LONG TERM STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNICATION IN THE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM SECTOR

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Summary

Overview

What you will learn - LO
Keywords and terms
Background

Section 1

Benefits of a Marketing & Communication Strategy
Increasing visibility
Working on its image

Section 2

New Social Era
Public interaction
Public engagement

Section 3

Case studies
Explanation of case studies

Section 4

Open Questions & Tips
Open questions & reflection
Tips
Key takeaways

Closing section

To continue your learning
List of references
Author's names & credits

What will you learn

This subunit invites the participants to reflect on an important aspect of business models, the communication and marketing strategy.

At the end of this presentation, you will be able to:

- Identify marketing strategies that can be used for the cultural heritage and tourism sector.

- Recognise the strengths of social media platforms and how they can be used for branding and communication purposes as well as for connecting with communities.

- Have an insight on the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on the communication strategies adopted in the cultural heritage and tourism sector.

- Grasp the importance of the new social era trend.

Keywords & terms /sentence

Sustainability

Strategies that are durable in terms of cost, investments and impacts. Communication sustainability refers to decisions that can be implemented in the long term.

Diversification

Utilising multiple channels and tools to cover a wider variety of revenue generators and reach a diversified audience.

Communication

A key part of the business model and marketing strategy, communication englobes internal and external image, visibility and relations with the public.

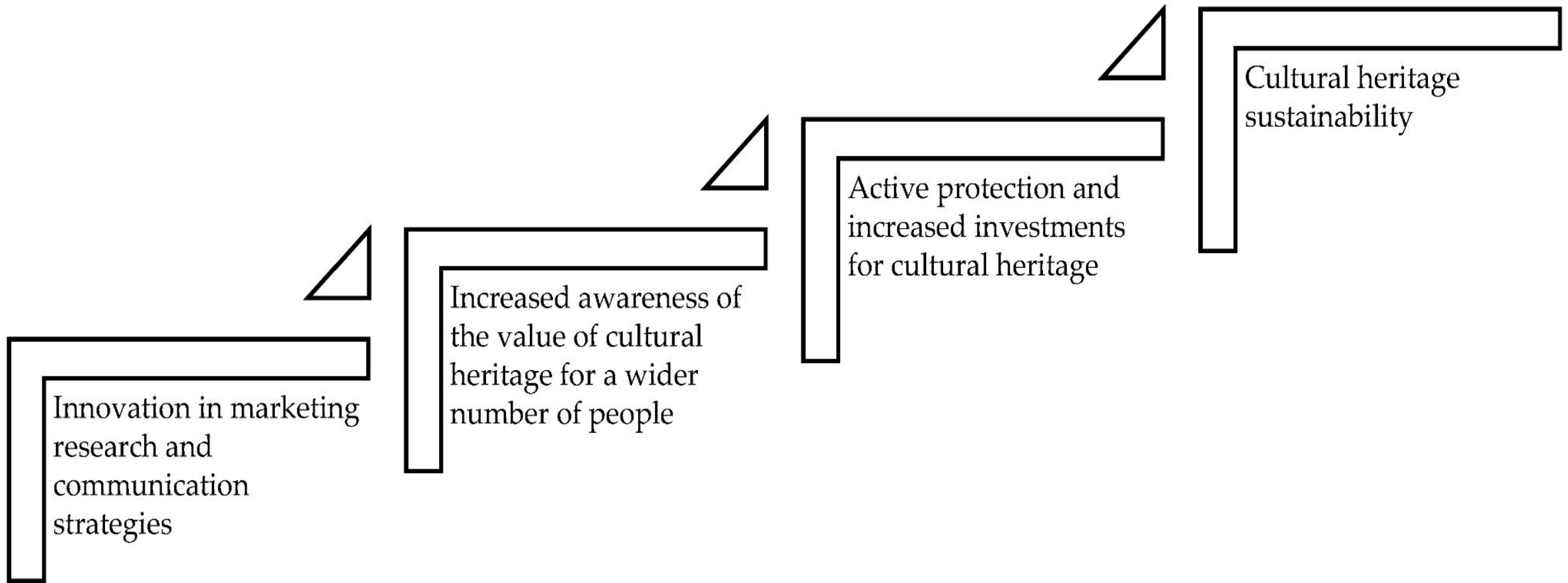Photo by Romain Vignes on Unsplash

Background

New long term strategies for sustainable business models.

