Title:
Lessons for museums from the pandemic lockdown: exploring user engagement with art museums in London on Facebook

Abstract:
Due to the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic, many institutions, such as museums, had been required to close so as to reduce non-essential human mobility. The dilemma of maintaining a consistent relationship with museums' users emerged. What are the digital initiatives that museums had developed? How did user engagement change during the lockdown? Most importantly, what can be learnt from these practices for developing more effective engagement strategies after the pandemic? With basic statistical analysis and content analysis as the main research methods, this study examines how London art museums used Facebook during lockdown and the changes of corresponding user engagement behaviours. Specifically, three London-based art museums are chosen for this study, which are the National Gallery, Tate and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). The results show that, during the period of lockdown, all three museums adjust their Facebook strategies in terms of both post type and content. The increase in the level of user engagement also suggests the effectiveness of some strategies, such as the frequency of museum posts and creation of different types of post content. These findings give reflections on art museums' digital initiatives and contributed to the understanding of the museum online users.

Presentation type:
Paper presentation in a themed session

Theme:
2021 Special Focus: What Museums Post Pandemic?

Keywords:
User engagement, Pandemic lockdown, Social media, Participatory culture