowed for the classification of information into various codes/themes. In addition, the codes were classified into categories. Consequently, all the replies were categorised into separate groups and subsequently used for the aim of this study.

Results and discussion

The Centre Pompidou is a modern and contemporary art museum in the heart of Paris. Its collection, consisting of 140,000 items, depicts the world's second-largest collection of contemporary art after the MoMa in New York, and the largest in Europe.

The Centre Pompidou has established a distinctive approach to offering worldwide opportunities by forming renewable agreements that span from 5 to 10 years. In 2010, Centre Pompidou-Metz became the inaugural French public cultural institution to undergo decentralisation. The Centre Pompidou Málaga was established in Spain in 2015, followed by the opening of Kanal-Centre Pompidou in Brussels in 2017, and the Centre Pompidou x West Bund Museum, whose opening was celebrated by the French President Macron in Shanghai in December 2019 (Pompidou, 2020). The latter project depicts the most important cultural exchange and cooperation project between the Chinese and French governments.

In order to increase its reach, the museum has enhanced the accessibility of its collections by enlarging its presence in the digital realm. For this purpose, the museum has an official website. Thus, collections and related data can be enjoyed through the institutional website and general information, such as events. The website is currently witnessing a surge in attendance, with a remarkable 5.5 million unique visitors (Pompidou, 2023). This represents a substantial rise of 1.6 million visitors, equivalent to a growth rate of 43%, compared to the previous year (2021). In addition to the website, the museum has official accounts on overriding social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok, Linkedin, and YouTube. Implementing this comprehensive approach resulted in a notable surge in the online visibility and impact of the Centre Pompidou, as seen by the record-breaking number of visitors in 2022. Social networks boast a staggering 3.3 million subscribers, with a notable increase in interactions, particularly on Twitter, which has seen a remarkable 65% surge, with more interactions than TikTok (Pompidou, 2023). The capillary presence in the digital realm matches the purpose of allowing a broader audience to access collections (Weilenmann, Hillman and Jungselius, 2013).

With regards to physical visits, onsite visits to the museum numbered approximately three million people (3,009,570) in 2022, with a surge of 101% in comparison to 2021, as shown in Table 1 (Bakhlina *et al.*, 2022; Pompidou, 2023). Online visits (8,188,120) through the museum website outnumbered physical visits early three to one, of which 5,494,942 were unique online visits. In total, 60,590,061 online visits were reported since the website was created in October 2012. These findings are consistent with those demonstrating that online visits support and exceed onsite visits (Corona, 2023b).

Some services have been customised according to the target audience and purpose, both onsite and online, such as for the Chinese audience. For instance, following the deal Centre Pompidou × West Bund Museum in Shanghai, a series of meetings named "Heure(s) de Chine" was developed in 2019 (Pompidou, 2020). These meetings happened on a bi-monthly frequency discussion on the latest advancements in modern and contemporary artistic endeavours within the cultural realm commonly referred to as "Greater China" or "Great China".

The efforts to engage Chinese people have also involved digital resources. For instance, to ensure proper accessibility, information on the website is provided in several languages, including Chinese.[2] Moreover, in order to attract more visitors, the French museum increased its presence in the digital realm and released the film "The Souvenirs of Paris". In addition, several media outlets (television, print, blogs) embraced this unconventional attempt by the Centre Pompidou to position itself as one of Paris's top five tourist spots. The film became viral. Indeed, it gained over 5.5 million views on YouTube (Pompidou, 2019).

Another crucial strategy to increase the accessibility of the museum collections was represented by the launch of the #Pompidou VIP campaign, which occurred on December 11, 2019.[3] Five days later, a redesigned campaign was launched to reach the Chinese public through two social media platforms of the museum -WeChat and Weibo- that are massively used in China. For instance, over one billion Chinese people access WeChat, and spend one hour and 20 minutes on the app daily (Statista, 2023).