With the restrictions caused by the covid-19 pandemic forcing museums and sites to close their doors and cultural events to be cancelled, the cultural heritage and tourism sector has been hit by unprecedented challenges, pushing cultural managers to enhance their entrepreneurial mindset and find alternative solutions to generate revenue, but also to guarantee the access to culture in spite of physical distancing. The pandemic has highlighted the fragility of relying solely on in presence visits and interaction, encouraging managers to look for more sustainable strategies.

It is in this context that the need for **diversification** of revenue streams in the culture and tourism sector has been accentuated, not only in terms of offer, but also in terms of communication. In their evolution towards more entrepreneurial approaches, cultural institutions have to reconsider the significance given to their marketing and communication strategy in their business plan. If the need to dedicate resources to online strategies was already recognised, it has become even more so apparent following the strict lockdowns put into place all over Europe. Indeed, being able to offer online experiences and engage with the public through digital platforms have already shown multiple benefits to businesses of all sectors, and have already proven to be a real asset for the promotion of culture and tourism. Most particularly, social medias have become the most powerful tool, working

How can innovating marketing and communication strategies help the cultural heritage and tourism sector?

Innovation in marketing research and communication strategies

Increased awareness of the value of cultural heritage for a wider number of people

Active protection and increased investments for cultural heritage

Cultural heritage sustainability

Source: https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/10/3/774/htm

Need for diversification.

The covid-19 pandemic has proven that in presence visits and interactions cannot be considered as the only way the public can access culture. Since the movement restrictions have inflicted considerable revenue loss, cultural events and institutions need to reinforce their online presence by diversifying the experience offer and creating a long term line of communication. Being able to remain connected to the public is, now more than ever, a necessity to not only make culture more visible and attractive, but also to keep people engaged.

Immediate response and recovery plans have been laid out in order to increase the offer of online experiences, which are considered the opportunity to create a new relation with the public that pushes the sector to embrace its process of ***entrepreneurialization*** and of innovation.

94% & 98% | of museums were closed in Western and Eastern Europe during the Great Lockdown of 2020.

80% & 83% | of museums and religious heritage institutions increased their online presence.

56% | of museums across Europe dedicated staff for digital tasks.

Datas taken from the **study of CULT Committee**.

Photo by Paolo Bendandi on Unsplash

SECTION 1

Benefits of a
Marketing &
Communication
Strategy

Dive in the topic

Marketing strategy to increase visibility.

From an entrepreneurial point of view, having an effective marketing and communication strategy is essential for a business. Cultural entrepreneurs have realised the benefits of having a strong online presence to increase visibility. For several years, the rise of social media has proven to be the best platforms to reach out the widest audience in terms of number, diversity in age, location and interest. Using social media for marketing purposes has become the most useful tool for any sort of organisation trying to convey a message, and especially for the cultural heritage and tourism sector in its sharing of culture and destination. Being free of use, social media represent a great promotional tool, that has even more influence than other online platforms.

Why becoming more visible on social media?

During the covid-19 pandemic, cultural assets found themselves inaccessible and isolated, and it has become necessary for cultural institutions to increase their online presence to maintain a connection with the public. Some institutions didn't wait for the pandemic to happen to realise the power of social media. Institutions like **MoMA**, **Guggenheim** and **Tate** have been very active on social media for years and gather millions of followers. But even smaller cultural establishments have been using these online tools to reach larger audience. The benefits of becoming more visible online and expanding the target groups are many, the main one being to attract more people to join cultural events. **The Museum of Rural Life** located in Berkshire, UK, is a great example of an institution taking full of advantage of the power of social media by increasing its online visibility and seeing a growth of in presence visitors of 47% in 2018, after making a post that became viral on twitter, showing that **online visibility** is a real marketing tool to **encourage conversion**.

Photo by Campaign Creators on Unsplash

Dive in the topic

3,619,965,485
Google searches today

3,493,018
Blog posts written today

372,520,059
Tweets sent today

3,524,295,433
Videos viewed today
on YouTube

42,153,401
Photos uploaded today
on Instagram

74,205,868
Tumblr posts today

The live daily data available on internetlivestats.com show how the phenomenon of digitalisation is growing by the second. With the number of user and published content constantly going up, social media platforms represent the marketing tool reaching out to the widest audience ever.

2,812,037,202
Facebook active users

961,792,988
Google+ active users

374,074,690
Twitter active users

Source: data taken on 20/05/2021 at 10:55.

