

FACEBOOK AS A DIALOGIC COMMUNICATION TOOL AT THE MOST VISITED MUSEUMS OF THE WORLD

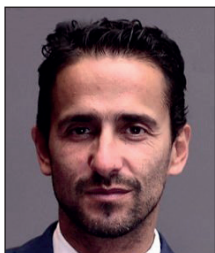
Facebook como aplicación dialógica en los museos más visitados del mundo

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Abstract

Social networks have obtained a relevant presence in Communication programs and they are changing the way to disseminate information and engage in dialogue. They permit a more balanced and participatory model of communication between publics and organizations, based in dialogue and conversation, not persuasion. The main objective of this paper is to evaluate how museums are using *Facebook* to interact and engage in dialogue with their publics. This work asks if they are using this platform in order to be recognized as 'museums 2.0'. Our results illustrate that the museums we studied (the 100 which are most important on the global level) have a very poor activity on *Facebook*, and they are not using all the opportunities that this social network offers as an interactive and dialogical means of communication.

Keywords

Museums; Corporate communication; Dialogic communication; Social networks; *Facebook*; Museum 2.0; Interaction.

Resumen

Las redes sociales han alcanzado una presencia relevante en los programas de comunicación y están cambiando la forma de difundir información y dialogar entre públicos y organizaciones. Permiten un modelo más equilibrado y participativo de comunicación, basado en el diálogo y la conversación, no en la persuasión. El objetivo principal de este trabajo es evaluar cómo los museos utilizan *Facebook* para interactuar y dialogar con sus públicos. Este trabajo analiza si están utilizando esta plataforma para ser reconocidos como 'museos 2.0'. los resultados indican que los museos que se han estudiado (los 100 más importantes a nivel global) tienen una actividad muy pobre en *Facebook* y no aprovechan todas las oportunidades que ofrece esta red social como medio interactivo y dialógico de comunicación.

Palabras clave

Museos; Comunicación corporativa; Comunicación dialógica; Redes sociales; *Facebook*; Museos 2.0; Interacción.

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1. Introduction

In the last decade, digital communication has been established as an indispensable tool in the communication strategies of all kinds of organizations. It has very rapidly altered the ecosystem, conditions, tools and communication capabilities of any organization. Its relative weight has increased such that some authors even claim that are changing the form of communicating. **Zerfass et al.** (2014) indicate that the results of the *European Communication Monitor 2014* clearly illustrate this transfer from conventional to digital communication, highlighting the fact that the trend in strategic communication shows that its online dimension is clearly leading the list of the main tools and channels for communication. Moreover, again citing the *European Communication Monitor 2014* (**Moreno et al.**, 2015), the prospects for the immediate future indicate that social networks will increase their presence as a communication tool in organizations significantly in the coming years.

“ Social networks have reached a relevant presence in communication programs ”

Digital communication is also playing an increasingly important role in museums as part of the new configuration of these institutions and the need to build organizations that go beyond the walls of their buildings and have a better connection with citizens (**Hooper-Greenhill**, 2000; **Gurel; Kavak**, 2010; **Allen-Greil; MacArthur**, 2010; **Gómez-Vílchez**, 2012; **Martínez-Sanz**, 2012; **Capriotti**, 2013). For a long time, the resources of the (essentially unidirectional) web 1.0 expanded the capacity of these institutions to disseminate information in a way that was large scale, controlled, fast and easy (**Marty**, 2007; **Tallon; Walker**, 2008; **Capriotti**, 2011) and enabled museums provide information in a “up-down” strategy (**Capriotti; Pardo-Kuklinski**, 2012; **Viñarás-Abad; Cabezuelo-Lorenzo**, 2012; **Claes; Deltell**, 2014).

However, the social web, and specifically social networking, favors a more participatory model and balanced communication between organization and publics, based on dialogue and conversation, not persuasion. Several authors (**Sweetser; Lariscy**, 2008; **Schulte**, 2009; **Waters et al.**, 2009; **Padilla-Meléndez; Del-Águila-Obra**, 2013; **Kim; Kim; Hoon-Sung**, 2014) argue that the communication in social networks is based on two key aspects: first, disseminating their own content through the constant updating of their spaces in social media. And second, the generation and maintenance of a dialogue and interaction with their publics through these platforms. Social media involves a substantial change in the way they relate to the different publics of the organization, in a much more direct and reciprocal manner. As **Sevick-Botree & Seltzer** (2009) state, social networks provide organizations with a space to interact with their key

publics, and also enable network users interact with other users on topics of mutual interest, thus establishing the ideal conditions to stimulate dialogic communication.