The Pompidou promoted the WeChat Mini Program so that Chinese language speakers could obtain a plethora of information about the Pompidou.[4] As a result, the program serves as a guide, a sort of personal assistant, through which the Chinese public can access general information, such as maps, opening hours, costs of tickets, and schedule of events.

Moreover, the guide provides information on collections. The display of the 20th and 21st-century masterpieces belonging to the permanent collections currently exhibited on the 4th and 5th floors of the museum is part of the museum's digital strategy. The guide offers two different journeys of art history: one on modern art, and another one on contemporary art. The first program illustrates 21 selected iconic modern artworks, such as Amedeo Modigliani's, Vassily Kandinsky's, Joan Miró, and Tamara Lempicka's. The second program shows 12 contemporary art items, such as Benjamin Vautier's and Giuseppe Penone's. Each program offers a description containing data associated with each artwork, such as the name of the piece, authors and their personal information, number of inventory, sizes, the collection to which the item belongs, publications, exhibitions carried out with that item, location of the artwork in the map, and further links. Information is available in Chinese text. As an alternative option, people can listen to explanations. The visitor's guide can be enjoyed inside the museum or offsite, e.g., at home. Furthermore, the Pompidou leveraged WeChat influencer marketing by using strategic keywords such as tourism, art, French culture, and related terms.

Most visited museums in Europe 2019-2022 (in 1,000s)	2019	2020	2021	2022
Louvre, Paris	9.600	2.700	2.825	7.726
Vatican Museums, Vatican	6.883	1.300	1.613	5.081
Natural History Museum, London	5.424	1.197	1.564	4.655
British Museum, London	6.208	1.275	1.327	4.097
Tate Modern, London	6.098	1.433	1.156	3.883

[2] Other languages used in the websites are French, English, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Thai, Hindi, Japanese, and Korean.
[3] VIP stands for 'For very important pieces'.
[4] The visitor's guide was conceived by MB Projects in partnership with Como Network.

Musée d'Orsay, Paris	3.652	867	1.044	3.270
Reina Sofia, Madrid	4.426	1.248	1.643	3.063
Centre Pompidou, Paris	**3.270**	**913**	**1.501**	**3.010**
State Hermitage, St Petersburg	4.957	969	1.649	2.813
National Gallery, London	6.011	1.197	709	2.727
Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid	3.203	852	1.175	2.457
Victoria and Albert Museum, London	3.921	872	858	2.370
Science Museum (South Kensington), London	3.254	862	646	2.335
Galleria Degli Uffizi, Florence	2.362	659	970	2.223
Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, Paris	2.370	793	984	2.101
National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh	2.210	444	661	1.974
State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow	2.836	894	1.581	1.910
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam	2.700	675	625	1.766
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam	2.100	517	366	1.346
Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, Oświęcim	2.300	502	563	1.184

Table 1. Most visited museums in Europe 2019-2022

This study was deepened with 29 direct interviews conducted after the visit to the museum. According to the data, half of the interviewees were under 25 years old (45%), and one out of three were from 26 to 49 years old (31%), whereas 24% were older than 50 years old. With regards to education qualification, most were students (48% at university, 4% at high school), 41% had a master's degree, and only 4% boasted a PhD. These results confirm previous studies highlighting how visitors' socio-economic status significantly affects museum visits (Falk and Katz-Gerro, 2016).

The research indicates that 25 digital users (86%) obtained knowledge about the most known artworks of the museums from the Chinese social network accounts of the museum and then chose to visit the physical museum. By contrast, some visitors (14%) explained that they decided to visit the Pompidou, regardless of their online consultation. Onsite and virtual visits have a complementary relationship. By and large, this study provides additional evidence to support the hypothesis that virtual visits encourage physical visits to museums, and vice versa (Marty, 2007; Ateca-Amestoy and Castiglione, 2014; Evrard and Krebs, 2018; Mihelj, Leguina and Downey, 2019; Corona, 2023a).