Dive in the topic

Increasing visibility during covid-19.
Cultural solidarity: a support initiative from UNESCO.

The pandemic has fostered a boom in the use of social media and other online platforms. Both the public and institutions have been looking to stay connected with the outside world from the inside of their homes. In an effort to provide support to cultural institutions and maintain a sustainable access to cultural heritage, UNESCO has launched several actions.

- A special 'covid-19 page has been added to their official website, with a section 'Exploring World Heritage from home with UNESCO' where several virtual tours and online exhibitions from cultural institutions of all over the world are being promoted.

- An international campaign was launched in April 2020 on social media with the hashtags **#ShareOurHeritage** & **#ShareCulture**, encouraging people to share their environments and traditions online for the public to stay in contact with culture around the world.

Source image: https://aiguofficial.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/resiliart.jpg

Reassessing strategies and investments.

To increase visibility, cultural entrepreneurs need to invest in marketing strategies and primarily invest in:

Time

➤ Dedicated to convey an effective marketing research in order to analyse the audience and identify the target groups, the needs of the institutions in terms of communication, the trends in the cultural and tourism sector as well as the global ones.

➤ To train the staff on the vision and mission of the institution and on the online tools available.

Budget

➤ Dedicated to promotional actions on social media.

➤ To promotional actions on other online platforms.

➤ To hiring staff with the right skills.

Staff

➤ Community manager

➤ Social media manager

➤ Digital marketing specialist

➤ Marketing director

➤ Digital communication manager

MoMA

MoMA is one of the most followed museums on social media platforms since several years. The museum has:

➤ Dedicated time to social media platforms very early, recognising their potential form the start ➜ Joined Facebook and Twitter in 2008, Instagram in 2011.

➤ Invested in a division dedicated to communication and marketing with an skilled director of marketing and creativity.

➤ It is one of the most active museums on social media in the world.

Dive in the topic

Working on its image.

If social media platforms can boost the visibility of cultural enterprises, they can also have a strong influence on the public worldwide. Just like in branding strategies, it is important to invest in the **image** of an enterprise and include it as part of its marketing and communication plan. As social media have a more personal approach, for profit and nonprofit enterprises have been using the platforms as the most cost effective marketing tool. For cultural enterprises, conveying their internal missions, showcasing their values and stating their contributions to public can not only lead to more visits or ticket sales, but also:

➤ Encourage long term membership

➤ Encourage donations

➤ Engage volunteers

➤ Drive political and social change

To establish its image, a cultural enterprise has to understand its audience, to take into consideration the different characteristics of the platforms being used, and most importantly, to work on its **content**. Content sharing is another way for cultural enterprises to **add value digitally** and is directly associated with the purpose of the enterprise , therefore it has to be carefully thought through. As the amount of content shared online keeps expanding, enterprises need to find distinctive content that is able to make them stand out in an image-saturated visual culture.

Types of content

The Museum of English Rural Life
@TheMERL

look at this absolute unit.

3:52 PM · Apr 9, 2018

♡ 105.2K   💬 785   ⬆ Share this Tweet

Image: https://twitter.com/themerl/status/983341970318938112?lang=fr

★ **Quality content**: keeping in mind the mission of a cultural enterprise, content that informs, educates, raises awareness on a particular topic, is very popular for a public in search of culture. Wild facts, pop culture references, mini interviews with famous artists and professionals, are innovative ways to keep the audience active on the social media platforms and drive public engagement. In this underline, Rob Baker, director of marketing and creative strategy at the Museum of Modern Art, share a few tips on what makes MoMA so popular on social media.

★ **Entertaining content**: social media platforms are also used for entertainment, therefor content needs to be adapted to what the audience is looking for. Using humoristic content is an easy way to get the attention of the users, but also to make culture more digestible and accessible to all kind of public, especially the young one,

Types of content

★ **Unique content:** social media platforms have the characteristic of being more intimate, where people share their daily lives, thoughts and experiences. An attitude adopted by many enterprises in order to feel more personal and in touch with the public, which has become even more popular with the covid-19 pandemic. Many museums and other institutions have given access to the public to content that they wouldn't be allowed to have access to in presence. By interviewing staff members, showing back stage processes or daily life tasks, the audience has access to new kind of culture that is more unconventional. The **Rijksmuseum** has found innovative ways to provide unique content with its 'Behind the Scenes' series on Instagram that can be watched for free, or with its 'Operation Nightwatch', an online night tour that can be booked directly on the official website that provides a new segment for generating revenues.