The social web and the 2.0 tools (more collaborative, multidirectional and dialogic) are offering museums new options and possibilities of communication and changing the way in which museums engage with their publics based on the active involvement and participation of the user. This allows the exchange of information, debate, discussion and collaboration (**Crenn; Vidal**, 2007; **Lopez et al.**, 2010; **Kidd**, 2011; **Viñarás-Abad; Cabezuelo-Lorenzo**, 2012; **Claes; Deltell**, 2014), and contributes to create more participative channels of communication for this type of institutions (**Lopez et al.**, 2010; **Martínez-Sanz**, 2012; **Cordón-Benito; González-González**, 2016). This explains why these platforms have become frequently applied in the communication strategies of museums (**Marty**, 2007; **Simon**, 2010; **Capriotti; Pardo-Kuklinski**, 2012; **Cabrera-Bravo; Cabrejas-Almena**, 2013).

Thus, social networks make tangible a new conception of museums, going beyond the walls that limit them and expanding the capacity to influence of these organizations. **Simon** (2010) defines what is known as the ‘Museum 2.0’ (or Social museum) as one that seeks to expand the visitor experience beyond the physical space to become a platform for the creation, discussion and negotiation between the institution, artists and visitors. In this new conception of museums (**Srinivasan et al.**, 2009), social networks are tools that can help expand and stimulate dialogue on museum activities (**Kidd**, 2011), which is a clear manifestation of the Museum 2.0.

Although such museums are still in an embryonic stage (**Lopez et al.**, 2010; **Capriotti; Pardo-Kuklinski**, 2012; **Padilla-Meléndez; Del-Águila-Obra**, 2013), one can observe a growing need for the museum to establish conversations with the virtual visitors and actively participate in discussions not generated by the organization (**Cabrera-Bravo; Cabrejas-Almena**, 2013; **Caerols-Mateo; Viñarás-Abad; González-Valles**, 2016). That is to say, as **Holdgaard** (2011) notes, through social networks, online communication of the museums can be much more active, participatory and dialogic than their traditional communication.

In this context, organizations like museums find in *Facebook* an essential instrument of relating to their publics, based on interaction, active listening and participation (**Sweetser; Lariscy**, 2008; **Kim; Kim; Hoon-Sung**, 2014). The ability of *Facebook* to allow and encourage interaction between the organization and its different publics can go beyond the usual functions of dissemination of information, to a much more comprehensive, broad and diverse communication that allows organizations to develop, cultivate and maintain dialogic communication with their key publics.

Facebook has been established as a key tool for museums, for its ability to be configured as a useful platform to facilitate dialogue between the museum's organization and its publics (Viñarás-Abad; Cabezuolo-Lorenzo, 2012), and the fact that it allows them to go beyond the usual broadcast functions to a much more comprehensive scenario, expanding the capacity for participatory communication of museums and even creating more open and active spaces.

The aim of this paper is to analyze whether *Facebook* is used by museums as a tool for dialogic communication with their publics, evaluating the activities carried out and the use of the various resources available to encourage interaction with their publics through this social platform. To do this, the top 100 art museums worldwide will be studied, which allows a large sample of the use of *Facebook* in 24 countries divided into 3 main geographical areas: Europe, America and Asia/Pacific.

2. Methodology

The object of this study has been the major art museums worldwide. To define the sample we used the number of annual visits to museums, and chose to analyze the most visited art museums. The sample was collected from annual ranking of visits by the prestigious magazine *The art newspaper*, which annually publishes a list of the most visited museums in the world of art.