Interviewees were also asked about their favourite social media platforms. Individuals under 25 years old principally engaged with the museum through TikTok, Instagram, and WeChat. Contrary to younger people, people aged over 50 showed a preference for institutional websites, such as Facebook and YouTube. These figures suggest that people select the right channel for them, according to what they think is more suitable for their needs, in terms of type and amount of information, duration, and right package (Yakel, 2000).

Respondents were also asked to indicate why they consulted the museum's digital networks. First and foremost, people reported general curiosity as the leading factor for accessing the digital realm. Some of them said that they saw about the Pompidou's collections while they were "whiling the evening on the Internet just for fun". This study corroborates the results of previous research, which determined that digital cultural consumption could broaden the user base when situated outside of the conventional art context, hence facilitating novel modes of hedonic and utilitarian consumption (Navarrete and Villaespesa, 2020). Additionally, they disclosed they "longed to know more about European artists' masterpieces' displayed in Pompidou." These results confirm that people are interested in collections for educational purposes, albeit virtually (İşlek and Asiksoy, 2024).

Interviewees were asked to indicate what they most appreciated in accessing social media. They revealed (83%) that digital consumption had fostered engagement in the collections, mainly due to the use of everyday language. Additionally, they pointed out that they enjoyed the information because it was provided in Chinese. Furthermore, participants (91%) revealed they appreciated the WeChat "Favourites" function to create their own personal list. This function generates a list of favourite links previously selected by the users that are always available on their mobiles or computers. Others (73%) expressed appreciation for the app's feature, which allows them to share their content with their friends and add comments. Respondents (87%) were interested in videos they saw in the WeChat "channels" section. The museum creates these videos, and visitors generate others (UGC, User-generated content). Moreover, people can repost them or share them with friends. These findings suggest that novel strategies attract new audiences -such as the Chinese public for this case study- and strengthen the engagement of digital users (Bakhshi and Throsby, 2012).

Most interviewees (87%) revealed that they utilised the mini program provided through WeChat to get information as a personal assistant throughout their visit. The visitors highly valued the narratives accompanying the artworks they looked at since they were presented in simple words. Some visitors expressed the opinion that the content and the length of the explanation were adequate to retain an interest in people for all the duration of the visit. This study confirms previous results demonstrating how multimedia content improves visit experiences (Nieto McAvoy and Kidd, 2024). Furthermore, a significant number of individuals (89%) revealed they would have taken the opportunity to review the objects they observed after their visit.

By and large, a prominent part of the participants (91%) said they were satisfied with the museum's social media usage. They recommended it to friends and family.

Conclusion

This study uses qualitative data from direct interviews with 29 Chinese visitors who engaged with the Pompidou's social media platforms. The results emphasise the influence of these digital strategies on tourist involvement and contentment. The study highlights the significance of employing informal language and social media marketing to engage with younger generations, while not omitting to address the preferences of older users through conventional online platforms, such as Facebook. The findings obtained from this study have implications for museums, providing practical recommendations on how to improve cultural engagement using tailored digital and social media strategies.

These include digital campaigns, social media activity, virtual experiences, and educational programmes. By implementing this strategic approach, museums can enhance their visitor numbers and cultivate more profound ties with their audiences, creating a heightened appreciation for cultural heritage. Employing informal language and focused social media advertising might entice younger demographics, while accommodating the tastes of older users by utilising conventional internet platforms such as Facebook. These strategies can be adapted to suit different groups of visitors, thereby ensuring that museums cater to their varied audiences' not only distinct tastes, but also their specific needs.

One severe limitation of this research is the limited sample of interviewees. This limitation could be addressed by future research. Despite this limitation, this study not only improves the understanding and value of social media for fulfilling the needs of specific groups, but it also sheds light on the changing role of museums in disseminating culture. In conclusion, this research offers practical suggestions for museums to enhance cultural involvement and contribute to the broader conversation on how museums may effectively connect with and engage diverse visitor groups through tailored digital strategies.

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