Image: https://www.instagram.com/p/B1tdrbnAPED/

SECTION 2

New Social Era

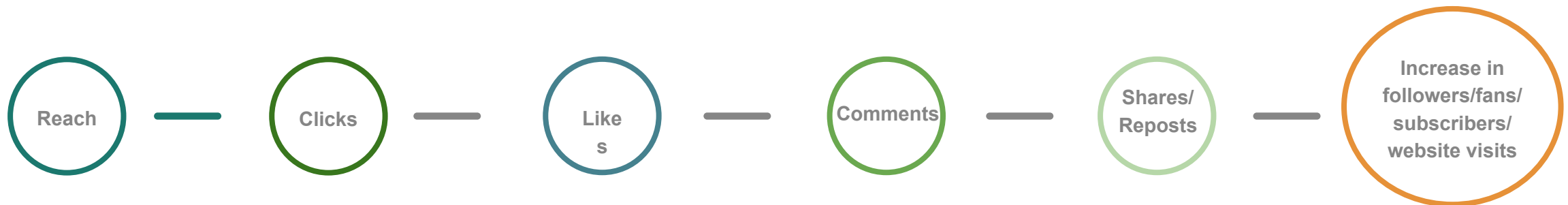# New strategies for a new social era

Fostering the 'social' in social media.

From online interactions..
If the social medias are such effective marketing tools, it is due to their 'social' nature. These platforms being based on the idea of creating a network encouraging communication and sharing of personal content, they have a **people-centered approach** that focuses on the users. Such characteristics that cultural entrepreneurs need to embrace and to keep in mind while elaborating their communication strategy. Not only the quality of the content is important, but also the way the users interact with it. Interaction is determined by the way the users receive the content, the objective being to encourage **open participation**. In a public sector such as cultural heritage and tourism, interacting with the users and giving the opportunity of playing an active role to a broader range of stakeholders, is perfectly in line with the 'social' dimension of social media and the need of the sector for collaborative planning and conservation.

With the evolution of the way the social medias are being used and the rapid evolution of technology, the way entrepreneurs address the public had to evolve too, creating a new language that the public can relate to. **New narratives** had to be developed in order to create a connection with the audience that is more personalised and confidential, fostering an environment of open communication where both the cultural entrepreneurs and the users exchange information. Nowadays , many social medias and other websites provide integrated **key indicators** to measure the interactions generated by shared content. Those indicators are valuable to understand the audience better and to measure the return on investment made in the marketing and communication strategy.

Engagement metric:

Reach — Clicks — Likes — Comments — Shares/ Reposts — Increase in followers/fans/ subscribers/ website visits

New strategies for a new social era

Public

Friend/Fan/Follower

Subscriber

Prospect

Customer/Member

Loyalist

Advocate

Inspired by Jason Falls, SocialMediaExplorer.com
© Mark Smiciklas, Digital Strategist, IntersectionConsulting.com/blog

Image source.

… to online communities.

Interacting with the audience online is now a common marketing strategy and has proven to be the ultimate strength of social medias. From these interactions, the audience becomes engaged in conversations and debates. The large amount of people gathered on the same platforms reacting to the same content has generated a spirit of community. This online community is very powerful as the audience engaged is totally geo-free and promote mutual understandings between people who not only interact with each other but also inspire each other and voice their opinions through advocacy. The principle of advocacy is to let the public promote and spread awareness. Keeping the audience virtually engaged is creating more opportunities for collaboration between local communities and cultural professionals through education outreach, knowledge sharing, and feedback. Those inputs are extremely valuable as they can set trends and influence the global cultural movements. Consequently, new roles and investments have to be added in the reshaping of cultural business models, such as the role of community manager.