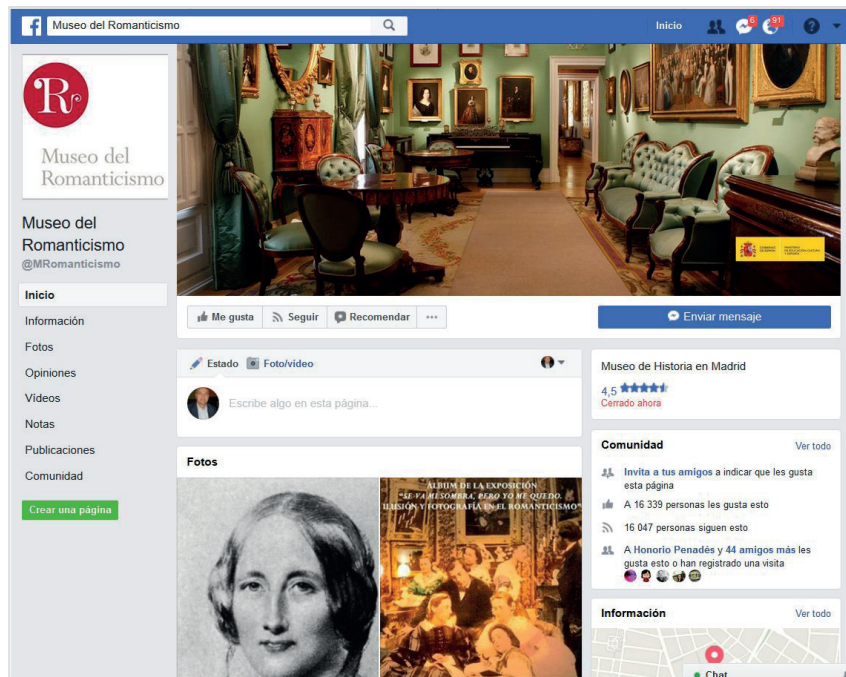
<http://www.theartnewspaper.com>

“*Facebook* facilitates museums to engage in dialogue with their publics”

To prevent some institutions which have recently appeared in the limelight, the rankings produced for five years (from 2008 to 2012, published from 2009 to 2013) were compared, and museums that appeared at least three times in the five years analyzed were selected, or in two of the last three years (2010-2012). The final sample included 100 museums from 24 countries: 60 from Europe, 23 from America, 17 from Asia/Pacific.

We analyzed the *Facebook* page identified as the “official account” of each museum. This was located by tracking the most popular Internet search engine, and also the *Facebook*'s own search function.

The unit of analysis was the published posts on the *Facebook* pages of selected museums. All posts published during alternate weeks of each month (even weeks) for 12 months (1 year full) were chosen. In total, 26 weeks of analysis, including two weeks at two key dates related to museums



<https://www.facebook.com/MRomanticismo>

at international level: the “International museums day” (on 18th May) and the “Ask a curator” day (on 17th September).

To achieve the objective set in this study, three research questions were established, in relation to three basic aspects linked to the use of *Facebook*. These were the “Posting activity”, the “Posting resources” and “Interaction resources” of each museum.

RQ1: What levels of activity do museums have on *Facebook*? (Posting activity).

RQ2: What types of resources are used to publish their content? (Posting resources).

RQ3: Do the *Facebook* pages of the museums contain tools to facilitate and promote interaction and dialogue with visitors? (Interaction resources).

Taylor & Kent (2014) indicate that dialogic communication is the framework for the building of relationships between an organization and its publics through the Internet. Dialogic communication can be defined as

“an ongoing interaction between organizations and their publics using Internet tools, which enables information, comments, opinions, assessment and experiences to be exchanged on a continuous basis” (Capriotti; Pardo-Kuklinski, 2012, p. 620).

In this way, the type of resources (RQ2) and the interaction tools (RQ3) used on *Facebook* open up new possibilities for dialogue between organizations and their publics, since social networks expand the potential for and provide new possibilities for organizations to promote dialogic communication (Viñarás-Abad; Cabezuolo-Lorenzo, 2013; Guillory; Sundar, 2014; Capriotti; Carretón; Castillo, 2016; Caerols-Mateo; Viñarás-Abad; González-Valles, 2016; Cordón-Benito; González-González, 2016).

Table 1. Posting frequency on Facebook

Less than 1 post per week (quasi inactive)
Between 1 and 4 posts per week (very low)
Between 4 and 7 posts per week (low)
Between 7 and 10 posts per week (adequate)
Between 10 and 15 posts per week (high)
More than 15 posts per week (very high)

Regarding RQ1, the category of “Posting activity” was developed. The ‘Activity’ element indicates the volume and frequency of publications or update posts on the page. Based on various studies (Patel, 2016; Jordan, 2017; McLean, 2017), there were established several levels of *Frequency* of posting (Table 1). According to these reports, the adequate frequency of posting would be between 1 and 2 posts per day (around 7 and 15 posts per week).