The role of **community manager**:
Interacting with the users and fostering engagement is a part of communication strategy of its own. Managing an online community on several platforms requires times and financial investments. The community manager helps with content sharing that nurtures a positive relationship with the audience and create a connection between the public and culture. Community management can be seen as the new way of providing customer care that goes beyond providing a service but offers a new experience and fosters empowerment to the public in participating in the valorisation, preservation and evolution of culture.
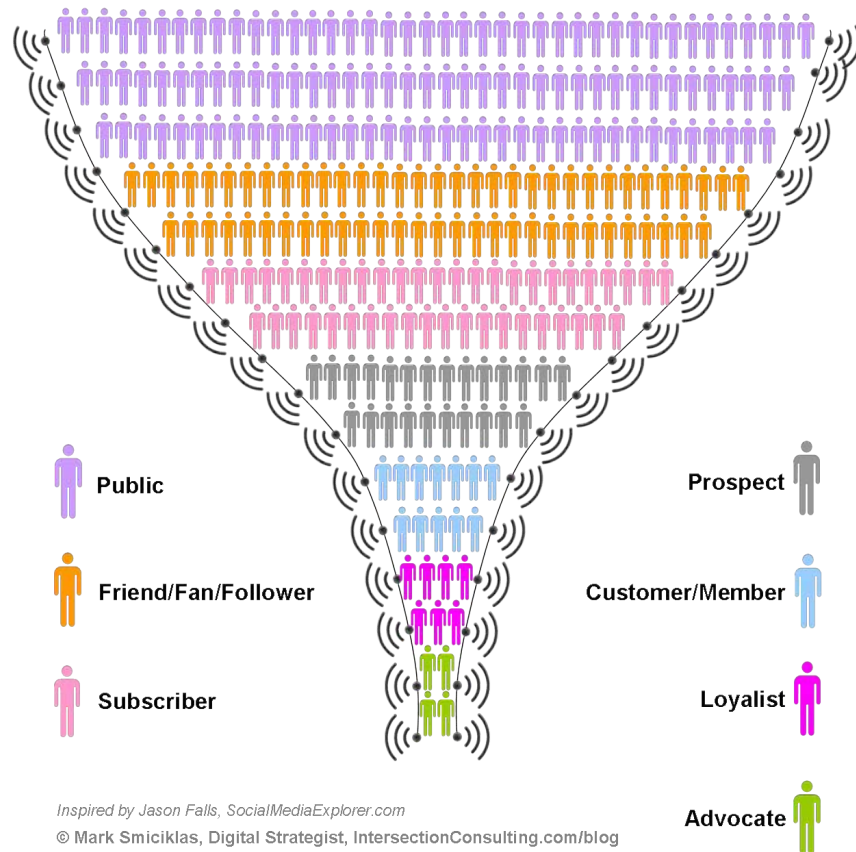
New strategies for a new social era

Contributing to collective memory.

Building an online community is beneficial for all sectors in many ways. Financial benefits are the first one taken into account since members of the community tend to promote naturally by talking about the content and making it more visible. 'Real-life' users also have the power to influence the audience with their feedback considered more authentic, therefore leading to more sales. But the power of social media lie also in the collaborative aspect of online communities. To be sustainable, the cultural sector relies on the involvement of the public, in presence and online. The opportunities provided by digitalisation and the social media platforms allow the users to be informed and to contribute to the development of culture from an early stage. Indeed, those communities constitute a laboratory for cultural entrepreneurs to gather information, as the users are encouraged to create their own digital heritage landscapes by photo sharing, video recording, voting on new exhibitions to be presented, therefore creating new cultural narratives. By gathering constant live feedback, there is the opportunity for cultural institutions to make common decisions that take into account the voices of the users. A **user-oriented approach** that fosters exchange of creative ideas and lays the ground for **open innovation and co-creation** that lead the public from 'users' to active contributors to culture and the collective memory.

Institutions are taking advantage of the context created by social media platforms to involve the public in culture storytelling, by organising photo contests of their own cultural sites, by inviting the public to upload content on their websites, by inviting the public to vote on which exhibition should be shown next, or by giving credits to the public.

➡ **<u>Wikipedia Loves Art</u>** collaborates with museums and invite the public to take photos that would best illustrated Wikipedia articles.

➡ **<u>PLUGGY</u>** is a social media platform that takes the public from observers to transformers of the way cultural heritages are being shared.

New strategies for a new social era

Social media narrative.

The evolution of technology and growth of social media mean that the ICT language had to evolve too in order to adapt to new formats. Innovative communication tools have led the way to new narratives intended for a young audience. Podcasts, live stories, reels and hashtags are amongst the most popular tools for contemporary storytelling as they relay content in a short and effective manner and can be shared easily. Cultural institutions such as **The Acropolis Museum of Athens** is using those tools to their full potential. In its nine part series exhibiting artifacts and statues from the museum during covid-19, the museum launched a hashtag campaign using #StaySafe that kept the museum active during lockdown. In its digitalisation boost effect, the pandemic has encouraged the culture sector to embrace those new narratives. This **Survey on the impact of the COVID-19 situation on museums in Europe** highlights the popularity of hashtag for storytelling on social media with an increase in use by the museums.
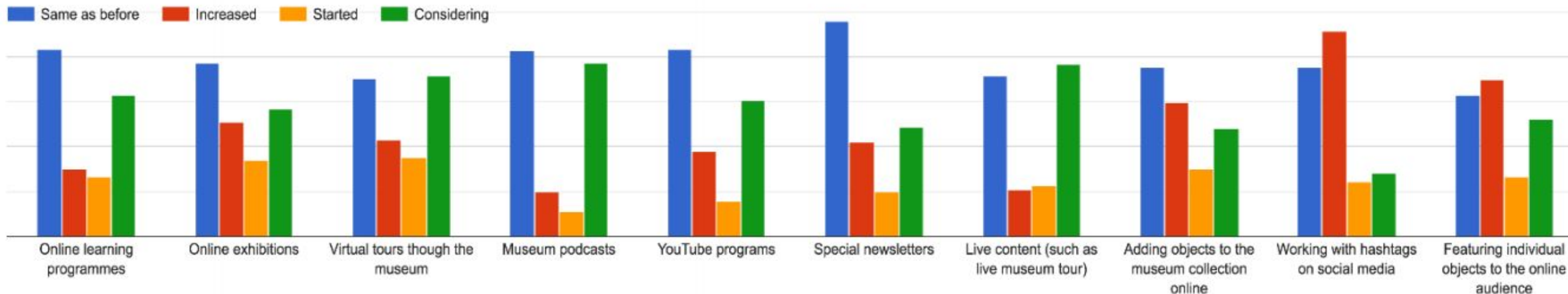
SECTION 3

Case Studies

Case study: pushing the boundaries of online community

New streaming platforms for online communities: The interesting case of Travis Scott on Fortnite.

In April 2020, the famous rapper Travis Scott and the popular video game Fortnite collaborated to offer a live **virtual concert** hosted on the Epic Games platform. Over two days, users from all over the world were able to attend five different virtual events by downloading the app for free. This event was so successful that it led to the speculation to make Fortnite concerts 'pay to attend', and set the path for a new kind of cultural offer.

What made the event so successful? The major asset of the video game platforms is in the almost unlimited freedom when it comes to graphic design. In the concert, the rapper arrived to the stage from the sky in an out of this world spaceship, while all attendees could place themselves directly by the stage, on rooftops, or on different islands, creating a unique and fun experience to all. The freedom in terms of number of attendees was also a major selling point for the collaboration since more than **27.7 million of users participated**.

But it is also the freedom of interaction that gave to the event so much success. Indeed, the players were able to customise their avatar's look, interact live during the concert through a chat room, and to danse all together along with the rapper, creating one of a kind online community.

New revenue generator. The success of the event can also be measured by the direct and indirect revenue it generated. Direct revenues came from classic routes such as merchandising sales, real (goodies to be mailed) and virtual (avatar customisation), while indirect revenues were seen through an increase of 1.4 million followers on Scott's social media, an increase of 419% demand for his next concert ticket, as well as a **major increase of Spotify earnings**.

Fortnite ✔ @Fortnite... · Apr 27, 2020   ···

Thank you to everyone who attended and created content around the Travis Scott event!

Over 27.7 million unique players in-game participated live 45.8 million times across the five events to create a truly Astronomical experience. 🤯 🔥

💬 2.5K   🔁 7.8K   ♡ 73.3K   ⬆

Case Study: using # to reunite heritage

In May 2020, the **Arts and Humanities Research Project Towards a National Collection** launched a social media campaign called **#CollectionUnited**. This campaign invited museum professionals and the public to share their own photos or information about cultural artifacts or events that would highlight the rich and diverse range of cultural heritage collections across the UK.

The goal of this project, born as part of the programme Boundless Creativity in response to the covid-19 pandemic, is to build a collaborative research community that brings collections together and extend public access. Using platforms such as facebook, instagram, twitter, and blogs, cultural heritage professionals and enthusiasts can posts a short story with photos or videos, using the #CollectionUnited. The aim is to bring together material from more than one collection, telling the stories that connect them, and encouraging the public to do the same.

This campaign is an example of initiative using social media and new narrative tools, here the #, to engage with the public and make people participate in the creation of a collective narrative about cultural heritage, bringing new perspectives to the national cultural memory.

Source.