For RQ2, the ‘Posting resources’ element (Table 2) allows us to analyze how the museums are integrating different kind of resources or tools to post their information, since Facebook lets the sender use and combine several formats (such as text, images, audio, video, links, hashtags, etc.). Three types of resources were identified. The first type was classified as “Graphic” (this includes plain texts and fixed images, photos and figures). The second type of resources was defined as “Audiovisual” (including audio and video tools). The third type was named as “Interactive”, which includes resources like ‘links’, ‘hashtags’ and ‘users quoted’ (with the @name method).

For the RQ3 the category of “Interaction resources” (Table 3) was developed, which allows us to evaluate the tools and resources available for promoting interaction with the contents published on the museum’s pages, and to assess the readiness for dialogue with virtual visitors. For this, four main aspects are established for analysis:

1) “Viralization”: analysis of reproduction and propagation by virtual visitors of the information released by the museum, through two sources: the ‘likes’ (volume of likes obtained by each publication) and ‘shares’ (number of times a post was shared).

Table 3. Interaction resources on Facebook

Category	Types of resources	Tools
Interaction resources	Viralization	Nº of likes
		Nº of shares
	Type of Interaction	Only dissemination of information
		Call to share
		Call to give opinion
	Conversation	Call to action
		Nº of visitor comments to museum posts
Nº of museum comments to visitor comments		

Table 2. Types of resources on Facebook

Category	Types of resources	Tools
Types of resources	Graphic	Texts
		Photos/Images/Figures
	Audiovisual	Audio
		Video
	Interactive	Links
		Hashtags
Quoted users		

2) “Type of interaction”, which assesses the action that is fostered through the publication of the contents. This has four options: ‘just dissemination of information’ (only aims to present and disseminate the contents), ‘call to share’ (encouraging visitors to share information with other users on the same network or other networks, including expressions that encourage sharing the post), ‘call to give an opinion’ (the use of words or expressions that encourage giving or expressing opinion or commenting by virtual visitors) and ‘call to action’, which encourages users to participate or collaborate with comments that drive actions (encouraging users to suggest ideas, go to the museum, subscribe to an activity, etc.).

3) “Conversation”: analysis of the ‘comments’ that are made on the posts made by the museum on its Facebook page, either by users on the posts of the museum or comments made by the museum in response to the comments of virtual visitors.

After defining the template for analysis, a test was performed on 20 Facebook pages to test the suitability of the template. After making the necessary adjustments, a content analysis was made to evaluate all posts collected during the designated time period. The data obtained were processed using SPSS for the results presented below.

3. Results

A total of 5,376 posts were obtained. The results were organized according to the established research questions.

3.1. Posting activity of museums on Facebook

Regarding the ‘Activity level’ on Facebook, an analysis was made based on the number of posts that the museum makes on its fanpage. Museums have a low average of just over two posts per week (Table 4). That is, these organizations spend an average of more than three days creating each publication. Moreover, the average number of original posts of museums is even smaller, with 1.72 weekly publications.

Table 4. Activity of museums on Facebook

Activity	N	%	Media per museum	Media per museum per week
Original posts	4,172	77.6	44.9	1.72
Shared posts	1,204	22.4	12.9	0.50
Total	5,376	100	57.8	2.22

Table 5. Publication frequency of museums on Facebook

Publication frequency	N	%
Less than 1 post per week (quasi inactive)	42	45.2
Between 1 and 4 posts per week (very low)	32	34.4
Between 4 and 7 posts per week (low)	15	16.1
Between 7 and 10 posts per week (adequate)	0	0.0
Between 10 and 15 posts per week (high)	4	4.3
More than 15 posts per week (very high)	0	0.0
Total	93	100

If we delve into the frequency of publication of posts (Table 5), we find that almost half of the museums (45%) have a quasi inactive account, publishing under a post per week, and more than 90% of the museums analyzed published less than seven weekly posts.

“The majority of art museums worldwide have very poor posting activity on Facebook”

Only a residual number of museums (just over 4%) have daily activity on their fanpage, publishing around 1.5 posts daily, that is, they are doing an adequate level of posting. These figures indicate that the activity of museums on Facebook is scarce and hardly produces information in a stable manner. Very few museums (less than 5%) post continuously, i.e., they have a regular activity on Facebook (more than 7 times a week).

3.2. Posting resources used by museums on Facebook

Next we shall investigate ‘Types of resources’. Given the possibilities for social networks to publish their content across multiple formats and resources, research intended to ascertain which of these were actually being used in posts. As shown in Table 6, the museums use a majority of ‘Graphic resources’ for the presentation of information on their Facebook pages: almost all the posts include text (98.8%) and to a lesser extent the still image or photograph (82.3%). ‘Audiovisual resources’ have an almost nonexistent presence (2.8%). And ‘Interactive resources’ are used in a very different way: links (70%) are frequently used, but less than 10% of the total posts include more specific social networking formats like hashtags (6.6%) or mentions using the “@user” format (7.1%). That is to say, that the museums are not taking advantage of the many resources that social networking and current technology provide and instead focus on using more traditional resources such as text and accompanying images and to a lesser extent, links.

Table 6. Types of resources

Types of resources	Tools	N	%
Graphic	Texts	5,310	98.8
	Photos/images/figures	4,424	82.3
Audiovisual	Audio-video	150	2.8
Interactive	Links	3,764	70.0
	Hashtags	356	6.6
	Quoted users	385	7.2

3.3. Interaction resources of museums on Facebook

The results obtained in the four aspects studied (Viralization, Type of interaction, Conversation and Active listening) indicate little interactive and dialogic use of Facebook pages by museums.

A significant result in this analysis is undoubtedly that of ‘Viralization’ of the posts of museums on Facebook (Table 7). The data show that each post published on fanpages gets a very high average number of likes (just over 300 likes per post), showing the high level of interest of virtual visitors in the content and activities of the museums. Moreover, each post that is published by museums is shared an average of nearly 80 times, reinforcing the idea that the content posted by museums are of great interest to virtual visitors and showing the great capacity for virtual dissemination of the content posted on this network by the museums.

Table 7. Viralization

Viralization	Nº
Likes per post	309.2
Shares per post	78.3



<https://www.facebook.com/MuseuPicassoBarcelona>

Table 8. Type of interaction encouraged

Type of interaction	N	%
Only dissemination of information	5,149	95.8
Call to share	0	0.0
Call to opinion	165	3.1
Call to action	62	1.1

In relation to the 'Type of interaction' that is encouraged through *Facebook*, the research suggests a division into four options on a *Facebook* page, beginning with the least interactive option (the mere "Dissemination of information", without proposing any interaction in the post). This is followed by the "Call to share" (encouraging users to share content on *Facebook* or other networks) and the "Call to opinion" (encouraging users to comment, rate, etc.). And finally with the "Call to action" (which invites users to suggest an idea, play games, sign up or subscribe, to propose an activity, event, etc.). The results obtained (Table 8) are very revealing: 96% of the posts of museums made use of the first type (a mere dissemination of information) without stimulating the interaction of virtual visitors (through sharing, reviewing or participating) with a clear lack of interest for the possibilities for feedback offered by *Facebook*. Just 4% of posts of museums seek to promote sharing, opinion or action on the part of users, by including words, phrases or comments that suggest an interaction. This suggests a very limited and unidirectional use of their presence on *Facebook*.

Our analysis of the 'Conversation' developed on *Facebook* aims to quantify and evaluate the conversation stimulated from the museum as well as from users. That is, the possibility that, from the published posts, a dialogue between the virtual visitors and the museum is established through the comments posted. In this regard, the total data (Table 9)

Table 9. Conversation

Conversation	N
Museum comments per post per museum	0.2
User comments per post per museum	10.0

show that the average is more than 10 comments (10.2) for each post, nearly all (10) written by the internet users and a small percentage (0.2) written by the Museum. This indicates the interest of users in generating dialogue based on the information published by the museums. But it also shows that museums have very little interest in continuing the conversation that they themselves have generated through their fanpages, and simply let the conversation occur between the users themselves. It therefore is an "unreal" conversation due to the fact that the institution ignores the conversation with their virtual visitors and complies only with its role as a disseminator of information.