# SECTION 4

Open questions
& hints

Open questions & reflections

Digital tools and 'social' interactions have become the core of marketing and communication strategies. With the rapid evolution of trends and offers, we can wonder how they are going to shape the strategies of cultural entrepreneurs in the future. Virtual platforms such as video games appear as a new tool where there is no limit to innovation.

Taking the case study of Fortnite into consideration and the modern trends, how do you imagine the strategies of tomorrow? How will the online communities look like? Which tools and platforms will be used?

Tips

If you are really interested in getting more familiar with the social media tools and the concept of online communities for your cultural organisation, we encourage you to observe what strategies some of the most popular institutions implement. Become familiar with the most used social media platforms, and start playing around with them, it is the best way to learn! For a stronger understanding of branding strategies, we invite you to go through each of the links found in the sitography, bibliography, and references section.
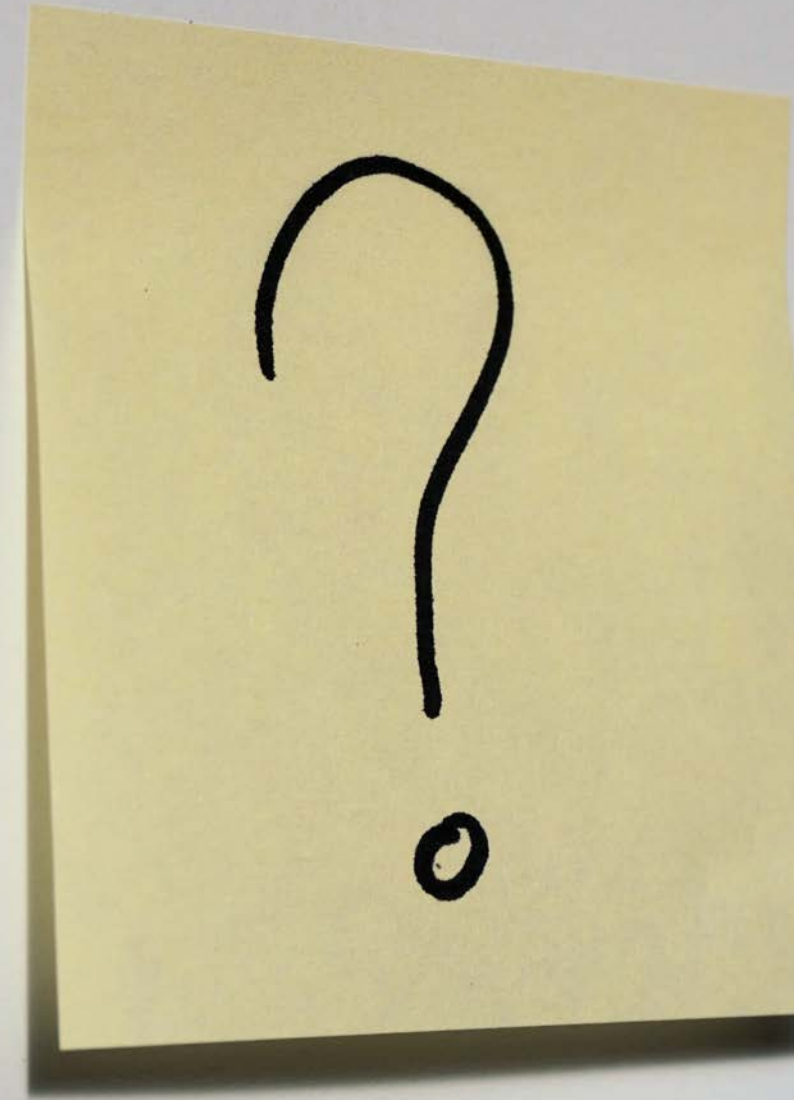
Key takeaways

This presentation was about communication strategies that cultural entrepreneurs need to include in their business models.

The covid-19 has put into evidence the strengths of social media platforms that are nowadays used for more than just social interactions. Social media platforms and their management represent a necessary investment for all institutions.

The return on investment of these platforms is not only financial, as it also brings the opportunities for cultural heritage and tourism institutions to showcase diverse content in innovative ways that directly touch the audience, that evolves from experiencer to active participants, creating a strong community that fosters the sustainability of the sector.