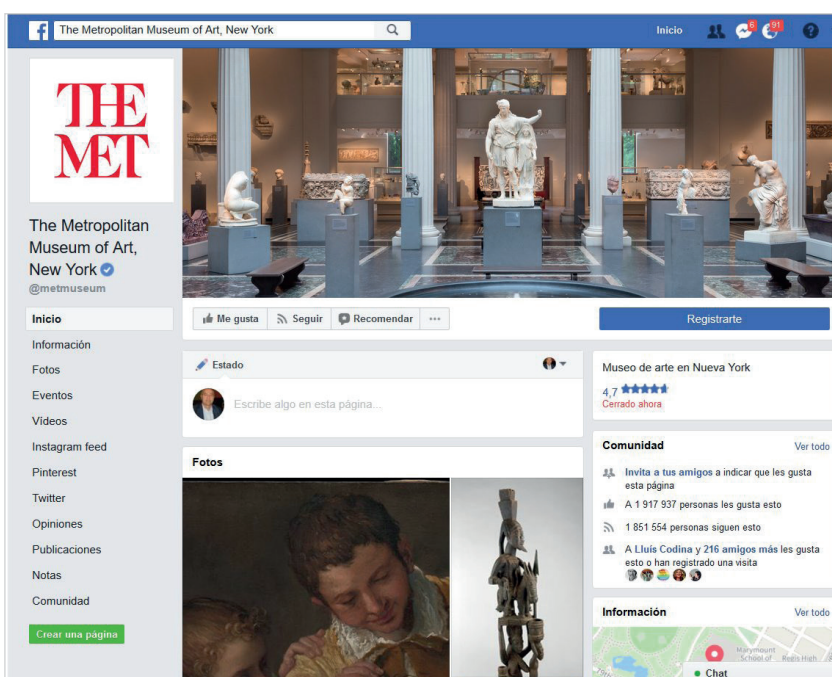
‘Museums worldwide are not interacting and engaging in dialogue with their publics’

4. Conclusions

Social networks have become a key tool in the communication strategies of all kinds of organizations, providing an unprecedented ability for interaction and dialogue with their publics. The results of our research show, in general, that the museums analyzed (the 100 major museums worldwide) are not taking advantage of all the tools offered by *Facebook* as a means of interactive and dialogic communication.

Regarding the RQ1 (Posting activity), it is observed that the "level of activity" of museums in *Facebook* is very low, since the average of updates is scarce (about 70% of the museums published less than 2 posts a week) and only a small group of institutions have daily activity on the social network. So, despite having a strong presence on *Facebook*, museums do not intensively use this platform to communicate with their virtual visitors.

About the "Types of resources" most used by museums (RQ2), the results indicate a majority use of graphic resources (text and images/photos) and links to their posts on their *Facebook* pages, while other audiovisual and interactive resources have a very limited presence. That is to say, the museums are prioritizing the use of highly unidirectional/monologic resources to present their information (focusing on the use of traditional resources) and are not taking



<https://www.facebook.com/metmuseum>

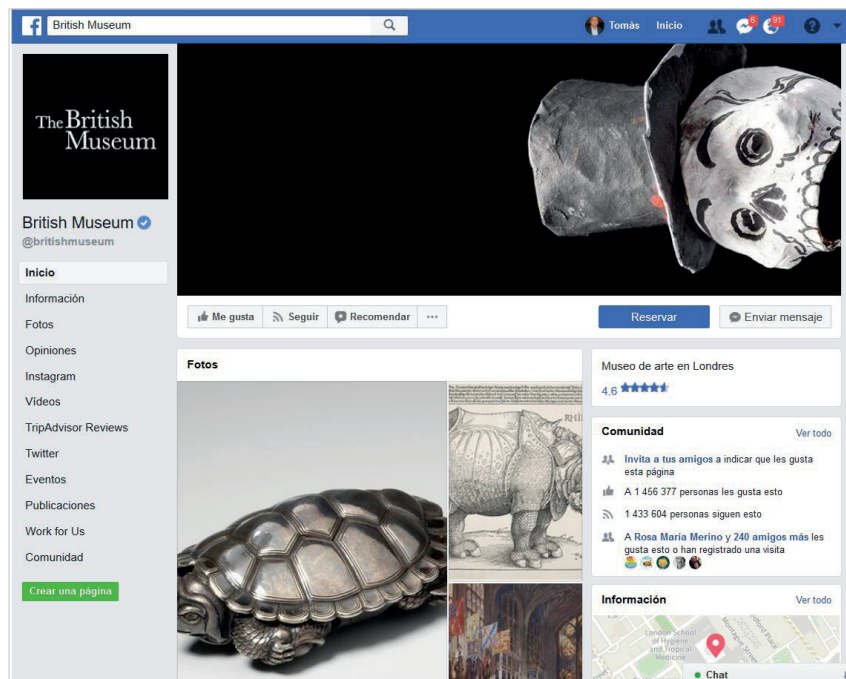
advantage of the many resources and interactive reporting capabilities available on *Facebook*.

In the category of “Resources for Interaction” (RQ3), the results indicate little interactive and dialogic use of *Facebook* by museums, through the evaluation of the three aspects analyzed (Viralization, Type of interaction and Conversation). On the one hand, Internet users show a great interest in the information disseminated by museums and share and converse about the information (with a high volume of ‘Viralization’ of and ‘Conversation’ about the posts). However, museums do not promote participation and dialogue, the ‘type of interaction’ being promoted in fanpages is mostly the mere dissemination of information, and the share, opinion and actions of digital users are not solicited. This is a clear waste of the interaction possibilities of *Facebook*. To this, we must add that very few museums will establish a ‘conversation’ with virtual visitors in relation to the posted content (only 0.2% of the comments associated with the post of museums belong to themselves). That is, the museums do not show much interest in continuing the conversations that they themselves have generated from the information published on fanpages.

This leads us to conclude that museums do not take full advantage of *Facebook*’s dialogic capabilities. Museums are not currently using all the opportunities provided by *Facebook* in order to proactively interact with their publics. *Facebook* pages of the museums studied are currently essentially one-way communication tools. Overwhelmingly, museums are still at an early evolutionary stage of interaction and dialogue, listening very little to their publics on the internet and prioritizing the production and dissemination of information in their own self-interest. However, signs can be observed that may presuppose a willingness to improve upon the museums’ interaction with publics.

Museums, like many other organizations in the corporate world, maintain a traditional off-line one-way perspective on *Facebook*, considering it as mere tool that can be used to disseminate information about the institution and its activities, but not to stimulate interaction and two-way communication with their publics. This allows us to conclude that the massive use of *Facebook* by the museums has not implied a change in mentality about the way they interact with their publics. This social network has brought to the museums a new tool to disseminate their own information in an immediate and global way, but it has not substantially altered the way of thinking related to interactivity and dialogue.

In short, despite having a massive presence on *Facebook*, most museums analyzed are mainly using *Facebook* as a tool for disseminating information, so they are not taking advantage of their ability to generate a genuine place for



<https://www.facebook.com/britishmuseum>

dialogue, exchange and conversation, making it possible to design a new museum (the museum 2.0) that allows interactive expansion of the user experience beyond the physical space, and the creation of a true platform for the creation, discussion and negotiation between the institution, artists and visitors beyond the walls of the institution.

“Museums are not using the possibilities that *Facebook* offers as a dialogical communication tool”

5. Contributions, limitations and further research

This paper contributes to define a model of analysis for dialogic communication through *Facebook*, by identifying the key aspects, categories and resources that should be taken into account. Having applied it to the specific sector of museums, we have obtained a perspective about how these organizations develop communication with their publics through *Facebook*. This will also help entities to develop better tools to foster and improve interactive communication with their key publics. However, the results can not be extrapolated directly to other organizations or institutions (such as companies, NGOs or government entities). Thus, a possible future line of work will apply the methodology developed in this research in other studies related to other types of organizations, which can provide further insight on the future challenges for dialogic communication through *Facebook*.

Finally, during our research work we have identified some aspects to be considered as future areas of study. Future works on digital (dialogic) communications are needed to

establish the way in which other social media platforms and other web 2.0 resources are being synergistically used by organizations in their dialogic relationship with their publics and, particularly, how those tools are integrated into the existing communication and public relations programs. We believe that these aspects are particularly relevant for organizations since social media are tools that can allow direct two-way communication with their publics. But this requires a clear communication leadership if they are to be implemented successfully, since the essence of web 2.0 requires entities to change their attitude, and decrease unidirectionality and allow interaction, dialogue and participation.

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