Closing section

To continue your learning

- To get a deeper understanding of the role of branding in the Nonprofit sector: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_role_of_brand_in_the_nonprofit_sector

- An interesting case study of the Museum of Natural History of Florence and its use of social media: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276942344_Museums_and_social_media_the_case_of_the_Museum_of_Natural_History_of_Florence

- Example of a communication strategy implementation plan for the INNOCULTOUR project: https://www.italy-croatia.eu/documents/96817/532201/INNOCULTOUR_COMMUNICATION+STRATEGY+IMPLEMENTATION+PLAN.pdf/6d4f9e6b-9cae-2e5c-7a9f-9b5727188e9e?t=1563792514386

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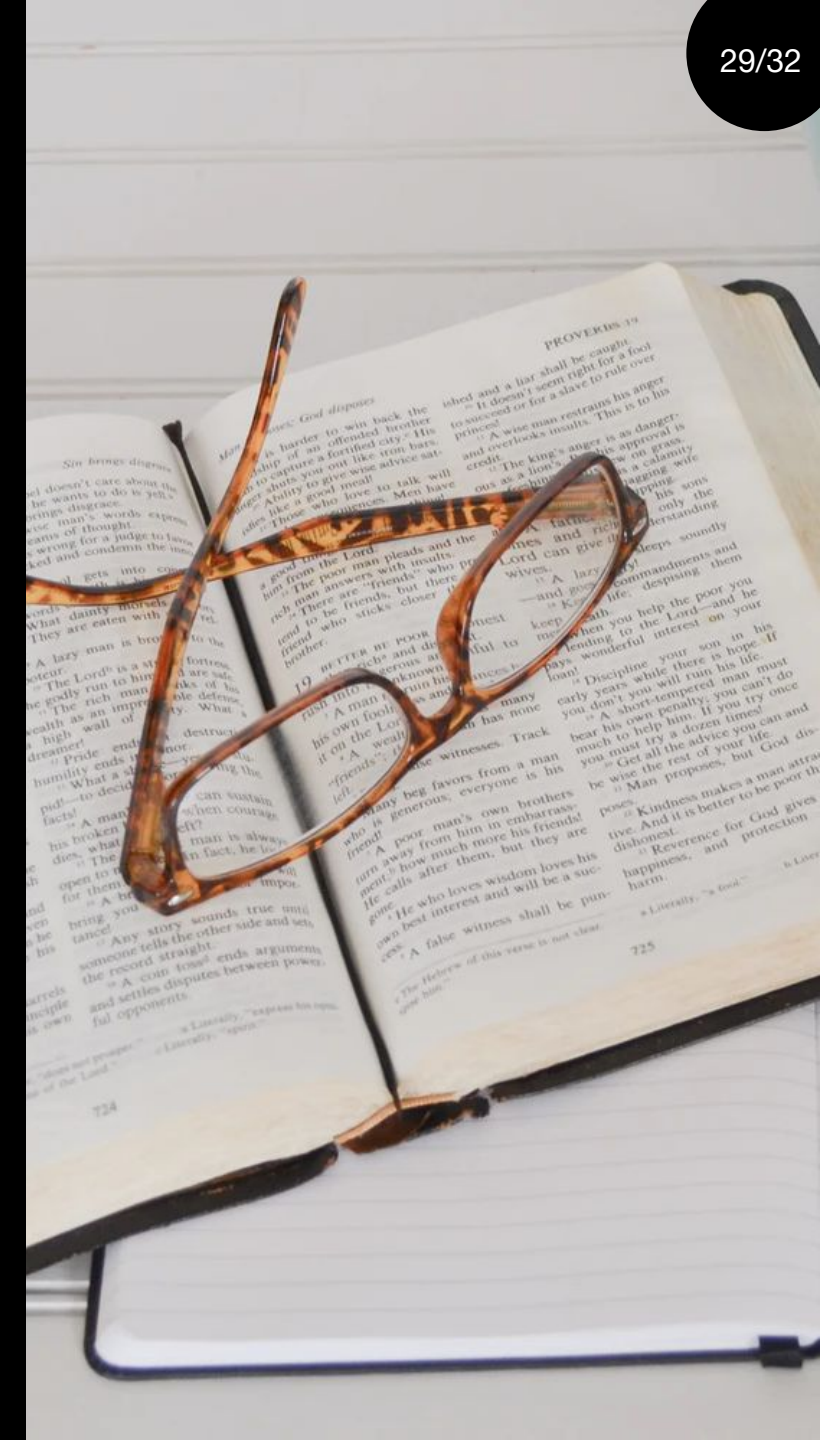
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